

A tribute to Elizabeth J. Farnsworth

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Invasion science, conservation, and plant ecology all lost a tireless and brilliant champion on 27 October 2017 when Elizabeth Farnsworth died at the age of 54 at her home in Amherst, Massachusetts. Elizabeth Farnsworth was an Associate Editor for *Biological Invasions*, a larger than life colleague valued by many across ecology, conservation, and invasion science, and a dear friend.

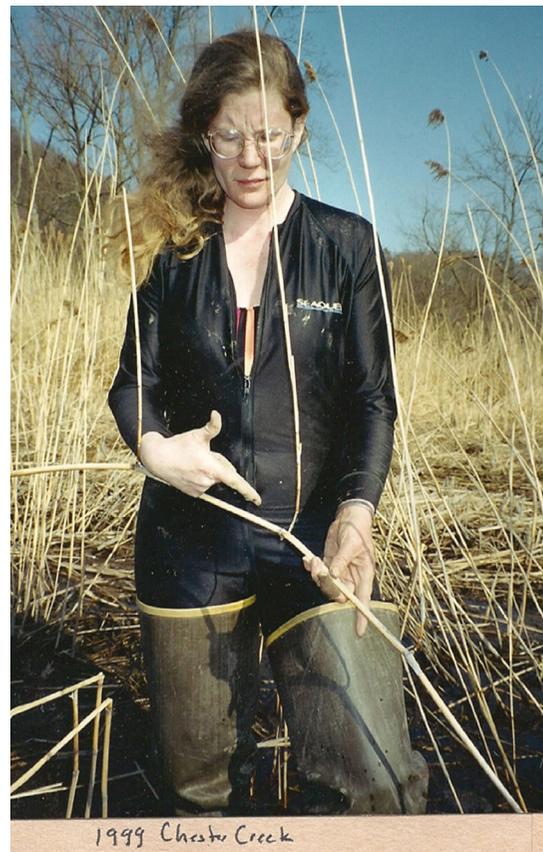
As an undergraduate at Brown University in the 1980s, she interned with well-known ecologists at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Maryland and with Doug Morse and Mark Bertness at Brown. She earned a Master of Science from the

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University of Vermont in 1991 and completed her Ph.D. at Harvard in 1997 where she studied the evolution and ecophysiology of mangrove seedlings

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with Elizabeth Kellogg. Elizabeth was awarded many fellowships and honors including National Science Foundation and Smithsonian post-doctoral fellowships and a Harvard University Bullard Mid-Career Fellowship in 2005. At the time of her death, she was a Senior Research Ecologist for the New England Wild Flower Society in Framingham, Massachusetts, a Research Associate at Harvard Forest in Petersham, Massachusetts, and a Senior Editor for the journal *Rhodora*, where she had previously served as Editor-in-Chief. While her recent work and focus were primarily on conservation, she made significant contributions to invasion science through her research and professional service and by supporting scientists and managers working with invasive species, and by always identifying the threat of biological invasions to conservation of rare species.

In addition to her original research and dozens of peer-reviewed papers, Elizabeth contributed invaluable expertise in creating the framework for plant identification for a generation of new ecologists and botanists. She brought an unusual gift for observation and illustration to her work and provided not only descriptions and expertise but also hundreds of line drawings of ferns and plants for the 2005 *Peterson Field Guide to the Ferns of Northeastern and Central North America*, the 2011 *Flora Novae Angliae*, and the online *Go Botany!* plant identification platform. Elizabeth was the driving force behind *Go Botany!* in order to reach a wider, digitally driven audience and to bring an understanding of conservation and invasion to a wide audience. Her detailed drawings and pithy

encapsulations of the impacts of invasive species are as useful as the clear dichotomous keys. This gift for reaching and holding an audience also shows up in the hundreds of articles, talks, and videos that Elizabeth created for a general audience.

In 1997 Elizabeth became the Stewardship Ecologist for the Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. Interest and research on the invasion of *Phragmites australis* in the United States was just beginning to grow and she both funded and conducted research on the science (including the effects of climate change), management, and impacts of this invasion and other plant invasions on the Connecticut River. It was during one such research trip on the return down the river in a kayak overloaded with soil cores and plant biomass that she and Laura Meyerson dreamed up the idea for the *Greater New England Symposium on Invasive Species* that was held at Yale University in 1999. This meeting brought researchers and students from all over New England working on invasive species. It resulted in a special issue in *Biological Invasions* in 1999 comprising issues 2–3 in Volume 1 of the then new journal, which included a line drawing by Elizabeth of a variety of New England invaders on the journal cover.

Elizabeth was a particular inspiration to women in science, encouraging us with her words and deeds to realize that anything is possible. She fearlessly forged a unique path and outstanding career. Her brilliance, generosity, dedication, talent, creativity, energy, and good humor will be missed.