

The Forest History Society Awards program enables the Society to recognize research and writing in forest and conservation history and to stimulate further research into our understanding of the relationships of people and forests. The following is a list of awards for 2018–2019.

2019 THEODORE C. BLEGEN AWARD

The Theodore C. Blegen Award recognizes the best scholarship in forest and conservation history published in a journal other than *Environmental History*. **Sarah Mittlefehldt** won for “Wood Waste and Race: The Industrialization of Biomass Energy Technologies and Environmental Justice,” published in the October 2018 issue of *Technology and Culture*. She is an assistant professor at Northern Michigan University in the Department of Earth, Environmental and Geographical Sciences.

In the 1980s, engineers developed new ways to use one of humanity’s oldest fuel sources—wood—to create electrical power. This article uses envirotechnical analysis to examine the development of a wood-burning power plant in Flint, Michigan, and argues that when public officials began working with major energy corporations to build industrial biomass facilities in the 1980s and 1990s, new energy technologies designed to run on renewable fuels became part of an entrenched fossil fuel-based power structure that maintained deep historical inequalities. Like other examples of environmental injustice, the burdens of industrial-scale biomass power systems tended to fall on poor, nonwhite communities. By exploring the creation of the Genesee Power Station as part of an envirotechnical regime in Flint, Mittlefehldt’s article develops conceptual bridges between the history of technology, environmental history, and environmental justice, and demonstrates the use of history to inform contemporary debates about sustainability.

2019 CHARLES A. WEYERHAEUSER BOOK AWARD

The Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Book Award rewards superior scholarship in forest and conservation history. The 2019 award was given to **Michitake Aso** for *Rubber and the Making of Vietnam: An Ecological History, 1897–1975* (University of North Carolina Press, 2018). He is an associate professor of the Global Environment, at the University of Albany, SUNY.

During a turbulent Vietnamese past, rubber transcended capitalism and socialism, colonization and decolonization, becoming a key commodity around which life and history have revolved. Aso narrates how rubber plantations came to dominate the material and symbolic landscape of Vietnam and its neighbors, structuring the region’s environment of conflict and violence. Tracing the stories of agronomists, medical doctors, laborers, and leaders of independence movements, Aso demonstrates how postcolonial socialist visions of agriculture and medicine were informed by their colonial and capitalist predecessors in important ways. As rubber cultivation funded infrastructural improvements and the creation of a skilled labor force, private and state-run plantations became landscapes of oppression, resistance, and modernity.

2019 FREDERICK K. WEYERHAEUSER FOREST HISTORY FELLOWSHIP

This fellowship provides a stipend to Duke University graduate students pursuing research in the fields of forest, conservation, or environmental history. There was no winner for 2019.

2019 LEOPOLD-HIDY AWARD

The Leopold-Hidy Award, named for forester and ecologist Aldo Leopold and business historian Ralph Hidy, annually recognizes superior scholarship in the quarterly journal *Environmental History*, which the Forest History Society and the American Society for Environmental History copublish. **Andrew Baker** won for his article “Risk, Doubt, and the Biological Control of Southern Waters,” published in the April 2019 issue. He is an assistant professor of history at Texas A&M University–Commerce.

Baker’s article traces early efforts to combat the invasive aquatic plant hydrilla in the southeastern United States. In a region identified with resilient and fast-growing invasive species like kudzu, hydrilla fit right in. Resistant to pollution, adaptable to various water environments, and nearly impossible to eradicate, hydrilla outcompeted its native counterparts, spreading across the South within two decades of its introduction to a canal in Florida in the 1950s. By the 1970s, the threat the plant posed to the booming lakefront development industry in the South alarmed politicians, who grew frustrated by the fact that scientific studies produced as much uncertainty as consensus. The resulting efforts to control hydrilla, which culminated in the introduction of another exotic species—white amur fish—triggered a separate set of environmental consequences and, tellingly, as Baker shows, owed more to politicians than to scientists or cautious regulators.

2019 JOHN M. COLLIER AWARD FOR FOREST HISTORY JOURNALISM

The Collier Award is given to a journalist whose work incorporates forest or conservation history in an article or series of articles published in North America that relate to environmental issues.

Adrian Higgins, a gardening columnist for the *Washington Post*, has specialized in writing about gardening, landscape architecture, and related environmental areas. His winning article, “Scientists thought they had created the perfect tree. But it became a nightmare,” was published in the September 17, 2018, issue of *The Washington Post Magazine*. It traces the history of the Bradford pear tree, from the time its progenitor was introduced to the United States from China around 1918 to the present.

The Bradford variety of the Callery pear was developed in the 1950s, and quickly was cloned by the millions to become the ubiquitous street tree of America’s postwar suburban expansion. It was upright and symmetric in silhouette. It exploded with white flowers in early spring. Its glossy green leaves shimmered coolly in the summer heat, and in the fall, its foliage turned crimson, maroon and orange—a perfect New England study in autumnal color almost everywhere it grew. And it grew everywhere planted, from California to Massachusetts, no matter the soil conditions, and seemed resistant to diseases. However, its many positive attributes are now perceived as negatives. It has become an invasive that is displacing native flora and reducing biodiversity. The Bradford’s poor branch structure and propensity to break provides its own headaches for property owners. Its ubiquity has made it prone to a blight that can

quickly move through communities and kill them by the score.

2019 WALTER S. ROSENBERRY FELLOWSHIP IN FOREST AND CONSERVATION HISTORY

For the first time in its five-year history, this fellowship, given to support the doctoral research of a student attending a university in North America and whose research contributes to forest and conservation history, is being awarded to two candidates: **Aaron Thomas** and **William Wright**.

Aaron Thomas, a PhD candidate at Mississippi State University–Starkville, was selected for his work, “Controlling Christmas: An Environmental History of Natural and Artificial Trees.” This project uses real and fake Christmas trees to understand their impact on debates about conservation and forestry management from the late nineteenth century to today. Beginning with charting the evolution of the natural Christmas tree industry, the study pays careful attention to the role conservationists, foresters, and extension agents played in shifting evergreen extraction from the country’s forests to tree farms. The second half of the project deals with artificial Christmas trees and highlights that trade’s origins in concerns about deforestation. This section also investigates conceptions of “natural” by contrasting the intensive management on farms with the ostensible unnatural production of metal, plastic, and other artificial competitors. Additionally, changes in artificial tree patent blueprints are traced illustrating the shifting visions of the ideal conifer.

The second recipient is William Wright, a PhD candidate at Montana State University. His project is “Nature Unbound: What Gray Wolves, Giant

Sequoias, and Monarch Butterflies Tell Us about Large Landscape Conservation.” Gray wolves across the Yellowstone to Yukon region, giant sequoias around Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks, and monarch butterflies along milkweed corridors from the Reserva Biosfera de la Mariposa Monarca are the iconic species studied to investigate how human communities in North America were forced to rethink conservation spaces over the long twentieth century (1880s to present). Wright examines how a patchwork of protected areas came to be viewed as part of a much larger landscape mosaic and are becoming increasingly important as lifeforms move in order to adapt to climate change.

ALFRED T. BELL JR. TRAVEL GRANT RECIPIENTS

Jennifer Dunn is a postdoctoral researcher at Michigan Technological University. Her research focuses on the history and management policies of the national forests in Montana and the U.S. Forest Service in the 1970s and 80s. Dunn examined the U.S. Forest Service History Reference Collection and the oral history collection.

Emily Knox is a visiting assistant professor of Landscape Architecture at Auburn University. She is investigating the historic role of livestock grazing on national forest lands. She used the U.S. Forest Service History Reference Collection.