

AMERICAN

SUMMER 2023

F O R E S T S



Forests in Focus

See the inspiring images that
earned top honors in our
annual photo contest



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Our forests are essential to our health, our environment and our quality of life. With our forests under increasing threat, the individuals who are willing to step up to protect and restore our forests are true heroes.

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Show your love of trees and do your part to protect and restore the trees and forests that supply us with clean air and water, provide wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities, and help to slow climate change. To help plant trees and advance sound forest policies, join American Forests by making a gift today by visiting:

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CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: KAT BARTON; JEFFREY P. GLADDEN; HOLLY APRIL HARRIS; TAYLOR KAMPIA / AMERICAN FORESTS; TRULOVE STUDIOS. COVER PHOTO: ALYSSA HUSSEY



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Tree Equity is growing in Phoenix

PHOENIX, A DESERT CITY, might not seem a likely flagship for the nascent Tree Equity movement that is bringing tree cover to underserved neighborhoods across the country. But this is a city that is doing everything right to increase tree planting and care in neighborhoods most acutely lacking tree canopy. Phoenix is currently working toward achieving Tree Equity by 2030 — the first city in the United States to set this public goal.

A sense of urgency is helping Phoenix overcome its unique challenges in equitably expanding tree canopy. It is one of the

most heat-vulnerable cities in the world, a reality that climate change is accelerating rapidly. By the end of this century, average summer temperatures there will increase from 103 to 114 degrees Fahrenheit.

Phoenix also faces problems with air quality and stormwater runoff that trees can help address. Increasingly hot days are worsening the city's smog, which can get trapped in the valley where Phoenix sits. And while it rains infrequently there, when it rains, it pours. More trees in areas with low tree cover can help intercept these rains and control flooding.



All this explains why Phoenix has worked so hard to become a Tree Equity leader. American Forests came in as an early partner to help the city formulate and launch this effort, and I am proud of our comprehensive approach:

► **Inclusive partnership:** We recruited more than 50 organizations to form a Phoenix Metro Urban Forestry Roundtable. This model partnership unites diverse actors, from the Mayor's office to the most local neighborhood organizations, to set goals together and partner on every aspect of the work.

► **Data-driven planning:** Phoenix has used American Forests' Tree Equity Score as a foundational tool for setting its Tree Equity goal and for prioritizing where to increase tree planting and tree care. Now, we are building our Tree Equity Score Analyzer tool for Phoenix to provide

THIS AND FACING PAGE: MICHAEL JENNINGS / AMERICAN FORESTS



"With American Forests and private sector partners, we're proud to prioritize investment in low-income and heat-vulnerable neighborhoods. Cool corridors model the vision for Tree Equity and serve students, public transit riders and pedestrians to make our city safer and more comfortable," said Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego, pictured on the right at the planting of the city's first cool corridor.

actionable data down to the granular level of individual properties.

► **Rigorous forestry:** Phoenix has embraced American Forests' forestry expertise to help select native tree species that will have the greatest potential for long-term survival in a changing climate while maximizing key benefits, such as shade.

► **Strategic investment:** Phoenix is thinking through how Tree Equity can be used to meet specific needs, such as creating "cool corridors" for walking, biking and public transit. This has led the city to strategically map out and focus investment on 100 cool corridors that align with high pedestrian use and low tree canopy. The city is further increasing the cooling impact in these corridors using techniques that reflect the sun's heat, such as cool paving.

This model work in Phoenix is having a huge impact nationwide, providing a template that American Forests can help other cities follow. This includes a new effort we are leading to export the cool corridors approach to other cities with support from the Seed Fund.

Of all the critical success factors for this work in Phoenix, the most important has been the trusting and giving partnership we have developed. Mayor Kate Gallego has been personally involved right down to the level of local planting events. And many great local organizations, such as the Arizona Sus-

tainability Alliance, have embraced this partnership and aligned their resources with it. Kudos are also due to corporate partners in this work, especially American Express, Salesforce, Bank of America, Aspiration and iHeartMedia. Together these corporate partners have leveraged significant public funds from the city and other philanthropic dollars secured by American Forests.

To scale the work in Phoenix and cement it as a strong proof of concept, we are working with the City of Phoenix to pursue a large grant from the \$1.5 billion dedicated to urban forestry in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). American Forests was able to help secure this funding in the IRA by working with Senators Cory Booker and Debbie Stabenow and Representative Donald McEachin.

There is Tree Equity interest waiting to be tapped in cities of all sizes across the nation with help from this funding. It is a thrilling moment for the Tree Equity movement, and American Forests is committed to help capture it with model cities such as Phoenix and Detroit, as well as in cities new to this work. Thank you for helping American Forests provide this important leadership with your continued support.

Jad Daley

For more news and updates from Jad, follow him on Twitter @JadDaley



In April 2022, American Forests, City of Phoenix staff and community volunteers planted more than 250 trees in Phoenix's Cesar Chavez Park to create the city's first cool corridor.



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American Forests' mission is to restore threatened forest ecosystems and protect inspire people to value and protect urban and wildland forests.

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PLACE-BASED PARTNERSHIPS

Reforestation can happen in the desert, too

WHILE MANY PROJECTS take years to see a striking visual transformation, sometimes a diamond in the rough reveals immediate beauty and gratification. In March 2022, American Forests partnered with Rio Grande Return to plant a riparian forest in

the Harvey Jones Bioswale in Rio Rancho, N.M.

The project involved removing 18,000 yards of dirt then reconnecting the streamside forest with the Rio Grande River and reengineering that forest area to catch more storm

water. Monsoon season immediately brought harsh storms but also resulted in amazing growth of the forest within a single season. The project's planting approach also expedited growth. Rather than planting nursery-grown seedlings, volunteers cut live stems from existing willows and cottonwoods, and planted them deep enough to access groundwater. These stems helped to stabilize the newly created channel banks.

This site was part of a larger project that planted 80,000 willows and cottonwoods across three planting sites in New Mexico: Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, San Antonio Creek

and the Harvey Jones Bioswale. These dense streamside forests will attract beavers that will continue to restore the sites in unique ways. They will also provide perfect habitat for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher, threatened yellow-billed cuckoo and sandhill crane. 🌿

A striking transformation of a riparian forest in the Harvey Jones Bioswale, eventually connecting to the Rio Grande River, in Rio Rancho, N.M. The before photo [facing page] shows the site in March 2022 during the planting and before leaf out, and the after photo [below] was taken only months later in August 2022.

“The transformation is incredible. This is a case of ‘build it and they will come’ — it’s like a pop-up riparian habitat. We saw migrating sandhill cranes zeroing in on the water and greenery as a safe spot when they flew over. This was a dry wash when they flew over earlier in the year.”

— AUSTIN REMPEL, DIRECTOR OF FOREST RESTORATION, AMERICAN FORESTS

THIS AND FACING PAGE: TODD LOPEZ / RIO GRANDE RETURN



DONOR PROFILE

Three decades of environmental support and action in Iowa

FOR AMERICAN FORESTS DONORS Fred and Charlotte Hubbell of Des Moines, Iowa, their three grown children and eight grandkids motivate their support for environmental causes. But these grandparents are

hardly new to this work; they've been dedicated to environmental initiatives for more than three decades, including supporting American Forests since 2005, and as Sequoia Circle donors since 2011.



Fred and Charlotte Hubbell of Des Moines, Iowa, have been involved in environmental work for more than 30 years, with almost two decades of that as American Forests supporters. They see increasing urgency for their giving as climate change advances. "It's very simple; it's a matter of an existential threat," says Charlotte.

"We've been trying to help tree planting across the globe," says Fred. "We can't do it individually, but through groups like American Forests we can facilitate it."

The pair met at University of Iowa Law School. "We met in property class, so we acquired each other," jokes Charlotte. Fred grew up with a strong sense of social responsibility and honed it as head of life insurance company Equitable of Iowa, where he emphasized community benefit alongside profitmaking. Charlotte served on and chaired the Iowa Environmental Protection Commission and co-founded the nonprofit Iowa Environmental Council, the state's largest environmental coalition.

"We've always realized that you're only as good as your community," says Fred. "We wanted to be doing what we could to make our community as good as we could for everybody."

As acting director of the Department of Economic Development of Iowa in 2009, Fred focused on climate-friendly investing and heard first-hand from community groups about the importance of trees.

"I quickly learned that trees can have a major impact — whether it's the canopy that provides shade and reduces heat, or whether it's providing protection from floodwaters," he says. "That's not even counting that they look nice."

The Hubbells have maintained a focus on the environment as philanthropists in support of American Forests and other organizations. Notably, they established the Department of River-Coastal Science and Engineering at Tulane University and created the Hubbell Environmental Law Initiative to expand the environmental law program at their alma mater.

They see environmental work as essential, considering the growing impacts of climate change: "If we don't have a planet to live on, really nothing else matters," says Charlotte. 🌱

COURTESY OF FRED AND CHARLOTTE HUBBELL



American Forests staff photo contest winners



Each year, millions of Americans grab their cameras and flock to our public lands and parks to enjoy the many benefits of nature. Our staff is no different. In conjunction with this year's Forests in Focus Photo Contest, we hosted an internal competition to give staff members a chance to show off their photography skills. They submitted dozens of photos, and everyone on staff could vote for their top three photos. The contest provided a fun opportunity for staff to take a different focus on the critical landscapes we're working to protect.

1ST PLACE:

"Midnight Burning"

PHOTOGRAPHER: Kat Barton, Southern California reforestation manager

PHOTOGRAPHER'S PERSPECTIVE:

"Before joining American Forests, I was fortunate to participate in a variety of controlled burning projects while working for the Mt. Adams Resource Stewards. On one wildland firefighting assignment in Washington, we were put on the night shift and given the task of backburning, where fire is used to fight fire. This was a great opportunity for me to get close and personal with how low-intensity surface fire can be used to protect forests."

2ND PLACE:

"Saturday in Central Park"

PHOTOGRAPHER: Hannah Gregory, senior manager, Career Pathways

PHOTOGRAPHER'S PERSPECTIVE:

"I was in New York City for my birthday when I walked through Central Park on a sunny fall day. I admire Central Park for its urban and natural beauty, and how kinetic and accessible the space is, full of runners and meanderers, trees and birds, and city dwellers and tourists. Last year, I started taking pictures on film, and I've come to appreciate its slowness. It's a reminder, like nature, to pause and reflect on these moments and the space around us."

3RD PLACE:

"Autumn in the Catskills"

PHOTOGRAPHER: Malissa Cadwallader, director, philanthropy operations

PHOTOGRAPHER'S PERSPECTIVE:

"On a series of hikes through the Catskills last fall with a couple of friends, we stumbled on this wonderful autumn landscape near Prattsville, N.Y., where Schoharie Creek ripples through the valley below. This overlook on Pratt Rock Trail afforded a lovely view of the changing colors of the leaves in the surrounding forest and made us thankful for the peaceful tranquility of nature that offers a much-needed respite from the rush of our daily lives." 🌿

MODELING

A CLIMATE-SMART FUTURE

How hard data and fieldwork are measuring the carbon potential of forests

BY LEE POSTON

A tree that was harvested in 2011 in Savage River State Forest shows signs of regrowth. Selectively harvesting older trees and keeping their carbon intact in products like furniture also makes room for younger trees that can absorb more carbon.



BRYAN DOZIER / AMERICAN FORESTS



ON A CRISP SPRING MORNING in Savage River State Forest in western Maryland, Sean Nolan and Kendall DeLyser are standing underneath towering pines in the Blocher Cemetery conifer stand, looking at satellite images of the forest. These 23 acres of spruce trees and red and white pine were thinned in 2021 and 2022, with the wood destined for split-rail fencing and paper mills.

Nolan is here in his role as the Savage River State Forest manager. This is one of dozens of areas he oversees in this 55,000-acre state forest tucked away in the uppermost corner of Maryland close to Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

But DeLyser, American Forests' director of climate science, is on a different mission. She's here to get an up-close look at a passion project she's worked on for three years: a massive multi-state modeling project designed to analyze the carbon storage potential of various forest management and wood use strategies.

"Forests have to be part of a climate solution," DeLyser says. "They're not the only solution — we can't get to all of our emissions-reduction goals on the back of forests alone — but we can't get there without them."

As trees grow, they pull carbon out of the atmosphere through photosynthesis, locking most of it away in their trunks, branches and roots. Anything that absorbs carbon, such as trees, soil or plants, is known as a carbon sink. And trees, in particular, can be powerful carbon sinks if they are well managed.

ALL PHOTOS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED: TAYLOR KAMPA / AMERICAN FORESTS

DeLyser's goal is for states to use the data from her models to protect forests from future climate impacts, help forest landowners implement climate-smart and financially beneficial practices, and inform forest management and policy. The project is funded by the U.S. Climate Alliance and led by American Forests in partnership with the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science, the U.S. Forest Service, the Canadian Forest Service, and Michigan State University's Forest Carbon and Climate Program.

DeLyser and her team delivered reports on this topic to officials in Maryland and Pennsylvania in December 2022. The reports provide powerful data to make the case for various climate-smart forest management practices. For instance, land managers can maintain and increase forest extent by reducing deforestation or by adding more trees to the landscape

(afforestation) or on livestock pasture (silvopasture). They can help forests regenerate naturally by controlling deer browse (eating the leaves, buds and twigs of woody plants such as shrubs) and restocking understocked tree stands. And they can boost sustainable management by reducing "high grading," a practice that culls only the largest, most valuable trees, leaving only small, stunted trees with limited carbon storage potential. Finally, the report notes that longer rotations between tree harvests optimize forest growth and recommends that states prepare for the negative impacts of climate change, especially from increasing pests and diseases.

DeLyser and her team found that by implementing these practices concurrently, Maryland can increase the carbon its forests capture and store annually by 29% by 2030 and by 68% by 2100. For Pennsylvania, those numbers are 38% and 124%, respectively. Currently, however,

Facing page: Kendall DeLyser, director of climate science at American Forests, uses complex computer models to analyze how forests and soil can serve as natural solutions to our climate crisis. Above: A recently thinned section of Savage River State Forest. The harvesting encourages natural regeneration of both pines and hardwoods to foster more species diversity. Turning the 160,000 board feet of harvested pines into fencing will keep the carbon intact in the finished wood.



“Forests have to be part of a climate solution. They’re not the only solution — we can’t get to all of our emissions-reduction goals on the back of forests alone — but we can’t get there without them.”

— KENDALL DELYSER, DIRECTOR OF CLIMATE SCIENCE, AMERICAN FORESTS

Below: Savage River State Forest Manager Sean Nolan measures the trunk of a pine tree that’s been marked for harvesting. “The goal is to thin out the stand to increase the health and vigor of the retained trees,” Nolan says.

Pennsylvania’s aging forests are losing their ability to capture carbon, meaning the state is moving from being a carbon sink to a carbon source, highlighting why the data in the reports is crucial for long-term management decisions.

The team’s models also consider how much carbon remains in wood products after they are harvested and how that compares to the climate impact of building materials, such as steel, that require a lot of energy to produce.

“Good forest management is good carbon management in my book,” says Shawn Lehman, program manager for the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry’s resource inventory monitoring section. Pennsylvania is a vast state with a \$37 billion forest products inventory, so Lehman says a portfolio of forest management practices is essential. “From my perspective, there’s not one single management strategy that’s the silver bullet. It’s about maintaining forest health and the



Top left: Newly harvested timber awaits shipping at Meadow Mountain hardwood regeneration harvest site in Savage River State Forest. Top right: Products made from harvested wood, like this log cabin at western Maryland’s Green Ridge State Forest, lock carbon away and can be a less emissions-intensive option for building materials and furniture than industrial products such as steel. Bottom: Hardwood logs are cut and stacked at Meadow Mountain, a 50-acre active harvest site that was previously thinned in 1994. The site will produce 219,000 board feet of timber and will rely on natural regeneration to keep the forest growing and healthy.



MODELING A CLIMATE-SMART FUTURE

Below: Anne Hairston-Strang, Maryland Forest Service's acting state forester, and DeLyser discuss carbon modeling at the Amish Road hardwood thinning site, which was harvested in 2011 and is now regenerating. "The entire purpose of these carbon modeling projects was to provide some information that was actionable and useful to our state partners," DeLyser says.

productivity of our forests, and managing them on a scientific basis."

The reports aim to help fix a major stumbling block to states achieving their climate goals: a lack of solid data about how various forest and land management practices impact carbon storage potential. Maryland's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act requires the state to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 50% by 2030, and in late 2022 the state announced a plan to plant 5 million native trees by 2030. DeLyser hopes that the data her team provides will shed light on whether this is the most effective way for the state to meet its climate goals, and whether it's enough.

"We've been working closely with our partners in Maryland and Pennsylvania to understand the things that they're most concerned about with the forest management practices they might use in the future," DeLyser says. "And then we run that through a carbon model so we can understand how those different practices might influence carbon storage."

In Savage River State Forest, Nolan and his team thinned the densely packed conifers at the Blocher Cemetery to improve the growth rate and diversity of trees, many of which were dying. This practice encourages young trees including hardwoods to grow, which is good for



Above: Trees marked with a blue "X" are ready for harvesting in a 47-acre pine stand established by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1950s in Savage River State Forest. The marked trees are dead standing trees that are overcrowding the forest, preventing healthy natural regeneration and a diverse mix of species.



"Good forest management is good carbon management in my book. From my perspective, there's not one single management strategy that's the silver bullet. It's about maintaining forest health and the productivity of our forests, and managing them on a scientific basis."

— SHAWN LEHMAN, FOREST PROGRAM MANAGER, PENNSYLVANIA BUREAU OF FORESTRY

the forest. And what's good for the forest is also good for the climate.

"A healthier tree growing faster is going to capture more carbon than a slow growing tree — or much worse, a standing dead tree," Nolan says.

Anne Hairston-Strang, Maryland's acting state forester, sees the older trees in a forest as the bonds in a stock portfolio, while the younger trees are like growth stocks.

"This is the way we regenerate the next faster growing stages of carbon," she says. "You want to keep some of your bonds, but you need to have some in those growth stocks and some of the mixed stocks in the middle. So, where we are actively managing the forest for different ages and a variety of hardwoods and pines, we're building that diversity within the stand and across the landscape."



This newly established silvopasture system on a dairy farm in Pennsylvania will provide shade for cattle, improve farm profits and capture carbon.



Austin Unruh, founder of Trees for Graziers, an organization that helps farmers integrate trees into their pastureland, says trees provide cows resilience to heat, cold and feed shortages while improving profit margins. “Trees do so while sequestering carbon, reducing runoff and creating rich wildlife habitat,” he says.

“Once we get a sense of how these management practices play in each state, we can use that to shape national-scale policies to help inform national-scale funding for climate-smart forestry. I think the opportunities are endless.”

— KENDALL DELYSER, DIRECTOR OF CLIMATE SCIENCE, AMERICAN FORESTS

The report also analyzes silvopasture, a management practice that integrates trees into pasture land without taking the land away from pastoral use. This practice is beneficial to livestock, providing them shade and additional food sources from leaves. The trees can also be a source of income from timber, nuts or carbon credits sold to companies that want to offset their emissions. Maryland and Pennsylvania have a lot of pastureland, translating into thousands of acres of potential planting sites.

“I think it’s a win-win,” DeLyser says. “It’s not like we’re putting trees in places that they don’t survive. We’re just reintegrating those trees into the landscape in a way that they can survive and contribute to the health of the ecosystem.”

Hairston-Strang, for her part, has already begun working with colleagues in the state to incorporate the carbon modeling into their accounting on greenhouse gas reduction.

“This gives us so much better data,” she says. “It gives us the ability to look over 100 years, as well as across our whole landscape.”

DeLyser and her team will model Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin next, followed by Oregon and California. Modeling states in regional groups allows the researchers to draw insight from their differences and similarities, and to take a broader view of forest management.

“Once we get a sense of how these management practices play in each state, we can use that to shape national-scale policies to help inform national-scale funding for climate-smart forestry,” DeLyser says. “I think the opportunities are endless.”

Lee Poston is a communications advisor who works with mission-driven organizations and writes from University Park, Md.



Above: As it grows, this recently planted seedling at Savage River State Forest’s Blocher Cemetery site will store increasing amounts of carbon and help diversify the species composition of the forest.

FACINTE PAGE, BOTH PHOTOS: TREES FOR GRAZERS

2023 Forests in Focus Photo Contest Winners

AMERICAN FORESTS' ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST is an opportunity to showcase a wide array of forest scenes — from large wilderness areas to city parks — that are just as beautiful and diverse as the people who live among, enjoy and depend on them. This winter, American Forests received more than 1,700 submissions. A panel of six judges, including professional photographers, adventure seekers and individuals with an eye for nature and design, assessed a selection of these photos on the criteria of originality, technical quality and artistic merit. These are the incredible photos that took home the top honors.



GRAND PRIZE WINNER:

“A Lover’s Gift”

PHOTOGRAPHER: Alyssa Hussey (Va.)

PHOTOGRAPHER’S PERSPECTIVE: “In Charleston, S.C., two great blue herons put on one of the most beautiful moments during mating. This elaborate display of courtship

and pair-bonding includes a ritualized greeting, stick transfers and nest ceremony where the birds erect their plumes and ‘clapper’ their bills. This stick transfer is one small step in a beautiful dance.”

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER: Hussey loves capturing moments in life that take you back to a memory of the past. Her work can be viewed on her Instagram: [@through_birds_eyeview](#).



WINNER, BIG, BEAUTIFUL TREES:

“The Tree”

PHOTOGRAPHER: Holly April Harris (Pa.)

PHOTOGRAPHER’S PERSPECTIVE: “Less than an hour before dusk on a breezy October day in Dolly Sods Wilderness Area in West Virginia, this beautiful birch tree seemed to glow in the light that filtered through its golden autumn leaves, appearing almost magical amongst the surrounding conifers.”

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER: Harris is a photographer, artist and long-time nature lover in southwestern Pennsylvania, who particularly enjoys photographing wildflowers, waterfalls and trees, and whose work can be viewed at <https://hollyapril-harris.pixels.com>.

WINNER, FOREST LANDSCAPES:

“Tunnel Vision”

PHOTOGRAPHER: Thomas Cluderay (Washington, D.C.)

PHOTOGRAPHER’S PERSPECTIVE: “I recently chased fall colors on Caddo Lake, a sprawling flooded cypress forest on the Texas-Louisiana border. I spent several days scouting seemingly endless opportunities for composition. Here, I tried to capture the scale and depth of the cypress groves, using trees on either side to frame the middle trio.”

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER: Cluderay is an avid photographer, backpacker and nature lover based in Washington, D.C., whose work can be viewed at www.tcluderayphoto.com.





WINNER, FOREST CLOSE-UPS:

“Mushroom and Moss”

PHOTOGRAPHER: Nan Sanders Pokerwinski (Mich.)

PHOTOGRAPHER’S PERSPECTIVE: “Returning home from a walk in nearby Manistee National Forest, I came across this backlit scene of a mushroom and moss growing on a fallen tree, just footsteps from my back door.”

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER: Pokerwinski is a writer and photographer who has found solace and inspiration in forests all her life, and whose work can be viewed at www.nanpokerwinski.com and www.nanpokerwinski.smugmug.com.



WINNER, FOREST WILDLIFE:

“Curtain Call”

PHOTOGRAPHER: Dave Shaffer (Wis.)

PHOTOGRAPHER’S PERSPECTIVE: “This entertaining cub lost all his inhibitions and performed like a stage actor as he played with a stick he found. I remember every second of my experience with this little guy that day. It’s moments like this that make me forget about the rest of the world, if even for a few moments.”

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER: Shaffer is a wildlife photographer whose work can be viewed at www.bearwitnessimages.com.





WINNER, NATURE AS ART:

“Early Morning Frost”

PHOTOGRAPHER: Gary Lord (Ohio)

PHOTOGRAPHER’S PERSPECTIVE: “This photograph was taken a little past sunrise on Jan. 21, 2023 along Hyatt Lane in Cades Cove, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. We came upon this road at the perfect time for the early morning frost to be shimmering in its glory and splendor.”

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER: Lord worked 45 years as a decorative painter and began exploring the world of photography as a new art medium when he retired. He tries to share his passion for the beauty of nature with others.



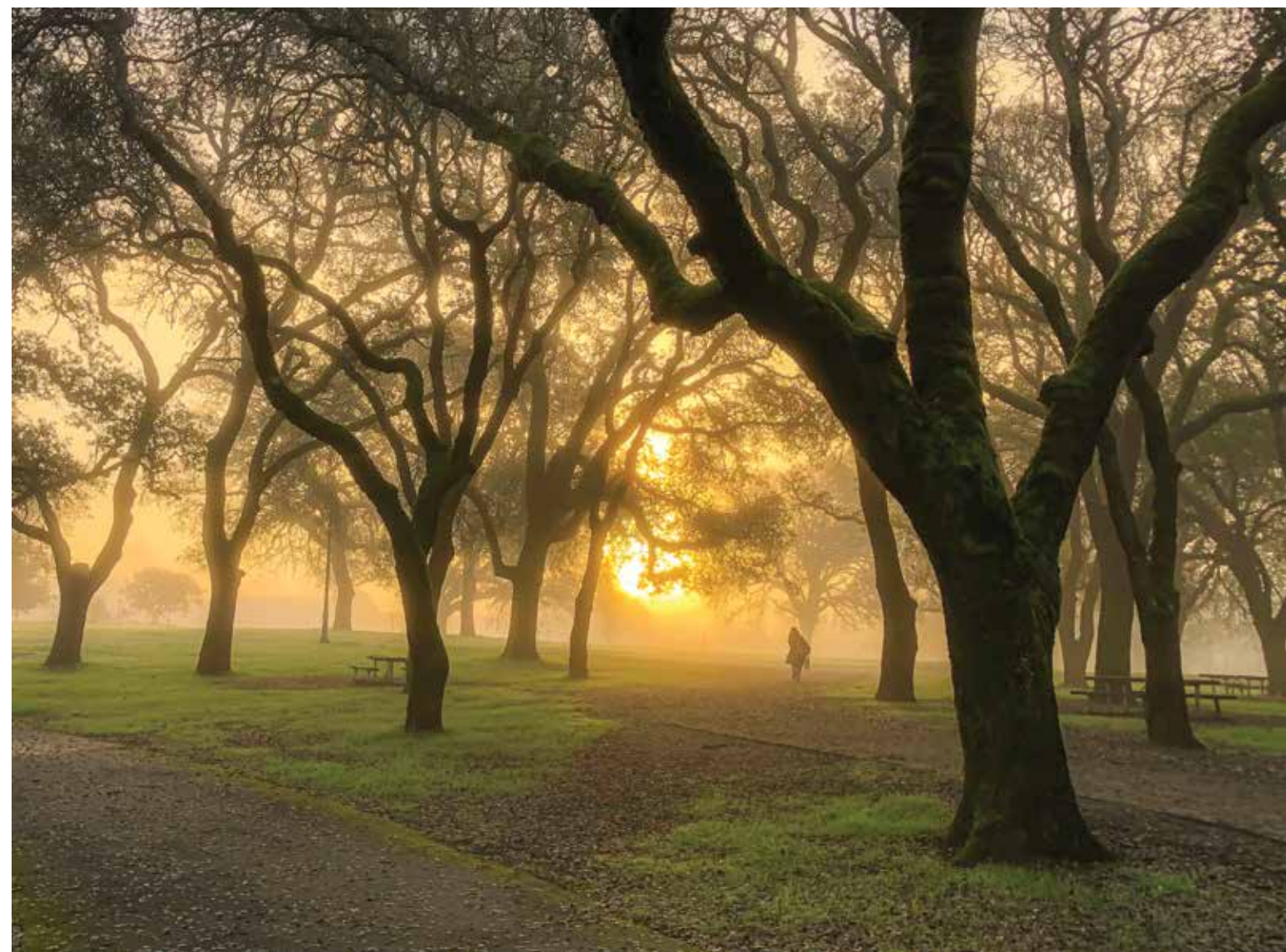
WINNER, FORESTS AND PEOPLE:

“Skiing Under the Stars”

PHOTOGRAPHER: Kinley Bollinger (Wyo.)

PHOTOGRAPHER’S PERSPECTIVE: “I took this photo of my dad when we decided to go out for a night ski under the stars together in Shoshone National Forest. My hands were absolutely freezing when I took this shot, but the moment under the stars made it all worth the negative 15-degree Fahrenheit temperature.”

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER: Bollinger is a nature photographer who loves to play outdoors and capture the marvelous beauty of her home state, Wyoming, and whose work can be viewed at www.wyophotos.com.



WINNER, ASPIRING PHOTOGRAPHERS:

“Misty Falls”

PHOTOGRAPHER: Kaiden Deck (Ohio)

PHOTOGRAPHER’S PERSPECTIVE: “I set out to hike Rainbow Falls in Great Smoky Mountain National Park, but, as I neared the falls, it began to rain. I decided to finish the hike, wanting to see the final view. I got there just as it started to pour and was able to get the shot before my camera got soaked.”

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER: Deck is a high school junior with aspirations to pursue photography as a career and whose work can be viewed on his Instagram: @kaideck_photography.

WINNER, CITYSCAPES SPLENDOR:

“Keiser Park”

PHOTOGRAPHER: Austin Parnow (Calif.)

PHOTOGRAPHER’S PERSPECTIVE: “I was dropping my kids off at the park behind their school one December morning, and I just had to step out and take a picture of the moss-covered blue oaks as the rising sun illuminated the ground fog.”

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER: Parnow is a landscape designer, landscape contractor and landscape photographer in Sonoma County, Calif., whose work can be viewed at www.parnowphotography.com.



“The Wood Duck” by Melissa Rowell

Honorable Mentions



“Alone in the Pasture” by Betty A. Gross



“The Pines of Bryce Canyon” by Claire Thompson

“Misty Dawn at Great Meadow” by Robert Banner



A blank canvas for Tree Equity

Mural series boosts Tree Equity and UN biodiversity initiative

BY MICHELE KURTZ

HER GREEN FINGERNAILS GRIP A LIVE OAK BRANCH, hoisting the emblem of hope 16 stories into the Houston skyline. This bold, beautiful monument to Tree Equity that brings life to the side of a Holiday Inn is first in a series of five unique, high-profile murals across the country. It calls attention to the need for Tree Equity and the role planting and protecting trees play in saving lives, improving health and creating career opportunities in low-income communities.



The completed 16-story mural on the side of the Holiday Inn not only adds green to Houston's skyline, but also calls attention to the need for Tree Equity in cities. The mural is the first ecosystem mural unveiled in the United States to draw attention to the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and its #GenerationRestoration campaign.



Argentinian street artist Martin Ron and an assistant, working several stories off the ground, paint the hand of a woman whose fingers will eventually grip a live oak branch. The 16-story mural is the first in a series of Tree Equity-focused murals funded by American Forests' partner Bulleit Frontier Whiskey.

Funded by American Forests' partner Bulleit Frontier Whiskey, this dramatic art is the first ecosystem mural unveiled in the United States to draw attention to the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and its #GenerationRestoration campaign.

"We create these really massive, big artworks in the heart of the city to stop people in their day-to-day and to make them think, 'How can I take action?'" says Audrey Decker, co-founder of Street Art for Mankind, a nonprofit that curates and produces murals around the world. Street Art for Mankind is collaborating with the U.N. Environment Programme to produce 50 murals intended to amplify

the goal of reversing climate change and biodiversity loss. "We really truly believe that it is 'we the people' that can truly make a difference."

Martin Ron, the Argentinian street artist who designed the Houston concept and named it "Ecosystem Restoration," identified a local woman as a hand model and painted the mural over a week. On the same day as the mural's unveiling, Bulleit volunteers teamed up with Trees for Houston and American Forests to plant 85 trees in an area devastated by Hurricane Harvey. The new trees will help mitigate future floods and provide shade for hiking and biking trails intended to bring area residents more access to greenspace.



Right: Ron paints a black background for his design on the side of the Holiday Inn in downtown Houston. He spent a week creating the mural, "Ecosystem Restoration," which amplifies the importance of planting trees in communities that need them most for clean air and water, cooler temperatures, and overall health.

ABOVE AND RIGHT: SUPERKANT



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— AUDREY DECKER, CO-FOUNDER, STREET ART FOR MANKIND

The mural also illustrates how far we’ve come in our relationship with nature in cities, says Ian Leahy, vice president of urban forestry at American Forests. In his early years in the field, “There was a feeling that cities were a lost cause, that we had to protect nature from people.”

But Tree Equity is built on the opposite notion. “We’re telling that story of bringing nature into your life, even when nature is already there,” Leahy says. “It can be there, but you don’t necessarily notice it.”

Leahy hopes that through stunning and relatable visuals, the murals will resonate with people across a variety of cultures — many of them being the very groups who were left out of the mainstream conservation movement.

The mural initiative is the latest in a series of impactful American Forests efforts supported by Bulleit. The partnership launched in 2020 when Bulleit committed to planting 1 million trees in large landscapes, a goal that they reached three years ahead of schedule. Since then, Bulleit has set a new goal of planting an additional 1.5 million trees. And it has expanded dramatically into funding Tree Equity priorities in cities.

“Bulleit is looking for ways to touch and engage our communities. That’s why supporting Tree Equity makes so much sense for us,” says Allison Fleischer, of Brands and Culture for Bulleit, who leads the partnership with American Forests. “Partnering on a project around Tree Equity and ecosystem restoration just felt like kismet.”

The partners are still finalizing some of the remaining cities, where murals will go up over the coming months.

Next up: New York in the fall.

“New York City is a huge opportunity,” says Fleischer of Bulleit, whose parent company Diageo is headquartered there. “New York is where the U.N. is located. It’s a huge tourist destination. It’s the world’s stage.”

Michele Kurtz writes from Washington, D.C., and serves as American Forests’ senior director of corporate partner communications.

Below: Ron addresses a crowd at the unveiling of the mural he painted in downtown Houston. To his left are Johanna Rogers, global brand director for Bulleit Frontier Whiskey; Audrey Decker, co-founder of Street Art for Mankind; and Jad Daley, president and chief executive officer of American Forests. Several Houston officials also spoke at the mural’s unveiling. Right: Volunteers plant a variety of trees in a spot near White Oak Bayou Greenway. The neighborhood, a combination of residential and industrial areas, was devastated by Hurricane Harvey. The new trees will provide sorely needed shade for hiking and biking trails as well as flood mitigation during extreme weather.

THIS AND FACING PAGE: TRULOVE STUDIOS



Left: Bulleit volunteers and American Forests staff spend the morning planting 85 trees to help mitigate floods and bring shade to the Cottage Grove community in Houston, hit hard by Hurricane Harvey in 2017. The planting, hosted by Trees for Houston on Jan. 12, preceded the unveiling of the partnership’s first Tree Equity mural later that day.

last look

2023 FORESTS IN FOCUS PEOPLE'S CHOICE

PEOPLE'S CHOICE WINNER



1



2



3



4



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Check out what our social media followers had to say about this year's Forests in Focus People's Choice nominees and winner!

1 "Tree vs. Boulder" by Jeffrey P. Gladden
"Gladden has an insane talent for capturing simplistic scenes and turning them into art. The true test of an artist is if he/she can make art out of anything. It's clear from his picture that Gladden doesn't need an exciting scene to produce an amazing picture. He lets natural elements, such as lighting and color, make any scene beautiful and captures it flawlessly." — Jennifer H., Facebook

2 "Marmot Pose at Independence Pass" by Anita Merrigan
"The overall composition. While it is not too difficult to get a marmot to pose for the camera, the background and even the rock the subject is on all balance well together in color and size." — Gary S., Facebook

3 "Upside Down Fern Forest" by Mitch Paine
"What an amazing capture. It looks like the forest is held inside that tiny drop of water! It makes you realize we are all just a small part to something so much bigger!" — @through_birds_eyeview, Instagram

4 "Eagle Photobomb" by Jennifer Kardiak
"The bear and eagle — because what are the odds of catching both in this way in the same shot?" — @CindyAcuff4, Twitter

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