

Café Science Pops Corks and Questions

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How much is nature worth? According to Shahid Naeem, \$42 trillion. In August, the chair of the ecology, evolution, and environmental biology department discussed how he and a team of ecologists and economists derived an estimate of “nature’s services,” such as waste treatment, pollination, climate regulation, and food production. But there was no lectern, no microphone, no PowerPoint presentation. Instead, there was food and drink, and the clinking of glasses and silverware at an off-campus salon at PicNic Market & Café on 101st Street and Broadway. Naeem was hosting Café Science, a series of monthly gatherings sponsored by the Columbia Science Connection that provides a relaxed forum for people to talk with leading Columbia scientists.

Naeem’s discussion was the third in the series that was kicked off in June with David Helfand, chair of the astronomy department, who contemplated intelligent life in the universe. In July, guests talked about the brain’s workings with Darcy Kelley, chair of the frontiers of science department. And in September, Klaus Lackner, the Maurice Ewing and J. Lamar Worzel Professor of Geophysics, presented work on environmentally sound uses of fossil fuels.

Upcoming experts include Geraldine Downey, chair of the psychology department, who on October 9 will speak about coping with rejection. On November 13, paleoceanographer Peter deMenocal will discuss climate change research, and on December 11, organic chemist Colin Nuckolls will bring molecules and electronics into the salon.



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