



52 tips for biodiversity



EUROPEAN
COMMISSION



environment

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52 tips for biodiversity

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

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FOREWORD

Biodiversity – the variety of life on Earth – makes our planet habitable and beautiful. Many of us look to the natural environment for pleasure, inspiration or recreation. We also depend on it for food, energy, raw materials, air and water – the elements that make life as we know it possible and drive our economies.

Yet despite its unique value, we often take nature for granted. The pressures on many natural systems are growing, causing them to function less effectively or even taking them to the brink of collapse. Biodiversity loss, as we call it, is an all too common occurrence.

This is why the European Union is committed to halting biodiversity loss. Over the last 25 years, the EU has built up a network of 26 000 protected areas within its borders, covering more than 850 000 km². Known as Natura 2000, it is the largest network of protected areas in the world, and a testament to the importance we attach to biodiversity. We are determined to strengthen this landmark programme with further long-term measures.

And we can all do more to help. We all have the power to help safeguard biodiversity and we need everyone to join in. Everyone can make small changes in their daily habits without dramatically affecting their lifestyles. These small changes, added together, can help.

We hope that the tips in this handy guide will help you to make that difference. Eating local foods when they are in season, reducing wasted water, composting food waste, or getting to know more about the animal and plant species that live in your local areas...if everyone takes just some of these simple steps it will make a big difference in preserving natural resources for future generations.

Janez Potočnik
European Commissioner for Environment

WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY?

Biodiversity is all around us and we are part of it. There are three main elements:

- ◆ The different types of species which live on Earth – including animals, plants, vegetables, fungi, algae, bacteria and even viruses;
- ◆ The differences between individuals of the same species – their sizes, shapes and colours;
- ◆ Different ecosystems – for instance, oceans, forests or coral reefs – and the species which live in them and their interactions.

Scientists have recorded around 1.9 million different living species on Earth, but the real number is certain to be much, much higher. Many are microscopic or live deep underground or in the oceans, others have simply not yet been discovered.

WHY IS BIODIVERSITY IMPORTANT?

The result of 3.8 billion years of evolution, biodiversity is essential to human survival. We rely on nature for many essential resources, including food, building materials, warmth, textiles or the active ingredients in medicines. In addition, there are other vital functions that nature provides, from the pollination of plants, to the filtering of air, water and soil, to protection against floods.

Life as we know it on Earth would be impossible without these essential materials and services. Unfortunately, all too often we forget what nature gives us. In our industrialised societies, biodiversity is taken for granted, and seen as something free and eternal. However, the reality is that the pressures we put on nature are increasing and many human activities are posing a major threat to the existence of numerous species.

The list of pressures on biodiversity is long and includes the destruction and fragmentation of habitats; pollution of the air, water and land; overfishing and overuse of resources, forests and land; the introduction of non-native species; and the release of increasing amounts of greenhouse gases that cause climate change.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO PROTECT BIODIVERSITY?

This booklet has 52 suggestions that will help you to make a difference each week of the year, including:

- ◆ Practical things you can do every day;
- ◆ Raising awareness within your community;
- ◆ Helping research by watching and recording wildlife and ecosystems;
- ◆ Using sustainable techniques in your garden;
- ◆ Construction and DIY projects.

For more information on biodiversity, go to:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/index_en.htm

I SUPPORT NATURE-PROTECTION ASSOCIATIONS.

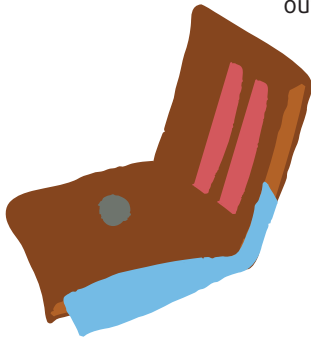
Week
1



The principal objective of these associations is to stop the degradation of biodiversity and, when necessary, to preserve or re-establish balance among the various biotypes protected (forests, rivers, ponds, parks, urban gardens, etc.), in step with human activity.



What actions do they take? They monitor species, set up and manage natural reserves, restore rare environments, organise conferences, host nature-discovery walks and awareness-raising days, and carry out targeted actions (such as operations to save toads), etc.



If you would like to support these associations, you can become a member, make a donation, buy their publications and products, participate as a volunteer in their conservation projects, etc.



I DO NOT DISTURB ANIMALS WHEN I AM OUT WALKING.

Week
2



Perhaps more than in any other season, you must avoid at all costs disturbing animals when you are out for a nature walk during the wintertime. If you take animals out of their shelters, if you surprise them when they are trying to find food, or if you wake them up when they are hibernating there is a risk that they will use up their few reserves to escape or to hide... and this could be fatal.

So, above all, stay on the paths, make as little noise as possible and observe animals from a distance. After all, like you, they need to have their living space respected...



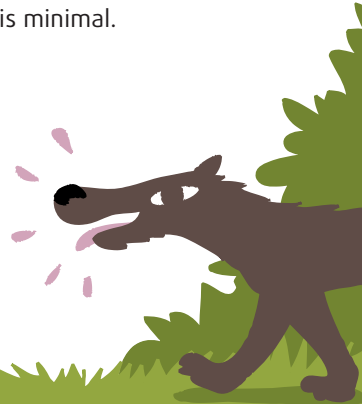
I SUBSCRIBE TO AN ECO-BASKET.

Week
3

By using soft production techniques, cultivating indigenous species without chemical fertilisers or pesticides, ecological agriculture does not exhaust the soil. It limits the pollution of free groundwater and respects nature's assistants (bees, earthworms, etc.) and the surrounding ecosystems.

It also very often draws attention to the value of forgotten local varieties, chosen for their excellent taste or nutritional value: Jerusalem artichokes, ancient wheat, exquisite apples, etc.

By subscribing to an eco-basket, you can participate in a global ecological philosophy. Make sure that the fruit and vegetables you buy are locally produced and in season (little preservation, limited transport) and that the packaging is minimal.



I PROMOTE BIODIVERSITY AT MY WORKPLACE.

Week
4

Are you developing new infrastructures at work? If so, why not integrate them into the surrounding nature (providing a passage for animals, allowing flora and fauna to colonise storm-water basins, etc.). To the greatest extent possible, keep or develop existing trees, diversified hedges, wasteland, ponds, etc.

When it comes to your home, its finishings and furnishings, opt for materials and products that are ecological, natural, durable and recyclable and, if possible, of local origin. Limit waste production and the consumption of non-renewable energy.

By so doing, you will reduce your enterprise's ecological footprint at the same time as improving your work surroundings, brand image and the trading value of the site.



I AM REDUCING MY GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS.

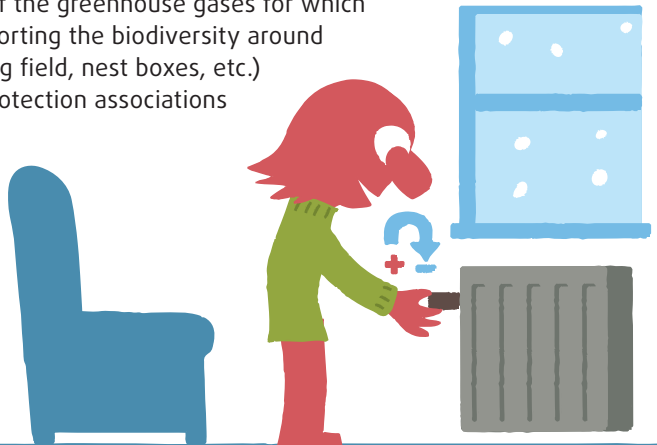
Week
5



When we heat our homes and workplaces, when we travel, when we eat, dress ourselves and even when we breathe... everything we do produces greenhouse gases that threaten the planet. Deserts spread, glaciers shrink, sea levels rise... in short, entire ecosystems are thrown off balance.

Reduce your greenhouse gas emissions by consuming regional, seasonal, eco- labelled products to the greatest extent possible, by walking, riding a bicycle or sharing transport, and by limiting waste.

And compensate for some of the greenhouse gases for which you are responsible by supporting the biodiversity around you (with a pond, a flowering field, nest boxes, etc.) and by supporting nature-protection associations and reforestation projects.



I USE MY PORTABLE COMPUTER FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

Week
6



The manufacture of game consoles and portable computers and telephones requires various minerals (copper, cobalt, lead, etc.), all of which are in increasing demand. The mines from which they come are found around the planet and their exploitation has enormous impact on the surrounding environment.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the famous mineral coltan comes from, the extraordinary biodiversity of the Kivu region is in jeopardy: illegal hunting of the last gorillas, not to mention elephants and okapis, to feed the miners; massive deforestation to provide them with wood for building and heating and to expand the mines; the erosion and pollution of the soil, water and air... not to mention armed conflict.

So, think twice before changing your portable telephone or computer.



I BUY FISH RESPONSIBLY.

Week
7



Red tuna, cod, salmon, sole, turbot... it is urgently recommended that you stop consuming these species. Overfishing, counterproductive capture periods (often at the height of the reproductive season) and certain fishing methods (which destroy the seabed or accidentally catch juvenile fish) threaten the renewal of their populations.

Give fish time to rebuild their populations. Eat fish and crustaceans that belong to non-vulnerable species. And buy fish that are caught locally or that have an MSC label.

For more information about this label: www.msc.org.



I DO NOT THROW RUBBISH ON THE GROUND.

Week
8



Discarding rubbish in nature has an impact on the environment, often with disastrous consequences.

Some waste has an immediate impact: cigarette butts and chewing gum intoxicate or choke animals that ingest them, small mammals and amphibians are trapped in bottles, pieces of broken glass can cut larger animals and, because of their magnifying effect, start fires.

Other rubbish has a more long-term impact: it takes hundreds of years for plastic to decompose, and it releases toxic products while doing so; batteries contain heavy metals that leach into the soil and contaminate free groundwater.

So use public rubbish receptacles and recycle as much as possible.



I HOUSE LOCAL FAUNA IN MY ROOF SPACE.

Week
9



Are you building or renovating? Then think about including shelter for local fauna.

Find out about species that could nest around your home: which would you like to house? Then, make the necessary arrangements: bore holes in a thick wall and leave small spaces (for solitary bees), make holes in building blocks (for bats), provide access to a granary (for birds of prey and bats), set up nesting boxes on the roof and on balconies, etc.

There is a lot you can do. Having the most diversified garden possible will make it easy for your guests to eat. Never use chemical products (pesticides, fertilisers, paints, detergents, etc.).



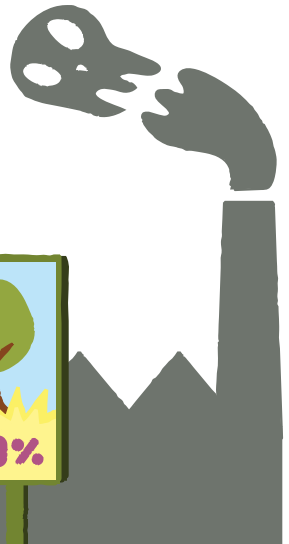
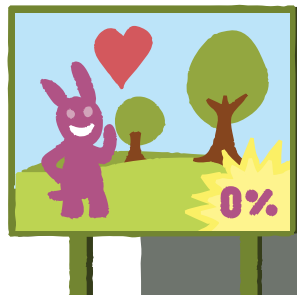
I DO NOT TRUST "GREENWASHING".

Week
10



Some enterprises, particularly car manufacturers, eagerly boast about the "ecological" virtues of products that are far from ecological. Others need to "greenwash" their images because their activities are highly polluting and damaging to biodiversity (production of greenhouse gases, land clearing to expand production capacity, the use of river water to cool machinery, etc.).

Do not be taken in by advertising campaigns that are too green to be true. Report them if necessary. And lobby these companies to reduce their negative impact on the planet. Eco-councillors can give you advice and assistance on how to go about doing this.



I USE NON-POLLUTING HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS.

Week
11



Even after treatment in purification plants, water discharged into rivers contains large quantities of phosphates, solvents, surfactants and other chemical products used in today's detergents. These compounds, often very polluting, can have serious repercussions for biodiversity – aquatic environments in particular – as well as for our health.

What can you do? Choose eco-labelled detergents or, even better, use Marseilles (Castile) soap chips as a detergent, soft soap for cleaning floors, warm vinegar for descaling, and sodium bicarbonate (with or without vinegar) for scouring pots and sinks (and it does not scratch). And, above all, avoid using too much of any cleaning agent – it is much better to have a light hand.



I RESPECT NATURE WHEN I GO FOR A WALK.

Week
12



When you are out walking in nature, be discreet. Make as little noise as possible and, if you want to see wild animals, avoid wearing bright colours or smothering yourself with perfume.

Always keep to the paths so that there is less risk of disturbing animals or of stepping on plants, mosses, mushrooms, etc.

If you take your dog with you, keep it on the leash or make sure it does not stray off the path. Also make sure that it does not bark and scare away nearby animals – in fact, if you want to catch sight of animals, it would be better to leave your faithful companion at home.

Finally, do not throw any rubbish away in natural surroundings and only pick or collect what is allowed.



I ENJOY THE TASTE OF BIODIVERSITY.

Week
13



Founded as a reaction against the endemic spread of fast food and junk food, the Slow Food Association has proven that one of the consequences of improving taste and curiosity among consumers when it comes to food is that it stimulates them to protect biodiversity.

How? It is very simple. Have you ever eaten creamed parsnip, Jerusalem artichoke chips or snail caviar? When you do, you will contribute to safeguarding forgotten varieties (such as tubers) and threatened species (such as the sturgeon).

To learn more about this eco-gastronomical association, its work and about the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, visit: www.slowfood.com.



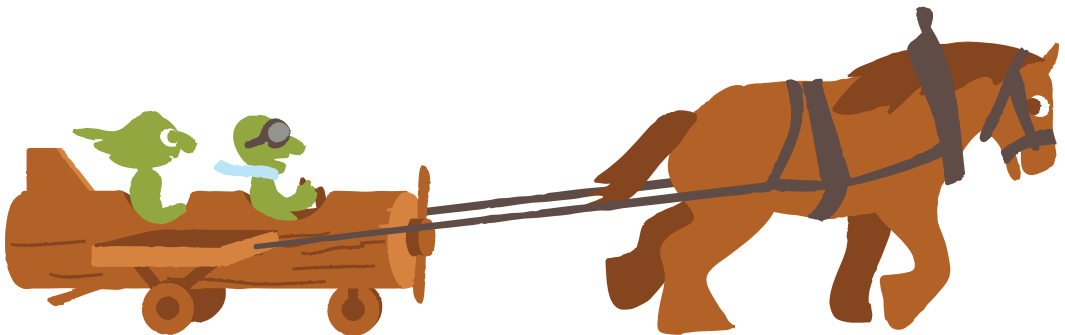
I LIMIT THE CO₂ EMITTED DURING MY TRAVELS AND COMPENSATE FOR IT.

Week
14



You should also think about limiting your greenhouse gas emissions, including the infamous CO₂, when you go on holiday. Go hiking or camping (but not camping in the 'wild'), or try eco-tourism. Choose nearby destinations and travel there by bike or train, or, why not by horse-drawn caravan. Once there, consume local products in season, limit your travel in motorised vehicles and do not bother with air conditioning.

If you are unable to avoid travelling by plane, try to take direct flights (take-offs consume enormous amounts of fuel). And compensate for the CO₂ omitted during your trip by financing projects that protect biodiversity and reforestation projects in your region or in far-off countries.



I ORGANISE TEAM BUILDING IN FAVOUR OF BIODIVERSITY.

Week
15



Do you need to strengthen cohesion on your team? Or would you like to spend some time relaxing with your colleagues? What about proposing group activities in favour of biodiversity?

You can organise them at your workplace by taking a census of the animals and plants in the immediate surroundings, by planting hedges and bee-foraging species around the outdoor parking area, by greening the facade of your building, by creating a flower or vegetable garden on the roof, by building nests and shelters and setting them up on and around your company's building, for example.

You can also take part in conservation projects, go on walks to discover specific species or biotypes, participate in operations to save toads, in visits to eco-farms, and so on.



I SAVE EARTHWORMS.

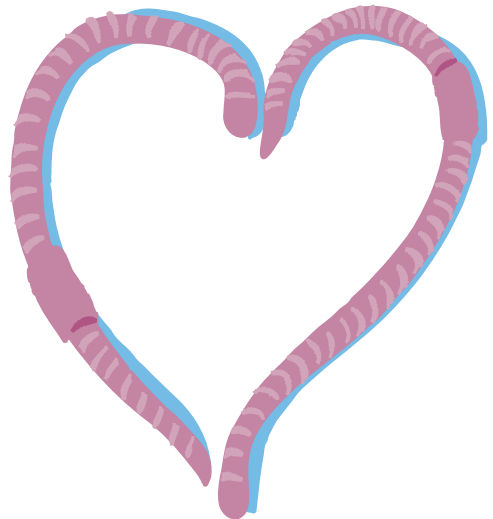
Week
16



Earthworms are an indispensable link in the food chain. They ceaselessly recycle organic matter, such as dead leaves and other decomposing plants. By so doing, they collaborate in the production of good humus and maintain the fertility of the soil in which the fruit and vegetables that we eat are grown.

In addition, their tunnels loosen the soil, which makes it possible for roots to develop well and for water to infiltrate deeply and rapidly, down to where it can be absorbed by plants. This also limits run-off and erosion during periods of heavy rain.

Protect these invaluable partners by refusing to use any chemical fertilisers or pesticides and by working the soil with a broadfork or grelinette.



I STAY AT AN ECO-HOTEL DURING MY HOLIDAYS.

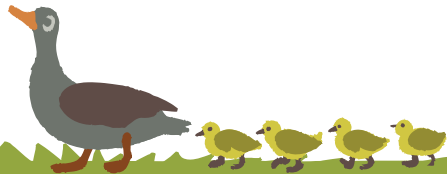
Week
17

Today, there are many eco-labels – such as the European ecological label – for hotels, camping grounds, lodgings and guestrooms.

What are the attribution criteria? Location and architecture (with respect for the surrounding nature), construction materials (ecological, durable, renewable, recyclable, etc.), limited consumption of water and non-renewable energy, reduced production of waste and waste management.

Their interest? These operators focus on the protection of biodiversity through recreation that respects nature and through the discovery of locally grown products, etc.

For more information:
www.ecolabel-tourism.eu



I AM REDUCING MY CONSUMPTION OF DRINKING WATER.

Week
18



Water is indispensable to the health of the planet and that of its occupants, whether they are animals or plants. There is enough water for everyone and everything but, unfortunately, it is badly distributed and often badly managed. Here in Europe, all most of us need to do to get our drinking water is to turn on the tap. And we often use it indiscriminately, for everything, sometimes even to wash the car.

Here is how you can save drinking water: water your plants with rainwater, preferably at the end of the day (to avoid evaporation), recover grey water (dishwater, bathwater, shower water) and use it for flushing, for cleaning floors, etc., and even, after filtering, for watering plants.



I ENCOURAGE MY LOCAL AUTHORITY TO GARDEN ECOLOGICALLY.

Week
19



Some local authorities are now making an effort to plan and manage roadsides and parterres as a way of promoting biodiversity.

If this is not yet the case in your area, you might suggest that the department concerned try these easy-to-apply principles: plant only local species (perennial flowers require less work than annuals), replace chemical pesticides and fertilisers with ecological equivalents, use mulch and groundcover to limit the growth of undesirable plants and to reduce watering, compost green waste and use the compost to feed the soil in the autumn, practise late mowing, and keep some refuge areas.



I PARTICIPATE IN BIODIVERSITY DAY.

Week
20



Proclaimed as “International Biodiversity Day” by the United Nations, May 22 provides an opportunity to raise the awareness of the public at large and our elected representatives about biodiversity, about the state of biodiversity in the world today, and about challenges, threats and protection.

A different theme is chosen each year: biodiversity and agriculture in 2008, exotic invasive species in 2009, biodiversity and development in 2010, and biodiversity and forests in 2011.

Celebrate this day by participating in the activities (exhibitions, conferences, etc.) planned for the occasion. Or organise an eco-picnic or a walk to discover local flora and fauna, or arrange a concert of green music.

For more information: www.cbd.int/idb.



I AM AN ECO-VOLUNTEER.

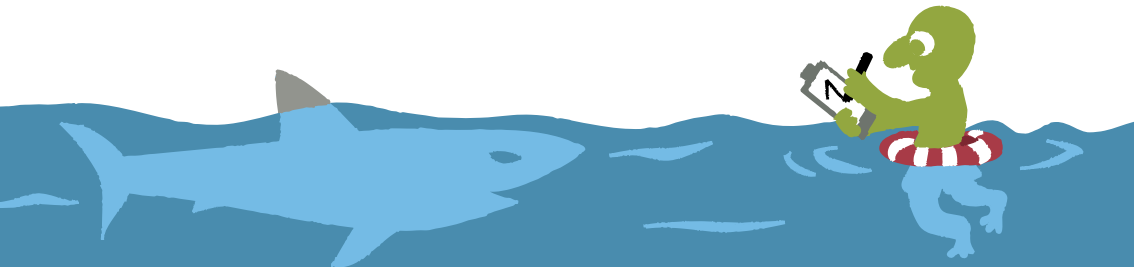
Week
21



Would you like to take advantage of your holiday abroad to protect biodiversity? Then why not become an eco-volunteer!

By discovering places inaccessible to ordinary tourists, you can actively help nature-protection associations by participating in research and conservation projects. And you do not need to be an expert in biology or environmental sciences – anyone can take part in the activities proposed.

So what would you say about doing a census of Mediterranean cetaceans, protecting the bears in Romania, studying the populations of great white sharks off the coast of South Africa, participating in the rehabilitation of gibbons, macaques and lorises in Thailand, or promoting eco-agriculture in India?



I AM CREATING A NATURAL REFUGE FOR BIODIVERSITY.

Week
22



How does one transform a garden – your own, the garden at your children’s school or on your company’s premises – into a natural refuge for biodiversity?

Refuse to use chemical pesticides and fertilisers.

Help spontaneous vegetation grow in a corner of the garden and practise late mowing which makes it possible for plant species to reproduce and diversify and creates a shelter for many animals.

Set up a pond or preserve a dead tree (its cavities can host a variety of animals), leave a log pile or a pile of stones for small mammals, amphibians and various invertebrates.

Diversify a hedge with indigenous species. Plant bee-foraging plants which attract large numbers of insects as well as bees.



I CHOOSE ECO-COSMETICS.

Week
23



Like detergents, most cosmetics sold today contain chemical products (preservatives, synthetic perfumes, surfactants, etc.) which are not biodegradable and are therefore harmful to biodiversity, particularly the aquatic environments into which they are carried by waste water.

Use eco-cosmetics: wash with Marseilles (Castile) soap, perfume your bath with a few drops of essential oil of lavender, clean your skin with an extraction of camomile or blueberry, exfoliate it with wheat- or oat bran, nourish it with sunflower or olive oil, etc. You can even make your own toothpaste. It is easy!



I AM DISCOVERING NATURE IN THE CITY.

Week
24



Contrary to what you might think, there is often more biodiversity in the city than in the country (where monocultures prevail, in both fields and forests).

Surprisingly, there is a great variety of biotypes in the city. Public and private gardens, ponds, parks, forests, streets and avenues, vacant land, wasteland, railway sidings, water-course embankments, etc., not to mention green roofs and terraces, balconies and facades decked with flowers. Even small cracks in sidewalks, at the base of buildings or in walls are colonised by a multitude of wild plants.

But this biodiversity is vulnerable: it is not strong enough to withstand cement mixers and steamrollers.



I HAVE FOUND OUT ABOUT HOW ECO-COTTON IS GROWN.

Week
25



The intensive growing of traditional cotton uses only 3% of cultivable surface area but 25% of the insecticides sold around the world. Soil exhaustion, deforestation, massive irrigation, pollution of free groundwater, exposure of agricultural workers and local species to toxic substances... intensive cotton farming is particularly harmful both to the environment and to human beings.

On the other hand, extensive growing of eco-cotton, with natural fertilisers and pesticides, requires less water, preserves soil fertility (because it is alternated with other crops), and produces cotton that has softer, more resistant fibres.

In addition, eco-cotton is hypoallergenic because it is not chemically treated when made into clothing.



I SAMPLE LOCAL SPECIALITIES WHEN I TRAVEL.

Week
26



When you eat local products where they are grown and produced, you are supporting the farmers who grow indigenous species and thus limiting the pollution caused by transport. This is good for both the local economy and for biodiversity.

Always refuse dishes made from threatened species (turtle steak, red-tuna sushi, sea cucumber, bush meat, etc.) or those whose production has a negative impact on local biodiversity (fishing or hunting without respect for minimum sizes or quotas, cultivation that requires deforestation of a large area, etc.).

Neither should you accept traditional remedies and cosmetics based on rhinoceros horn, elephant tusk, tiger meat or bone, the musk from musk deer, etc.

A list of threatened species is available at:
www.cites.org
www.iucnredlist.org



I HAVE DOWNLOADED ANIMAL SOUNDS ON TO MY MOBILE PHONE.

Week
27



The American Centre for Biological Diversity is proposing an original way of raising the awareness of every citizen to today's biodiversity crisis. You can now download, free of charge, the sounds of rare animals, of animals threatened with extinction, and of those that could become threatened – and use these sounds as cell-phone ring tones.

The shriek of the peregrine falcon, the bleating of the giant panda, the song of the beluga whale... whichever ring tone you choose, it will be sure to surprise those who hear it, giving you an opportunity to talk about the threatened animal that makes it.

You can download these ring tones and read descriptions of the corresponding animals at:
www.rareearthtones.org.



I USE MINERAL SUN CREAM.

Week
28



Most sun creams contain chemical UV filters that often cause allergies. When they end up in the sea, lakes and rivers, they can disrupt the hormonal balance of animals – including humans – and are partially responsible for coral bleaching.

Some tourist sites, such as the Xel-Há Aquatic Park in Mexico, have taken the threat seriously: only mineral sun creams are allowed. These creams are a little more difficult to apply and sometimes leave white traces because of their mineral filters, but they are effective and definitely less toxic to you and to nature.

Another solution is to use a T-shirt or wetsuit when you go swimming.



I PROMOTE THE PASSAGE OF ANIMALS THROUGH MY NEIGHBOURHOOD.

Week
29

A significant part of urban green space is made up of private gardens. They are often islands of green in the middle of blocks of houses and are frequently walled. Encourage your neighbours to create small access tunnels between gardens by removing one or two bricks near the bottom of each wall. This will make it possible for hedgehogs, shrews, frogs, toads, etc. to get through.

And, to connect these green islands, convince the local authorities to plant trees along your streets (creating a bridge for squirrels, for example, above the street) or to make passages (like toad-ducts) through speed humps.



I BUY GARDEN FURNITURE MADE FROM CERTIFIED WOOD.

Week
30



Wood has at least two advantages: it is more resistant than plastic and it is not derived from oil. When you buy FSC- or PEFC-certified furniture, you are certain that the wood from which it is made comes from sustainably managed forests and not from temperal or boreal forests negatively affected by biodiversity regression or from over-exploited humid tropical forests.

Select local wood from among the labelled varieties available since it is just as resistant as exotic wood but involves less energy-consuming and polluting transport. If you treat it, choose natural products based on linseed oil, beeswax or vegetable oil.

For more information about these labels:

www.fsc.org

www.pefc.org



I HAVE REDUCED MY CONSUMPTION OF MEAT.

Week
31



Why? In order to raise livestock, it is necessary to have pastures or to produce forage (soy, corn, beets, colza, etc.), all of which requires a very large surface area, often carved out at the expense of forests. In addition, it takes an enormous amount of water and pesticides to grow forage crops, resulting in the exhaustion and pollution of free groundwater.

And that is not all! When ruminants digest, they produce vast quantities of methane, one of the most potent greenhouse gases, particularly when they are fed with protein crops, such as soy.

Finally, too much meat is not good for us (hypocholesterolaemia, cancer, diabetes, etc.). Instead, eat lentils, eggs, cheese, legumes or fruit several times a week.



I BUY MY HOLIDAY SOUVENIRS RESPONSIBLY.

Week
32



Make sure that the souvenirs you bring back from your holidays have not been made from threatened species. Boycott anything containing coral, ivory, sea-tortoise shell, Brazilian rosewood (*Dalbergia nigra*), for example.

Some objects (crocodile-skin bags, butterfly-wing art, etc.) may have been made using animals raised in captivity or plants reproduced in artificial environments. Do not buy them unless they have a CITES permit: this certificate, necessary for the products to pass through customs, guarantees that their sale is permitted and does not constitute a threat to biodiversity.

The CITES is an international convention that regulates the trade in animal and plant species threatened with extinction.

For more information: www.cites.org.



I DO NOT CONTRIBUTE TO THE “GARBAGE ISLANDS” IN THE WORLD’S OCEANS AND SEAS.

Week
33

Veritable islands of rubbish generated by human beings are being formed in the world’s oceans and seas by the action of marine currents. The “Great Pacific Garbage Patch” alone occupies nearly 3.5 million square kilometres.

These islands consist primarily of plastic. Plastic takes between 500 and 1 000 years to decompose (and in so doing, it releases numerous toxic products) and can choke fish, turtles, birds and marine mammals who swallow plastic strips and shreds, mistaking them for prey.

What can you do about this? Limit your use of plastic (bags, bottles, etc.), never throw anything away in nature (even far from the sea) and discuss these garbage islands with people around you as many are unaware that they even exist.



I AM SUPPORTING A REFORESTATION PROJECT.

Week
34



Every day, hundreds of hectares of forest disappear on our planet. They are cleared to increase areas for cultivation or habitation, or are over-exploited to provide us with wood for construction and furniture.

Many NGOs organise reforestation projects in the most affected areas. If the organisations have a positive ecological impact (in the fight against desertification, landslides, etc.), if they improve biodiversity in the area (the planting of threatened plant species, the fight against habitat fragmentation, etc.) and if they are supported by local populations, contribute to them by making a donation. Or, why not go to where they operate and become an eco-volunteer.



I LIMIT LIGHT POLLUTION OUTDOORS.

Week
35

In both the country and the city, the lighting of highways, streets and gardens makes it possible for various creatures (human beings, foxes, etc.) to extend their night-time activities.

But artificial light disturbs many species. Animals whose sight is adapted to nocturnal light (owls, rats, etc.) have difficulty seeing obstacles, prey and predators. Migratory birds are disoriented. Moths beat against lights until they are exhausted. Male fireflies are unable to perceive the luminous signals sent by the females of the species and thus are unable to reproduce.

So, if you want to light your garden, terrace, doorstep, etc. at night, choose non-glare lights, point them downwards, and turn them off when you go inside.



I HAVE INTRODUCED ECO-EATING IN MY CANTEEN.

Week
36



Company restaurants, canteens in schools, day-care centres, hospitals and rest homes – collective kitchens feed a lot of people.

Persuade those responsible for your canteen to get their supplies from local eco-producers, to serve fruit and vegetables in season, to reduce the portions of meat and fish and to replace them regularly with dishes based on cereals, legumes, eggs, cheese, etc. to help people discover forgotten varieties (Jerusalem artichoke, rutabaga, etc.), to reduce and compost uncooked waste (such as fruit/vegetable peel and eggshells).

The cooks will have to adapt their techniques a little but the results will have a very positive effect, both on biodiversity and on your health.



I PARTICIPATE IN THE 'LET'S PLANT FOR THE PLANET' CAMPAIGN.

Week
37



Trees provide us with food, fuel, building materials, fibres and medicines. They also provide shelter for many mammals, birds, invertebrates, mosses, mushrooms, etc. And they capture carbon dioxide, release oxygen, prevent erosion, maintain soil humidity, lower the temperature by several degrees, increase the relative humidity of the air, and contribute significantly to maintaining climatic balance.

But they are threatened by increasing deforestation. To fight against the ravages of this deforestation, participate in the Let's Plant for the Planet campaign, led by the United Nations' Environment Programme.

For more information:
www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign.



I LOBBY FOR ROADS ADAPTED TO BIODIVERSITY.

Week
38



Encourage your local authorities to improve the environment and quality of roads.
What can they do?

Plan roads so as to minimise their environmental impact.

Choose quieter road surfaces and use recycled materials.

Install appropriate lighting (non-glare, directed downwards, with solar collectors).

Create or facilitate passages for animals (toads, squirrels, deer, etc.).

Plant thick hedges along roads, particularly to channel fauna towards ecoducts and to absorb some of the pollution (atmosphere, sound, light) created.

Maintain roadsides at appropriate times (pruning trees and bushes outside of the nesting season, late mowing, etc.).



I DO NOT BUY CLOTHING THAT NEEDS TO BE DRY-CLEANED.

Week
39



Most dry-cleaners use perchloroethylene (or tetrachloroethylene). This solvent is toxic for those who handle it: it irritates the skin and mucous membranes, and can cause nausea, headache and loss of consciousness. It accumulates in the body and is probably carcinogenic.

Normally used in closed circuits, it is nevertheless found in free groundwater and rivers. It is equally very harmful to the environment – to aquatic ecosystems in particular.

Today, ecological dry-cleaners using biodegradable products only (water in particular) are still very rare. The solution? Avoid buying clothes and household linens that need to be dry-cleaned.



I AM HAVING A GREEN ROOF INSTALLED AT HOME.

Week
40

In the city, a green roof is an additional refuge for numerous insects and birds. But this is not the only reason it is of interest – far from it! It retains a lot of rainwater. It improves the quality of the ambient air. It protects the building from variations in temperature and even provides a certain degree of acoustic insulation.

The choice of plants is based on the type of roof (it must be flat or have only a gentle incline), the weight it can bear and the time you are prepared to spend maintaining its vegetation (mosses, succulents and grasses only require maintenance once a year). For optimal results, contact a specialist company.



I DO NOT INTRODUCE EXOTIC SPECIES INTO THE WILD.

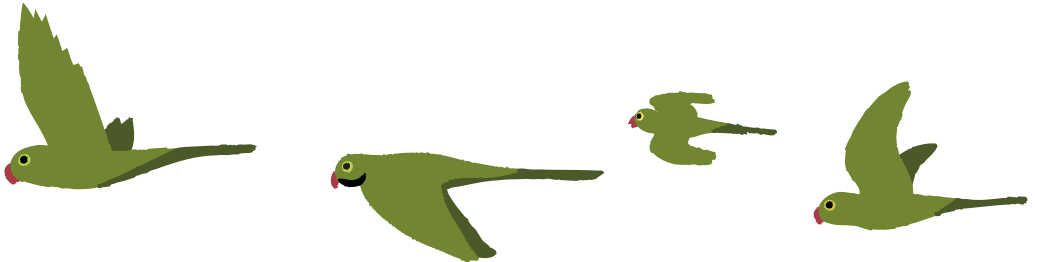
Week
41



Introducing exotic animals into the wild – willingly or otherwise – may create problems: some animals (such as muskrat, American mink, Canada goose) acclimatise perfectly and proliferate. The same applies to plants (Black cherry, Giant hogweed, Ragweed, etc.).

In the absence of natural predators that keep down populations in their original environments, some exotic species become so invasive that they threaten indigenous species. Also, these invasive species may have significant economic impact and negative effects on human health. Finally, it is often very difficult, and expensive, to eliminate these species once they have taken hold.

So, if you have exotic species at home, please take every necessary precaution to prevent them from spreading into the wild.



I AM DISCOVERING THE 'HOT SPOTS' OF BIODIVERSITY.

Week
42



Such regions are among the richest in biodiversity. They are home to approximately 60% of the planet's plant, bird, mammal, reptile and amphibian species, of which almost half are endemic (that is, particular to these regions). But they are also the most threatened. They have already lost at least 70% of their primary vegetation and are home to almost 75% of the most endangered animal species.

Currently, 34 land hot spots requiring urgent intervention have been identified (marine hot spots have not yet been identified). So act now by supporting the nature protection associations that are operating in these regions.

For more information: www.biodiversityhotspots.org.



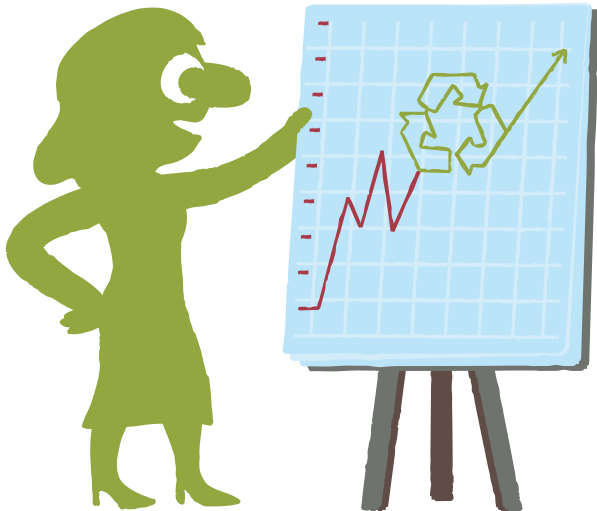
I ENCOURAGE MY COMPANY TO TAKE ACTION FOR BIODIVERSITY.

**Week
43**



Convince your company to compensate for its environmental impact (its CO₂ emissions, its site along a watercourse, etc.) and to increase its commitment to biodiversity.

How? By supporting nature-protection associations (that restore special ecosystems, protect threatened species, etc.), by financing scientific inventory and conservation programmes, by sharing profits with third countries that have provided raw materials or genetic resources, by setting up a foundation dedicated to safeguarding biodiversity, by involving employees, by sending them into the field, etc.

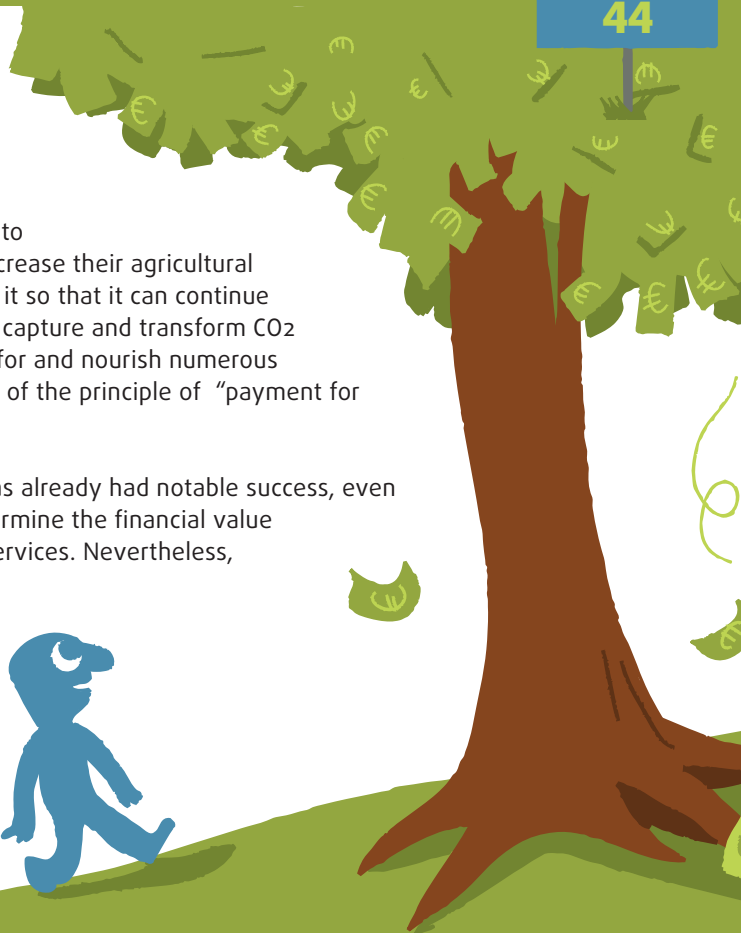


I HAVE DISCOVERED PAYMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES.

Week
44

Farmers are paid because they agree (in spite of a certain loss of income) to not clear a forest in order to increase their agricultural land but rather to maintain it so that it can continue to absorb run-off water, to capture and transform CO₂ into O₂, to provide shelter for and nourish numerous species. This is an example of the principle of “payment for environmental services”.

This innovative principle has already had notable success, even though it is difficult to determine the financial value of certain environmental services. Nevertheless, if it appeals to you, talk about it with the people around you. It is possible that the idea will not fall on deaf ears.



I ORGANISE NEIGHBOURHOOD CLEAN-UPS.

Week
45



Get together with your neighbours and, with the support of local authorities, clean up your neighbourhood.

Pick up rubbish (tins, cans, bottles, buckets, tyres, TV screens, cans of paint, etc.) along the roadside and river embankments and in thickets that have become rubbish dumps. Pull down plastic bags caught in trees. Separate all this rubbish and take it to a waste-disposal centre.

By doing this, you will limit the pollution of ecosystems such as watercourses and wasteland. And you will help animals avoid many dangers, such as harming themselves when they walk on broken glass or choking on pieces of plastic mistaken for food.



I AM REDUCING MY CONSUMPTION OF PAPER AND CARDBOARD.

Week
46



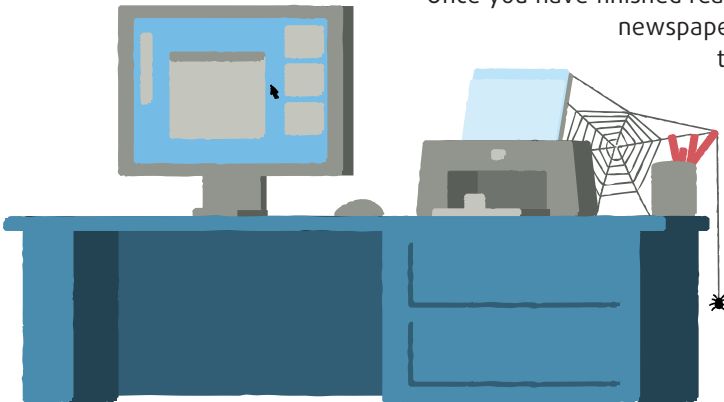
Consume less paper and cardboard and you will protect forests, limit the energy and water used to manufacture these products and reduce the waste generated.

If you need to print a document, use both sides of the paper or 'recycle' the blank sides as scrap paper. Reuse envelopes where possible and keep the others for making shopping lists and noting down messages.

When possible, choose alternatives of recycled or FSC- or PEFC-labelled paper (notebooks, toilet paper, wallpaper, etc.), of material (napkins, handkerchiefs, bags, etc.) or online alternatives (directories, transfers, etc.).

Once you have finished reading your books, newspapers and magazines, pass them on to others.

And, of course, recycle your paper and cardboard.



I USE THE INTERNET TO ACT FOR BIODIVERSITY.

Week
47



You can act for biodiversity simply by going on the internet. There are search engines that suggest a different gesture in favour of the planet to their users every day. Others keep track of your visits and plant a tree every time you have made 100 or 500 searches. While others are displayed on a black background (less energy-consuming than the white version) or donate all or part of their advertising revenue to nature-protection associations.

You can also calculate your ecological footprint online, finance programmes that compensate for the CO₂ emitted during your plane trips, find out about eco-labels, and share your experience in protecting biodiversity on blogs, forums, social network sites, etc.



I HAVE BECOME A “LOCAVORE”.

Week
48



If you want to become a locavore, you must only eat food produced locally. By so doing, you will limit the discharge of CO₂ into the atmosphere when food is transported (many animals and plants are at risk of extinction because of climate change resulting from the increase in greenhouse gases), and you will support producers in your region who grow or raise indigenous species.

Indeed, this also involves consuming fruit and vegetables in season. They often taste much better – especially if they are eco-products – than their international equivalents (the growing of which can require huge quantities of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, while transporting them is very polluting). For you, this is a win-win situation.



I LIMIT THE DISCHARGE OF MEDICINES INTO NATURE.

Week
49



A large part of the active ingredients in the medicines we take is discharged into our toilets. Resistant to treatment at water-purification plants, they turn up in rivers and seas where they act on aquatic flora and fauna.

Their effects are not yet well known but it seems that, for example, certain fish exposed to the synthetic oestrogen used in contraceptive pills become hermaphrodites.

What can you do? Take medicine only when it is really necessary (antibiotics are useless against viral infections) and return any unused or expired medicines to the pharmacy (never throw them into the rubbish or down the toilet).



I CHOOSE GIFTS WITH BIODIVERSITY IN MIND.

Week
50



Out of gift ideas? Choose objects that give you a chance to talk about biodiversity, about the benefits it provides and about how important it is to protect it. This is a pleasant way of bringing up a topic so essential to the health of our planet.

Offer do-it-yourselfers a manual about natural paints, give gourmets a book about edible flowers, present globetrotters with a guide to eco-tourism, and offer naturalists a pair of binoculars...

You can make a gift of Aleppo soap (100% natural) and create interest in using natural detergents. With the gift of a box of eco-chocolates, you give rise to questions about the growing of oil palms in Indonesia and Malaysia (and the threat to apes).



I HAVE GIVEN MY NAME TO A NEW SPECIES.

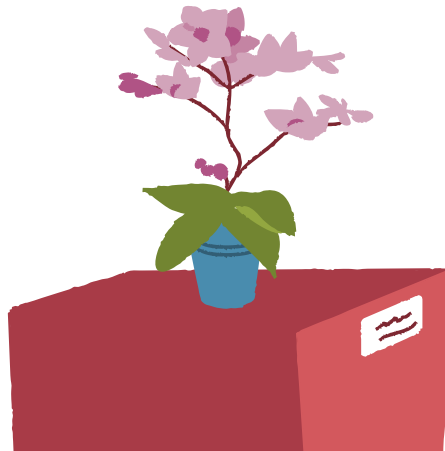
Week
51



BIOPAT (Patrons for Biodiversity), an initiative supported in particular by several German institutions and natural science museums, offers you the opportunity to dedicate your name, or that of someone close to you, to a recently discovered animal or plant species (frog, butterfly, spider, fern, orchid, etc.) in exchange for a donation.

In this way, you can immortalise your commitment to preserving biodiversity. And you can support taxonomic research (that is, the description of new species), as well as nature conservation studies and actions carried out primarily in the countries in which these new species have been discovered.

For more information
about this initiative:
www.biopat.de.



I AM FINDING OUT ABOUT THE NATURA 2000 PROGRAMME.

Week
52

Agriculture, silviculture, industry, tourism... all of these human activities can result in the deterioration of natural habitats, such as bogs, wasteland, oak/pine stands, chestnut groves, etc., and consequently in the regression of numerous animal and plant species.

The European Natura 2000 programme was set up to preserve, in harmony with human activity, these species and the natural environments that provide them with shelter. What has been done so far? Biotypes have been restored, indigenous species have been reintroduced, and research and educational activities have been developed.

For more information about Natura 2000:
ec.europa.eu/environment/nature.



For more information:

Nature & Biodiversity

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/index_en.htm

Natura 2000 network

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/naturazoo/index_en.htm

Biodiversity campaign

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/campaign/index_en.htm

Convention on Biological Diversity

<http://www.cbd.int/>

Royal Institute for the Natural Sciences of Belgium

<http://www.naturalsciences.be>

Federal Public Service Health,

Food Chain Safety and Environment

<http://www.health.belgium.be/>

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