

Don't just think about it

BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

Turning theory into practice, the students of Dr. Martin Willison's Nature Conservation class are hitting the campus and the city promoting conservation issues.

As a requirement for the class, offered out of the Dalhousie Biology Department, tutorial groups of 9-10 students work with their TAs on a project of their choice designed to benefit the environment. It gives them a chance to put what they are learning to practical use.

"Nature conservation can be very depressing — we deal with species extinction and environmental problems...and students can end up feeling that it's hopeless," said Willison. "Part of the objective of the group project is to empower them to

understand that it's not helpless and that there are things that the individual can do."

The projects have been an integral part of the course since Willison began teaching it in the early 1990's. Projects in the past ranged from the painting of Nova Scotian endangered species in the Life Science Centre to promoting the protection of right whales in the Bay of Fundy.

This year's projects included a fundraiser for shark research and a beach clean-up.

"[The nature of the projects go] in cycles," said Willison. "This year there was a lot of money raising, some years there have been a lot of pamphlets."

"One of [this year's] groups set up a Nature Conservation Society. It's going to be a 'B' society at Dal, and it means that there will therefore be some continuity from one year to the next."

Car seats and condoms on Lawlor's Island

BY T.L.C. (THE LAWLOR'S CLEAN-UP)

Lawlor's is an island located near MacNab's Island that serves as a breeding site for heron and osprey and was once used as a quarantine area during a cholera outbreak. It is an island of great natural beauty, with colourful beaches and thick woods.

Yet, in spite of its colourful history and its environmental importance as a nesting area, Lawlor's has never been cleaned of the garbage that washes onto its shores. It was therefore a perfect project for our Nature Conservation tutorial group to take on.

At 9:30am on Saturday Mar. 21, we arrived on Lawlor's Island. Layered in our warmest clothes, decked out in our brightest rain suits and rubber boots and armed with a great number of garbage bags, we

were ready to face the elements to do our part for the environment. We had been there only ten minutes when we realized the true challenge. The wind was fierce, the cold was extreme and to make matters worse, the garbage was under a layer of snow. Still we persevered, and in spite of the difficulties we managed to collect over a dozen bags of garbage from our portion of the island. The items retrieved included sheets of plastic, chip bags, pop cans, condoms, tampon applicators, shotgun shells, a pair of underwear and a car seat.

The truly disturbing fact is that all of this waste was found on an island that the public is rarely allowed to visit. With the casual disposal of waste into the harbour we run the risk of ruining Lawlor's and places like it. This project made us realize, and we hope that by telling others it will raise their awareness too, that people need to take responsibility for the waste we create. It is time for us to clean up our mess.

Trash Tales

It seems everywhere you look, fast food restaurants are springing up. One group of nature conservation students decided to do a survey on the amount of garbage produced and thrown away by these restaurants, as well as investigate the prevalence of recycling.

The combined number of people served in all the campus restaurants is approximately 3000 people a day. It was found that on the average day the fast food places on campus throw out a total of 58 bags of garbage. Robin's Donuts in the SUB throws out the most garbage at 15 bags a day. The Time Out lounge in the Dalplex throws out the least, averaging about 1 bag daily. The garbage consists mostly of paper bags, paper cups, styrofoam cups, plastic cups, straws and other items.

Most restaurants said they don't ask customers if they want "extras" (bags, straws, etc.) — they said the few customers who don't want them will ask for their items without the extras.

Approximately six or seven per cent of customers on campus bring reusable mugs with them for coffee and other drinks. Tim Horton's, the Second Cup and Robin's Donuts all offer discounts to those who do. Insulated mugs are available at Canadian Tire for about three dollars.

The group provided these tips to help customers reduce waste:

1. Only take a paper bag with your muffin/donut if you need one.
2. Only take what you need; for example — 1 napkin, not 10.
3. Don't take a place-mat on your tray (at Harvey's, for example). This wastes paper, and you don't need it.
4. You don't use straws and lid covers for drinks at home — it isn't necessary to use them at restaurants.
5. Remember to recycle your drink containers. Be aware of the need to recycle, and keep waste reduction in mind when eating anywhere, on or off-campus.

OPINIONS

Our earth, our health

The earth is controlled by executives. Our soil, water and air are slaves to corporate polluters and as a result, our health is being poisoned. There are global limits to the depletion of natural resources and the build up of waste. We give little thought to the poor environmental conditions that cause the deaths of millions of people.

Everyday we use and discard chemicals that are dangerous to us and the environment. We seem more worried about ridding ourselves of trash than contaminating our rivers, trees and ecosystems. However, waste must go somewhere and in the past, much has been disposed of in areas dangerously near local communities.

Waste water from industries releases toxins into municipal waste dumps which then enters the soil and water reserves. Those

chemicals don't break down in the environment. Hundreds of toxic chemicals reside at each hazardous waste site but no one knows the extent to which most people have been exposed and affected.

In humans, hazardous waste can contribute to birth defects, nervous and immune system deficiencies, skin and blood disorders, kidney and liver disease, cancer and more. Our health seems doomed. If we choose to try and improve environmental health today, tomorrow will be more sustainable for our children and grandchildren.

Producers of hazardous waste materials should make ethical choices about the operation of their industries and disposal of products instead of only trying to make a good return on an investment. In a perfect world, the corporation should pay the cost of pollution damage including the damage to people's health. However, this is an idealistic view

— there is no one solution. Reading this article is a first step because once you are willing to learn about what affects our environmental health, you are more willing to care.

Individual participation can promote environmental quality because it provides a way of initiating action and motivating self preservation. The School of Health and Human Performance has organized a battery disposal campaign at Dalhousie University. Disposal containers are available on campus for dead batteries until April 26. These batteries will be sent to Ontario to a special toxic waste site. Bayers Lake Recycling Depot also collects both disposable and rechargeable batteries every Saturday through May and August.

Help us to protect our environmental health. We have to take responsibility for our own existence.

STEPHANIE HICKS

Cheap stuff and a guy named Groszko

BY ANDREW GILLIS

Looking for cheap stuff for your pad next year? Want to get rid of that sofa with three legs? Think nobody will buy your stuff? Think again, because Green Dalhousie is offering the services of a *Virtual Second Hand Store* to sell your lamps, toasters and futons.

"It's just another way for people to sell their second-hand goods, save money and reduce the effect on the environment," says Wayne Groszko, webmaster of the *Virtual Second Hand Store*, an internet service designed to reach out to a different audience than that of the usual classified section in the newspaper.

"This is easy. It's like running a little more complicated classified section," says Groszko.

The Dal Biology department's Nature Conservation Class created the web-site in May of 1995 as a part of the Green Dalhousie website. Once the website was finished, the class asked the Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group (NSPIRG) to maintain it and make it an official website. Groszko was asked to take over and it was his idea to create the *Virtual Second Hand Store*.

As you enter the *Virtual Second Hand Store*, the first thing that will grab your attention is the free table. It's the one beside the painting of 'Dogs Playing Pool'. There is a wide variety of stuff here, and if you're lucky, you can even find wood to burn in the fireplace over the winter. Next to the free table is the cheap section. This section is the largest in the virtual store, and you can browse through used toasters, lamps without shades, and computer

desks. Make sure that the toaster's wires are not frayed, and that it is approved by the Canadian Standards Association.

Upon entering, you can find the mission statement of the virtual store: "If you need something, getting it second hand helps the environment by reducing the resources required to make and transport new products. If you need to get rid of something, you can convert it to cash and simultaneously keep it out of the landfill. To facilitate this exchange and reuse of goods, Green Dalhousie offers the service of a virtual second hand store."

The *Virtual Second Hand Store* has been well received since 1995, but it is still battling problems of anonymity.

"Relatively speaking, not many people have used it," says Groszko. "It's probably because nobody knows about us."

Groszko said that there are naturally some barriers for people who are not familiar with computers. He admits that it would be a lot easier for someone to advertise in newspaper classifieds, but the *Virtual Second Hand Store* is a service offered for free, and it is a medium well worth looking into.

In the future, Groszko would like to see the *Virtual Second Hand Store* expanded and offer more services.

"I need several other people who would like to turn it into something big," Groszko says. "There is real potential here, and it could be a great business opportunity."

But making money is not the main purpose of the store, Groszko explains.

"Second hand materials and the environment are totally our focus."

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