



EnviroBriefs



Seashells

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Sea Shell Secrets. Scientists from Austria are unlocking the mysteries of seashells to clean up heavy metal contamination in the drinking water of coastal communities in developing countries. Along the banks of the Saigon River in Vietnam, researchers have used crushed clam and mussel shells to purify water laden with cadmium, zinc and lead. Vietnam suffers from poor water quality and can't afford expensive water treatment systems. It is hoped that this cost-effective method will greatly reduce the health risks posed by toxic metals in drinking water supplies of Vietnam and other emergent nations.

Poultry Parade. Mr. Clucky, a bicycle riding white rooster who perches on his owner's bike has become a tourist favorite in Miami Beach FL. However, Mr. Clucky has been ordered to leave town because of his earsplitting crowing

early every morning. Owner Mark Buckley was ticketed by municipal authorities and faces a fine and an order to get rid of the bird, even though Mr. Clucky was Grand Marshal of last year's King Mango Strut in nearby Coconut Grove FL. Feeling slighted and unappreciated, Mr. Clucky is leaving his owner for the bright lights of New York City and the very prestigious Columbus Day Parade. Elated Italian-American parade officials were so happy to land a VIP of Mr. Clucky's stature that they are bestowing upon him a title much more impressive than Grand Marshal. He will be celebrated as the noble (and delicious) *Signore Chicken Cacciatore*.

Snap-Crackle-Pop. Hundreds of ground squirrels have invaded the Finch Arboretum in Spokane, WA and turned the grounds into a real-life *Whack-a-Mole* game. The squirrel burrows damage tree roots

and adversely impact drainage. Fed-up park officials are bringing in the heavy artillery - the *Rodenator Pro*, a machine which injects a mixture of propane and oxygen into burrows and ignites it. The resulting explosion collapses squirrel hideaways and turns the cute rodents into crispy critters. The manufacturer of the *Rodenator Pro* ludicrously claims that the device is humane and also environmentally-friendly (since it uses no poisonous chemicals). Disney has optioned the story and is producing a movie that is guaranteed to be a real tear-jerker rivaling *Bambi*. The film will feature an *all-rodent* cast including Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Chip 'n Dale, and financier Bernard Madoff.



Environmental Moments in History

1306: King Edward I of England forbids coal burning in London when Parliament is in session.

1784: Benjamin Franklin insightfully observes that the switch from wood to coal has saved what remains of England's forests and he urges France and Germany to do the same.

1873: First of a series of "killer fogs" in London kills 1,150 people in three days. Similar incidents occur in 1880, 1882, 1891 and 1892.

1893: Michigan Board of Health publishes a book of wallpaper samples and issues it to libraries as part of its investigation of arsenic in wallpa-

per. Arsenic produces a vivid green color but is also highly toxic. The book itself causes arsenic poisoning when library patrons thumb through the pages.

1905: Congress establishes the first game preserve (later called wildlife refuges) in Wichita KS.

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Did you Know?

- Arsenic became a favorite murder weapon in the Middle Ages especially among the Italian ruling classes because its symptoms are similar to cholera, a common ailment of the day.
- *Arsenic and Old Lace*, a movie starring Cary Grant, is about a drama critic who learns on his wedding day that his favorite aunts have just poisoned their 13th gentleman friend with arsenic. Grant was the fourth choice to play the lead character after Bob Hope, Jack Benny and Ronald Reagan passed on it.

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Only Great Ideas



Aquatic harmony (see No. 1) →

Top 10 Little Known Environmental Quotes

10. "A tree's a tree. How many more do you need to look at?"
Ronald Reagan
9. "I don't think my parents liked me. They put a live teddy bear in my crib." - *Woody Allen*
8. "I durst not laugh for fear of opening my lips and receiving the bad air." - *William Shakespeare*
7. "It isn't the pollution that's harming the environment. It's the impurities in our air and water that are doing it."
Dan Quayle
6. "I am not a vegetarian because I love animals, I am a vegetarian because I hate plants." - *A. Whitney Brown*
5. "I never drink water because of the disgusting things that fish do in it." - *W.C. Fields*
4. "A zebra does not change its spots." - *Al Gore*
3. "Not all chemicals are bad. Without chemicals such as hydrogen and oxygen, there would be no way to make water, a vital ingredient in beer." - *Dave Barry*
2. "If a tree falls in the forest, will you make a sound?"
Homer Simpson
1. "I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully."
George W. Bush (see photo at left)

Number 2 Bus

Leave it to the Norwegians to take the lead in going green by finding an innovative use for *brown gold*. City officials in Oslo, Norway are soon planning to introduce buses for their public transit system



that run on biofuels extracted from human waste solids. The biofuel (methane derived from fermenting sludge) will come from the Bekkelaget sewage treatment plant which processes waste from 250,000 city residents. Annually, this output will be enough to operate 80 buses for 62,000 miles each.

The fuel is carbon neutral, emits 78% less nitrogen oxide and 98% fewer fine particles (two leading causes of respiratory illness) than the diesel that currently fuels Oslo's bus fleet. Buses will also be 92% less noisy (Editor's Note: some less refined publications might make a comment here relating to *silent but deadly*, but this newsletter will instead take the high road). According to an Oslo official, "If our entire fleet switched to bio-

methane, carbon dioxide emissions would be reduced by around 30,000 tons per year."

Unlike ethanol made from grains and plants, biomethane offers the unique advantage of not competing for food supplies, fertilizer or valuable water resources. And it is relatively cheap: the cost of producing biomethane equivalent to a gallon of diesel is \$3.79, while a gallon of diesel fuel currently sells for \$4.92 in Norway. Most transit riders would probably not object to sitting on a bus powered by poop, but it may be a public relations challenge to convince people to use biomethane to cook food. Reports indicate though that the fuel creates no foul odor or residue as it burns (and no need to watch where you step).