

Marlborough Public Library Adult Book Club

May 13 or 15, 2025

Finding the Mother Tree by Suzanne Simard

Interview with the author abridged from:

<https://www.npr.org/2021/05/01/992670191/suzanne-simard-explores-the-the-forest-society-of-trees-in-bo>
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SIMON: And they communicate using some of the same chemical properties we do.

SIMARD: Yes. Well, when I started looking at these linkages between trees, I focused on the resources that we know that trees compete for, which are light, water and nutrients. But then as my research became more sophisticated and more in-depth, I realized - or I discovered - that there's a lot more information going through between these trees than just resources. There's also information about their health, their stress, whether they've been infected by something and even whether or not they're related to each other.

SIMON: Oh, mercy. I mean, you're talking about investing certain forms of sentient behavior in trees.

SIMARD: Yeah. I mean, I referred to it as an intelligence. And the way - the reason I use that word is because when we map this network from a scientific point, you know, very scientific using DNA analysis in how these fungal threads link different trees together, what emerged out of that map was a complex network. In fact, it's a biological neural network if you look at it mathematically. And we have neural networks in our brains. And although trees and forests don't have brains, they do have these biological neural networks belowground. That led me to thinking of nature as more of an intelligent system. Not a lot of people, you know, agree with using words like intelligence or sentience even further than that. But for me, the English language is that those are good words to describe what I'm seeing.

SIMON: Your book "Finding The Mother Tree" is also part memoir and autobiography. I find it interesting you used to be a logger.

SIMARD: Well, I came from a family of loggers. My great-grandfather and my grandfather and my great-uncles and my dad and his brothers all horse logged. And so, yeah, I grew up around this. You know, my grandfather and my great-uncle, they built all their own flumes and their own water wheels to generate electricity, their own logger's houseboats. They - you know, their words (ph), their boats - everything was handmade, and everything was slow and small. And so - of course, to me, it was just the way of life.