

# Thoreau & the Politics of Extinction

July 12-16, 2023

## BRIEF BIOS & ABSTRACTS

In Alphabetical Order by Presenter Name



**Peter Alden**



**Isabel M. Fernandes Alves** teaches North American Literature at the University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro in Portugal, and her research focuses on ecocriticism and environmental humanities. This presentation explores how Thoreau's words about the natural world in general, and about trees in particular, generate an emotional constructive development for more positive relationships with others—human and non-human. Moreover, I also contend that Thoreau's use of emotional language is intended to stimulate social and political change in his own time, but still today.



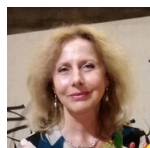
**Stephen Andrews** teaches American literature at Grinnell College. In his 1871 journey to Yosemite, Emerson, when invited to name a sequoia, chose “Samoset” over “Logan.” This paper proposes to expose “Logan’s” indigenous critique at the intersection of Emerson’s personal exhaustion, the legacy of Jeffersonian judicial and legislative extirpations, and the putatively sanative benefits of wilderness.



**Karla Armbruster** is Professor of English and Chair of the Sustainability Studies Program at Webster University in St. Louis. This presentation explores to what extent the ideas, words, and practices of Thoreau, so powerful in regard to coming to terms with human mortality, can help with the process of grieving lost species. I will put Thoreau into conversation with scholars of extinction studies and ecological mourning to see how they can help us move past despair and what Ursula Heise calls “decline narratives” towards new visions of multispecies flourishing.



**Katie Baker** is Associate Professor of Writing at Rosemont College, where she enjoys reading, writing, running, and teaching, though not all at the same time. This presentation explores the way Thoreau's writings have inspired other writers to be empowered through their prose, using the written text as a means of social protest and a call to action through modern and contemporary literature.



**Albena Bakratcheva** is Professor of American Literature at the New Bulgarian University of Sofia and recipient of the Thoreau Society's Walter Harding Distinguished Service Award. This presentation explores the proto-environmental thinking/awareness indicated by Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes*. I suggest that such direction of discourse implies (and itself provides) a certain immediate intellectual/literary context in which Thoreau's own environmental imagination will very shortly thrive and triumph.



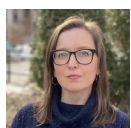
**Peter Balaam** teaches in English and American Studies at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota and is the Secretary/Treasurer of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society. He will chair the Emerson Society panel, which explores how Emerson's later work re-imagines the fate of the nation and its resources, broadly defined, in the wake of the Civil War, reassessing and revising his earlier thinking.



**Brian Bartlett** is a Canadian writer who has published fifteen collections and chapbooks of poetry, a selection of his prose on poetry, and three volumes of nature writing. This presentation explores Thoreau's anxieties, especially in the essay "Walking," over the extinction of primeval wildness. It addresses both his recognition of a diminishment in undomesticated nature and his hopes for recovering wildness.



**Christopher Allan Black** is Assistant Professor of teaching at the University of Memphis. This presentation explores how Thoreau's Essays "Slavery in Massachusetts" (1854) and "A Plea for Captain John Brown" (1859) contributed to Frederick Douglass and Harriet Beecher Stowe's embracing of republican justified violence to abolish the institution of slavery. I contend that Thoreau's endorsement of John Brown's revolutionary violence was a major contributing factor to Douglass and Stowe's support of republican revolution and justified violence in Douglass's novella *The Heroic Slave* (1852) and Stowe's second novel *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856).



**Amy Brady** is Executive Director of the Orion Society.



**Jamie Lynne Burgess** is a former Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House guide and the co-creator of Let Genius Burn, a podcast about the life and legacy of Louisa May Alcott. This presentation explores how politics influenced the Alcott family's dietary habits and interest in diet reforms. I will discuss their food choices as purposeful political acts--like the Alcotts' fights for abolition and suffrage--and the ways food choices connect to environmental preservation.



**Katrina Byrd** is a Jackson, Mississippi writer /playwright who advocates for an amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) cure. This presentation explores how Thoreau views nature as spirit, a view reflected in his daily practice in order to encourage change in his life and change in the world. I suggest his attention to animals, plants, and trees invites readers to consider the natural world as a contributor to processing grief and advocating for human life within the rigid constraints of the politics of dying.



**Phyllis Cole** is a former president of the Margaret Fuller Society, present member of the Thoreau Society Board of Directors, and Professor Emerita of English, Women's Studies, and American Studies at Penn State Brandywine.



**Tracey A. Cummings** is Professor of English at Lock Haven University. This presentation explores how the experience of the NEH Summer Institute on Transcendentalism and Social Reform inspired me to reflect on Thoreau's transition from civil disobedience to his support of John Brown's armed rebellion. I reflect on the nature of this transition and examine how it speaks to the issues of social protest and social justice that we face today, with a particular focus on connecting students of today with Thoreau and 19th-century Concord.



**Tierra Curry** is a senior scientist at the Center for Biological Diversity, where she leads the Saving Life on Earth campaign to end extinction by organizing nationally to celebrate and protect biodiversity.



**Ted David**, retired Professor of Law and Taxation and a proud member of the Board of Directors of the Thoreau Society, continues researching for a new overdue biography of Ellery Channing, "The Irascible Transcendentalist." This presentation will explore Channing the poet as the unsung hero of the Transcendentalists. His true poet-nature, accomplishments, and influence on the greats will be discussed, with an emphasis on the last ten years of his life as the last standing Transcendentalist before dying in 1901.



**Rachael DeWitt** is a PhD candidate in English at University of California, Davis. This presentation approaches domesticity in *Walden* as a vehicle for interdependence rather than independence. When read as a domestic manual in its own right, rather than a tirade against the genre, *Walden* appears filled with scenes of multi-species housekeeping that undermine human reproduction while embracing care and collaboration in and beyond the human world.



**Kathryn C. Dolan** is Associate Professor of American literature at Missouri University of Science and Technology. This presentation explores the interconnected ways that Thoreau and Octavia E. Butler apply lessons from the beyond-human world to find hopeful answers to some of the most pressing issues of the nineteenth and late-twentieth century. I suggest that they show a history of productive literary engagement with the non-and-beyond human world, one that can be studied beyond period and genre.



**Julia X. Du** is an author, translator, and Member of Technical Staff at NetApp Inc. This presentation explores the historical context of the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the theoretical and political foundations for George Frisbie Hoar's solo opposition to it in 1902. His vote derived from his support for civil rights and opposition to racism and imperialism, the same beliefs he shared with his friend Thoreau.



**Cristie Ellis** is Associate Professor of English and Codirector of the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Mississippi.



**Stephen Evans** is a playwright and the author of *A Transcendental Journey* and *Funny Thing Is: A Guide to Understanding Comedy*. This reading explores the complex relationship between Emerson and Thoreau during the formative sojourn at Walden Pond. Set in the summer of 1847, this one-act play imagines what might have been Emerson's final visit to the cabin before his second trip to Europe later that year.



**Mark Fairchild** is a professor in the Program of Color Science and Munsell Color Science Laboratory at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, NY. This presentation explores photographically the progression of tree leaf colors throughout a growing season along with Albert Munsell's influence on the scientific description of colors and the project's inspiration by Thoreau's close and careful observations of nature through the seasons.



**Jill Fuller** (she/her) is Reference Librarian at the Wisconsin Historical Society Library and co-host of Let Genius Burn, a podcast on Louisa May Alcott. This presentation explores how Louisa May Alcott advocates for a new era of health reform and wellness living for young people in her 1875 juvenile work, *Eight Cousins*. I point to the influences of the Alcott family's Transcendentalist and homeopathic philosophies and her own personal health journey, and connect Alcott's views to modern-day discussions on reproductive health and bodily autonomy.



**Randall Fuller** is the Herman Melville Distinguished Professor of American Literature at the University of Kansas. This presentation considers the changes in Emerson's response to Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, from initial enthusiasm to a growing apprehension that evolutionary thought entailed, among other things, the extinction of species. The paper will focus on Emerson's "Progress of American Civilization" (1867), where he performs "Emerson" the idealist even as he notes privately that Darwinian theory spells the end of idealism.



**Peter Galvin** is Founder and Director of Programs at the Center for Biological Diversity. His father, Bob Galvin, was a longtime member, as well as former board member, of the Thoreau Society.



**Rebecca Kneale Gould** is Associate Professor of Environmental Studies and co-chair of the Philosophy, Religion and Environment Focus at Middlebury College, author of *At Home in Nature: Modern Homesteading and Spiritual Practice in America*, and a member of the Thoreau Society's board of directors.



**David Gordon** is an Assistant Teaching Professor at Loyola University Maryland, where he teaches the History of Philosophy and Environmental Philosophy. This presentation explores the implications of Thoreau's 1859 return to the two-acre beanfield near Walden Pond to plant over 500 trees and sow numerous acorns. If the average American uses roughly a thousand trees in their lifetime, then following Thoreau's example and Paul Taylor's Principle of Restitutive Justice, we are required to plant as many trees as we use in order to make up for the damage we have caused to the environment.

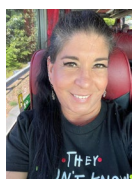




**Jayne Gordon**, a member of the TS Board and chair of the Society's Education Committee, is president of Coastal Senior College, an educational organization which provides "learning in retirement" courses for residents of two counties in midcoast Maine.



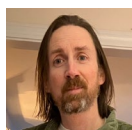
**Robert Gross** is a member of the Thoreau Society Board of Directors, the James L. and Shirley A. Draper Professor of Early American History Emeritus at the University of Connecticut, and author of *The Minutemen and Their World* (1976), which won the Bancroft Prize; *Books and Libraries in Thoreau's Concord* (1988); and *The Transcendentalists and Their World* (2021).



**Diane Whitley Grote** is a professor of English at Austin Community College and is pursuing research about Thoreau and his connections to Native Americans. This presentation explores that while Thoreau may have participated in dietary practices that contributed positively to the environment, his faith in the improvement of humanity was, perhaps, misplaced. I explore how the consumption of animals has dramatically risen and has led to an overwhelming amount of food waste which contributes negatively to the environment.



**Charmion Gustke** is Associate Professor in the English Department and in the Honors Program at Belmont University in Nashville. This presentation explores Thoreau's *Walden* and William Christenberry's Hale County photographs to ponder the material realities of extinction as they are expressed through remembrance and elegy. When viewed in the spatial context of Thoreau's *Walden* experiment, these images edify extinction, not as disappearance, but as a process of transformation that occurs through the accumulation of time.



**Christopher Hager** is Professor of English at Trinity College and the author of *Word by Word: Emancipation and the Act of Writing* (Harvard, 2013) and *I Remain Yours: Common Lives in Civil War Letters* (Harvard, 2018). This presentation explores the impact of the 2022 NEH/Thoreau Society Summer Institute on my teaching of an undergraduate course about *Walden* and my thinking about the interplay of natural history and late antebellum politics—including the state of knowledge about species extinction in the 1850s and Abraham Lincoln's pledge to put slavery "in course of ultimate extinction."



**Lauren Hehmeyer** is an independent scholar and editor of the book *The Forgotten Alcott: Essays on the Artistic Legacy and Literary Life of May Alcott Nieriker*. This presentation explores how both Louisa May Alcott and May Alcott Nieriker sought an experience with the sublime by ascending mountain peaks. For each woman, the experience was enlightening, but for very different reasons.



**Richard Higgins** is a writer, book editor, author of *Thoreau and the Language of Trees*, and member of the Thoreau Society board of directors.



**Gerard Holmes** is a Lecturer at the University of Maryland, College Park and Coordinator of the Grass Foundation, which supports neuroscience education. This presentation explores the consequences of Margaret Fuller's reading of George Sand's

novel *Consuelo* and its sequel *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*. Consuelo is a highly-skilled improvising singer who escapes the judgments of a series of opinionated, controlling men by following her impulses, becoming more politically radical and personally autonomous as she travels across eighteenth-century Europe, providing a model for Fuller's increasingly extemporaneous life and work a century later.



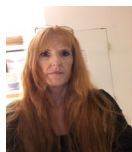
**William Homestead** is Associate Professor at New England College and author of *An Ecology of Communication: Response and Responsibility in an Age of Ecocrisis*, which includes a chapter on Thoreau: “The Call to Responsibility: Thoreau and the Voice(s) of Nature.” This presentation explores Thoreau’s enactment of biophilia, which E. O. Wilson’s defines as our innate affinity with all forms of life. I argue that Thoreau’s biophilia, expressed as listening and learning beyond the human, informed his call for nature preserves, which can be linked to Wilson’s “Half-Earth Project.”



**Lewis Hyde**, for many years the Thomas Professor of Creative Writing at Kenyon College, is now retired and living in Cambridge. His current writing project—a natural history essay arising from a life-long interest in butterflies—has led him into reflections on climate change and geological time. His presentation at the gathering will focus on the ways in which Thoreau imagined time and ask whether or not his temporalities offer useful points of departure for dealing with the present crisis.



**Don Jewler** spent nearly twenty years as Director of Communications at the Association of Community Cancer Centers in Rockville, Maryland, and as medical writer and managing editor for a number of oncology-related publications. This presentation explores how Thoreau teaches us to accept loss as usable—as a time to reinvent ourselves. In the face of life tragedy or chronic illness, we would all do well to find “Sproutland” within us and grow anew, “luxuriantly” as a meadow bursting with wildflowers after a blaze.



**Rebecca A. Johns** is Associate Professor of Geography at the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg. On Thursday’s panel, Rebecca’s presentation will explore the ways Thoreau and Muir attempt to reconcile conflicting attitudes toward animal others throughout their writings. Using Marc Beckoff and Jane Goodall’s 12 Millennial Mantras for ethical engagement with animals, I track how each writer reflected on his impact on non-human others, which sometimes involved death, captivity and sacrifice in the name of science. On Friday’s NEH Summer Institute Roundtable Session, Rebecca’s presentation will demonstrate how Thoreau’s transcendentalism, his unique blend of scientific observation, introspection, and dedication to social reform, can be leveraged through a pedagogical framework to motivate students as agents of change in the fight against mass extinction.



**Linck Johnson** is Charles A. Dana Professor of English at Colgate University, contributor to the Princeton University Press edition of *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau*, and author of *Thoreau’s Complex Weave: The Writing of A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*.



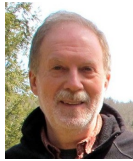
**Rochelle L. Johnson** is President of the Thoreau Society and Chair of Environmental Studies at the College of Idaho. She writes about Susan Fenimore Cooper, Henry David Thoreau, and early American natural history, and is completing a book about Susan Fenimore Cooper, environmental grief, and disability.



**Marc Jolley** is the director of Mercer University Press (since 1995) and is Senior Lecturer at Mercer University (since 1997). This presentation explores Thoreau's journal entry of March 23, 1856, and the idea of "extinction" as the imminent existential question facing humans. Thoreau's response to this crisis may be instructive to us in our looking for an answer to the question, "how does one live a life in the face of extinction?"



**Christina Katopodis**, PhD, is Associate Director of Transformative Learning in the Humanities, a three-year initiative at CUNY supported by the Mellon Foundation, and co-author with Cathy N. Davidson of *The New College Classroom* (Harvard UP, 2022). This presentation explores connections between Fuller's response to the Mexican-American War and the Italian Revolution. Katopodis frames Fuller's more political writings within the context of her radical optimism, revisiting and reinvigorating arguments about Fuller as a democratic theorist.



**Michael Kellett** has been executive director of RESTORE: The North Woods, since co-founding the organization in 1992, and he developed the original proposal for a 3.2-million-acre Maine Woods National Park and has worked to safeguard the legacy of Thoreau, including Walden Woods, the Thoreau birthplace, Estabrook Woods, Mount Wachusett, and the White Mountains. This presentation will recount highlights and lowlights of efforts over the past thirty years to protect Atlantic salmon, Canada lynx, gray wolves, and other imperiled species in the northeastern United States. Pushback by opponents who would let politics trump science have forced the issue within the political hierarchy to the level of the presidential cabinet and U.S. Senate.

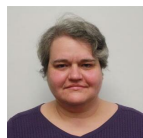
**Mateusz Kucab** [no abstract or bio received]



**John J. Kucich** is a professor of English at Bridgewater State University, the editor of *Rediscovering the Maine Woods: Thoreau's Legacy in an Unsettled Land* (2018), and the author of several essays on Thoreau and Native Americans. This presentation explores how Thoreau saw both Native America and natural phenomena through the lens of succession. His growing insight into Darwinian forces shaped his view of forests and seeds as well as Native people, yet while this perspective made it difficult for Thoreau to move beyond savagism, it also radically unsettled conventional understandings of both race and nature, allowing him to imagine an alternative indigenous future for the land he called home.



**J. Drew Lanham** describes himself as “a product of a family farm, abundant wildness, and the bittersweet legacy of land interdependence by chain and choice.” He is a prolific writer and speaker, 2022 recipient of the MacArthur “Genius” Award, and Alumni Distinguished Professor, Provost’s Professor, and Master Teacher of Wildlife Ecology at Clemson University, as well as author of *The Home Place - Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*. His pre-conference workshop explores race, writing, and extinction, and his Saturday conversation with Sumanth Prabhaker explores the future of nature writing.



**Heidi A. Lawrence** researches the intersections of children's literature with ecopsychology and ecotherapy while teaching at Brigham Young University. This presentation explores how Alcott's work supports the importance of nature connectedness in healing physical and psychological trauma. In this way, it demonstrates the ongoing relevance of children's literature to ecotherapy.

**Jacob McCarthy** [no abstract or bio received]

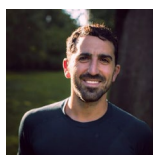


**Gary Macdonald** is an Associate Professor of English at Virginia State University. This presentation considers Thoreau's response to the killing of a cow moose (and calf) in "Chesuncook." I suggest that his complex responses to the death of cow and calf may provide a partial index of his responses to species-level extinctions.



**Andri Snær Magnason** is an Icelandic writer and documentary film director. He writes novels, children’s books, essays, poetry, and nonfiction books. His book *On Time and Water* was an Icelandic national bestseller, translated into many languages. He has been active in the fight against the destruction of the Icelandic Highlands. His book *Dreamland: A Self Help Manual for a Frightened Nation* takes on these issues, and his text for the memorial of Ok glacier became widely read around the world.

He ran for President of Iceland in 2016 with environmental issues on his agenda. He spent some of his early years in New England and now lives in Reykavik.



**Marc Martorana** is the founder of Walk and Talk Learning, an initiative to draw on walking philosophical conversations to deliver meaningful learning experiences. This presentation will offer a series of reflections on my experiences teaching Thoreau. I will also explore Thoreau's essay “Walking” and consider the ways that Thoreau's work can inform our modern moment in education.



**Karen J. McLean** is from Saint John, New Brunswick, on the Atlantic Coast of Canada. Her first pilgrimage to Concord, in 2015, was inspired by rereading *Walden* after a serious brain injury. A poet and award-winning short fiction writer, Karen is currently writing a memoir, *Crossing the Street*, with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.



**Marlowe Miller** is Professor of Literature and Writing at UMass Lowell, where she also leads faculty in the study of contemplative pedagogy as the inaugural Faculty in Residence at the Center for Learning and Teaching. This presentation examines Thoreau’s contemplative form of naturalism (rooted in simplicity, careful observation of the natural world, walking, and journaling) as a tool for helping students work with



the difficult emotions that arise as they witness and study climate change. I demonstrate how I use Thoreau's model to teach strategies that cultivate present awareness, disciplined attention, and contemplative writing—all of which help students cope with climate emotions and act for positive change and environmental justice.



**Lydia Millet** is Chief Editor at the Center for Biological Diversity. She also has published more than a dozen novels and story collections, including her novel *A Children's Bible*, which was a *New York Times* "Best 10 Books of 2020" selection and shortlisted for the National Book Award.



**Alex Moskowitz** is a Visiting Lecturer in the Department of English at Mount Holyoke College, where he teaches American and African American literature to 1900. This presentation explores what happens when we think through American literary history as a site of struggle over the establishment of dominant cultural and political narratives. In this talk, I suggest that we begin to rethink the relationship of Transcendental social reform to nineteenth-century African American reform movements, or, what I call "Transcendentalism's Black political unconscious."



**Barbara Mossberg** is President Emerita of Goddard College, Professor of Practice at the Clark Honors College of University of Oregon, Fulbright Specialist, Poet in Residence Emerita (Pacific Grove, CA), and founder and past president of the Emily Dickinson International Society. This paper explores Thoreau's transformational message for our own climate change ethos: Thoreau's *Walden*, composed in his "city" years, is not an elegy. His observation of extreme loss is inextricably connected to the idea of resurrection as a constant in universal laws.



**Christopher H. Nicholson** is a graduate student in Rice University's English Department. This presentation explores Thoreau's posthumously published *Wild Fruits* with an eye towards gleaning modes of resistance to the deterioration and homogenization of cultural and biological diversity. Thoreau's meticulous work as a natural historian in *Wild Fruits* stands against the extinctions of both specific plant species and human ways of relating to those plants through identification, cultivation, consumption, education, and protection.

**Uliana Nikolaeva** [no abstract or bio received]



**Dennis Noson** is a board member of the Thoreau Society, a west coast saltwater saunterer, drawn eastward, crucially, three times in his life, each time into a life changing rendezvous with destiny. This presentation explores the question of what Thoreau must have heard from his second-floor jail cell, through its barred opening--and what that might have meant to him--during his overnight lock-up. In an early scene of Act One, the playwrights of *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* introduce a wild, mournful and solitary cry of the Loon, an intruder into his brooding thoughts, lifting Thoreau (and us, the audience) out of self-imposed confinement by its dramatic, expansive sound:

an invocation to hear the idea that the world's direction is open to being nudged onto a new course by our personal choices and shared actions.

**Izumi Ogura** is Professor of English in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Law, at Daito Bunka University in Tokyo, Japan. This presentation explores how Emerson's lectures "American Civilization" (1862) and "Fortune of the Republic" (1863) were substantially modified and lost the original form. By tracing the restoration process in *Collected Works* and *Later Lectures*, I would like to show how radical Emerson's position against slavery was in the midst of the Civil War.



**Henrik Otterberg** wrote his doctoral dissertation on Thoreau's aesthetics, and serves on the Thoreau Society Board of Directors and as the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* bibliographer. This presentation explores Thoreau's abiding and variegated influence upon the American expatriate artist Walter Carl Glück (better known as Viktor IV), who lived on the Amstel canal in the Dutch capitol for over twenty years, from the early 1960s to mid-1980s, working in various media. The presentation combines artworks, notes, logbooks, photographs, and interviews toward a sketch of Thoreauvian artistic reception in the 20th century.



**Sandra Harbert Petrulionis** is a longtime member of the Thoreau Society, the author of *To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau's Concord*, and a professor at Penn State Altoona. In the summer of 2023, she directed the Society's NEH-supported Summer Institute, "Transcendentalism and Social Reform: Activism and Community Engagement in the Age of Thoreau."



**Beverly Pittman** is an Afrofuturistic Health and Wellness advocate who specializes in African American women's health. This presentation explores how the late Audre Lorde's essay, "The Master's Tools Will Not Dismantle the Master's House," is a great critique of racism, sexism, and other social ills, but is not an adequate antidote to the problems. I suggest that the tools Thoreau used to build his literal and figurative houses offer an opportunity to reposition humanity in its proper place in the universe and, thereby, impact our self-extinction.



**Nikita Pokrovsky** [no abstract or bio received]



**Tina Powell** is an Assistant Professor of English at Concord University. This presentation explores how to use Thoreau's rhetoric of dissent as a foundation for discussing social justice and protest in contemporary society. I suggest that Thoreau's work can be used to invite readers to ask complex questions about American society in a way that counters current discourses about "woke" agendas.



**Sumanth Prabhaker** is Editor in Chief of *Orion* Magazine, and Founder of Madras Press. This conversation with J. Drew Lanham explores the future of nature writing.



**Donna Marie Przybojewski** *Donna Marie Przybojewski* is a junior high school Language Arts teacher who utilizes Thoreau's works as springboards for her students' writing, and she is the author/illustrator of eight children's books on Thoreau. This presentation explores the loss of childhood innocence in today's world as compared to Thoreau's childhood. I suggest that there are three major areas that have contributed to this loss: lack of a strong family unit, violence, and technology.



**Audrey Raden** is an adjunct professor whenever necessary, a poet, a writer of memoir, a fledgling novelist, a raconteur, a cat lover, and a Transcendentalist to boot. This presentation poses the question, if the Thoreauvian Imagination lives in the present moment, how do creatures who are disappearing or have disappeared carry our thoughts? To that question I will pose another—what is the nature of the present moment, and if we recreate the past in the present, does it not then become the present?



**Brent Ranalli** is an independent scholar with the Ronin Institute and the editor of the *Thoreau Society Bulletin*. This presentation explores myths that have grown up around the courtship of Ellen Sewall by John and Henry Thoreau. A return to contemporary primary sources helps us course-correct on some points.



**Jym St. Pierre** has been at the forefront of efforts to protect Thoreau's Maine Woods, serving since 1995 as Maine director of RESTORE: The North Woods. This presentation will recount highlights and lowlights of efforts over the past thirty years to protect Atlantic salmon, Canada lynx, gray wolves, and other imperiled species in the northeastern United States. Pushback by opponents who would let politics trump science have forced the issue within the political hierarchy to the level of the presidential cabinet and U.S. Senate.



**Robert Sattelmeyer** is Emeritus Regents' Professor at Georgia State University, contributor to the Princeton University Press edition of *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau*, and author of *Thoreau's Reading: A Study in Intellectual History*.



**Michael Schleifer** is a past president and current treasurer of the Thoreau Society. He is a practicing CPA/tax consultant and a retired lecturer/undergraduate advisor in Accounting and Economics at Hunter College (CUNY, 1986 to 2018).



**Jim Sherblom** is a transcendentalist, retired Unitarian Universalist minister, activist, author, and financier. Jim and his wife Loretta have been members of First Parish for over thirty-five years and raised their children here. Jim's Sunday sermon at First Parish will explore the congregation's deep roots and strong branches. Thousands of individuals have helped create First Parish over hundreds of years, interacting with the indigenous people, puritans, militia, farmers, enslavers and the enslaved, revolutionaries, transcendentalists, industrialists, financiers, immigrants, and many others.



**Ryan Smedberg**, LSW, is a school social worker by title, counselor by practice, and Thoreauvian in spirit-, residing in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. This presentation explores the practice of dwelling within Thoreau's project at Walden Pond. Throughout, I hope to provoke the ways in which Thoreau's dwelling is instructive for the existential challenges and limitations--death and meaning among them--we face in the contemporary moment.



**Corinne H. Smith** is an independent scholar and public speaker who first encountered Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," and *Walden* as a high school student in the suburbs of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in the 1970s. She is the author of *Westward I Go Free: Tracing Thoreau's Last Journey*, and *Thoreau for Kids: His Life and Ideas, With 21 Activities*. Her popular video series, "Studying Thoreau," can be found on YouTube.

She manages The Thoreau Society at the Shop at Walden Pond. This pre-conference workshop revisits the Thoreauvian basics. Corinne is also leading a walk on Saturday morning.



**Richard Smith** has lectured on and written about antebellum United States history and 19th-century American literature since 1995. He has worked in Concord as a public historian and Living History Interpreter since 1999 and has portrayed Henry Thoreau at Walden Pond and around the country. Richard has written six books for Applewood Books and is the past Scholar in Residence at Longfellow's Wayside Inn in

Sudbury. This pre-conference workshop revisits the Thoreauvian basics. Richard is also co-leading a walk on Sunday morning.



**Suzanne Smith** is a Lecturer on Engineering Sciences at the Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. This presentation explores Emerson's treatment of the trope that peace and plenty beget weakness and, more broadly, his construction of elite self-estrangement in his address, "Progress of Culture." I consider how, and why, in the wake of war, the relatively fortunate and idle "great men" of Phi Beta Kappa and those like them are to obtain the presumed benefits of "rude opposition" and adverse fortune.



**Matthew Spencer** is a lecturer of English at Auburn University. This presentation explores how Thoreau's nature writing presages Anthropocene discourse while simultaneously refusing extinction as a foregone conclusion through transcendental re-enchantment of the natural world. I suggest that this tendency is akin to more recent ideas, such as Amitav Ghosh's formulation of the environmental uncanny, and that

Thoreau is an early, vital touchstone for how to present, comprehend, and cope with global climate change.



**Megan Spring** is a PhD student at Florida Atlantic University. This presentation explores how Margaret Fuller in her *Summer on the Lakes* sets her narrative structure against the traditional structure of a travelogue, which mirrors the traditional masculine narrative structure. I suggest, through a close reading of the text, that Fuller's narrative structure is evocative of the female orgasm, elevating the importance of female pleasure in all forms and asserting a place for herself and women within the national literature.





**Catherine Staples** teaches at Villanova University and is the author of two poetry collections, *The Rattling Window* and *Never a Note Forfeit*. This presentation of original poems explores loss and survival—from Thoreau’s “moose with the lesser forest on his head” and passenger pigeons to the diminished chorus of wood thrush, whippoorwills, even swallows. How might words honor and recover Concord lives, both the well recorded and those whose traces of existence are more elusive? What is the role of imagination and writing in the face of extinction and loss?



**Timothy Sweet** is Eberly Family Distinguished Professor of American Literature at West Virginia University, where he teaches courses in American literature and environmental humanities. His publications include *Traces of War: Poetry, Photography, and the Crisis of the Union* (1990), *American Georgics: Economy and Environment in Early American Literature* (2002), and *Extinction and the Human: Four American Encounters* (2021). In addition to leading a pre-conference workshop on extinction and early American literature, Tim will deliver a Saturday presentation that takes its cue from Thoreau’s brief speculations regarding climate-driven human extinction to explore scientific and literary debates over the extinction of our Neanderthal kindred. These debates open large questions concerning human agency, climate, and narrative genre.



**Robert (Thor) Thorson**, a Professor of Earth Sciences at the University of Connecticut, is a life member of the Thoreau Society, serves on its board, and is the author of three related books, *Walden's Shore* (2014), *The Boatman* (2017), and *The Guide to Walden Pond* (2018). This presentation explores Thoreau’s lament for the loss of the “nobler” Holocene animals from his sojourning country and suggests that he chose the word “extermination” rather than extinction for his March 23, 1856, journal entry because he understood the latter to be geological, rather than ecological. Indeed, none on his “nobler” list are extinct today, and five of six have since returned.



**Amity Wilczek** is an evolutionary ecologist whose role as an educator and researcher has been shaped by attention to place, history, and student experience. Her teaching career started at Harvard and Brown before transitioning to Deep Springs College, where she served as Herbert Reich Chair of Natural Sciences, Academic Dean, and Vice President. Her work on plant responses to changing environments has appeared in *Science*, *PNAS*, *Ecology*, *American Naturalist*, and *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. Amity currently lives in Concord, Massachusetts, and serves as trail steward of the Emerson-Thoreau Amble for the town.



**Lydia Willsky-Ciollo** is Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Director of American Studies at Fairfield University, where she specializes in New England Religious thought, new religious movements, and the intersections of gender and liberal Christianity. This presentation explores Thoreau's own challenge to, and adoption of, the Unitarian doctrine of "self-culture," which was a “theology of work.” Thoreau is constantly “at work” in the cultivation of an understanding of and connection to nature, even if that very work, as leisure, as quiet and still, redefines and seeks to reform what labor should be.



**Geoff Wisner** is the editor of *Thoreau's Wildflowers* and *Thoreau's Animals* and a board member of the Thoreau Society. This presentation explores Thoreau's relationship with the passenger pigeon, his observations on its declining numbers, the methods used to bait and trap the pigeons in Concord, and the final fate of the bird in Massachusetts. It is accompanied by images of the passenger pigeon from John James Audubon, Louis Agassiz Fuertes, and others.