

## Call for proposals: Forests & Care

People frequently feel deep and meaningful connections with trees and forest ecosystems, which the general public and forestry professionals both articulate as 'care'. However, the ways people care for and about forests and the effects of their care are highly diverse, sometimes even conflicting. Additionally, dominant paradigms in forest policy and management largely embrace economic rationality and reductionist approaches that often minimize or ignore the importance of care. These approaches are increasingly challenged from sociological, anthropological, political, and other critical social sciences and humanities research perspectives.



Despite care being a central element of people's relationships with forests, particularly for many Indigenous environmental engagements, 'care' is only recently in scientific literature, beginning to be identified as an important element in motivating human action regarding nature (Hofmeister & Mölders, 2013; Jax et al., 2018; Barca, 2020). Over the past decades, the academic concept of care circulated from its origins in feminist theory into different disciplinary fields and is now beginning to make its way into forest-related studies and practices. As a concept, 'care' (Tronto 1993, 2013) encompasses diverse understandings and practices of care taking and was in this context originally connected to (domestic) care work in relation to ethics, capitalism, gender roles, and gendered power structures. Care has since developed into an "important means of understanding how people relate to the world, and the relationship between people and trees is no exception" (O'Flynn et al. 2021: 228).

We invite diverse forms of scientific engagement with caring and (un)caring practices in relation to trees, forest ecosystems and forestry, and their incorporation into culture, as well as barriers and embeddedness of care in political and institutional structures. We are seeking contributions that will evaluate human relationships with forests or with each other that are developed through shared experiences of forests, which are not well represented when forests are framed only as means to satisfy human ends or as entities of importance separate from and independent of people. To that end, we are open to contributions drawing on a broad range of care frameworks from feminist theory to indigenous or traditional approaches to environmental philosophical concepts like Arne Naess' 'deep ecology', Aldo Leopold's 'land ethic,' environmental stewardship, Stefania Barca's 'earthcare', and others. In this Special Feature we invite contributions to explore and present examples of care that further our understanding of human-forest relationships, more-than-human relations, and societal relations with nature in the context of forests.

Central questions for this Special Feature include:

1. What does it mean to 'take care' of a forest in times of global change and multiple crises?
2. How do people develop and maintain a caring relationship to 'their' forest?
3. How is decision-making (in forest management and policy) shaped by relational, social and emotional dimensions?
4. How do different understandings and practices of care shape conflicts in forest uses?
5. Do the bioeconomy, circular economy, or biodiversity policies transform how forests are taken care of?
6. How are relations of care in tension with (or working with) capitalist frameworks and, are care relations within capitalism a utopian idea?
7. Are people taking care of forests or might forests in fact be taking care of humans?
8. How does/can care contribute to social-ecological system resilience or transformation?

Review and synthesis, perspectives, and research papers with both conceptual and empirical basis are welcome. We encourage contributions from a wide range of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, political economy, Indigenous studies, gender studies, feminist political ecology, ecological economics, forest management, forest science, and beyond. We encourage interdisciplinary approaches and submissions that integrate care perspectives with natural sciences.

In particular, we are interested in submissions that are focused on care in applied ecological settings. For example, representations of care in forest management, forest restoration, forest farming, traditional forest practices, subsistence relationships with forests, motivations for biodiversity conservation efforts in forests, and forest policy. Care can be an important dimension in these spaces where people and forests are intimately engaging with one another, but care is rarely recognized in research, management, and policy. This is a blind spot that we hope to address through this Special Feature.

Contributions should be in scope with the Special Feature as outlined here as well as within the scope of the journal.

Please submit article proposals, including the lead author name and institution, the names and institutions of co-authors, an abstract of the proposed paper (350 word max), the type of article (perspectives, research article, review and synthesis), and the article title, [via this form](#) by the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2025.

Proposals will be assessed by the editors for quality and fit within the scope of the Special Feature. Authors of selected proposals will receive an invitation to submit a manuscript by the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2025. The target deadline for article submission will be the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2025 but articles will be reviewed as they are received. Full articles that are accepted after peer review will be published online as they are accepted but will not receive an issue number until all articles in the Special Feature are published.

**Journal:** People and Nature

**Editors:**

Anna Saave, University of Freiburg

Ronja Mikoleit, Forest Research Institute Baden-Württemberg  
Austin Himes, Washington State University  
Jodie Asselin, University of Lethbridge  
Violeta Gutierrez Zamora, Tampere University  
Jana Rebecca Holz, Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena  
Agata Konczal, Wageningen University

#### **Timeline:**

- Submission of the article proposals – 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2025
- Decision on the of the selected proposal – 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2025
- Submission of the full articles – 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2025 (possibility for extensions)

#### **Literature Cited:**

Barca, S. (2020). *Forces of Reproduction: Notes for a Counter-Hegemonic Anthropocene*. Cambridge University Press.

Hofmeister, S., & Mölders, T. (2013). Caring for natures? Naturschutz aus der Perspektive des Vorsorgenden Wirtschaftens. *Netzwerk Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften (Hg.): Wege Vorsorgenden Wirtschaftens*. Marburg: Metropolis, 85-114.

Jax, K., Barton, D. N., Chan, K. M. A., de Groot, R., Doyle, U., Eser, U., ... & Wichmann, S. (2018). Caring for nature matters: A relational approach for understanding nature's contributions to human well-being. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 35, 22–29.

O'Flynn, T., Geoghegan, H., Dyke, A., & De Bruin, A. (2021). Attending to nature: Understanding care and caring relations in forest management in the UK. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 86, 226–235.

Tronto, J. C. (1993). *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. Routledge.

Tronto, J. C. (2013). *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice*. New York University Press.