

CATS Membership Meeting via Zoom, April 27, 2022, 9:30-11:00 am

Attendance: 50

Speaker: David Haskell, Professor of Biology and Environmental Studies, University of the South, Sewanee. Professor Haskell spoke on “Trees as Nature’s Great Connectors.”

Nature, mainly trees, are the subjects of Professor Haskell’s several books and are the animating force of his newest, “The Songs of Trees: Stories from Nature’s Great Connectors.” Prof. Haskell considers trees the “great life givers” on planet Earth, connecting everything from each other to animals, birds, insects and other plants, to us humans, in a web of community where everything thrives through cooperative interaction. Each tree is home to a microcosm of life that depends on the tree and, in return, sustains the tree. Those microcosms give rise to activities that emanate outward from trees to the entire natural world.

Among the many organisms Prof. Haskell lists as synergistic with trees are human beings. Given our descent from primates that live in trees, it is no surprise that human beings feel a kinship with trees. He looks to the fossil record to infer that, as a species, humans have only lived outside of the tree canopy for two million years, approximately three percent of the time we have existed as a separate species. Trees were our original habitat. Many of the experiences humans find pleasant or alluring can be compared with sensations found in the forest, such as the thrilling reverberation in music halls.

Naturally, then, trees figure prominently in religious iconography worldwide. For example, the Buddha was enlightened under a tree, while Adam and Eve began life in a garden eating from a tree. Trees continue to be the spiritual hubs of various indigenous peoples who recognize at a visceral level their dependence on forests. The strong connection felt by these peoples gives rise to a protectiveness that has been known to incite successful actions aimed at stopping forest destruction.

Deeply drawn to trees given our ancestry, we humans currently find ourselves oddly estranged from them. Since we walk upright, in the middle of trees at their trunks, we no longer climb about in the canopy nor crawl at ground level amidst the soil and roots. Prof. Haskell has spent time with individual trees at various sites around the world, just being with them engaging all of his senses. He recommends not only learning about trees through traditional methods, but also choosing a tree and periodically visiting it – sitting quietly with it, listening to it – to renew our ancient spiritual connection to these mighty life-givers, not only to think about and FEEL how they sustain us but to be driven to want to nourish and protect them . . . for the good of the entire natural world, including ourselves.

Business Meeting:

Projects Committee Report: Kathy Nepote

Kathy extended a thank-you to everyone who worked with on projects last month; they accomplished a great deal.

Tomorrow, there is a chance to work on the American Chestnut grove in Fluvanna.

More projects are added periodically to TIF, so please keep an eye out there.

President's Announcements: Robin Hanes

Robin thanked all of the volunteers who worked with Marjie and Jill at the Clark Elementary School event.

Friday is Arbor Day. Join CATS at 10:00 a.m. at Sojourner's Church to honor the American Elm there, a CATS Landmark Tree.

Also, at 5:00 p.m., CATS members and friends will gather at Mint Springs park in Crozet to hike up to the Boundary Oak.

The CATS spring tree sale was a great success. CATS sold 360 trees in an hour to 104 purchasers, 60 percent of whom bought 1-3 trees. This means that CATS is reaching more individuals.

Much of the success of the tree sale goes to Penny for her great marketing and PR.

And also, thanks to Associated Fabricators for fixing CATS' sign without charge.

There will be a potting party on Saturday, limited to 14, so let Robin know or sign up on TIF if you can come. Also, this time the potting party won't start until 2:00 so as not to conflict with the Piedmont Master Gardeners' annual plant sale.

Three Oaks have already been cut down because of utility issues on Garrett Street. A fourth tree is probably going soon. The new City Arborist is attempting to save trees, but Robin suggested also that CATS members who live in Charlottesville could write letters as concerned citizens to officials to advocate for saving the trees.

Tomorrow, there will be a bareroot tree planting event at Riverview Park to replace some of the Ash trees lost to the emerald ash borer. Robin asked for volunteers to meet there at 8:30 a.m. to help with the project.

Look for CATS's ad in today's C'ville promoting the Arbor Day events, tree walks, etc.

Treasurer's Report: Michelle Cormier

Michelle reported that the tree sale generated approximately \$4,000 of income.

A realtor donated \$1,500 to CATS in honor of a client. This is the first time CATS has received a donation like this.

As of today:

\$4,800	spent to date
\$2,300	in from membership dues
\$5,800	in from donations

The budget for this year is \$19,000 so CATS is in good shape.

Libby thanked the members who've paid their dues. Most have done so now. CATS currently has approximately 160 members.

Education: Tim Maywalt

There will be a couple of tree walks in May. Please book your spot soon because these walks fill up quickly.

Emily gives her summer tree ID class in June.

No other classes are scheduled at this time.

The survey taken of the membership by the Education Committee was anonymous. The Committee will send out a questionnaire asking people who, exactly, would like to attend.

Last year 40-50 members volunteered to help with the training class. The Education Committee will be looking for folks to help this fall, also.

Anyone interested in helping tend the American Chestnuts at Pleasant Grove Park tomorrow should let Tim know.

Other Announcements: Marjie Guiliano

Marjie called for volunteers to help at the CATS table at the Rivanna Festival from 11-4.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Alison Brill