

Ask EcoGirl

By Patricia Dines

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Great Sources for Environmental Info

Dear EcoGirl: I want to learn more about environmental issues, so that I can take effective action for the earth. What information sources do you recommend? *Signed, Caring in Cazadero*

Dear Caring: Your question reminds me of a delightful little moment in the classic film *Casablanca*. As they sit at a café, Captain Renault asks Humphrey Bogart's Rick how he came to this remote north African spot. Rick answers, "My health. I came to Casablanca for the waters." "The waters? What waters?" protests Renault. "We're in the desert!" Rick shrugs, "I was misinformed."

Beyond the smile that this scene brings, it's also a reminder that information can either guide us wisely or lead us astray. Simple words become ideas then decisions and actions in the very real world.

Nowhere is quality information more vital than with environmental issues, where the fate of our world is literally at stake.

However, as the environmental topic has moved from our culture's fringes onto the main stage, it has too often received the mainstream media treatment. This includes full-page celebrity photo spreads, dramatic stories that generate despair not informed action, inaccurate collapsing of complex issues into standard stereotypes, product pitches that continue promoting consumerism, and parroting of half-baked answers that ignore root causes.

This can leave us all feeling misinformed, and hungry for something better.

However, there is quality information available that can help us take wise actions for a better world.

How to Improve Your Eco-Info Stream

- **Be intentional about your eco-info consumption.** Passivity makes us vulnerable to manipulation by powerful interests.
- **Determine what information you most want, then look for it.** What topics or solutions especially resonate with you?

- **Seek quality information, and support those creating it.** This is vital for nurturing intelligent decision-making.

- **Identify your approach to assessing information.** Some things I look for: Does the author focus more on being dramatic and hip than on issues and solutions? Do they just repeat others' ideas, or think independently? Are they willing to question mainstream notions, and do so responsibly, based on facts and logic?

- **Read varied perspectives, including opposing ones,** to gather key facts and sift out biases and blindspots.

Where to Find Wonderful Eco-Info

You can find eco-information in many convenient formats, including: magazines, books, books-on-tape, websites, newsletters, e-letters, action alerts, podcasts, documentaries, courses, conferences, and radio and TV shows.

- **MAGAZINES.** For keeping informed on a wide range of issues, I love **E - The Environmental Magazine** <www.emagazine.com>. Also, the quarterly **Yes!** magazine reports on solutions for a better world <www.yesmagazine.org>. Find other options at magazine stores; subscribe to your favorites.

- **BOOKS.** Discover wonderful green books at publisher **Chelsea Green's** site <www.chelseagreen.com>. Peruse more choices online or at local bookstores.

- **INFORMATION HUBS.** A wide variety of eco-info is on **EnviroLink**, a non-profit grassroots information clearinghouse <www.envirolink.org>. Many community actions and e-lists are gathered at **Care2** <www.care2.com>. **Rachel's Health & Environmental News** is a free e-newsletter with powerful information and perspectives <www.rachel.org>. For insightful analysis and remedies, explore the esteemed Lester Brown's **Earth Policy Institute** <www.earthpolicy.org> and book, *Plan B 3.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization*.

- **COURSES & EVENTS.** If you prefer in-person learning, check out the always-inspiring **Bioneers Conference**, which brings together leading eco-

change agents, from scientists to activists to native elders. This October San Rafael event sells out early. They also offer information in other formats <www.bioneers.org>.

Also consider **Daily Acts'** Sustainability Tours <www.daily-acts.org>; **Occidental Arts & Ecology's** courses <www.oaec.org>; and the **Solar Living Center's** classes and summer SolFest <www.solarliving.org>.

- **GROUPS.** Nonprofit and advocacy groups that offer great eco-information, in various forms, include: the **Sierra Club** (with its magazine and local chapters) <www.sierraclub.org>; the **U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG)** and its California chapter (CALPIRG) <www.calpirg.org>; the **Environmental Working Group** <www.ewg.org>; the **Environmental Defense Fund** <www.edf.org>; the **Natural Resources Defense Council** <www.nrdc.org>; the **Wilderness Society** <www.wilderness.org>; the **World Wildlife Fund** <www.worldwildlife.org>; and **Environment California** <www.environmentcalifornia.org>.

To connect with local eco-groups, see the **Environmental Center of Sonoma County** at <www.envirocentersoco.org>. For eco-info on candidates and elected officials, plus policy recommendations, see the **League of Conservation Voters** <www.lcv.org>.

I hope that these leads help you discover information that engages you and empowers you to serve our vital cultural shifts with your passion and unique gifts.

Ask EcoGirl is written by Patricia Dines, Author of The Organic Guides, and Editor and Lead Writer for The Next STEP newsletter. Email your questions to <EcoGirl@AskEcoGirl.info> for possible inclusion in future columns. View past columns at <www.AskEcoGirl.info>. Also contact EcoGirl for information about carrying this column in your periodical. "EcoGirl believes that everyone can be a superhero for the planet. Then she shows you how!"

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