

CATS Membership Meeting via Zoom, October 19, 2022, 9:30-11:00 am

Attendance: 64

Speaker: Susan Tyler Hitchcock, photographer with National Geographic and author of *Into the Forest*. The title of her talk was “Hearing the Message of the Forest.”

**Program:** Susan Tyler Hitchcock

Ms Hitchcock considers herself a reporter when it comes to trees and the message of the forest. Admittedly not a scientist, the thesis of her talk was that in our modern, scientific era, longstanding and worldwide mythologies regarding trees that are largely no longer front of mind are circling around to fit into modern, scientific paradigms. The messages of the forest that peoples everywhere have included in their religions, myths, and legends have been forgotten by industrialized cultures. However, science is now proving what people once knew intuitively about the deep connections between trees and humans.

She discussed some of the stories in which trees play central roles in the organizational ideas humans depended on to unify and order preindustrial civilizations. Various tree archetypes have been essential to many cultures, some were even pivotal in creation myths.

With a nod to Lynn White, Jr. and his 1967 article, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” Ms Hitchcock described how, in approximately 1300 AD, the plow that turns the soil was invented. By changing the environment to serve human needs, the mindset developed by which we continue to live – that nature is available for humans to alter and exploit, rather than simply to be accepted and used within its natural capacities. The animistic religions of the past gave way to the divisive notion that people have “dominion” over the Earth. Human beings forgot the messages of the forest.

By the 1970s, awareness of our current ecological crisis and humans’ interconnectedness with nature reemerged, this time within the current culture of rationality and science. Three ancient messages from the forest became topics for study and scientific verification:

- Trees are essential for the health of the planet, especially for carbon sequestration;
- Time spent among trees benefits humans physically and spiritually (forest bathing); and
- The cooperative interaction among trees via mycelium offer people lessons in caring and compassion.

The division between people and trees is being healed through science.

Ms Hitchcock then opened the floor for folks to talk about trees they feel connected to or that have given them hope or strength in trying times. Quite a few members contributed interesting personal stories.

### **Business Meeting:**

Announcements: Robin Hanes, Barbara White, JoAnn Dalley, Kendra Hall

Robin brought to the members' attention two large-scale tree removals in the area, one at the Piedmont Botanic Garden and the other on the Downtown Mall. She assured the membership that the trees are being removed out of necessity and for beneficial reasons. The trees coming down at the Piedmont Botanic Garden must be removed for a much-needed stream restoration which is part of a city-wide project concerning streams. The trees slated for removal from the Downtown Mall are too compromised to let stand any longer.

Barbara reported that CATS received a grant of approximately \$6,000 from Trees Virginia for Clean Water. This money is earmarked for planting trees at Mint Springs Valley Park in Crozet and at Darden Towe in Charlottesville.

A mini-grant from Trees Virginia will go toward buying trees and supplies for the CATS nursery, books, and rain gauges imprinted with the CATS logo for the 10<sup>th</sup> and Page project (and perhaps for the Habitat for Humanity Project and/or to sell).

JoAnn informed the membership that Mary Spear volunteered to chair the communications committee next year. JoAnn still needs people to step up and volunteer for president elect and chair of the education committee.

Kendra announced that trees planted years ago by the Rivanna Conservation Alliance at Crozet Elementary need to be tended. CATS volunteers plan to do this on Saturday from 10-12.

Treasurer's Report: Michelle Cormier

Since September, CATS has brought in \$3000 (net) from the fall tree sale as well as \$250 in donations.

Past month's expenses: \$1,120

The credit card limit was raised to \$3000 in anticipation of funding fall projects.

Current account balances:

\$11,800	checking
32,136	money market savings

Communications: No report this month

Projects Committee: Kathy Nepote

The Projects Committee is gearing up for an active fall, including:

- Planting at Mint Springs on October 29

- Mulching at Greenleaf Park on October 26
- Invasives control and tree tending at Jackson Burley on November 2
- Invasives control at Northeast Park on November 12
- Planting at Darden Towe on November 5

Per Robin, a workday at The Grove will be planned soon (see TIF),

For all activities, watch TIF and sign up there or directly with Kathy.

#### Education: Mary Spear

Next month's membership meeting will be via Zoom on November 16 at 9:30 a.m. The speaker will be Amber Ellis, Director of Virginia Tech's Catawba Sustainability Center, who will speak on Riparian Buffers and give an Introduction to Ecotherapy: Streamside Forests for our Water and Soul.

This year's training class continues to go well.

Emily's next tree ID talk and walk is full, but folks should sign up on the waitlist in case spots open.

There will be a walk at Phil Stokes' property in November. See the website and TIF to sign up.

The chainsaw safety workshop went well. Approximately 20 CATS members attended.

A vote determined that the new t-shirts will be long-sleeved.

#### Tree Sale History: Phyllis Johansen

In the past several years, CATS sold about 575 trees each year. In 2022, CATS sold 724, and customers wish we could make even more available.

Phyllis thanked everyone for making the sales so successful.

#### Tabling Report: Anne Bentham

Two recent tabling events proved to be positive, one at Loop d'Ville (including 19 more names for the email list), and one at the Crozet Arts and Crafts Festival (34 more names for the email list).

Anne stressed how much fun tabling can be, adding that she and Kathy are investigating more places to go, and thinking about increasing materials for children.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Brill