

Producer's Statement by Thomas Mark Szelog

I aspire to help every person on earth witness peace in a forest and experience nature's ways of wonders through this film; to see, hear, feel and witness a sanctuary where life coexists peacefully and productively. With minimal narration and no human presence, the movie provides viewers an intimate experience to observe life in the wild, transporting them to a place that stimulates one's senses in a manner that is rare and priceless in this day and age. Experiencing life within the wild will open eyes to nature's miracles, awakening peace within hearts and desires to protect our precious earth, and all inhabitants, human and wild.

I know, firsthand, nature's nurturing power. I have been on a mission since I was a youngster, although I did not realize it at the time. My entire life has been carefully honed, unbeknownst to me for many years, to be a passionate voice for wildlife.

I did not seek this project. It sought me. At times this all seems like a dream of such magnitude that I cannot always believe it. Why me? Why have I been selected to speak for the animals? Why do I silently shed tears when alone in the forest?

Have you ever been spoken to, but did not hear? For decades the wildlife was speaking to me, but I did not listen. When I began listening I did not comprehend at first. When I, a non-swimmer who almost drowned on two occasions as a youngster, jumped into a brackish bay many years ago to rescue a drowning osprey I started to realize my unique relationship with wildlife. I had risked my own life to save this bird. I was quietly beginning my special bond with animals and Mother Nature. The wildlife was becoming my immediate family.

This first-ever feature-length wildlife movie, filmed and produced in Maine, under wild conditions, features many of my now cherished family members, including, but not limited to white-tail deer, chipmunks, blue jays, bobcat, and coyotes to name a few. Many members of the cast live throughout neighborhoods across Maine, the U.S., and worldwide. These creatures are often ignored or taken for granted, yet as viewers will discover, their daily behavior and antics compete with creatures of the Serengeti or Yellowstone.

Like any family, I must persevere and protect the members of my family, providing them a peaceful home, free from persecution and harassment. I want to share with mankind the behaviors and beauty of these animals and how truly fascinating they are. The wildlife in the film will captivate viewers as they behave naturally in their forest home, undisturbed by mankind. What viewers will witness is how wildlife thrives in forests when they are given the opportunity to live peacefully.

As a member of the human species, I want to remind my fellow humans that we are a species and are just as connected to nature as any wild animal. We know wildlife is suffering, therefore mankind is also suffering in numerous ways. Becoming re-acquainted and aware of nature's power to comfort, relieve stress and slow our pace is just one way we can benefit from nature. The greater our collective wisdom, the greater our capacity to be visionaries, contributing to the protection of land, clean air, clean water, each other, wildlife, natural beauty and saving our earth, the home we share with all species.

I hope the greatest achievement of *a Peace of Forest* will be more peace, love and understanding by mankind towards all life on earth. The world and every person needs more peace, more hope, and more of nature's restorative benefits.

There is a fair wind blowing in Maine and I am searching for it. Sometimes I feel I am the only human allowed in the brotherhood of wildlife. Sometimes I feel I am the only human in the world of wildlife. I feel I have returned to nature. It is time for all mankind to do so; I want to help every member of the human species return to our roots. It is time we all learn to appreciate our natural world. It is time we do more to preserve the forests, fields, ponds, streams, rivers, and lakes for the benefit of all life.

I had a beautiful dream last night. I dreamed that all of mankind cared for nature and wildlife. I dreamed we cared for all life on this planet. It was a beautiful dream. At this point, it was just a dream, but I strive to make it reality. I want every person on this planet to view *a Peace of Forest* and experience nature's transformative power and realize that all lives matter.....all life matters.

We are the generation that may forever be known as the one to destroy the planet. Or, we can be the generation that may forever be known as the one to save the planet. I do not want to be part of the destruction; I want to be part of the protection. Do you? I want this film to create a sense of awareness and urgency that we are not alone; we are not the only species making a living on this planet.

This film represents the views and opinions of Mother Nature. Lee Ann and I present them, as nature presented them to us. We now share them with you so you can form your own views and opinions. This is a place and a story of hope that can only be found in a peace of forest, and only if we protect it.

Lee Ann and I are grateful to have a glimpse into the lives of the wildlife who allow us to share their home in this forest, and document their intimate life cycle which we now share with the hope that you find peace in the forest and inspiration to help protect every living creature.

Nature is filled with inexpressible and glorious joy; I personally and profoundly invite you to experience pure joy by viewing *a Peace of Forest*, and continue to experience it every day for the rest of your life.

Tom