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Neil is a Senior Ecologist at the Harvard Forest. He studies the dynamics and long-term development of forests from tree to subcontinental scales as they interact with climate and as they interact amongst themselves. Neil's aim is to conduct basic and applied research to help develop ecologically-based, long-term forest management. He digs natural history, [charismatic megafloora](#), and old-growth forests. One of his passions is the growth, longevity, and ecology of broadleaf trees and forests.

Neil grew up in rural Volney, NY, in the Adirondack Mountain forests, and on the tasty bass grooves of Les Claypool. He earned an associate's degree in math while playing lacrosse at SUNY-Morrisville, got a bachelor's degree at SUNY-College of Environmental Science & Forestry, and a MS at Auburn University studying an old bottomland hardwood forest in South Carolina. After a stint as a tech at the Tree-Ring Laboratory of Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory studying climate change in Mongolia and Russia, he earned a PhD at Columbia University studying forest ecology and climate change along the eastern US seaboard. Before becoming a senior ecologist at the Harvard Forest in Fall 2014, Neil was an assistant professor in biology at Eastern Kentucky University and a research professor in the Tree Ring Laboratory of Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory.

Neil completed his doctoral dissertation at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University with Edward Cook in 2005. Inspired by the mix of southern and northern forests on the LDEO campus, he realized the Hudson River Valley was home to nearly two dozen southern tree species at a northern range margin and determined that researching the impact of climate change, notably the impact of warming on old trees in Mongolia, on northern and southern species in eastern NYS. This research both expanded and contracted in scope where there was a focus on southern species along the eastern US. In opposition of what he expected, Neil soon learned that most the southern tree species were limited by water. From there, he also then realized the northeast US was experiencing one of the wettest eras of the last 500 years. Mostly, Neil was incredibly inspired by the diversity of research at LDEO at broad spatial and long temporal scales. His experiences at LDEO still colors his research and allows him to think differently about forested ecosystems.