

IN BRIEF

5
Questions of
Environmental
Leaders

Behind the Greens

The Bowerbirds

Phil Moore and Beth Tacular have given up on the human world. In the backwoods of North Carolina, they live in an Airstream trailer with no electricity or plumbing, the nearest town about 15 minutes away. This Walden-like existence is perfect for creating mellow music that conjures thoughts of crackling campfires and warm summer evenings.

Guitarist and songwriter Moore and percussionist Tacular, along with Mark Paulson on piano, violin and percussion, make up The Bowerbirds, a band that began by writing personal music to praise nature. Talk of the band's poetic and sometimes haunting lyrics about humankind's ability to destroy the natural world soon made its way into indie circles. The group makes music naturally—electric guitars and amplifiers are absent from the debut album, "Hymns for a Dark Horse."



E Magazine talked to Phil Moore about the band's environmental vision.

1. E: What's your songwriting process—do you write songs outside?

P.M.: I do, mostly on front porches overlooking nice views. It's best to put myself where there's nothing like buzzers, other people, distractions, cars driving by—all that stuff.

2. E: What mainstream amenities are you going without in the middle of the woods?

P.M.: We just got a cell phone and Internet. We also just got water...kind of. We ran a hose from my neighbor's well, so we have cold, cold water. We don't have electricity, but we have a solar panel. We don't have a toilet—we don't have plumbing. We don't have heat really, but we have a little wood cook stove.

3. E: When you're touring, do you have environmental standards that you live by?

P.M.: When we first started the band, we were not supposed to be a touring band. We were just writing songs, and we decided to play them for our friends. We do what we love, but at the same time it's contradictory—we still drive around the country burning gas.

4. E: Are there any environmental issues that you're most concerned about?

P.M.: One thing about all the alternative energy sources that we are talking about as the next step—all of those are going to take so much petroleum. When you're making solar panels, how much energy has to go into that? We are counting on new technology, and I think we need to go back in time and rely on our old ways.

5. E: Kind of like what you're doing, living out there in the woods?

P.M.: It's more about getting back to the land. Maybe we all go back to hunting and gathering. I don't know how possible that is, but I think we should all try to do things like that.

CONTACT: Bowerbirds, www.bowerbirds.org. —Amanda Peterka

INNOVATION



MY OWN LITTLE TURBINE

A personal wind turbine created by the French designer Philippe Starck has just been released. The 18-foot turbine, which resembles a giant rotating magnifying glass, debuted at Milan's Greenergy Design show in March. Titled "Democratic Ecology," it will provide 20-60% of a home's energy needs. The Pramac Company assisted Starck with the technical aspects of the design.

The designer turned heads in March 2008 when he announced his retirement after an illustrious 40-year career. In an interview in *Die Zeit*, a German weekly, Starck said he would quit designing within two years. "Design is really a terrible way to express oneself," he said. "I have been a producer of materiality. I do feel ashamed for this. What I want to be instead now is a producer of concepts." (English translation courtesy of the Mlle. A arts and technology blog, <http://mademoisellea.vox.com>.)

The wind turbine marks a change from Starck's past designs. His previous credits



SLICE OF LIFE

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Forsaken Lake: A fisherman rescues dying pike from Lake Cerknica in Slovenia, the largest intermittent lake in Europe. The lake dries out three times a year (a decade ago, it was once in seven years) due to human intervention and climate change. The European Union's LIFE Project has committed \$1.8 million to protect the vanishing lake.

include consumer goods, furniture, restaurants and hotels, most recently the SLS Hotel at Beverly Hills in Los Angeles. The hotel boasts on its website that it is "rich on pleasure and comfort."

The "Democratic Ecology" wind turbine represents a very different value aesthetic. On display at the Greenery show, the giant magnifying glass turned inside a distorted cube printed with ecological declarations. As it rotated, the glass magnified statements like, "The more materiality there is, the less humanity." At \$633, the turbine is even relatively affordable. Comparable home turbines can cost thousands of dollars. This follows Starck's vision for the future of design. "Elitism is vulgar," he told *Die Zeit*. "The sole eloquence lies in multiplication."
—Beth Connolly

DIVE INTO A CARPOOL

Drivers face gridlock traffic every day, yet single-occupancy vehicles continue to dominate the roadways. Why not share the ride?

DivideTheRide is an online service where families can organize carpool calendars with people they know. Once users enter their schedule of activities and choose the members of their carpool, the website creates a carpool calendar and e-mails it to everyone in the group.

Another option is eRideShare, which connects commuters traveling in the same direction. Members place an ad specifying if they are interested in carpooling for a daytime commute or extended travel, and then search for potential matches.

Some websites include more in-depth personal profiles, allowing carpoolers to, for

example, ride with people who share their taste in music. How about a women-only carpool? Carpool CREW attempts to minimize the inconveniences of carpooling, and increase

usage, by matching people based on many criteria.

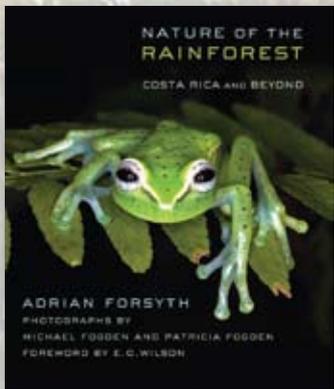
The recent addition of the Carpool application to the social networking site Facebook has brought a carpooling tool to the fingertips of even younger drivers. All of these resources are free, and as carpooling gains popularity in direct proportion to the price of gasoline, it's becoming easier

to find people willing to share the burden of getting from point A to point B.

CONTACTS: www.carpoolcrew.com; www.dividetheride.com; www.erideshare.com; www.facebook.com/applications/Carpool/2549790782. —Samantha Grasso



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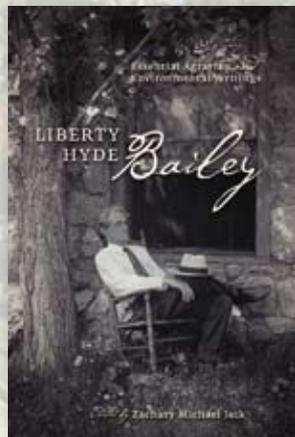


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ACTIVISM

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

If the cuffed polar bear sitting in a giant electric chair didn't convince enough students en route to their classes last January, the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) is getting another chance this February. And so will thousands of other schools at the second annual National Teach-in on Global Warming Solutions, formerly known as Focus the Nation. (The nonprofit group Green House Network still runs a project by this name, but it is no longer affiliated with the annual daylong teach-in.)

The National Teach-in on Global Warming Solutions was founded by Eban Goodstein, professor of economics at Lewis & Clark College. Professors of art, biology and religion incorporate lessons about global warming into their lectures on the same designated day and tailor events to their schools.

"It became apparent to me that if my own sense of urgency was at this level, it would be true of my colleagues at other universities," Goodstein says.

Unlike other initiatives, the National Teach-In works with schools, not against them. "When the idea was conceived it was reminiscent of protests during the Vietnam era," says Kristin Blackler, sustainability analyst at UCSD. "But the teach-in is much more in line with students in higher education today. Students work with the establishment."

Goodstein wants to see 5,000 schools and five million people involved this February, up from 1,900 schools and a million people last year. This time around, he hopes to see a stronger policy focus. And February is an especially ripe time for that aim.

"February is the beginning of the first 100 days of the new administration. It's a critical moment for the planet," Goodstein says. "If Congress doesn't pass climate legislation in 2009, it's pretty much a window that's closed for the future and for today's young people."

CONTACT: National Teach-in on Global Warming Solutions, www.nationalteachin.org.

—Amanda Peterka

HOW GREEN IS THAT ... CHRISTMAS TREE?



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Feel guilty about chopping down a pine tree this Christmas? Think you'll help the environment by purchasing an artificial tree? Think again. Even if you plan to reuse that artificial tree for years, it's the most ecologically damaging option this December. Artificial trees are often constructed in China, can contain both lead and PVC, and can even cause an allergic reaction. There's more: Buying a real, American-grown tree will help our economy more than investing in a Chinese product.

The truth is, you shouldn't worry about "killing a tree" when you buy a Christmas pine. These trees are crops. When tree farmers cut down a tree, they plant a new one. If you can find a local tree farm that doesn't use chemical pesticides, you're golden.

After Christmas, make the effort to get your tree shredded into mulch chips.

—Beth Connolly

THE MISSING GAS

Nitrogen Trifluoride (NF₃) has been termed the “missing greenhouse gas,” with a global warming potential over 17,000 times greater than CO₂ in a hundred-year period. The research was published in June 2008 in *Geophysical Research Letters* from the American Geophysical Union. Professor Michael Prather and his colleagues are at the forefront of research on this little-known gas. The potency of NF₃ is 60% higher than previously published estimates. Despite the research, NF₃ is not listed among the greenhouse gases covered in the Kyoto Protocol’s international climate change agreement. Over a dozen gases were left off the list in 1997 because they were not produced at a scale large enough to cause significant environmental harm.

But NF₃ is used in chemical vapor deposition, a process involved in making LCD televisions,



semiconductors and synthetic diamonds, so production of the gas has jumped in recent years—up to 4,000 tons this year—and is expected to double by next year. LCD panels are not only used in televisions, but also cell phones and computers. With the upcoming switch to digital cable across the country, sales of flat-screen TVs are expected to spike.

At a United Nations climate convention meeting last August, a report was presented on various gases used in manufacturing electronics, including NF₃. This meeting was one of seven that will take place before

the 2009 annual U.N. climate meeting, which is the deadline for a new treaty to extend Kyoto beyond 2012. The report warns that adding more gases to the list will likely increase the U.N.’s carbon markets, raising the demand for emissions allowances and credits.

CONTACTS: American Geophysics Union, www.agu.org; Earth First, www.earthfirst.com. —Jennifer Santisi

Honor Roll

 **Toyota** supports the **No Child Left Inside** initiative, giving \$5 million and 23 vehicles to national parks across the country.

 **The Dow Chemical Company** formed a partnership with the **Nature Conservancy** to restore Brazil’s Atlantic Forest, pledging \$1.5 million.

 **TheGreenOffice.com** became the first national office supply retailer to go PVC-free, removing close to 2,000 products from their catalog.

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