Integrating Climate Conversations into Conservation Science & Practice

Interactive Session Wrap-Up Report for NACCB 2024

Dr. Megan Jones & Dr. Jessica Rizzolo

Overview

Twenty-six conservation students, practitioners, and researchers participated in our 90-minute interactive session on climate conversations in conservation at NACCB 2024 in Vancouver BC in June 2024. Our goals for the session were to help participants 1) *learn* about how conservation science, especially social science, can support climate action to protect ecosystems and humans who depend on and are a part of these systems, 2) *connect* with each other and create space to catalyze longer-term conversations, and 3) *strategize* about what they might do next, so they could leave the session with tangible ideas for habits they might want to build or projects they want to develop that could support deeper engagement with climate conversations within the conservation sector.

Participants brought their own rich and unique histories of climate and conservation engagement to the session, which led to a lot of thought-provoking discussion. Various participants expressed a) their appreciation that other folks were interested in the intersection of these topics, like them, b) a sense of shared urgency to accelerate climate action, c) a recognition, deepened through the session, of the nuances and possibilities for future climate conversations in their work and life. Participants also discussed barriers that have held them back from talking about climate action in the past, and helped each other reflect on what that might mean for their efforts moving forward.

Below we present the activities we designed and ran within our session, in case they help any readers to facilitate a similar workshop in future. Each round took about 15 minutes.

Round 1: Climate Action Audit

1. What climate actions have you tried? What's stuck (habits) and what hasn't? What were the one-offs that went well?
    - Free write for 3 min
2. What climate actions would you like to try? What have others done that has inspired or impressed you?
    - In groups of ~4, take 10 min to create a list of ideas (designate a notetaker)

Possible domains: food, transportation (travel, commute, infrastructure), home, policy (organizational, local, national), volunteering, community, teaching, parenting, energy infrastructure, clothing, art

Round 2: Bridging the Gap

1. Identify a few conservation concerns that motivate you to want to take climate action.
    - Could be species, ecosystems, places, people, etc. Be specific. (5 min in pairs)
2. Brainstorm a few audiences you might want to talk about climate action with.
    - Think colleagues in conservation, friends, family, etc. Be specific. Why might they care about climate action? (5 min in pairs)
3. How would you bridge the gap between a conservation concern of yours and the motivations that one of your audiences might have for climate action?
    - Draw, diagram, or discuss. Spend 5 min on person 1, then switch and 5 min on person 2.

Round 3: Practice Climate Interactions

1. Practice having a hypothetical conversation with one of the audiences from Round 2, where you either: (a) ask them to help you take a specific climate action from Round 1, (b) ask them to talk through with you some climate actions they might want to take, or (c) try to persuade them to take a specific climate action (hard mode).
    - In pairs, one person is themselves and the other pretends to be their audience (8 min)
    - Remember the audience's motivations and need for autonomy, competence, relatedness as described in self-determination theory.
2. What did you learn from practicing this? Any advice you'd give?