

Three levels of integrating ecology with the conservation of South American temperate forests: The initiative of the Institute of Ecological Research Chiloe, Chile

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The diversity of native species assemblages and that of indigenous cultures that once characterized the temperate forests of southern Chile have experienced a process of homogenization ever since the Spanish conquest. Today this process continues to erode both biotic and cultural diversity. With the goal of linking ecological research with actions to conserve the biological and cultural richness of this region, we established the Institute of Ecological Research Chiloe. The Institute's philosophy and activities involve three approaches: (1) participation of professional ecologists in environmental education and decision making, through collaboration with the community at local, regional, and global scales. (2) programs of ecological education, which include planting indigenous trees in urban areas and creating a local botanical garden with representative Chilean forest species. (3) critical analyses of the narrow economic and utilitarian environmental ethics that currently prevail in C