Living Earth Community Conference

Saturday, October 17, 2026

Peabody Museum, Yale University

YALE FORUM ON RELIGION AND ECOLOGY

YALE PEABODY MUSEUM

Introduction to the Living Earth Community Project

This project is an invitation to a fresh collaboration between ways of knowing and ways of valuing. There is a growing awareness among scientists and humanists, ecologists, and nature writers that there is a deeper unity in our planet, something we can call "**Living Earth Community**." From plants to people, from humus to humans, there is a continuity of being recognized by Indigenous peoples and by many of the world religions. We are not isolated individuals on a materialist planet of mechanistic processes. We have arisen from complex living ecosystems that have birthed us and sustained us. These insights bring us to the realization that deep feelings and affectivity have a role in ways of knowing and valuing life systems. We belong here; we have always belonged here.

This website is a celebration of such a realization, which is both ancient and new. As this awareness arises so does the capacity for awe and wonder of life's remarkable evolutionary dynamics. This includes emergence, self-organization, and complexity giving rise to differentiated sentience and reflective self-consciousness. We now know that all of life has developed forms of communication and signaling that are far more remarkable than we had imagined. While science is revealing this, humanists are reflecting on the implications for our consciousness and conscience. We are not the only "intelligent beings." Rather, we are participants in a "knowing" community of life on which we depend.

Biodiversity is a precious gift of nature's unfolding processes. Its health and ours are intertwined. That is because there is a continuity of being between and among all life forms. This creates relationality, mutuality, and kinship with the more-than-human-world, namely, plants, insects, birds, marine life, and humans. Thus, this interdependence calls forth a new reverence for the integrity of ecosystems and biodiversity.

Endorsements

At every level—from the entire universe to this planet, to all living beings now and through time, to your mind and body, and the world's collective thinking and beliefs—existence is networks of relationships. I know of no other place on the internet that is a better first-stop and launching point for delving deeply into what all kinds of people have learned and thought about that most basic fact of existence and its radiating ramifications.

Carl Safina, PhD, Ecologist; Professor for Nature and Humanity, State University of New York; author of Beyond Words: What Animals Think and Feel

It's perhaps a cliché to speak of Living Earth Community as an oasis in the desert; perhaps a more accurate description is that of a garden, curated with the wisdom and passion of a master gardener. Living Earth Community is more than an information resource; it's a map of where we've been, where we are, and of the country ahead. In a time when data and knowledge is being purged as if with flamethrowers, Living Earth Community is a trusted and treasured repository of deep natural intelligence, in this burning era of the artificial.

Rick Bass, Author of For a Little While, The Lives of Rocks: Stories; Executive Director of the Yaak Valley Forest Council in Montana

Conference Program

All sessions held in O.C. Marsh Hall, 260 Whitney Ave., New Haven

Yale Land Statement

Yale University acknowledges that indigenous peoples and nations, including Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot, Eastern Pequot, Schaghticoke, Golden Hill Paugussett, Niantic, and the Quinnipiac and other Algonquian-speaking peoples, have stewarded through generations the lands and waterways of what is now Connecticut.

8:00-9:00AM REGISTRATION

9:00-9:45AM INTRODUCTION

WELCOME

Darlene Kascak, Educational Outreach Ambassador, Schaghticoke Tribal Nation

Gerald Torres, Yale Center for Environmental Justice; Yale Law School; Yale School of the Environment

OPENING REMARKS

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology

Charles Stang, Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University.

9:45-10:30AM KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Introduction

David Skelly, Director, Yale Peabody Museum

"The Nature Record," Jane Lubchenco

Wayne and Gladys Valley Professor of Marine Biology, Department of Integrative Biology, Oregon State University; Former Administrator of NOAA and Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere (2009-2013)

10:30-11:00AM BREAK

11:00AM-12:00PM CELLS, PLANTS, FUNGI

Chair, Erika Edwards, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Whole Plant Evolution, Yale University

Speaker: Ursula Goodenough, Cell Biologist, Washington University, Emerita, Author, *Sacred Depths of Nature*

Speaker: Zoe Schlanger, Author, *The Light Eaters*

12:00-1:00PM TREES AND FORESTS

Chair: Marlyse Duguid, Thomas J. Siccama Senior Lecturer in Field Ecology, Research Scientist, Yale School of the Environment; Director of Research, Yale Forests

Keynote Address: Cody Desautel, Executive Director, Confederated Tribes of Colville Reservation, Washington State

Respondent: Charles F. Sams II, Director of Indigenous Programs, Yale Center for Environmental Justice

1:00-2:00PM LUNCH

2:00-3:00PM MAMMALS AND BIRDS

Chair: Paul Waldau, Co-editor, *Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science and Ethics*

Speakers:
Carl Safina, SUNY Stony Brook, "What an Owl Taught Me About Connections"

Patricia Wright, SUNY Stony Brook, "Lemurs and Ecosystems"

3:00-4:00PM EARTH LAW

Chair: Missy Lahren, Earth Law Center, Durango, Colorado

Speakers:
Cesar Rodriguez-Garavito, NYU Law School, Rights of Nature

Carlos Andres Baquero-Diaz, NYU Law School, MOTH

Respondent: Doug Kysar, Yale Law School

4:00-4:30PM BREAK

4:30-5:30PM NEXT STEPS IN OUR SHARED WORK

Chair: Mary Evelyn Tucker, Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology

Scientific Perspectives and Religious Practices:
Oswald Schmitz, Yale School of the Environment: *Scientific Perspectives*
David Haberman, Indiana University: *Religious Practices*

Nature Writing:
Amy Brady, *Orion Magazine: Nature Writers and the Yale Forest School*
Willow Defebaugh, Editor-in-Chief, *Atmos Magazine: Nature Writing*

Thinking with Plants and Fungi
Rachael Petersen, Harvard University: Harvard Conference on Plants and Fungi

5:30 JAZZ SAXOPHONIST PAUL WINTER PERFORMS

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