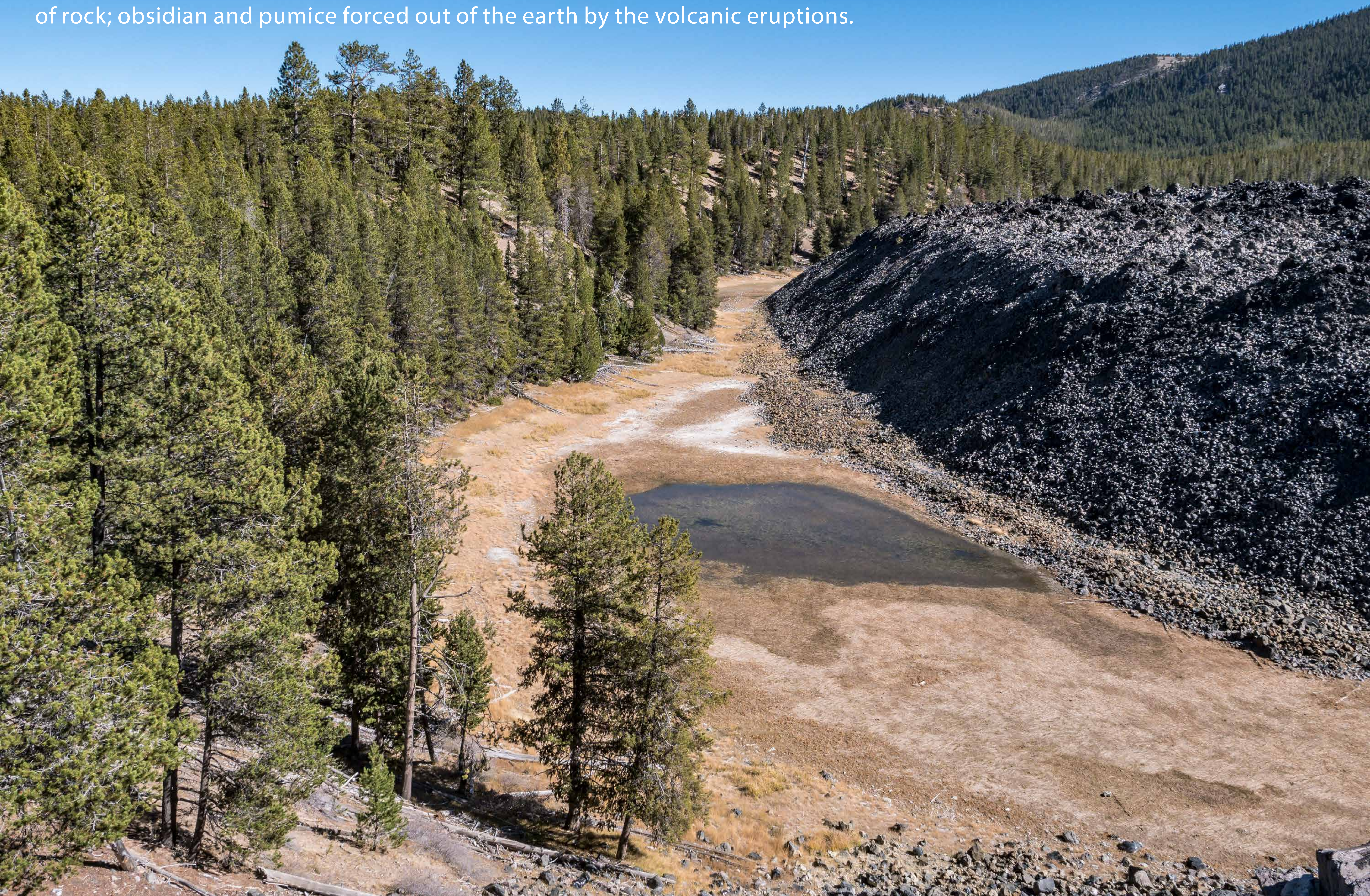


A photograph of a gnarled, wind-swept tree growing on a rocky mountain peak under a clear blue sky. The tree has a thick, twisted trunk and sparse, green foliage on one side, while the other side is bare and skeletal. It stands prominently on a large, light-colored rock formation. The foreground and background consist of a field of smaller, dark rocks. In the distance, a line of evergreen trees is visible on a lower slope. The sky is a solid, clear blue.

Adaptations

Joe Lipka

There is nothing gentle about this little section of Oregon. On the edge of a volcano that erupted a mere 1300 years ago (a split second in geologic time), the effects of this eruption are apparent. The ground we stand on is a huge pile of rock; obsidian and pumice forced out of the earth by the volcanic eruptions.



We see nothing but rocks as we begin our climb to the top of the Big Obsidian Flow.

Both the terrain and the light are harsh at this elevation. In rain shadow of the Cascades, the humidity is very low and the ground is dry and hard. Actually, there is no ground.

There is nothing but rock, black glassy razor edged obsidian and abrasive pumice.



We traverse a trail of rock piled upon rock. Pumice, scrubs and abrades your shoes as you walk on the trail. Obsidian waits to slice the soles of your boots, or your skin should you venture off the proscribed path.





We should see nothing but rocks as we climb to the top of the Big Obsidian Flow. The rockpile is as barren as a lunar landscape. The environment is too harsh to support life.

Looking in a shadow, we find a surprise. A small tree has taken root and is engaged in a struggle to survive in this harsh place.

Once we have seen the exception, we ignore the rocks all around us and look for what shouldn't be here. Hidden in crevices, sprouting from little pockets in the rocks are trees, determined to survive in this spot.



The odds are definitely stacked against the seeds that are fortunate enough to germinate in the Big Obsidian Flow.

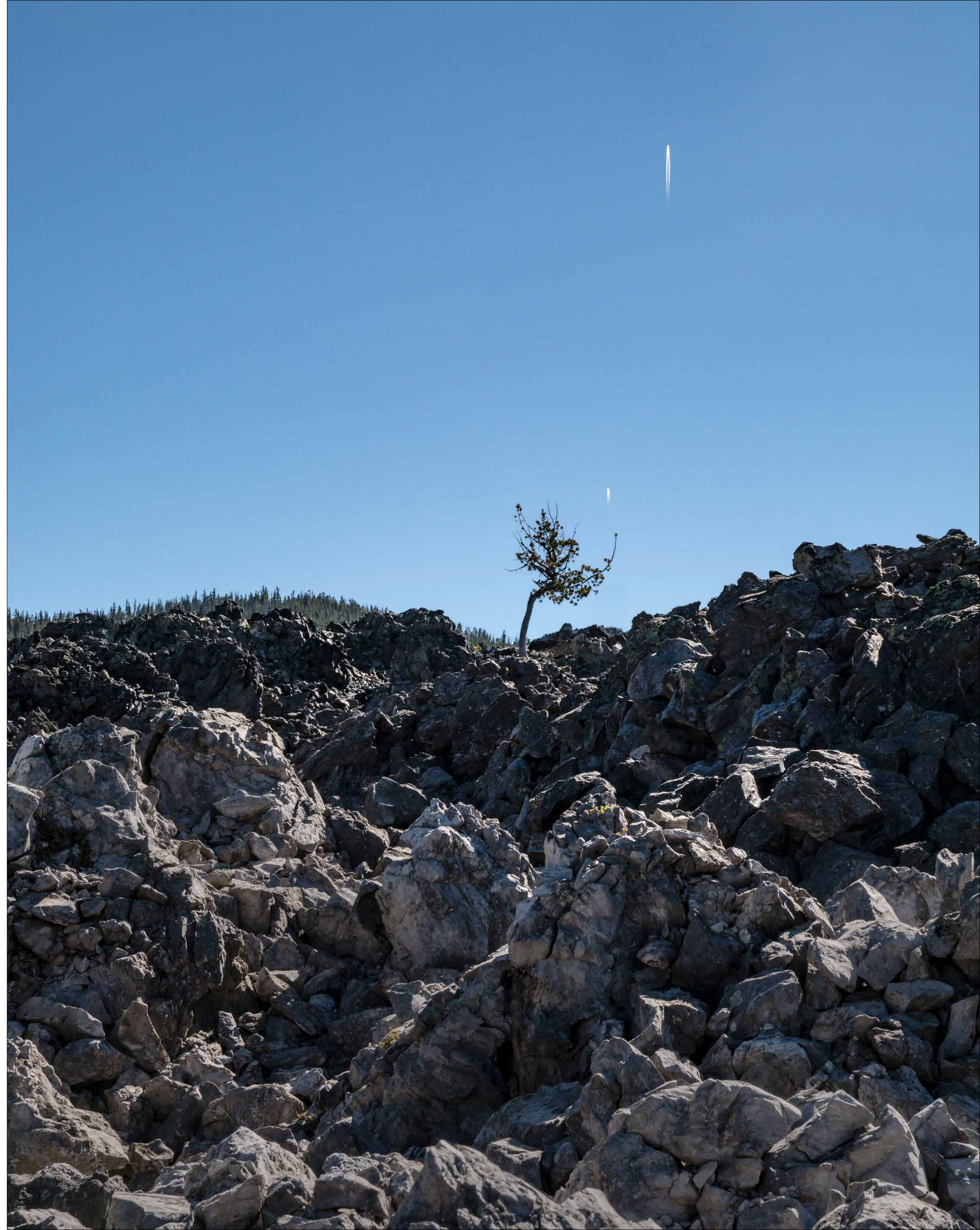
Trees are not cognitive. They cannot calculate the odds for survival, predict the weather or understand photosynthesis.

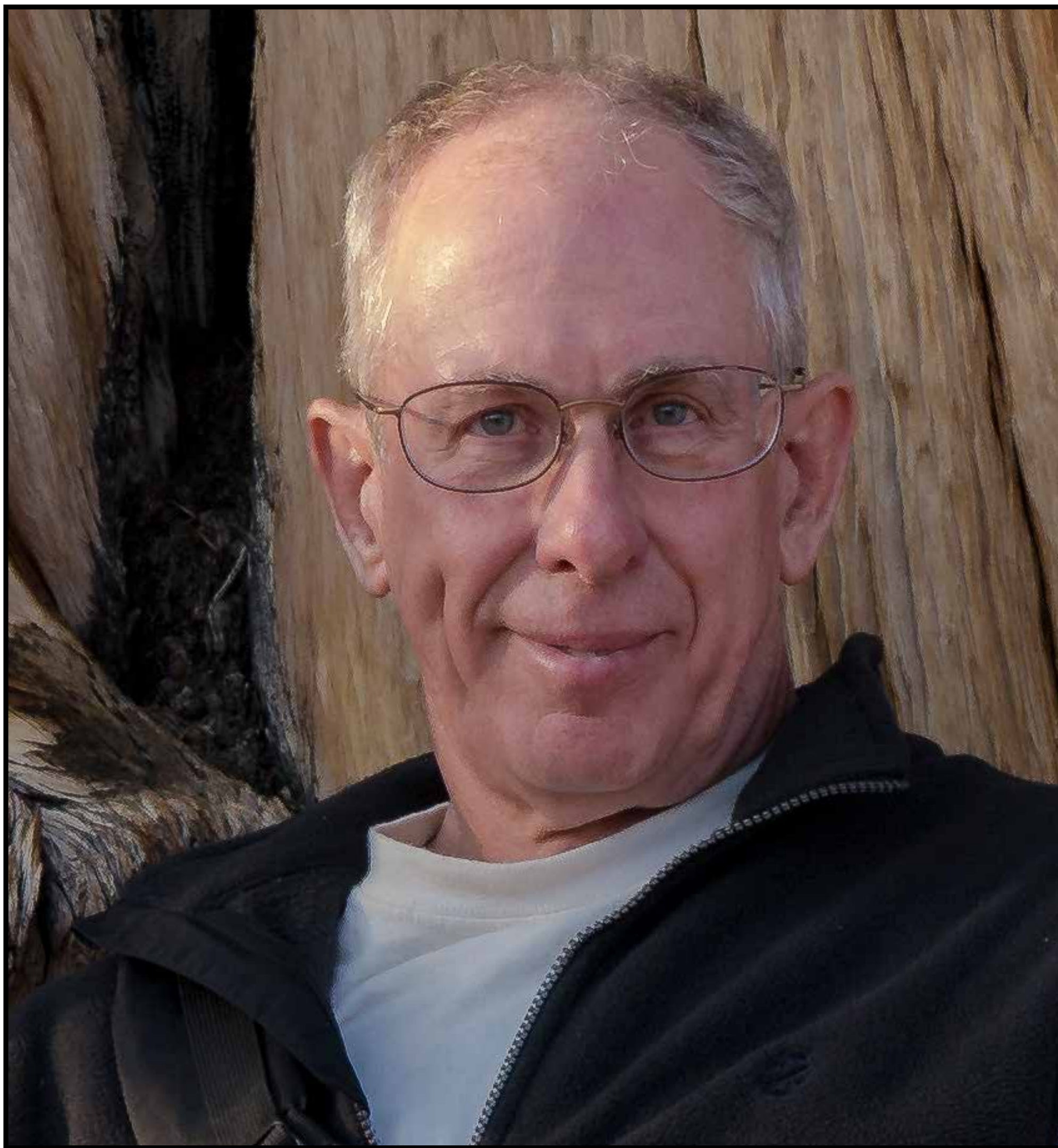
They do not know this so they grow.



I look up at a silhouette of a tree atop this great pile of rocks. In the sky beyond the tree are jet contrails, evidence of man's ability to adapt to the stratosphere.

Neither the Big Obsidian Flow nor the Stratosphere is a hospitable environment. Both trees and man have adapted to survive in these harsh environments.





Joe Lipka has shared his vision since he began photographing.

In the last thirty years, his photographs have appeared in over one hundred juried exhibitions, more than twenty solo exhibitions and have been printed in both *LensWork* and *Black & White Photography* (UK) Magazines.

His website www.joelipkaphoto.com has continuously evolved since it was launched in 2004. His blog *Postcards from the Creative Journey*, published weekly since 2010, is a collection of his photographs and thoughts on the creative process.

COLOPHON

Adaptations

Joe Lipka

*The images in this portfolio
were made in October, 2018
in Central Oregon*

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Web site: www.joelipkaphoto.com
Blog: <http://blog.joelipkaphoto.com/>

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