

Northern Woodlands Conference

Friday, October 20 – Sunday, October 22, 2017

Hulbert Outdoor Center, Fairlee, Vermont

Thank You to our Sponsors:

The Bailey Charitable Foundation and The Trust for Public Land

Friday, October 20

4:00 – 5:00 pm **Registration** - *Library*

5:00 – 6:00 pm **Social Hour** - *Conference Hall*

6:00 – 7:00 pm **Dinner** - *Dining Hall*

7:30 – 8:30 pm **Plenary Session** - *Conference Hall*

Shedding Light on the Working Forest: Art as a Value-Added Forest Product with Kathleen Kolb and Verandah Porche

- ❖ Kathleen Kolb and Verandah Porche will present their traveling exhibition of paintings and narratives of people who earn their livelihoods in the working forest. They will discuss what they've learned during their long collaboration. The images and the accompanying narratives honor the workers and open their environment and their insights to the viewer. The artistic intent is to shed light on beauty and sensitivity, amid the danger and the din of machines. Kolb's visual art spans a twenty-year period. Porche's work distills and amplifies the voices of people engaged with the working forest.

8:30 – whenever **Music & Poetry Night** - *Conference Hall*

Poetry reading and music with Verandah Porche and Celia Evans

Saturday, October 21

6:45 – 7:45 am **Early Bird Woods Walk** - *Front Porch*

7:30 – 8:30 am **Breakfast** - *Dining Hall*

8:00 – 8:30 am **Registration** - *Library*

8:45 – 9:30 am **Keynote Address** - *Conference Hall*

The Songs of Trees with David George Haskell

- ❖ David George Haskell, Professor of Biology at the University of the South, is the author of *The Songs of Trees* (2017) and *The Forest Unseen* (2012), which won multiple book awards and was a finalist for the 2013 Pulitzer Prize in General Nonfiction. Haskell writes:

“I returned repeatedly to the trees around the world, listening to the trees and their many inhabitants, talking to people whose lives are linked to the tree, seeking the stories that center on each tree. I did this to experience how trees live in forests, cities, conflict zones, and areas on the front lines of environmental change. Trees are the great connectors of the living world, so by listening to them I touched a stethoscope to the skin of the landscape, hearing what stirred below the surface. As I traveled, I found that people were always part of the trees’ songs. This was just as true on the sidewalks of Manhattan as it was in the remote Amazon rainforest or the olive groves of Jerusalem. So listening to trees also gave me a new perspective, a ‘tree’s view,’ on human nature. I’ll share some of these stories, along with readings from my book.”

9:30 – 9:45 am **Break**

Morning Sessions

Choose TWO 1-hour sessions (A & B) or ONE 2-hour session AB

9:45 – 10:45 am **Morning Session A (1 Hour)**

1. A Reading and Discussion of Tim Weed’s New Fiction Collection, *A Field Guide to Murder and Fly Fishing* (Green Writers Press 2017)

A high mountain lake in the Colorado Rockies, the tidal waters of Nantucket, a granite quarry in New Hampshire, Venezuela’s Orinoco basin, the summit of an Andean volcano, the tension-filled streets of eastern Cuba: these are some of the settings for these stories of dark adventure, in which fishing guides, amateur sportsmen, teenage misfits, scientists, mountaineers, and expatriates embark on disquieting journeys of self-discovery in far-flung places. Tim Weed will read from this collection and lead a free-ranging discussion about writing, publishing, the central importance of place and setting in contemporary fiction, travel, fly fishing, or whatever other topics are of interest to participants.

2. Short and Sweet: The Power of the Seven-Minute Writing Prompt with Gary Lee Miller

Can you spare seven minutes to change the writing lives of your students forever? In just that tiny window of time, a good prompt can build critical English Language Arts skills and make even reluctant writers look forward to writing assignments. We’ll focus on prompts involving place. Bring a notebook and a pen.

3. (FULL) Outdoor Workshop: New Tools for Plant Identification with Jerry Jenkins (*limit: 12*)

The Northern Forest Atlas Project makes identification tools - photo guides, books, charts, digital atlases - for field and indoor use. We will have pre-publication copies of woody plant charts and photo guides, and give you a chance to test them and see how they work.

4. Protecting Maine's Underwater Seaweed Forest with Robin Hadlock Seeley

In her book *The Edge of the Sea* (1955), Rachel Carson described Maine's intertidal seaweed beds of rockweed (*Ascophyllum nodosum*) as an underwater "forest". In recent decades, this seaweed has been cut from Maine shores to produce fertilizers for farms and golf courses and nutraceuticals for horses, cows, cats, and dogs. Well-intentioned home gardeners buy organic rockweed (also known as kelp) mulches and potting soils. What impacts does the rockweed industry have on marine ecosystems? In this workshop you will take a trip underwater via film and still photography to see Carson's underwater rockweed forest and its residents: cod, lobster, squid, snails, and shrimp. We will also learn about the importance of this forest for shorebirds and seabirds. We will discuss the meaning of "sustainability" for seaweed harvests, and look at different species of seaweeds, including rockweed/kelp, brought to Vermont from the coast of Maine.

11:00 – 12:00 pm Morning Session B (1 Hour)

1. Forests and Climate Change: What Do We Know? An Informal Talk with Jennifer Hushaw

Will maple sugaring become a thing of the past? Will the spruce and fir disappear from our mountains? Will our forest canopies soon be dominated by oak and hickory? Or will the woods of the future look basically the same as they do today? These are just some of the many questions out there on the subject of climate change and forests in the Northeast. Anticipating forest response is a complex challenge. Forecasts are based on our understanding of how trees responded to climatic changes in the distant past, current understanding of what controls the distribution and character of modern forests, and simulations of possible futures. This informal talk will unpack the complicated subject of forest response to climate change, outlining what we can say with certainty and the major questions that are still the focus of ongoing research. We will paint a nuanced picture of the north woods in a warming world, based on the latest science.

2. (FULL) Living Maps: Writing Setting as a Character with Sean Prentiss (*limit: 15*)

Whether writers live in small cabins in Vermont and write about the natural world or live on Long Island, New York, and write about their suburban experience, they can create place as something more than merely a backdrop for their action. Instead, writers can transform place into something that serves as another character, one important enough to influence characters, affecting characters' needs and desires. This discussion will talk about how to transform setting from a non-vital backdrop into something that enhances dramatic moments, reveals character, and affects tone.

3. (FULL) Macroinvertebrate Sampling Workshop: Aquatic Insects - Far more than Fish Food with Declan McCabe (*limit: 15*)

We will rapidly sample the pond and stream for aquatic insects and plankton. The catch of the day will be examined under microscopes and hand lenses. We will share some rapid collecting and identification tips and explain why sometimes a name is just a name and it's really the diversity that matters. Participants should expect to leave with a nice hand lens and the skills to quickly enter the fascinating world of aquatic macroinvertebrates.

4. Woods Walk

9:45 – 12:00 pm **Morning Session AB (2 Hours)**

1. Nature Illustration / Journaling with Adelaide Tyrol and Nona Estrin (limit: 20)

Anyone interested in the outdoors and willing to put some effort into acquiring some basic art skills is welcome to this two-hour field drawing workshop. The class will be an introduction to drawing using gesture, contour, and watercolor techniques to quickly record one's experience and observations of nature. We encourage people to bring a simple set of watercolors and/or watercolor pencils, a pad, and pencils. The workshop will focus on connecting visually with nature. We will talk about the importance of using art as a communication tool to inform and elucidate the things we see as important. Field science and field drawing are fabulous mates: both take curiosity, patience, and attention to detail. There is such a need to slow down, to be patient, in order to really experience the world around us. Drawing outdoors cultivates a kind of profound attention to the natural world and our place in it.

2. Metaphors on Ice with Jim Collins and Kristen Laine (limit: 20)

Whether it's finding layers of emotion in frozen water or describing fall Vermont color as a native character trait, the use of metaphor in writing about landscape is a way of both compressing and elevating meaning. It's one of the elements that distinguish memorable, thought-provoking pieces from mediocre, run-of-the-mill articles. Finding resonant metaphors in your subject material is where it begins. Setting up or extending the metaphor is where the craft comes in. Led by writers Jim Collins and Kristen Laine, this interactive workshop is for intermediate and advanced writers who want to make their writing more sophisticated and nuanced. Includes selections to be read in advance of the session.

12:00 – 1:00 pm **Lunch - Dining Hall**

1:15 – 2:45 pm **Plenary Session - Conference Hall**

Baby Birds: An Artist Looks Into the Nest with Julie Zickefoose

- ❖ Why and how do baby songbirds develop so quickly, some launching into flight only eleven days after hatching? In 2002, Julie Zickefoose began to draw and paint wild nestlings day by day, bearing witness to their swift growth. Over the next thirteen years, Julie would document the daily changes in seventeen bird species from hatching to fledging. *Baby Birds* is the enchanting result, with more than 500 life studies that hop, crawl and flutter through its pages. In this talk, Julie shares her influences as well as her artistic process, a must-see for the aspiring natural history artist. Art and science blend in every Zickefoose pursuit, as the scientist's relentless curiosity joins the artist's quest for beauty. The work, wonder and fun of studying nestlings, including being foster mother to orphaned hummingbirds, chimney swifts and bluebirds, makes for an irresistible and highly inspirational presentation.

2:45 – 3:00 pm **Break**

Afternoon Sessions

Choose TWO 1-hour sessions (A & B) or ONE 2-hour session AB

3:00 – 4:00 pm Afternoon Session A (1 Hour)

1. Editor Panel Discussion with Ian Aldrich, Erik Hoffner, and Dave Mance III

Back by popular demand, this moderated discussion will cover topics such as: What do editors look for in a story pitch? How do they come up with their own content ideas? What makes them want to work with a writer again? What are major don'ts for pitching a story? What topics that relate to our region deserve more reporting? Most of this hour will be devoted to a Q & A format, so there will be plenty of time to ask questions.

2. Selected Readings and Discussion with Author Castle Freeman

Author Castle Freeman has published seven books, about fifty short stories and "rather more than" a hundred essays and other works of nonfiction, most relating in some way to rural northern New England. Join him for selected readings and an informal discussion.

3. Woods Walk

4. The Craft of Bee Hunting with Tom Seeley (*Limit: 20*)

In this workshop, I will share my knowledge of the ancient craft of bee hunting—finding wild colonies of honey bees—one of the most fascinating games in the world. We will review the equipment needed and the process of establishing and following beelines, which are lines of bees flying back to their bee-tree homes. This is an outdoor activity of infinite variety, suspense, disappointment, perseverance, and triumph. You go out into the fields. Before you rises a hillside with ten thousand trees. One of those trees is a bee tree. With simple equipment, and special skills, you can find it! For this talk, I will draw on my nearly 40 years of experience as a bee hunter, described recently in my book, *Following the Wild Bees: The Craft and Science of Bee Hunting*.

4:15 – 5:15 pm Afternoon Session B (1 Hour)

1. Ecological Graphics with Jerry Jenkins

The Northern Forest Atlas is making ecological field guides. We want to show how the forest divides into landscapes, and what lives in each habitat and why. This turns out to be hard, which is one reason why it hasn't been done. But it also turns out to be doable. The key some new sorts of graphics — process diagrams, ecological range maps, nested cross-sections. I will show you what we have devised, and you can tell me what you think of it.

2. Art, Science, and The Outside Story: an Informal Roundtable Conversation with Verandah Porche, Kathleen Kolb, Nancy Wollum, and Others

This conversation will explore human creativity in science and art. All of our work draws on the natural world and involves intense observation and discrimination. Is there a common language and a synergy between us? Are there areas where we diverge? We hope you will join in.

3. Poetry Reading: *To Look Out From*, Poetry of Place & Environment with Dede Cummings

When asked in an interview if he was a nature poet, Galway Kinnell responded, “What other kind of poet is there?” Join Vermont poet and founder of Green Writers Press, Dede Cummings, on a journey through time and landscape as she reads selections of poems from her award-winning collection, *To Look Out From*. John Elder writes of Cummings’ new collection, “What an authentic, moving, and beautifully cadenced collection this is.” Following the poetry reading, audience participation is encouraged to address questions such as: What role does the environment play in literature? How can instilling a vivid sense of place help literature fulfill its role as a form of solace, enrichment, and betterment for writers? Cummings reminds her readers that Henry David Thoreau says, so typically, “It’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see.” Bring a favorite nature poem to share.

4. Last Ride to Berlin with Jim Collins (*limit: 20*)

In the spirit of *The Northern Forest*, written by Richard Ober and David Dobbs and perhaps the finest nonfiction volume ever written about the working culture of our region’s north country, this workshop explores the art of writing about landscape through the people who make their livings and their lives there. Former *Yankee* magazine editor Jim Collins considers three north-country profiles through perspective, narrative, physical description — and how the intended audience can influence a writer’s choices. For intermediate and advanced writers, and for ambitious writers just coming to the craft. Includes selections to be read in advance of the session.

3:00 – 5:00 pm *Afternoon Session AB (2 Hours)*

1. A Place in Mind with Terry Osborne & Patrick White (*limit: 20*)

This workshop will focus on developing short personal narratives about place. We will use indoor and outdoor writing exercises to explore specific aspects of successful place narratives. Some sample place-based nature essays will be sent to registered participants beforehand, and if you come to the workshop with your own “place” in mind—a location you’d like to write about, and even a reason you’d like to write about it—you’ll have material to develop in the workshop.

2. Contemplative Practices in Ecology & Creative Writing Education with David George Haskell (*limit: 20*)

A discussion and workshop on the use of contemplative practice with students. Bring a notebook and the sensory apps that came preinstalled in your nervous system. *1.5 hours*

5:00 – 6:00 pm *Social Hour - Conference Hall*

6:00 – 7:00 pm *Dinner - Dining Hall*

7:30 – whenever *Saturday Night Open Mic - Conference Hall*

Come share your short stories, poems, songs, coyote howls, and other creative endeavors

Sunday, October 22

7:30 – 8:30 am **Breakfast & Thank You**

8:30 am **Check-out of Cabins**

8:45 – 10:30 am **Plenary Session** - *Conference Hall*

How Honey Bees Choose a Home in the Woods with Thomas Seeley

- ❖ In the late spring and early summer, honeybee colonies reproduce by producing swarms, each of which contains one queen bee and approximately 10,000 worker bees. After a swarm has left its parental nest in a mad whirl, the bees settle themselves in a beard-like cluster hanging from tree branch, bush, mailbox, or whatever. Now these homeless bees must solve a life-or-death problem: find a nesting cavity that will provide the colony with good shelter from the weather and good protection from predators. A swarm does so through a process that was discovered in Germany in the late 1940s, and that has been analyzed more closely in recent years. It includes collective fact-finding, open sharing of information, vigorous debating, and fair voting by the 300-500 bees in a swarm that function as scout bees. Once the scouts have made their choice of the swarm's new home, they trigger every bee to launch into flight and then they guide the school bus-sized cloud of bees straight to their new bee tree home, which is often a mile or more away.

11:00 am **Check-out**

Enrollment Limited - Register Today!

<http://northernwoodlands.org/writersconference>