Members' News & Reports

Calling all volunteers
by Ms Betti Minkin, Ecolodge Member, Tohum, Turkey
FLORA BOTANICAL GARDENS, a new eco-project on the Turkish Mediterranean needs volunteers to help with gardening and other work. 15 minutes from Olympus beach where the endangered loggerhead turtles lay their eggs. If interested please contact us for more information.

EARTHSHIP looking for partners
by Mr. Kurt Cordice, Trial Ecolodge Member, Earthship, St. Vincent
We are looking for partners who might be willing to organise volunteer groups as part of the EARTHSHIP program. The groups can be involved in general activities, or can focus on a specific activity or project, such as SCUBA and marine research, the Turtle Tracking Project etc. Please contact us for more details.

Water shortage in a Rainy place: Malaysia
by Vikneswaran Nair, Expert Member, Lecturer, Taylor's College School of Hospitality & Tourism, Malaysia

As populations grow and water use per person rises, demand for freshwater is soaring. Yet the supply of freshwater is finite and threatened by pollution. Agenda 21 states that effectively integrated management of water resources is important to all socio-economic sectors. Malaysia is tropical and lush with enough water for its needs on an annual basis but tap water shortages occur and water cuts are part of everyday life. Opposition leaders protested earlier this year when the government announced water price hikes of between 20 percent and 75 percent in the Kuala Lumpur region. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said the increase, the first in a decade, "was unavoidable" because of rising water costs and new projects. The opposition accused authorities of inefficiency and poor conservation campaigns. The bottom line is people do not want to suffer a repeat of the 1998 crisis, which also forced many hotels, restaurants and laundries to close down.

There has been a large amount of unplanned and unsustainable development in the highland forests in Malaysia, including inappropriate road building and excessive highland resort development. Excessive clearing of forests has led to the siltation of rivers and contamination of the water supply. Forest clearance has resulted in frequent occurrences of soil erosion and landslides. The quality of water gradually deteriorates due to siltation and pollution from the construction work of the highland roads, while poorly constructed roads contribute to soil erosion and water pollution.

In the first three months of this year Klang Valley received more than
average rainfall. Yet we are hit with a water shortage. Levels at the
dams continue to fall. It is quite obvious that poor management of our
water resources is one of the main reasons for the crisis. El Nino has had
little to do with it this time.

The catchment areas no longer retain water, as they should. Many
reasons can be cited, probably all arising from lack of coordination
between the state agencies. While one agency designates the catchment
areas as reserves, another approves logging concessions on them. Yet
others allow the development of forest-depleting golf courses and
quarrying in catchment areas. Industries with potential to contaminate
rivers that feed reservoirs are allowed to operate upstream. It is time to
take a hard look at the utilization of land in and around catchment areas
and come up with a clear and sensible policy.

Inexpensive drinking water could be obtained in coastal areas by
installing low-cost water-treatment plants that use solar energy for the
desalination of seawater. Countries like Saudi Arabia, already reap the
benefits from this abundant natural source of energy. Seawater can be
desalinated near coastal areas, and untreated water thrown back into
the sea or the salt zone, and the treated water supplied to small towns
and villages by pumping stations. This process not only ensures the
availability of abundant drinking water, but also provides employment to
the locals. The salt obtained from this process can be used in
commercial and industrial applications. The use of treated seawater
may, in the future, save many lives in times of drought.

The generous use of drinking water and leakage in pipelines and taps
are among the major causes of water wastage, amounting to millions of
gallons per day. The use of drinking water in gardening, car washing and
toilet flushing also add to the wastage of drinking water. Brackish water
or treated sewage water can be used as substitutes for potable water for
these purposes. Another cause of the problem is the mishandling of
wastewater from raw sewage, industrial waste, and agriculture runoffs,
which increase the contamination in natural sources of fresh water.
Sewerage water, therefore, ought not be allowed to fall into the sea or
rivers, but should be treated properly, and stored outside the cities or
villages to be supplied back to the residents for use. The recycling of
sewerage water and its storage outside the cities will raise ground water
levels, and the treated solid waste is a natural fertilizer. While recycling
sewer water and its accumulation may create waterlogging in some
areas and increase the salinity of the soil, in most cases it will raise the
water level and result in fertile soil. Waterlogging and salinity may be
controlled through the use of modern scientific technology.

Over the past few years, the Malaysian environment has continued to
deteriorate. The rapid growth prior to the economic crisis and the
present economic recovery, whilst raising the GNP and incomes, has had
a toll on the environment. Uncontrolled growth with scant regard for
ecological principles continues to be the order of the day.

**Whale Watching in Newfoundland**

*Interview of Dave Snow, Expert Member for a survey by the
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS). Mr. Dave Snow*