



Times-News

Making Earth Day Every Day

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ECO NOTES



Forty years ago, smog covered nearly every major city in the country, the Great Lakes were on fire and many of our waterways were more akin to cesspools than home for aquatic life. Wilma Dykeman, WNC's own Rachel Carson, in her renowned book, *The French Broad*, wrote, "Dwellers of the French Broad country are learning an ancient lesson in all their natural resources: it is easy to destroy overnight treasures that cannot be replaced in a generation, easy to destroy in a generation that which cannot be restored in centuries."

The smog has begun to clear, our waterways are not the dumping grounds they once were and younger generations are beginning to work to right some of the wrongs their ancestors (wittingly or not) wrought on the land. In 1962, when Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was released, pelicans had disappeared on the east coast of North Carolina and nationwide, attributed to DDT's insidious damage to hatchlings. With the passage of legislation outlawing DDT and the adoption of the Clean Water and the Clean Air Act, an era of greater environmental stewardship had begun.

Yet the silent spring of Carson fame, the concern with unchecked chemical warfare on natural systems, have manifested themselves in other ways more recently. The Audubon Society has documented the dramatic loss of America's most common birds, mostly probably due to increasing use of insecticides and pesticides and their growing loss of habitat. Similarly, the disappearance of honey bees and bats, the basis of most pollination in the world, has shocking implications for future food supply and the sustainability of our ecosystems. With the US population expected to grow by more than 3 million people per year coupled with approval of hundreds of new chemicals each year for crop control, the possibilities of a silent spring beyond Rachel Carson's comprehension is a very real danger.

The biggest challenge to the environment of our generation is no doubt climate change. As we watch in horror at the disappearance of our earth's ice covering, our ability to think globally and act locally was never more important.

Today we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, with joy, with solemn reflection and with increased vigor for the long road ahead. We take joy in knowing that with increasing environmental awareness, we will not make the same mistakes again. Millions of people think first before dumping fertilizer on their lawns, understanding that we are interconnected in the web of life and recognizing that chemicals on our lawn, will return to our waterways, to the food we eat, and the water we drink. We reflect on the damage that has occurred to our ecosystems and the value to our society to invest in its remediation. And in this season as we watch the rebirth of our natural world, we reaffirm the importance of taking action, both as individuals and as citizen-activists, to heal and rebalance the environment.

Towards this end, ECO, the Environmental and Conservation Organization, has organized an Earth Day celebration this week to help us celebrate, reflect and reaffirm. On this 40th Anniversary week, the "kick off event" is the screening of the award-winning documentary film, *EARTH DAYS*, which reflects on the Earth Day movement, from its inception to the growth of the modern environmental movement. The Hendersonville premiere is on Earth Day, April 22nd at 7:00 PM at the Tiered Lecture Hall at the Arts & Sciences Building on the campus of Blue Ridge Community College.

On April 24th, join ECO for WNC's Earth Day Festival featuring a solar stage with music and performance art all day from 10-6, workshops on everything from green energy to sustainable gardening, a watershed festival that educates kids of all ages on the life of our streams and a green Olympics for the young'ns. For car fans, our first electric car rally launches at 11 AM and you can test drive a half dozen electric vehicles throughout the day. Walkers and hikers can join ECO and Gary Eblen on a Greenway Walk that takes off from Patton Park at 8 am, meets folks at Jackson Park at 9 am and joins the festivities at BRCC at 10 (please make reservations in advance). In addition, there'll be lots of informative and interesting booths, great food & more.

The evening Earth Day Concert features Balsam Range, one of the leading bluegrass bands in the nation and Americana great Shannon Whitworth and her band. Concert tickets are on sale now online at www.eco-wnc.org or by calling us at 692-0385.

See you at the celebration!

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