

Gecko reNews

Official Newsletter of Gecko -
Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council

AUGUST 2004

FREE!

gecko.org.au

FREE!

Volume 15 No. 8

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Carbon Recycling

Gecko reNews

Newsletter of Gecko - Gold Coast and
Hinterland Environment Council

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New Members! A warm welcome to our new members:
Luke Stepto, Karen Allen, Kris Taylor, Paul Herman,
Jarrod Lowerson, Valerie Johnson, Irene Wareing.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL USERS OF GECKO HOUSE:

Please be aware that our insurance will not cover us if the doors, windows, etc., are left open. There have been a few instances of late where the last person to leave has not thoroughly checked that all entry points in the Office, Hall and upstairs Toilets are secure. They weren't! If we're not careful and diligent we could lose the lot. Please be careful.

Thank you, Management Committee

Gecko Library News

BEHOLD - THE VERTICAL FILES!

by Steve Johnson, Library Assistant

As Library Assistant, part of my duties incorporates the management of the vertical files. Within these files there is a wealth of information.

There are over 230 files covering a diverse range of environmental issues. Some examples are: coastal ecology, dugongs, energy conservation, forest ecology, national parks, recycling and wetlands. Contained in each individual file are information booklets, brochures, pamphlets, permits, fact sheets and a large number of media clippings. These media clippings are sourced from mainly local papers and have been collected over many years.

To ensure access for all, these files may not be borrowed. Of course, information can be read or photocopied on the premises - so come and have a cuppa while you peruse.

At the present time, the best day to access the Vertical Files Resource is Tuesday, as that is the day I can be of assistance (other days will become available in the near future). So please take the time to come and have a look at our Vertical Files Resource. I know you'll be amazed.

Book Reviews

RESURRECTION IN A BUCKET: THE RICH AND FERTILE STORY OF COMPOST

by Margaret Simons

Compost is part of the history that binds humankind to the land. Interspersed with interviews from obsessed composters who offer the secrets of their success, this book is a humorous and entertaining read showing the history of modern humanity as you've never seen it before - through its waste.

(200 Pages, 650 Photographs, RRP \$32.95)

FROM THE BEGINNING

by Katie Edwards & Brian Rosen

This great book describes the history of Earth from its very beginnings to the planet we know today. It explores the ceaseless changes of the Earth, describing the development of land, sea, atmosphere, climate and life.

This revised edition reveals the secrets of our past and includes an update on human origins.

(Revised, 72 Pages, colour, RRP \$29.95)

EPA logo

The Queensland Government's Environmental Protection Agency provides funding to assist in the production of this newsletter.

QR logo

QR is a sponsor of the Queensland Conservation Council and Gecko.

SHOVELING FUEL FOR A RUNAWAY TRAIN

pic

Consider the words of Jacques Chirac, president of the French Republic who recognised there are no solutions. He said at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002: "Our house is burning down and

we're blind to it. Nature, mutilated and overexploited, can no longer regenerate and we refuse to admit it". What has become, slowly but surely, a primary threat to our national security, the environment, and future generations? Economic growth, our highest domestic priority! Yet the economics taught in our schools - and corrupted by corporate interests - says the economy may grow perpetually... in defiance of ecological principles!

Americans have been conditioned to appreciate, cheer and serve economic growth. Brian Czech, author of 'Shoveling Fuel for a Runaway Train', argues that, while economic growth was a good thing for much of American history, somewhere along the way it turned bad, depleting resources, polluting the environment, and threatening posterity. Yet growth remains a top priority of the public and polity. In this revolutionary manifesto, Czech knocks economic growth off the pedestal of American ideology. Seeking nothing less than a fundamental change in public opinion, Czech makes a bold plea for castigating society's biggest spenders and sets the stage for the "steady state revolution."

Czech offers a sophisticated yet accessible critique of the principles of economic growth theory and the fallacious extension of these principles into the "pop economics" of Julian Simon and others. He points with hope to the new discipline of ecological economics, which prescribes the steady state economy as a sustainable

alternative to economic growth.

Czech explores the psychological underpinnings of our consumer culture by synthesizing theories of Charles Darwin, Thorstein Veblen and Abraham Maslow. Speaking to ordinary American citizens, he urges us to recognise conspicuous consumers for who they are—bad citizens who are liquidating our grandkids' future. Combining insights from economics, psychology, and ecology with a large dose of common sense, Czech drafts a blueprint for a more satisfying and sustainable society. His ideas reach deeply into our everyday lives as he asks us to re-examine our perspectives on everything from our shopping habits to romance.

From his perspective as a wildlife ecologist, Czech draws revealing parallels between the economy of nature and the human economy. His style is lively, easy to read, humorous, and bound to be controversial. Czech will provoke all of us to ask when we will stop the runaway train of economic growth. His book answers the question: "How do we do it?"

Brian Czech is a conservation biologist with the US federal government and an adjunct professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. He is coauthor of *The Endangered Species Act: History, Conservation Biology, and Public Policy* (2001).

Brian's web page includes more information about the book, a guestbook, and ordering information for a companion videotape.

"On behalf of the newly established Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy, I would like to give you one of the first opportunities to e-sign a new support list for a concise and critical position on economic growth.

It is the only signable position on economic growth I am aware of. We already have signatures from a handful of luminaries in ecological economics, conservation biology, and sustainability science. I have made it very convenient to take part.

Please go to <http://www.steadystate.org/>
Faithfully, Brian Czech.

Biodiversity Conference 2004

by Rose Adams

I had the pleasure of representing Gecko at this 3-day conference at the University of Queensland, Gatton last month. The conference was well attended by conservationists, officers from various SEQ councils, and representatives from Catchment Groups and the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, all keen to hear from the many expert scientists, researchers and planners lined up.

pic

What exactly is biodiversity? Many are familiar with the definitions offered by the IUCN and other bodies, describing it as the diversity of biota in a given area. Researchers are investigating the relative biodiversity values of different ecosystems in an effort to focus on strategies for protection. Is a rainforest more valuable than grassland and therefore deserves more conservation effort? When undertaking restoration programs, does a large area of hoop-pine have more biodiversity value than a smaller area, which might cost less? How much habitat must be conserved?

Biodiversity is not just about numbers and, sadly, speaker after speaker acknowledged that we will be unable to

protect everything. There will be tragic but inevitable losses of species as man and nature compete for space and resources on our crowded planet. We are facing a situation of environmental "triage" where we will have to accept the extinction of certain species but redouble our efforts to protect others. We were shown graphic images of the footprint of Queensland's coastal towns and cities from the 70s to the projected urban sprawl that will result from the additional million people who will be seeking their own slice of paradise over the next 10 to 15 years. Our government is now planning means to accommodate these people and it is vital that the whole community participates in this process to obtain the

best outcomes, protect our biodiversity and, hopefully, prevent our paradise from becoming concrete jungle. There was some good news, however, with Adrian Caneris and Dr Darryl Jones presenting an update on UrBAC (Urban Biodiversity Advisory Consortium), an exciting project that developed after the Urban Biodiversity Conference held by the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland in Brisbane last year. This program helps to identify and protect wildlife in our urban areas and to help people to reconnect with our natural environment. A key resolution from the conference was to request government to halt the loss of arable land to housing developments. The resolutions are at: www.urbanbiodiversity.org.au.

Sins of the Fathers: How Corporations Use the Constitution & Environmental Law to Plunder our Communities and Nature

See the full article at www.gecko.org.au.

LIVE LIGHTLY, LEARN TO USE LESS

Professor Steve Van Matre, Chairman and founder of the Institute for Earth Education, is based in Cedar Cove, West Virginia. He was in Adelaide in October to address the Australian Primary Principals Association and the Bio-Regional Earth Education Conference. Kris Mosher caught up with him there.

Q. Professor Van Matre, we are hearing a lot about the River Murray, deforestation and plastic bags. What do you see as our greatest environmental threat at this moment?

A. People. Most of us are out of touch with the natural world and fail to understand how our choices and actions impact on the earth and its life. Every day our choices are creating exponential growth in damage to ecosystems that support all life - including us!

Q. What can we as individuals actually do? It seems so huge a problem.

A. Simply use less energy and less materials. The extraction, production, transportation and disposal of everything we use has an impact we don't usually even think about. When we use less of anything we lower our impact on the natural world. We need to understand and take responsibility for the choices we make. We should always ask ourselves: 'Is this something I really need?' and 'What are my choices for the least impact?' Take paper towels for example, you could ask yourself: Do I really need them? Are they manufactured a long way away - involving long distance transport? Are they chemically bleached and printed with coloured ink? Are they packed in non-recyclable plastic? Where do they go when I am finished with them? Have I considered that the production of

paper requires a lot of water and energy and afterwards the water is virtually unusable? Perhaps we shouldn't take the paper towels but leave the paper towels.

Q. I understand the institute develops educational programmes. What do you think we should be teaching our young people?

A. We need to teach people to understand the basics of how life works on this planet. We need to get people in touch with the natural world so they can develop positive feelings for it. We need to ask them to take personal responsibility for the choices they make in their own lives. After all, the easiest person you can change is yourself!

Q. There are so many environmental problems. Doesn't it depress youngsters (and everyone else) to learn about them?

A. We aren't talking about teaching problems - that sure is depressing - especially when we give away our power by making the problem someone else's.

We are asking our learners to develop key ecological understandings, then take responsibility for their impact by doing their part in using less energy and less materials. We don't encourage them to ask others to fix the problem. We find our learners are empowered and excited by this, often changing lifestyle habits and getting involved

Cotton on to this!

Australia is ranked among the top ten cotton producing countries in the world, unbelievably not 1%, not one seed, none, of this cotton is organic. We need your help to change this!

You may not be aware, but conventionally grown cotton, like the type grown here in Australia, is one of the worst agricultural crops in terms of its effect on the environment. In fact 25% of insecticides and pesticides used worldwide are used by the cotton industry.

It takes approximately 1/3 of a pound of chemicals to produce one T-Shirt. In contrast, organic cotton is produced free from pesticides, genetically engineered seeds and chemical bonds.

Partner yourself with a Briskrace garment today and join our vision to build a sustainable organic cotton industry in Australia. Our online shop is at www.briskrace.com.au or call our Tugun Head Quarters on 5598 2255.

in local environmental action.

Q. Isn't this all being covered in schools already?

A. Generally not. We have found even the most well-meaning teachers do not have the time or resources to do a good job of it. Teachers are not given adequate planning and preparation time and have to resort to one-off activities that have little lasting impact. They also fall prey to the educational materials (propaganda) provided by the big multinationals, the ones who have created many of our environmental problems.

What is needed to support teachers is complete learning programmes that develop these understandings and feelings in a fun and inspiring way. That is what we have been working on in the institute. Our Earthkeepers programme is being run in many centres across Australia and throughout the world.

(We had to leave Steve at this point as he was leaving for Japan to continue his world speaking tour.)

The Institute for Earth Education is an international, non-profit, volunteer organisation which teaches children how to take local action and care for our planet.

More info: Kris Mosher, Australian Branch, ph (08) 8396 3304 or ieeaust@adam.com.au or see www.eartheducation.org

Source: *Eco Voice*, Oct/Nov 2003

ORGANIC WASTE: From Landfill to Resource

Organic waste occupies more landfill space (40%) than any other waste category in Australia. It decomposes to contribute over 3% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

Organic wastes include all green waste such as gardening wastes and tree loppings, as well as food waste, agricultural and food manufacturing wastes, paper and cardboard - in fact anything that can be degraded organically.

Removing organic material from the waste stream could save Government an estimated \$252 million through reduced management costs, and also generate a viable industry sector injecting employment and economic benefits in local regions.

Organic material recovered from the waste stream could supply over 4 million tones of organic carbon to remediate soils depleted through intensive agricultural activity.

Carbon-depleted soils are less fertile and more susceptible to erosion, salinity and sodicity.

CSIRO field trials have demonstrated that incorporating organic carbon into

soils will initiate a cycle of carbon regeneration, maintain soil stability and enhance productivity.

Returning organic carbon to agricultural soils can result in water savings in excess of 25%, reduced chemical and fertilizer inputs, reduced run-off and consequent soil erosion and waterway pollution, and increased plant vitality.

Through the Recycled Organics Initiative under WMAP, some \$1.3 million was provided for projects aimed at building the capacity of the recycled organics industry, developing markets, establishing trials and demonstration facilities, and exploring innovative ways of diverting organic material from the waste stream. The recycled organics sector is expecting to reap maximum benefit from this investment over the next five years.

Source: *Envirobusiness Update*, June 2003

Gold Coast Water Future *Re: Public Notice* HAVE YOUR SAY ON WATER SUPPLY PLANNING

It is very important that Gold Coasters participate in the Gold Coast Waterfuture Project.

In particular, members are reminded that the proposal to raise the Hinze Dam for water storage purposes would be an expensive and highly environmentally damaging act that would offer a very limited increase in the water supply to the city.

Please refer to previous articles in our newsletter on this topic, or contact our office for more details.

Water is a limited resource - especially on the Gold Coast. While an existing plan is in place to meet the City's immediate and short-term water needs, Gold Coast City Council has embarked on the Gold Coast Waterfuture Project, which will deliver a new long-term water supply strategy, considering the growing needs of the City.

A Discussion Starter has been produced that provides insight into some of the issues surrounding the decision making for the long-term water supply strategy.

Your feedback on this important issue is being sought and will be vital in the development of the new Strategy.

For a copy of the Discussion Starter and more information about the project, please visit our website at www.goldcoastwater.com.au or call 1300 366 692. Submissions must be received by 3 September 2004.

There will be ongoing opportunities over the next 12 months to participate in this important project.

“Do not try to satisfy your vanity by teaching a great many things. Awaken people's curiosity. It is enough to open minds; do not overload them. Put there just a spark. If there is some good inflammable stuff, it will catch fire.”

ANATOLE FRANCE

Gecko Regen

ACREAGE PROPERTY VEGETATION SERVICES

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Do something positive for your living environment and for future generations?

Hide your neighbours?

Then call Gecko Regen for:

- Tree planting, plant supply and site maintenance.
- Bushland restoration and environmental weed control.
- Screen plantings, native landscapes, buffer zones, wildlife habitats.

Tom Caamano : 0414 890 650

Step back from Springbrook

by Sheila Davis

pic

Springbrook is so special that Gold Coast City Council is being urged to take a step back and require wider public consultation prior to agreeing to the release of its draft Springbrook Local Area Plan (LAP) at next week's Strategic Growth Management Committee meeting.

Conservationists are concerned about protection of Springbrook's World Heritage values, damage to habitat for rare and threatened species, and pollution of the Gold Coast water supply dams. They say that scientific knowledge and consultation with other levels of government and public consultation with the wider community should take place in the early drafting of the LAP.

"Because of Springbrook's importance as a World Heritage area and a centre of biodiversity, this whole area deserves a more holistic and coordinated approach to its planning," said Lois Levy, Gecko spokesperson. "This is not just an ordinary urban area plan, but one which encompasses an area entrusted to our safe keeping for the world.

"The planning parameters established for freehold land on Springbrook need to reflect the agreed priorities and constraints necessary to protect an area of World Heritage significance.

"Lack of wider consultation with all stakeholders — including the state and federal governments and scientists and community groups — including consideration of any recovery plans and threat abatement plans, may well result in environmental degradation of the area and the loss of both a natural and financial asset to the city. There are other areas where nature tourism can be accommodated.

"Council, state and Commonwealth governments should consider that, in Queensland, the making of a planning scheme confers upon the landholder rights which must be compensated if later reversed, due to findings that they will have unacceptable impacts on World Heritage values and habitat for listed threatened species, as has happened in the Daintree," Ms Levy said.

"The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act outlines responsibilities of councils and landholders with regard to protection of matters of national environmental significance, including the World Heritage area and its values as well as habitat for listed threatened species," said Sheila Davis, Gecko Campaign Coordinator.

"These should also be considered in the making of this draft Local Area Plan," Ms Davis continued.

"To date the only consultation has been with some residents who agreed to meet with the local area councillor, despite others awaiting the promised joint planning process by former Mayor Gary Baildon and former Queensland Environment Minister Dean Wells," said Ms Davis.

"This process was to provide the community and Council with the scientific basis for decision-making and funding."

"Council officers met with the councillor's group, but have not been allowed to meet with any other residents on Springbrook, or residents in the rest of the Gold Coast community who also have a legitimate interest in the future of one of the city's most important assets," said Ms Davis.

"Given the international status of the environmental values of Springbrook, Gecko urges Council to reconsider its position for the benefit of all and undertake broader consultation on the draft LAP prior to its release for public comment."

Please fill out the submission support letter insert to this newsletter and send back to us by 15 August 2004.

FLUORO TUBE RECYCLING CUTS MERCURY RISKS

Two Australian companies are now recycling spent fluorescent light tubes, diverting glass and mercury - with their associated environmental and health risks - from landfill.

Mercury, a highly toxic chemical that can accumulate in human and animal tissue, is found in many fluorescent tubes. In Australia, fluorescent tubes are the light source for most commercial and industrial buildings. For large tenancies that can mean many thousands of tubes in use at any one time. Used tubes are currently disposed of in landfill, where mercury powder may enter water bodies or become airborne.

Australian companies Chemsal and Advanced Recycling Australasia (ARA) together provide a complete removal, transport and recycling service to customers all around the country.

The recycling process captures mercury from tubes by distillation and recovers the glass. Chemsal also recycles used High Intensity Discharge (HID) lamps and sodium vapour lamps. Chemsal offers rental of appropriate containers that allow clients to safely store spent tubes on-site prior to collection.

They also accept original cardboard supply boxes.

Environment Australia (EA) has adopted fluorescent tube recycling as a new waste initiative under the Department's Environmental Management System.

For more information about recycling fluorescent tubes and HID lamps, contact Chemsal on (03) 0369 4222 or go to www.chemsal.com.au.

For information on Environment Management Systems go to www.ea.gov.au/industry/sustainable/greening-govt/ems.

Source: *Envirobusiness Update*, Dec 2002.

"The ultimate measure of a person is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy."

Martin Luther King Jr.

WHO SAID THE DROUGHT HAS BROKEN?

Earlier this year when we received wonderful rain that approached a near normal summer rainfall, the pundits were telling us that the drought had broken. But by all appearances now, this could be far from the truth. Certainly, those in many parts of the southern states have had recent good rains but the fact remains, it has become very dry here and we have also had an extraordinarily warm winter. Nights may become close to freezing, but the days are almost that of early summer. In essence 'Desert weather'. I feel sure, there is definitely something amiss with the weather. Is it global warming or just another pattern of change? Is all that Space Junk that humankind has put 'up there' affecting our weather patterns? I can't see why not. Maybe we are into a Hot age opposed to an Ice age. Whatever it is, it could have catastrophic effects on our lifestyle. Nevertheless, let's hope by the time the next issue of Gecko reNews comes out, we will have had some good useful rain.

Walk with Wildlife

by Tom Fletcher

NORMAL SURVEY WALKS

These take place once a month on a Sunday morning. The walks begin at 8am.

- **August 15th 04 - Marjory St Henry/Burleigh Ridge Conservation Park** [MS]
Meet at Marjorie St Henry Park, Tabilban St, Koala Park, Burleigh Heads.
- **September 19th 04 - Ingleside School & Lions Park** [ISS & LP],
Tallebudgera Valley. Travel southwest along Tallebudgera Creek Road. Meet in the car park in front of the Ingleside School.
- **October 17th 04 - Burleigh Knoll Conservation Park** [BK].
Meet at Barwon Street, Burleigh Heads [off Deodar Drive and Gold Coast Highway].
- **November 21st 04 - Tallebudgera Creek Conservation Park, North** [TCN]
Meet at Fleay's Wildlife Car Park, West Burleigh.

pic

2004 PROGRAM OF SPECIAL SURVEY WALKS

Elanora Wetland Habitat

These occur every fortnight on a Tuesday morning beginning at 7.30am. Interested participants meet at the front of EWH.

August 10th, 24th

September 7th, 21st

October 5th, 19th

November 2nd, 16th, 30th

December 14th, 28th

Suntown Landfill Winter Survey

Date to be advised.

DON'T FORGET:

All members of Gecko, associated groups and visitors are welcome to attend any of these activities.

ELANORA WETLANDS BUSHCARE GROUP

The group meets on the first Tuesday of the month for bushcare on the site.

Work begins at 8am and finishes at 10am with a BYO morning tea.

Everyone is welcome to participate in the group's activities. There are no joining fees. But, you are asked to ensure you bring a bottle of water and wear solid shoes, shady hat and sunscreen. Gloves, tools and other equipment are provided by Walk with Wildlife. A responsible adult must accompany all children.

NEXT BUSHCARE DATE:

Tuesday, 3rd August, 2004

7th September, 5th October,

2nd November, 7th December

Walk with Wildlife MONTHLY MEETINGS

These take place on the last Sunday of the Month at Winders Park, near Gecko House starting at 4pm.

We begin with a short walk round Tallebudgera Creek Estuary.

We then discuss and plan the coming month's activities during the BBQ.

For more information on any of these activities please call:

Maureen (07) 5598 7900

Arthur (07) 5534 3824

Tom (07) 5598 4145

Our Population Challenges

by David Harris

Australia is a vast continent and in theory we should be able to cope with a much greater population than we currently have.

The reality is that most of us live in the cities along the coast and that it is already difficult to supply enough water (especially) and food for that population, let alone our friends in the inland. The fact is that we can't allow our population to expand without causing increasing damage to the environment.

An urgent need for most cities is to have first class, environmentally friendly transport systems, as this would be the most effective way of reducing the need (or want) to use cars which burn up fossil fuels and poison the atmosphere.

A sustainable city must embrace green

businesses and be driven by corporate environmental awareness. Sustainability initiatives, including energy efficiency and water and waste management must have the active commitment, leadership and participation of industry.

There needs to be a more equitable distribution of wealth now. As it is, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer and the types of housing reflects this disgraceful imbalance.

As urban areas expand, there is a need for green zones which provide important health and lifestyle benefits, aiding in pollution reduction, providing recreational opportunities and areas for community gatherings. We need an increase in the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target as this

would directly create over 10,000 new jobs, billions of dollars in investment and would be great for the environment. The transition to Renewable Energy must be made while fossil fuels are available to create the necessary infrastructure. Future generations will have a diminished standard of living unless effective alternatives can be found.

The youth of today need to demand more recycling, reduced volume of waste and more sustainable residential housing. They can do it. They must do it! The future of the environment and our population generally lies in their (hopefully capable!) hands. Previous generations have stuffed up the environment to a disgraceful degree ...

AUGUST

What's on

- 03 **AUSTRALIA AT THE CROSSROADS: A TIME FOR CHANGE.**
Public Meeting. Main Auditorium, Brisbane City Hall, 7pm.
- 07 **MEETING OF MEMBER GROUPS.** Back to first Saturday and back to Gecko House. See page 9.
- 09 **INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE.** Indigenous Day pic
- 11 **MEMBERS' GATHERING.** Gecko House, 6:30-9pm. Greek theme. Greek theme illustration
- 16-22 **LANDCARE WEEK.** Landcare Logo
www.landcareaustralia.com.au
- 25 **GUEST SPEAKER.** Toxic Timebomb with Russell White. Gecko House, 6:30-9pm. See page 9.
- 27 **GOLD COAST SHOW HOLIDAY.**

What's your wasteline like?

Gold Coast City Council documents reveal that of the 469,000 tonnes of waste generated by residents and visitors each year on the Gold Coast, only 65,500 tonnes are recycled. Of that, just 19,400 tonnes of material in 2002-03 was collected by domestic kerbside collections. The rest of the rubbish, enough to fill more than 1500 Olympic-size swimming pools annually, is buried at landfill sites across the city.

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER ... is BIODIVERSITY MONTH

- 01 **WATTLE DAY.** www.wattleday.asn.au Wattle Day pic
- 04 **MEETING OF MEMBER GROUPS.** Back to first Saturday and back to Gecko House!
- 05 **BIG SCRUB RAINFOREST DAY.** See page 13 for details.
- 08 **GENERAL MEETING.** Gecko House. 6.30-9pm.
- 5-11 **KEEP AUSTRALIA BEAUTIFUL WEEK.** Ph 3252 2886 or visit www.kabq.org.au
- 7 **NATIONAL THREATENED SPECIES DAY.**
Ph (02) 9281 5515 or visit www.wwf.org.au/tsn. See page 12 for more details.
- 12 **SOLAR HOUSE DAY.** www.anzsos.org
- 22 **GUEST SPEAKER.** Lyndall Kennedy, EPBC Unit Coordinator. Gecko House. 6.30-9pm.

Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council, Assoc. Inc.

Meeting of Member Groups

Saturday, 7 August, 2004

8.30am - Noon

*Venue: Gecko House
139 Duringan Street, Currumbin*

Member Group Representatives and all members welcome.

Purpose of the meeting: To support our Member Groups and represent their issues and campaigns to our members and appropriate levels of government - local, state and federal.

AGENDA FOR MEETING OF MEMBER GROUPS

1. Welcome & apologies.
2. Minutes of the last meeting and business arising.
3. Summary of Correspondence.
4. Rapid Round Up - each group's report.
5. General Business.
6. Campaigns to work together on.
7. Announcements.
8. Next meeting - Saturday, 4 September, 2004.

Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council, Assoc. Inc.

URGENT !!
**We need your
attendance!**

Members' Gathering

Wednesday, 11 August, 2004

6.30pm - 9pm

Gecko House, 139 Duringan Street, Currumbin

All Members and guests welcome.

Purpose of the Meeting: To participate in the management of Gecko's activities.

For new items, please notify Ben at Gecko.

AGENDA FOR MEMBERS GATHERING

1. Wine & Cheese Welcome.
2. Raising of new issues by members.
3. Feedback on Members' activities.
4. Announcements
5. Next Meeting - General Meeting, 8 September, 2004.

Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council, Assoc. Inc.

Guest Speaker Night

Wednesday, 25 August, 2004

6.30pm - 9pm

Gecko House, 139 Duringan Street, Currumbin

'Toxic Timebomb'

Presented by Russell White, Director of the Cancer Prevention Coalition.

Russell will expose the hidden carcinogens in a wide range of household products which may affect human and environmental health.

Nothing to show but a wasteland

by Paul Sheehan, June 28, 2004

Australia has the potential to become one of the most stupid, short-sighted, short-lived civilisations (for want of a better term) ever created. The nation could last little more than three greedy, mediocre centuries as an advanced economy, and two of those centuries have already passed. Compared with what's heading our way unless we mobilise as a nation, such passing obsessions as the Iraq war and the latest federal election are mere sideshows.

People keep talking about the historic "drought" afflicting the eastern states. It is not a drought. It is far more serious than that. Even if good rains come they are not going to change the fundamental problem. The weather pattern has changed. Having mined and altered and channelled and stripped the landscape for the past 150 years in an impossible attempt to re-create Europe, we can't even see the obvious - that when you profoundly change the landscape, when you destroy vast amounts of balancing energy in the soil and vegetation, you change the weather.

Gradually, with excruciating slowness, the full magnitude of our collective ignorance and arrogance is only beginning to come into focus. We saw a hint of this focus on Friday when the Prime Minister and five premiers - all except the Premier of Western Australia - gathered in Canberra to announce a belated national effort to address Australia's slow-motion disaster with the river systems and the over-allocation of water.

The process is going to make for some strange politics. Take, for example, Senator Bill Heffernan. He can see the disaster unfolding. And because he can see it unfolding, he is now to the left of St Peter Garrett when it comes to the environment. While Garrett is locked into the union-dominated Labor Party, Heffernan has moved to the left of Labor on big environmental issues. Take his views on that most totemic green cause, the clear-felling of old-growth forests in Tasmania, protected under the bipartisan Regional Forests Agreement:

"It's a disgrace," Heffernan told me. "They could end clear-felling of old-growth forests tomorrow. And they should. They are over-committing Tasmania's forest resources in a way they will regret in a hundred years ... And in their haste to clear the timber they waste and burn and haven't even done any work on the impact on the water system. Places like Launceston are having a dramatic change in the

stream pattern. It could be a long-term disaster."

Yes, Wild Bill Heffernan, the Junee farmer, Irish-Catholic conservative and political knee-capper, who sits impregnably at the top of the Liberal Senate ticket for NSW in the next federal election. He also happens to be driving two Senate inquiries (he is chairman of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislative Committee) into national water policy and sustainable forestry practices, and thus inevitably colliding with a raft of ugly statistics and ugly satellite images.

From this vantage point, and after a life on the land, Heffernan can see disasters, all different but all related, unfolding in every state. Sitting in his office in Parliament House, Canberra, late at night, he ticks off the big problems, using exasperated language which has not been vetted by his mate, the Prime Minister:

"In Tasmania, they burn everything that's there and 1080 [poison] them, it's just a mournful operation and the process of pushing down old-growth forests is a huge waste. They recover only about 10 per cent of the old growth as saw logs; the rest just goes to the chip mill."

He wants his Senate committee to consider a proposal to protect a further 240,000 hectares of that state's high-value old-growth forests, offset by what he calls a "wall of wood" coming on stream from new plantations in Tasmania and Western Australia.

"In Queensland, the great national disgrace remains the water harvesting at Cubby Station [a huge cotton farm] which completely intercepts the water rights of downstream users ...

"In NSW, the over-allocation of the rivers and aquifers is a classic example of disastrous planning by governments of all persuasions. It's the same with the complete denial of the problems caused by water interception in plantation forests. It's happening in every state ...

"In Victoria, the La Trobe Valley aquifer is facing a potential

catastrophe because of unsustainable drawing down of the water table ...

"In the Northern Territory, they have no brains and no experts when it comes to water management. The government has decided to mine the arid aquifer, which means no one has learnt from the disaster of mining the Namoi aquifer ...

"In Western Australia, climate change and unsustainable water use has caused serious long-term problems for Perth's water supply."

The senator did not blink when I told him the noted environmental scientist Tim Flannery believed Perth's water shortage would become so severe the city could become "Western civilisation's first ghost metropolis".

"We need to get beyond denial," Heffernan said. "All governments. The only way for governments to get the political courage to act is for the public to be made aware of the gravity of our national situation. Friday's announcement by the PM and [Deputy PM] John Anderson and the premiers was real progress, a good start. They all know the Murray-Darling Basin has only 6.2 per cent of Australia's run-off but 70 per cent of Australia's water farming. They know that no matter how you do the sums, we need better technology, smarter water-farming, and the removal of some activity." He singled out rice growers and cotton farmers as having to "lift their game".

"It's a no-brainer that we need a new agricultural frontier in northern Australia, where the Timor Gulf and Burdekin catchments have 60 per cent of the nation's run-off - 10 times more than the Murray-Darling - but are virtually untapped."

"Australia controls the world's fourth largest expanse of land, sea and continental shelf. We should be an ecological superpower. Instead we have chosen, so far, to remain a European colony in the most insidious, dangerous way possible."

AUSTRALIA AT THE CROSSROADS
A TIME FOR CHANGE
PUBLIC MEETING
City Hall Main Auditorium,
Tuesday, 3rd AUGUST at 7pm

Kevin Carmody, singer and songwriter, will open the forum. Master of Ceremonies, Jim Soorley will introduce such keynote speakers as Julian Burnside QC (Refugee advocate); Michael Raper (Aust Council Social Services); Prof. Ian Lowe (Environment); Julie Bignell (Australian Services Union); Mary Graham (Indigenous Issues); and Ann Matson (Oxfam/Community Aid Abroad).

SUBJECTS COVERED AT THE MEETING:

THE WAR IN IRAQ - Do we want policies that follow the US blindly into more non-UN sanctioned wars or do we want policies that help build positive relations with other nations?

MEDICARE - Do we want policies that mean health care is only for the rich or do we want a fair and equitable health care system?

EDUCATION - Do we want policies that divert much needed public funds to wealthy schools or do we want policies that value a quality education for all?

REFUGEES - Do we want policies that treat people fleeing persecution and war badly or do we want policies that are in line with UN conventions of human rights?

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT - Do we want policies that sell out our hard earned working conditions and way of life in the interests of big business or do we want policies that look after worker's rights and values our cultural heritage?

ENVIRONMENT - Do we want policies that balance the need for environmental protection with development or policies that are primarily in the interests of business?

INDIGENOUS ISSUES - Do we want policies that enhance self-determination or policies that put indigenous issues in the past?

This public meeting was initiated by Just Peace and is endorsed and supported by Refugee Action Collective, Rally for Peace, Aust Democrats, Sen. Claire Moore, Qld Greens, Earth Charter, Qld. Council of Unions, Oxfam/CAA, Multi-Faith Centre (Griffith Uni), Qld Peace Network, ENUFF, RAASQ, Social Action Office, MICA, Friends of the Earth, Palestinian Jewish Unity, Fabian Society, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, QLD Peace Network, Medical Assn for Prevention of War, Australian West Papua Assoc Brisbane, UQ and QUT Students Unions, Union of Australian Women, Individuals. QLD Nurses Union, Australian Services Union.

For further information visit the website: www.justpeaceqld.org or call Annette on 3324 8459, or Ross on 3366 5318.

Winds of change for environment?

by *Ulrika Sandberg, West End.*

It is well known that the greenhouse emissions have risen about 40 per cent in the past decade.

The Federal Government is aware that emissions will continue to rise but, so far, has not provided Australia with a viable and sensible plan of attack to combat those emissions. David Kemp, the former environment minister, said he believes that the Federal Government is the first to have done something for the environment in Australia. Where is the proof? In what area has the Government significantly improved our environment?

The European Union has set a Mandatory Renewable Energy Target of reducing greenhouse emissions by 8 per cent by 2012. Compare that with Australia's target of 2 per cent by 2010. This target was not increased in the Government's green policy presented several weeks ago.

This is an embarrassment for us internationally.

In Europe, Australia is as notorious for not signing the Kyoto protocol as Japan is for whaling.

At home, the Australian Wind Energy Association has said that in order for hundreds of wind projects not to be left stranded, the target needs to be increased to at least 10 per cent. The plan to start a wind farm project in Tasmania was suspended because of the Federal Government's decision not to increase the MRET. Hopefully, the new minister will see the potential in renewable energy and really care about Australia's environment.

Source: Courier Mail, 15/7/04

Computers 'must be greener' by *Tim Hirsch, BBC environment correspondent*

Worldwide efforts are needed to reduce the environmental damage caused by computer equipment, according to a United Nations research group.

A study says making the average PC requires 10 times the weight of the product in chemicals and fossil fuels.

Many of the chemicals are toxic, while the use of fossil fuels helps contribute to global warming.

And the short lifetime of today's IT equipment leads to mountains of waste, the UN University report says.

That waste is then dumped in landfill sites or recycled, often in poorly managed facilities in developing countries, leading to significant health risks. The authors say that both manufacturers and computer users across the world should be given greater

incentives to upgrade or re-use computer hardware instead of discarding it.

IN LIFE AND DEATH

As computers become smaller and more energy-efficient, their environmental burden might be expected to decrease - but the study suggests that the opposite is happening.

It found that manufacturing a 24kg PC with monitor needs at least 240kg of fossil fuels to provide the energy, and 22kg of chemicals. Add to that, 1.5 tonnes of water, and your desktop system has used up the weight in fossil fuels, and it is clear that making more than 130 million computers worldwide has a significant impact.

OWNING THE PROBLEM

Little research on these impacts has been carried out, and there are several law suits pending from workers at semiconductor

plants who claim their work is linked to birth defects and cancer.

The rector of the UN University in Tokyo, Hans van Ginkel, said: "This study clearly shows that our current understanding of the health and environmental impacts of computers is inadequate.

BROKEN SLEEP

Although modern computers use relatively little electricity while they are being operated, a huge amount of energy is wasted because equipment is left on permanently, often overnight.

Even energy-saving devices which automatically switch devices into standby mode can be deceptive, says the study, as they are frequently "woken up" by traffic from servers if they are connected to a network.

Source: www.news.bbc.co.uk

NATIONAL THREATENED SPECIES DAY

National Threatened Species Day (NTSD) will be held this year on 7 September. NTSD aims to encourage the community to prevent further extinctions of Australia's fauna and flora, and to restore healthy numbers of endangered species and ecological communities in the wild. September is also Biodiversity Month, a time when many Australians celebrate our unique and valuable biodiversity with activities to protect and conserve the environment. A number of events are coordinated across Australia for

NTSD to raise community awareness about the plight of threatened species in Australia and to encourage community participation in varied conservation activities.

Activities range from exhibitions and festivals, to displays, guided walks, workshops and a range of other community education and promotional activities. The Threatened Species Network (TSN) is beginning to compile this year's events register and this will be added to the WWF and the DEH websites to promote your event.

On-line event registration is available for you to add your events live.

In addition, NTSD kits are available through the State Coordinator.

If you have an activity you would like to discuss or register for NTSD, or you would like to order some kits, we'd like to hear from you.

For more information please contact the Threatened Species Network State Coordinator, Keryn Hyslop at khyslop@wwf.org.au or phone: 07 3221 0573, or visit the World Wildlife Fund website at www.wwf.org.au/tsn.

QCC STATE CONFERENCE 2004

Different Voices: Common Cause?

Different Voices: Common Cause? promises to deliver an environmental conference with a twist. The theme reflects an attempt to find common cause between differing perspectives on environmental issues. Can developers and environmentalists agree on anything? Is there room for the union movement to work with conservation groups to achieve better environmental and employment outcomes?

Dinner/Forum Friday Only	\$ 70 (no concession)
Full Conference Saturday & Sunday + dinner	\$120 (\$100) \$180 (\$160)
Full Day - includes buffet lunch	\$ 70 (\$60)
Half Day - includes tea & coffee	\$ 40 (\$30)
Single Session - includes tea & coffee	\$ 20 (\$15)

All prices include GST. Concession prices (in brackets) available for F/T students and HCC holders.

Friday Night: Dinner/Forum -

The Environment and the Election.

Speakers include: Senator Kerry Nettle (Greens); Mr Kelvin Thomson, MP (ALP); and Senator Lyn Allison (Democrats).

Saturday & Sunday: Two Streams

1. Environment Stream: Climate Perspectives; Urban Perspectives; Employment Perspectives; Water Perspectives; Northern Perspectives; Wildlife Perspectives.
2. Training and Development Stream: Managing Sponsorship; Managing Organisations; Managing Volunteers; Managing People; Managing Fundraising; Managing Money.

MARK THESE DATES
IN YOUR DIARY NOW!!!
20, 21 & 22 August
Mercure Hotel,
Brisbane

Places are limited. Bookings & more information Email Michael at conference@qccqld.org.au or call 3221 0188.

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Big Scrub Rainforest Day 2004

Now in its 6th year, Big Scrub Rainforest Day is Australia's largest annual Landcare information and education event.

The range of activities provides something for everyone: early morning birds of the rainforest tours, presentations by leading experts in rainforest plants and animals, workshops on rainforest restoration, farm forestry, plant propagation and weed control.

Music and a wide variety of food and information stalls create a festival atmosphere. And we shouldn't forget the eco philosophy, yoga in the rainforest sessions or the children's activities that run all day. This year promises to offer something for everyone with many new activities on the program including eco tours, frisbee golf and botanical art.

All major regional Landcare groups, practitioners and businesses are represented at Big Scrub Rainforest Day, providing an opportunity to gain information about rainforests and their restoration from Australia's leading experts.

Big Scrub Rainforest Day is pivotal in networking regional Landcare specialists, volunteers and landowners. The event provides a chance for everyone to be inspired to get involved in hands-on work for the environment by checking out what other groups and environmentally orientated businesses are up to. Community Landcare volunteers also use the event to keep up to date with best practice bush regeneration knowledge and protocol.

THE FOCUS OF THE DAY IS THE BIG SCRUB

Once the largest expanse of subtropical rainforest in Australia, the Big Scrub covered a roughly circular area where Lismore, Ballina, Byron Bay and Mullumbimby are presently situated. Of the original 75,000 hectares, now less than 1 percent - only 300 ha, of scattered rainforest fragments remain. The remnant areas contain a rich diversity of flora and fauna, supporting more than 300 species of trees and shrubs. At least 28 threatened species of flora and 22 species of fauna occur in these

remnants. Their high conservation value is reflected in the inclusion of the 32 largest remnants in the Register of the National Estate.

THE THREAT TO THE BIG SCRUB REMNANTS

The condition of almost all remnants has steadily deteriorated over the years due to the impact of many damaging weed species that spread rapidly throughout the remnant. These vigorously growing weeds smother native plants, seriously degrading the forest structure and arresting natural regeneration. Without effective weed control the remnants' health and viability will decline and future regeneration works would need to increase exponentially. Landcare remains a crucial field of work in protecting what is left of the Big Scrub.

VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

Presented by Rainforest Rescue, the Big Scrub Rainforest Landcare Group and Richmond Landcare Inc, Big Scrub Rainforest Day is entirely facilitated and run by volunteers. Walk leaders and workshop presenters also volunteer their time teaching and demonstrating skills for the community.

Any members of local Landcare groups who would like to assist on the day are encouraged to contact Johanna Kempff, Landcare Coordinator, on (02) 6627 0120.

Big Scrub Rainforest Day is an inspiring annual gathering and everyone is invited to join the community in celebrating the Big Scrub on Sunday the 5th of September 9am-4pm at Rocky Creek Dam, 15kms Northwest of Lismore (Northern NSW).

Admission by donation.

For more information, send an email to: bigscrub@rainforestrescue.org.au or visit the Big Scrub website www.rainforestrescue.org.au/bigscrub.html

Big Scrub Rainforest Day 2004 is supported by the Beach Hotel, ReGenesis and Rous Water.

pic

Gases

'to melt all ice'

London was under threat from submersion by melting ice as greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere reached levels not seen for 55 million years, the British Government's chief scientific advisor has warned.

Sir David King said there was enough carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to melt all the ice on the planet and submerge cities such as London, New York and New Orleans.

"You might think it is not wise, since we are currently melting ice so fast, to have built our big cities on the edge of the sea where it is now obvious they cannot remain," he said.

"On current trends, cities such as London, New York and New Orleans will be among the first to go."

He said when Antarctica's ice cap melted, the sea level would rise 110m "in a worst case scenario".

Source: Gold Coast Bulletin 15/7/04

Catchment Logging and Water Woes

by Melissa Fyfe,
Environment Reporter, The Age

The State Government should urgently examine logging in Melbourne's water catchments, a Uniting Church policy unit has urged.

The church's social justice unit in Victoria and Tasmania has come to this conclusion after assessing a 307-page report on forest issues.

The unit, which will take its concerns to the synod in September, believes the logging in the Thomson and upper Yarra catchments will add to the city's water woes. Melbourne Water has conceded - based on scientific research - that an extra 20 billion litres of water each year could be sourced from the Thomson catchment if logging was phased out.

The problem is the young trees that grow back after logging suck up more water than the existing older ones.

"Given the importance of water, the Government needs to really look at this issue and not drag its feet in doing so," the director of the social justice unit, Mark Zirnsak, told The Age.

The State Government's White Paper on water reform promised to do more hydrological studies on the impact of logging on water yields. The Government has promised to assess whether plantations can be established outside state forests to offset any reductions in the timber industry's area.

Another concern to be raised at the synod is how Victoria's endangered species are affected by logging.

1970s HOUSE GETS AN ENERGY EFFICIENT MAKEOVER

Environmental responsibility and a desire to reduce their electricity bills prompted home owners Ray and Wendy Miller to give their high-set brick veneer house in Corinda an energy efficient makeover that has led to a more comfortable home with lower electricity costs

"This transformation has been achieved gradually as we have become more aware of how we can reduce our impact on the environment and as family finances and time have allowed," explains Ray.

"When we brought our home, it had no insulation and all energy services, except winter heating, were supplied by the main electricity grid.

"The house was very hot and uncomfortable in summer and electricity usage was 22 kilowatt hours (kWh) per day."

Inspired after completing an "Introduction to Renewable Energy Technologies" subject at TAFE in 1995, Ray and Wendy did an initial energy audit of their home and "things just went on from there".

The initial audit itemised all energy consumption and led to Ray and Wendy developing an action plan for tackling the highest energy users.

They then did another audit in 1998 to measure the effect of the changes they had made and developed further plans for reducing energy use.

"It just keeps on going in a cycle now really", says Wendy.

The one night per week TAFE course also covered the basics of energy-efficient building design which Ray and Wendy then used as a basis for improving the energy efficiency and

pic

comfort of their 1970s home.

The Millers say that installing a solar water heater had the biggest effect on reducing their electricity consumption.

Some other changes they made included:

- Repainting the roof a light cream colour to reflect the heat and aid cooling;
- Fitting thermal-lined curtains and pelmets to bedroom and rumpus windows as well as installing some double-glazed or single-glazed casement windows to maximise summer ventilation and minimise winter heat loss;
- Installing cellulose fibre insulation and reflective insulation under the roof and on the western wall of the house;
- Adding weather seals on all doors and windows; and
- Using energy appliances such as a

solar hot water system, LPG gas appliances, compact fluorescent tubes and a 5-star refrigerator.

Their electricity now comes from the solar energy system that they mounted on their roof and officially registered as a power station named "Go 100% solar".

"We use gas for cooking and the sun to provide our electricity and hot water. Any excess electricity we generate is sold back to the Queensland electricity grid," says Wendy.

Today, the Millers enjoy year-round comfort, with a little assistance from pedestal fans in the middle of summer. And they are now using only 5-7 kWh per day for a family of 4 adults, compared with 22 kWh per day for a family of 2 adults and 3 children in 1995.

Ray and Wendy both say that the modifications have been a good financial investment, citing that the solar hot water system has already paid for itself.

Furthermore, Ray says all of these measures combined have dramatically reduced the greenhouse gas emissions from their household, thereby reducing their contribution to global warming and climate change in a small yet personally significant way.

Source: Innovation Queensland, Apr 2004

National Folk Festival: Towards Zero Waste

As a new 'Towards Zero Waste' undertaking, the 2003 National Folk Festival represented a major challenge to SCRAP (School Communities Recycling All Paper). A national event with a long and distinguished history, it attracted over 45,000 people across 5 days and of these around 5,000 camped for the duration.

Preparations start a week in advance on site and the clean-up afterwards lasts for at least 2 to 3 days.

Previous efforts at waste reduction and recycling had been made with a fair degree of success, though sometimes the claims did not match the results.

The festival organisers, to their credit, had taken some steps to contracting stallholders in ways, which constrained the waste generated; but as we found from the actual events, there is much more to be achieved in this vital aspect.

The event's bin system reflected then current ACT government practice with 3 types of bins - Recycling, Compost and Other Garbage. Fine for ACT people who knew it but the majority came from out of town, so there was a huge education

job to be done as people arrived and throughout the event.

Most people were 'recycling conscious' and tried to do the right thing but of course confusion occurred as differing packaging types conflicted with the key messages and if you have 'Other Garbage' bins then garbage is generated.

Despite all this and largely because of the fantastic and dedicated group of volunteers we had,

SCRAP was able to genuinely collect, audit and sort around 18 tonnes of material into a clean compost skip which was actually composted (6 tonnes), a clean recycling stream the vast majority of which was recycled (9 tonnes) and around 3 tonnes went finally to landfill. Not zero waste but almost 80% diverted from landfill.

Of the 20% which went to landfill three quarters of it went during the final clean-up when most volunteers had left and we were overwhelmed with the amounts thrown out by stallholders packing up.

What this meant was that of the 15 tonnes generated during the event itself, SCRAP was able to keep waste to landfill to just 5% (around 750kg), i.e. 95% diverted from landfill!

A full audit report was sent to ACT NOWaste and the National Folk Festival. Phil Spring, NFF Director, said, "An enormous amount of work was done by many people and all credit due to SCRAP's organisation and commitment.

This effort shows that we still need more resources to achieve Zero Waste."

Source: SCRAP Newsletter, Term 3, '03

Carbon Recycling

by Tim Appenzeller

An excerpt from the February 2004 National Geographic magazine:

It's there on a monitor: the forest is breathing. Late summer sunlight filters through a canopy of green as Steven Wofsy unlocks a shed in a Massachusetts woodland and enters a room stuffed with equipment and tangled with wires and hoses.

The machinery monitors the vital functions of a small section of Harvard Forest in the center of the state. Bright red numbers dance on a gauge, flickering up and down several times a second. The reading reveals the carbon dioxide concentration just above the treetops near the shed, where instruments on a hundred-foot (30-meter) tower of steel lattice sniff the air. The numbers are running surprisingly low for the beginning of the 21st century: around 360 parts per million, ten less than the global average. That's the trees' doing. Basking in the sunshine, they inhale carbon dioxide and turn it into leaves and wood.

In nourishing itself, this patch of pine, oak, and maple is also undoing a tiny bit of a great global change driven by humanity. Start the car, turn on a light, adjust the thermostat, or do just about anything, and you add carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. If you're an average resident of the United States, your contribution adds up to more than five metric tons of carbon a year. The coal, oil, and natural gas that

drive the industrial world's economy all contain carbon inhaled by plants hundreds of millions of years ago—carbon that now is returning to the atmosphere through smokestacks and exhaust pipes, joining emissions from forest burned to clear land in poorer countries. Carbon dioxide is foremost in an array of gases from human activity that increase the atmosphere's ability to trap heat. (Methane from cattle, rice fields, and landfills, and the chlorofluorocarbons in some refrigerators and air conditioners are others.) Few scientists doubt that this greenhouse warming of the atmosphere is already taking hold. Melting glaciers, earlier springs, and a steady rise in global average temperature are just some of its harbingers. By rights it should be worse. Each year humanity dumps roughly 8 billion metric tons of carbon into the atmosphere, 6.5 billion tons from fossil fuels and 1.5 billion from deforestation. But less than half that total, 3.2 billion tons, remains in the atmosphere to warm the planet. Where is the missing carbon? "It's a really

major mystery, if you think about it," says Wofsy, an atmospheric scientist at Harvard University. His research site in the Harvard Forest is apparently not the only place where nature is breathing deep and helping save us from ourselves. Forests, grasslands, and the waters of the oceans must be acting as carbon sinks. They steal back roughly half of the carbon dioxide we emit, slowing its buildup in the atmosphere and delaying the effects on climate.

Who can complain? No one, for now. But the problem is that scientists can't be sure that this blessing will last, or whether, as the globe continues to warm, it might even change to a curse if forests and other ecosystems change from carbon sinks to sources, releasing more carbon into the atmosphere than they absorb. The doubts have sent researchers into forests and rangelands, out to the tundra and to sea, to track down and understand the missing carbon. Get the whole story in the pages of National Geographic magazine or visit www.nationalgeographic.com

What is Biomass?

Perhaps the least known source of renewable energy is biomass. We may have all heard of it but probably only a few of us could accurately describe what it is and how it works.

While biomass has less profile than wind, hydro or solar power, it plays an equally important role in sustaining our planet. In 2001/02 approximately 60% of Australia's Green Power sales were sourced from biomass facilities, helping to reduce the need for traditional coal-fired electricity.

The simplest way to define "biomass" is organic matter located within the Earth. Energy can be created by utilising various forms of biomass such as waste from farming activities, methane gas from landfill and even elements of sewage effluent.

A common form of biomass generation in Queensland is using bagasse as a fuel source. Bagasse is the waste from harvesting sugar cane.

This is an excellent example of how waste products can be put to good use.

When there is insufficient bagasse for the generators, other green waste that would ordinarily end up in council refuse dumps or landfill can be used to supplement it.

The use of native tree forest wood as a biomass source should not ever be supported by anyone.

Source: *Earth's Choice Green Energy*, V5.

pic

Astrological Environmental Guide to Leos (23/7 - 22/8)

by David Harris

Your sunny disposition is enough to brighten up the most polluted, pillaged environment, so use your natural charm, looks and personality to impress upon those in authority that we can all do a little more to make our intended landscape more pleasant and sustainable for the future generations.

It is your responsibility to do so.

pic

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