Pete Zona September 29, 2010

Tom Zetterstrom

On Thursday, September 16th, the Natural World Cluster attended a speech by photographer and environmentalist Tom Zetterstrom. A resident of Connecticut, Zetterstrom has traveled across much of the United States to take pictures of numerous species of trees spread throughout different ecosystems. He also lectures about these trees to explain their unique purpose for the planet and why they are a necessity. He is determined to protect the many species so that they can be enjoyed by generations to come.

My experience of the talk by Tom Zetterstrom affected the way that I view the natural world and our place in it. I agree with much of what Zetterstrom said at the lecture about the necessity of trees and the many benefits they have for the planet and for us as human beings. Trees that are strategically placed can provide shade but more importantly, through the process of photosynthesis, trees provide oxygen which is the greatest need for life on earth. As students, it is our job to plant and protect trees for the world that we are entering as well as for the sake of the future.

I was most intrigued by Zetterstrom’s images of Dutch Elm Disease. This is a disease that was introduced to the United States by a species of invasive beetles about a century ago. It prevents water from traveling up the trunk of the tree therefore causing it to slowly die from the outermost branches inward. Zetterstrom’s pictures demonstrate this disease as well as document what environmentalists must do to treat the trees to prevent the disease from spreading.

The speech by Tom Zetterstrom certainly made me think about the necessity of trees everywhere and why we must go to measures to protect them. While I am not sure that it is necessary for every student at Holy Cross to be able to identify the 52 species of trees on campus, I agree that planting and protecting trees is a job that every person is responsible for.