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Reflection on Tom Zetterstrom’s Lecture

Though I enjoyed the lecture Tom Zetterstrom gave, I felt a very limited connection to it. I thought his images of the elm trees were beautiful, but I still don’t understand why the natural Montserrat cluster required us to attend.

I live in southern Connecticut; in fact, a decent portion of Zetterstrom’s lecture was spent talking about my county. It’s famous for our Elm trees apparently. This came as news to me – because even though New Haven, Connecticut has Elm trees lined up around the green , it has never been anything that intrigued me.

Now, I completely understand why the natural cluster would ask someone to come to lecture on trees. Trees are what make up the very essence of nature. I thought the lecture was well presented: a perfect combination of text, pictures and improvisational speaking. Zetterstrom kept his lecture light and surprising witty for some of the topics he was talking about. Never once did I feel that the lecture was dry or bland; Tom Zetterstrom kept me interested the entire time.

I was even able to appreciate most his points. Considering I had no idea the trees lined up on the New Haven Green were elm, nor did I know that these trees easily contracted a deadly disease, I completely understood the underlying urgency within Zetterstrom’s lecture.

However, I still do not think it was necessary to require all students of the natural cluster to attend his lecture. As a Montserrat, we are studying Mathematics through Time and Culture – not the history and appreciation of elm trees. I’m unaware why we are considered the “natural cluster” for this reason – what does the history of math have to do with nature? Sure, math exists within all facets of nature, but personally, I find considering the history of math to relate to nature (in the sense that we are required to go to talks on trees) quite a stretch.