

FOUR MEN AND A PLANET

The following article is reprinted with permission from the September/October 1992 issue of *Sierra* magazine. Unlike the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society and South Shore Audubon Society cannot endorse candidates for any office. I can, however, provide you with information on politicians' histories and promises concerning the environment. I have omitted the original article's introduction (where, for the second time in its history, the Sierra Club endorsed one ticket), but have retyped the rest in its entirety. Readers should note that the positions of the National Audubon Society don't always agree with those of the Sierra Club.

If you received this newsletter after Election Day, then your post office spent the last 15 days delivering tons of holiday mail order catalogs instead of the *Skimmer* (which was mailed October 19th). In any case, this article provides a nice summary of what we can expect next year.

Renewable Energy and Conservation. George Bush's energy plan adopts the oil industry's agenda for accelerated oil production, failing to include substantive incentives or requirements for renewables or energy-efficiency measures. While Bush enacted a ten-year moratorium on oil drilling off the Florida Keys, Massachusetts, and parts of California, the administration still calls for drilling in sensitive areas elsewhere. Bill Clinton wants to ban new offshore drilling, expand the use of natural gas, create tax incentives for renewable energy sources, redirect federal weapons funding to renewables and light rail, and mandate percentages of recycled materials required for specific products.

Stabilizing Carbon-Dioxide Emissions at 1990 Levels. At every international conference for the last three years, the United States has resisted efforts to limit annual emissions of worldwide greenhouse gases at 1990 levels by the year 2000. At the Earth Summit in Rio this year, Bush blocked an international climate treaty until it was purged of specific targets and timetables, a move that rendered the agreement meaningless. The U.S. was the only developed nation to oppose precise goals. Clinton says he supports the Rio treaty's original goal. In addition, he would "give serious consideration" to a 20- to 30-percent reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2005 and "would consider supporting" a carbon tax to discourage emissions, as long as its revenues were used to offset existing taxes. Clinton's running mate, Senator Al Gore, led a congressional delegation to the Summit, and is a strong proponent of U.S. participation in a cooperative global effort to protect the planet.

Fuel Economy. The Bush administration opposes raising the corporate average fuel-economy rating of new automobiles from 27.5 miles per gallon to 45, the single-biggest step the United States could take to reduce emissions of gases that cause global climate change. Clinton supports the higher standard, and would institute "revenue-neutral" measures such as rebates for purchasers of fuel-efficient cars, to be paid for by a tax on gas-guzzlers.

Nuclear Energy. George Bush's National Energy Strategy calls for dramatically increasing the number of U.S. nuclear power plants, and Congress has approved his proposal to limit public input during the licensing process. Bill Clinton promises to "avoid increased reliance" on nuclear energy.

Population Policy. Anti-abortion candidate George Bush continues the Reagan policy of denying that uncontrolled population growth is an environmental problem. He halted support for the United Nations Population Fund and maintained the so-called Mexico City policy, under which any private organization receiving U.S. funds for family planning cannot use the money to provide abortion services or related information. Pro-choice candidate Bill Clinton supports funding the U.N.'s population program and reversing the Mexico City policy.

International Trade. George Bush backs both the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the North American Free Trade Agreement, which would remove trade barriers between nations but might also induce companies to open factories in countries that have less-stringent environmental laws. Bill Clinton has said that he would support free-trade agreements only if they guarantee adequate environmental and health safeguards.

International Forest Protection. Just before the Rio conference, George Bush announced plans to increase funding for world forests by \$150 million. However, the United States refused to support a strong forest agreement at the Summit, and has been widely criticized for failing to protect its domestic forests. Bill Clinton has called on banks and multilateral institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to negotiate debt-for-nature swaps, which allow developing nations to reduce debt burdens without plundering rainforests and other resources.

Clean Air. Laurels for George Bush's support of the 1990 Clean Air Act wilted under the continuing attempts by the White House's Council on Competitiveness to cripple the law's implementation. To his credit, Bush resisted efforts to water down the law's acid-rain-control provisions, and doubled the EPA's enforcement budget. While the environment has long taken a back seat to economic issues in Arkansas, in 1991 Bill Clinton won approval of tougher anti-pollution laws, the first big package of environmental measures that he had pushed since his first term as governor in the late 1970s. He has pledged support for the Clean Air Act; his state is one of only four that meet all federal air-quality standards.

Wetlands and Clean Water. President Bush's "no net loss of wetlands" campaign pledge [in 1988] was rendered meaningless by his administration's proposal that such areas simply be redefined, effectively eliminating protection for half the country's wetlands. Up for reauthorization this year, the Clean Water Act (which encompasses wetlands protection) is bound to be stymied by the heavy hand of the Competitiveness Council. Bill Clinton has condemned the administration's attempt to rewrite wetlands laws. His own clean-water record (dealing primarily with rivers in his home

PLANET EARTH — COMING TO THE RESCUE

The following is reprinted from a sheet provided by the National Audubon Society's Conservation Information Department.

Many of us feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the environmental problems that surround us. Acid rain. Global warming. Air and water pollution. Deforestation. They are indeed serious. But having created the problems, we are also the key to solving them. We can do a lot in our personal lives to make a difference.

Did you know that Americans represent only 5% of the world's population, yet we use more than a third of the world's resources? Each year, demands for energy increase as we buy more automobiles, air conditioners, and new appliances. We use up our natural resources — trees, water, open space — so voraciously that nature itself cannot keep pace with our greed. Such wasteful lifestyles exact a high toll on our environment and on the quality of our lives and that of future generations.

Simple acts can get us on the road to a more environmentally positive and healthier future. Writing letters using both sides of a page is a good example. This means fewer trees are cut down; less energy is needed to power paper mills and transport logs; and fewer chemicals are required to produce paper from wood, resulting in less pollution. Finally, reducing the amount of paper thrown out can save landfill space and decrease the amount of garbage that must be incinerated.

Here are some suggestions of how you might plan a more environmentally sound lifestyle. Be creative, and remember that your actions will affect the planet, for good and bad.

Be Energy Efficient. The United States emits more than 20% of the world's total emissions of the gases that contribute to global warming. That amounts to yearly emissions of more than 14 trillion pounds of carbon dioxide and its equivalent in greenhouse gases, or about 55,000 pounds for every man, woman, and child. Here are some practical ways to cut carbon dioxide emissions:

- Lower your thermostat by 2°F in the winter. In a typical house, this would reduce heating-fuel-related carbon dioxide emissions by 6 percent.

- Set your air conditioner thermostat higher. For central air conditioning, an increase from 75°F to 78°F can reduce CO₂ emissions by 8%.

- Use compact fluorescent bulbs. Replacing a 100-watt incandescent bulb used four hours a day with a 22-watt fluorescent can save 114 kilowatt hours and 180 pounds of carbon dioxide a year.

- Turn off lights and appliances when they are not needed.
- Select an efficient model when buying a new refrigerator or air conditioner.

- Make sure your new car gets more miles to the gallon. If you replace a 20-miles-per-gallon vehicle with a 30-miles-per-gallon vehicle, at 12,000 miles driven per year you will cut your annual CO₂ emissions by 4,400 pounds.

- Minimize driving. If you have a 25-miles-per-gallon car

and reduce your driving from 12,000 miles to 10,000 miles a year, your annual CO₂ emissions will drop by 1,800 pounds.

- Avoid auto air conditioners where possible. Just *having* one results in chlorofluorocarbon emissions equivalent to 4,800 pounds of CO₂ — whether you use it or not.

Reduce Your Garbage. Each American discards close to 4 pounds of garbage per day — an amount unmatched in any other industrialized nation. Most of our garbage — 80% — is dumped in landfills, and we are fast running out of inexpensive and licensed facilities.

Plastics: In 1960, less than 1% of our solid waste by weight was plastics. Today, that figure is more than 7% and growing — for example, more than 16 billion disposable diapers, 2 billion razors, and 1.6 billion pens are thrown out every year. These plastics comprise 32% of our waste stream by volume and do not biodegrade in the environment, causing unsightly pollution and posing a threat to wildlife. It doesn't take much to lessen your own contribution of plastics:

- Avoid "disposable products" where alternatives are available. For example, when possible, use reusable razors, refillable pens, and cloth diapers.

- Avoid products that have excessive packaging. Buy bar soap, not soap that is packaged in a plastic container. Buy a large container of juice, not several small containers, etc.

- Recycle any plastics that are accepted in your neighborhood. If your community does not have a recycling program, lobby your local representatives to get one launched.

Paper: Paper comprises about 36% of our waste stream — about 50 million tons each year. Recycling paper both reduces our waste load and saves valuable forests. You can reduce paper waste:

- Recycle newspapers and other types of paper accepted in your community.

- Use both sides of a sheet of paper whenever possible.

- Attach the blank side of old bills and other waste paper to a clipboard to make a note pad.

- Take a reusable shopping bag to the market; don't use paper or plastic grocery bags.

- Junk mail wastes resources and increases our output of garbage. Write to companies whose mail-order catalogs you don't use and ask to be taken off their lists. To prevent your name from being sold to other companies, write to Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, 11 West 42nd St., P.O. Box 3861, New York, NY 10163-3861.

Hazardous Household Products: Toxic household products that enter the waste stream present a threat to human health as they may leach into water supplies and cause other types of environmental problems. There are natural and less expensive alternatives to common household products:

- To get windows sparkling clean, use a solution of hot water and one-quarter white vinegar with a dash of lemon juice; dry with newspapers.

- To prevent clogged drains, pour a gallon of boiling water once a week directly into your drain, rather than harsh chemicals which can ruin pipes and pollute groundwater.

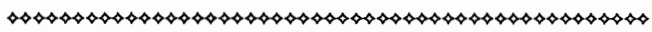
- Boric acid is effective against roaches.

- Baking powder can be used as a mild scrubbing agent for cleaning.

- Help your community develop a collection center for hazardous household wastes.

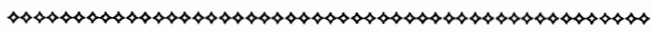
Conserve Water. In some areas, the flow of streams and rivers has been greatly reduced due to demands for water. This affects both people and wildlife.

You can help by installing water-saving shower heads. Don't let water run while washing your hands and brushing your teeth. Use low-flush toilets. Take short showers instead of baths. Run your dishwasher only when full. In many dry areas, a lawn is a luxury that nature cannot afford.



MISSING A HAT?

The bus driver for our Greenwich Hawk Watch trip has returned a navy blue hat with lots of appropriate pins on it. If it's yours, call Diane Singer at 561-6118.



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SNOW GEESE

Tom Torma

The western sky was ablaze with color created by the setting sun. The eastern sky was already dark, marking the advancing night. As I looked to the northeast I saw flashes of light in the sky. They did not appear to be from either heavenly or manmade objects. I pointed my scope towards the flashes. When I looked into the scope, I saw a flock of Snow Geese, the light of the setting sun reflecting off their bodies and wings. Behind the first group of geese came numerous waves of geese, all heading straight towards me. It was October and I was at Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge. I was witnessing the arrival of the Snow Geese migration.

Every year, 1.5 to 2 million Snow Geese migrate from the Canadian tundra to the United States. Their wintering grounds are from Jamaica Bay down the east coast to the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, and along the west coast south to Baja California. Snow Geese prefer salt marshes and marshy bays. They can sometimes be seen on freshwater marshes and in adjoining grain fields. The best time to see Snow Geese on Long Island is in October, when they are migrating

through this area. Since Snow Geese winter over in Jamaica Bay, it is an excellent place to see these birds all winter long.

There are two color phases of Snow Geese. The white birds with black wing tips are the most common on the east coast. The blue-phase birds are often called Blue Geese. The Blue Geese are dark gray with a white neck and head. They nest in northern Canada at places with names like Foxe Basin, Baffin Island, and South Hampton Island. The Blue and Snow Geese are considered one species. Where the two phases nest in the same area, they will breed with each other. Each fall, the Blue Geese gather at the southern end of Hudson Bay. When they leave this location, they make one nonstop flight to the gulf coast, where they are commonly seen.

Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge is a great place to photograph Snow Geese. A gravel road leads you out onto the marsh. You can use your car as a blind. A tripod can be set up inside your car and used to mount your telephoto lens, but this can be awkward. A good window mount is better. A beanbag or even a pillow can be used to support a camera and lens on a car window.

Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge (now a division of Edwin B. Forsythe NWR) is located off New Jersey Route 9, just north of Atlantic City. There is a small user's fee to enter the sanctuary, unless you have a duck stamp, which can be used for admission. Old Smithville is nearby, with restaurants and shops to provide a break from a hard day of bird-watching or photography.

The next morning after the geese arrival, I returned to Brigantine early. The marsh was filled with Snow Geese. I set my telephoto lens up on a window mount. I soon found a beautiful goose resting in the tall grass at the side of the road. Its neck and head were resting across its back. I pulled my car up to the bird, focused my camera lens, and got my picture. Seeing the Snow Goose fly in over the marsh at dusk is a sight I will never forget. That memory and the picture I took made the trip to Brigantine National Wildlife Sanctuary worthwhile.

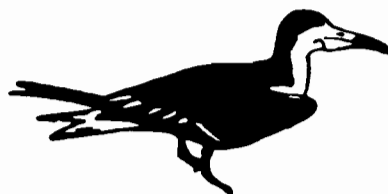


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South Shore Audubon Society
P.O. Box 31
Freeport, NY 11520-0031

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