

ECONEWS #212

EcoNews is a free monthly newsletter, funded by your kind donations. It dreams of a world blessed by the harmony of nature, the pleasures of community, and the joys of personal fulfillment, guided and protected by our active citizenship.

To receive EcoNews by email, sign up at www.earthfuture.com/econews. To receive it by mail send your address to Guy Dauncey, EcoNews, 395 Conway Rd, Victoria V9E 2B9.

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| Advertising | \$100 | \$75 | |
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THE ECO-PERSONALS

\$1 a word. Max 5 lines, non-profits, low-income free. 1" box ad \$50

* **Lovely room to rent**, close to ocean, downtown, cooking facilities, \$35/night, weekly and monthly rates 250-382-3810.

* **Unused letter-sized envelopes** still needed for EcoNews. Guy, 881-1304

* **Metchisin:** Large, lovely furnished room, private bath. Deck with forest view. Shared kitchen, close to Galloping Goose and parks. \$550, includes utilities. Available May 1. mbwa@shaw.ca

* **Volunteers wanted** to supervise ecological restoration activities at three Saanich middle schools, April 19-21, for Peninsula Streams Society program Creatures of Habitat, an environmental education program for Grade six students. www.creaturesofhabitat.ca

* **Want to grow organic food** but need space? New initiative in Hillside-Quadra. Help with garden set-up for your yard or balcony, organic training and materials. Call Marion, 250-388-7696

* Gulf Islanders For Safe Technology - lobbying BC Hydro for non-wireless Smart Meter options. www.gifst.ca

* **Cohousing at Mary Lake**, in the Highlands. Amazing opportunity to live green in strong community, surrounded by beauty. Call Koi Neah 250-474 4324

* **City Harvest Co-operative** is launching a CSA Veggie Box Program, offering 20 weekly boxes of fresh local organic produce grown in members' backyards. www.cityharvestcoop.com

ORGANIC and ECO-FARMING

"You'll never be able to feed the world with organic farming - people will starve." How many times have we heard this from one expert or another, insisting that chemical pesticides and fertilizers are essential for our future?

Well, they are wrong. In March, a UN report on Agro-Ecology and the Right to Food (www.srfood.org) showed that if farmers in the developing world moved to ecological agriculture, reducing their use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, they could double their food production within a decade, while mitigating climate change and alleviating rural poverty. Eco-farming projects in 57 nations have increased crop yield by 80%; projects in 20 African countries have resulted in 100% yield increases within 3-10 years with innovations such as planting insect-repelling plants in corn fields. In Malawi, agro-ecology is now benefiting 1.3 million of its poorest people who are seeing maize yields increase from 1 to 2-3 tons a hectare.

In the developed world, the Rodale Institute in Pennsylvania has been running a side-by-side Farming System Trials experiment for 27 years, testing three methods of growing corn and soy: (a) organic, rotating with perennial forage crops for cows, fertilized with manure; (b) organic, rotating grains with cover crops fertilized by nitrogen-fixing legumes; (c) conventional, with synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. For corn, all three systems produce equivalent yields. For soy beans, the manured and conventional crop yields are the same, while the legume fertilized yields are only slightly lower.

When there is moderate drought, in four years out of five the organic systems produce 31% *more* corn than the conventional systems, and hold 15-20% more water, because they build more organic matter in the soil, retain more soil nitrogen and store more carbon. When I was researching the solutions for farmers for my latest book *The Climate Challenge*, I found that if the whole world changed to organic farming on 1.5 billion hectares of cropland, the global carbon in the atmosphere could be reduced by 11% as the soil absorbed it. These chemicals, and the agricultural nightmare being imposed on farmers make no sense at all. We *can* feed the world with organic agriculture. Repeat after me:

Organic is good

Organic is best

Organic can feed the world.

In America, the Organic Consumers Association is organizing a big campaign called Millions Against Monsanto. You can join by going to their website, buying a T-shirt or bumper sticker, downloading "Ten Things Monsanto Does Not Want You to Know", and spreading the word. See www.organicconsumers.org/monsanto

TO BEE, OR NOT TO HONEY BEE?

It's spreading. The collapse of honey bee colonies is now being observed in China, and a quarter of Japan's beekeepers have recently faced the sudden losses of their colonies. It has also appeared in Egypt. The authors of a new UNEP report have issued a stark warning, calling for profound changes to the way humans manage the planet. "Human beings have fabricated the illusion that in the 21st century they have the technological prowess to be independent of nature. Bees underline the reality that we are more, not less, dependent on nature's services in a world of close to seven billion people," said Achin Stein, Executive Director of UNEP.

The cause of the collapse is being assigned to a number of factors, including the use of systemic insecticides; a decline in flowering plants; air pollution; parasites and pests; the transformation of rural areas that has triggered a decline in wild bees and other pollinators; the subsequent use of industrial scale bee hives that are trucked all over the country to provide bees for farmers; and vast monocropping on farms, giving the bees no variety to feed on.

Just 100 crop species provide 90% of the world's food, and of these over 70 need to be pollinated by bees.

On Vancouver Island there was an 85% decline in honey bee colonies in 2009/2010. In response, the Land Conservancy has launched the Native Pollinator Enhancement Project, managed by Natalie Chambers from Madrona Farm. There are 400 native bee species in BC, and the project's goal is to work with the farming community to demonstrate the best ways to help them. These include using more native plants and flowers, setting aside undisturbed areas, adapting cover crops mixes to increase

bee forage, allowing certain crops to go to flower before plowing them in, and not using pesticides. See www.bit.ly/bringbackbees, and call Natalie at 250-479-8053 - she has an entertaining visual presentation.

INTEGREEN CONCERT

Have you ever thought how handy it would be if a single website served as the portal for the whole environmental community locally? A place where you could learn who's doing what in each sector of the movement, and get involved? www.Integreen.ca, set up by UVic student Lliam Hildebrand, is aiming to provide just such a service. So check it out, and make sure your group is listed. On Sat April 9th, there's a big launch at the Integreen Action First Concert. with Juno nominated singer Hanah Georgas. If you complete an agreed eco-action before the concert, tickets are \$15, not \$40. See www.integreen.ca



EARTH DAY

A BILLION ACTS OF GREEN

Immediately after the concert, there's the big Earth Walk on Saturday April 16th - a joyful and colourful parade from the Legislature to Centennial Square. earthwalkvictoria.ca. Then it's Earth Day on Friday April 22nd a chance to dream up a special way to celebrate our home, this precious planet. I invite every reader to think of ONE special thing you will do on Earth Day, and tell your friends about it on Facebook, Twitter, or in person. Join the global commitment to "A Billion Acts of Green". Could be a green dinner party; a day of walking and cycling; writing a personal letter to a leader; doing a morning meditation or prayer for the Earth; organizing a green bag lunch meeting with colleagues at work; even simply picking up the litter on your local streets is an action of respect and love. See www.earthday.org

GLOBAL FISHERIES CRISIS

On Thursday April 14th, 6:30pm at the Laurel Point Inn, UBC is bringing its travelling "Do Fish Have a Future?"

Dialogue to Victoria, with some major expertise. Globalized industrial overfishing is emptying the world's oceans of fish. It's a crisis that is parallel in cause to global warming, the collapse of bee colonies, and the toxification of our children's bodies by industrial chemicals - they all stem back to the unconscious belief that humans can never really harm the planet, and that free market economics is the best way to bring wealth and prosperity to all. On the oceans, it's a total disaster. With the tuna, it's the Italian and Japanese mafia who are now calling the shots. At the current rate, the big fish will all be gone by 2015, and *all* fish will be gone by 2048. Global warming makes things worse - there has been a 40% decline in the ocean phytoplankton since 1950, and it continues to disappear at 1% a year. What a mess. Come to the UBC event to learn more, and get engaged in the solutions.

"FISH DON'T FEEL PAIN"

...but it's just not true. Brain research published in Der Spiegel shows that when goldfish, trout, salmon, carp and cod are poked by a needle, a flurry of neuron messages are transmitted to the very region of the brain where pain signals are processed by birds and animals. Rainbow trout have more than 20 brain receptors in the very area where a barbed fishing hook penetrates its flesh - and when they were injected with bee venom they ventilated vigorously for over three hours, rocking back and forth on the floor of their tank. The hormone oxytocin has also been found in fish, telling us that they experience pleasure, too. We need to eliminate the fisherman's denial, which tells us that fish have no feelings. Fish experience consciousness. Fish experience pain. Fish experience pleasure. This is the ancient reality we must learn to embrace. To learn more, see www.bit.ly/fishfeelpain.

TRAGEDY IN JAPAN

The pain in Japan continues, even while the world's attention goes elsewhere. The Red Cross is one of the best ways to channel support - www.redcross.ca. Dr Masaru Emoto, founder of the Emoto Peace Project in Japan, is urging us to extend our sympathy not only to the Japanese people but also to the water that has been so harmed by the nuclear radiation. He writes: "Let's send our thoughts of love and gratitude to all water in the nuclear plants in Fukushima. Please say the following:

"The water of Fukushima Nuclear Plant, we are sorry to make you suffer. Please forgive us. We thank you, and we love you," and repeat it three times as you put your hands together in sincere prayer. Thank you very much from my heart." See www.emotopeaceproject.blogspot.com

NDP LEADERSHIP RACE

A trusted friend in the Comox Valley went to a NDP Leadership debate there, and came away hugely impressed by Dana Larsen: "I was absolutely shocked at how clearly he understood and advocated for Sustainable BC (SBC). He clearly understood that it is a whole vision about why and in what way we govern, including our precious and endangered Earth and the ecosystems and species to whom our existence is inextricably tied. I was overwhelmed to finally hear a leadership candidate who fully understands SBC and is very capable of putting its vision forward."

DEEP OCEAN OFFSHORE WIND

Vancouver Island has fantastic wind energy potential off the west coast - but the Pacific ocean there is too deep for conventional wind turbines which need to stand on the ocean bottom, no more than 20 metres deep. In Norway, Statoil Hydro has pioneered the world's first floating wind turbine, named Hywind, which is currently working 10 km off the southwest Norwegian coast. The 2.3 MW turbine is attached to a 100 metre-long steel tube weighted with gravel which floats vertically beneath the surface, tethered to the ocean floor with slack cables attached to giant concrete blocks on the seafloor that allow the turbine to drift by 8 metres in any direction.

The region was chosen precisely because of its strong winds and storms, but the turbine has never swayed by more than 3 degrees, and in March 2010, it produced power for 46% of the time - in contrast to 30% for regular wind turbines. Based on its success, Statoil will build a 15 MW floating wind farm in two years, and if it is a commercial success, it will build similar farms in Spain, Japan and other countries where the ocean drops away quickly into deep water.

Japan built its nuclear power plants because it urgently needed energy to power its industrial revolution. Its future energy may come peacefully and harmlessly from the very ocean that so recently drowned it.