Letters from Down Under...

So I have only been in Oz for a week, but it has already made an impression on me. I came with intentions for traveling the east coast of Australia with my free month before classes began - but I am so captivated by my new home city that I cannot leave. I am living in Brisbane, a major city in Queensland; it is incredible. I have been sucked into the local man made beach, Streets Beach - which is really just a pool with sand. You don’t often find swimmers in the Brisbane River because of the infamous Bull Sharks that lurk below the murky waters of the city. So I find Streets Beach to be a perfect replacement.

I’ve come to find that I shipped myself away to the most dangerous country in the world. Not only can the sharks get you, but there are six seriously deadly snakes, three deadly spiders (one of which with enough poison to kill five horses), the Cone Shellfish, the Blue Ring Octopus, Stonefish and the crocs! But above all beware of the jellies! Here Blue Bottles, or as we know them Portuguese-Man-of-War, are just jellies that can hurt you (when I always considered them the worst thing to encounter along the East Coast). But Australians have to worry about Box Jellyfish. Each tentacle of the Box jelly has up to 5,000 stinging cells and enough toxin to kill 60 humans.

But if the animals don’t kill you, the heat of the Outback will, and if that doesn’t do it then the riptides of the gorgeous beaches will whip you out to sea. There is always a little danger waiting around the corner. I’m surprised there is anyone left on this island.

The best part about it all: the Aussies really can’t be bothered by it. Their coined saying “no worries” is the epitome of their lifestyle. Everyone is content with what they have got, but always more than welcome to share. I am thinking you will be very lucky if you get me back come September … if I make it out alive.

Enjoy the cold weather for me!

Your Editor,

Chelsea
**Green is the new Red this Valentine’s Day!**

By Kate Gardella

Consider these eco-friendly twists on some of your holiday favorites

**Cards**

65 percent of us like to give our lovers a card to celebrate the holiday. Consider making your own greeting card from leftover paper that you have sitting around the house, or send an e-card. If you still feel like you need to buy a card, try a recycled card printed with soy based ink.

Another great idea is a plantable card! Bury this card under some soil, water, and watch your love grow.

**Flowers**

79% of cut flowers come from Ecuador or Columbia and are grown with 12 different pesticides. These pesticides are getting workers sick and polluting our ground water. Skip 1-800-FLOWERS and choose local florists that offer potted plants or organic cut flowers instead. Air purifying plants are a great idea. Lilies, ferns, ivies, and small palms are attractive and will remove toxins from indoor air with very little maintenance.

**Champagne**

No need to skip the bubbly this year! Try some certified organic champagne. Rosé Cuvée de la Pompadour (California) or Altana Frizzante Rosato (Italy) are delicious, and produced completely organically and without sulfites. Cheers!

**Jewelry**

The gold from one 18-karat ring can cause up to 18 tons of arsenic, cyanide, and mercury-laced mining waste. Try finding a healthier gold by checking out No Dirty Gold at nodirtygold.com.

200,000 have died in Sierra Leone’s diamond trade. Make sure your gems are KPCS certified to avoid buying infamous “blood diamonds.”

**Chocolates**

Divine Chocolate, a Fair Trade chocolate producer, is working to improve the lives of West African cocoa farmers through Fair Trade certifications. This company pays farmers a fair and set price so that they support their families. Divine chocolate has also set up a “social premium” fund. This money goes back into farming communities to pay for farmers’ kids to go to school or clean drinking water in the community. Never feel guilty for indulging in chocolate again!

**Lingerie**

Instead of Victoria’s Secret, try Pants to Poverty this Valentine’s Day! Pants to Poverty works with thousands of farmers and factory workers in India to produce fashionable, globally friendly underwear for men, women and children. Pants to Poverty has changed lives through the purchase of fair trade organic cotton, fair wages for factory workers, and environmentally excellent conditions in their factories. Plus, every order ships with a latex free, biodegradable condom... protect yourself and the world! Go to pantstopoverty.com to place your order.

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**Advising Night with Dr. George Clark**

On Tuesday, March 30, Dr. Clark will be hosting another informal advising night. Before registering for next semester, come sit with the Human Ecology faculty to discuss your options and make the most of your time at Rutgers.

**Save the Date:** Tuesday, March 30, 2010

7:15-8:30 PM

Cook Office Building, Room 226

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**Three Course Sequence**

The purpose of the three course sequence is to help you develop skills in a specialized area. This sequence makes an impressive addition to your résumé and can be the difference in finding a job. If you haven’t already declared your sequence, talk to your advisor. Kristen Drusjack can also provide you with a list of suggestions of courses if you’re not sure in what you want to specialize. Remember, if you have a minor or certificate program, that may also count. Find more information here: [http://humeco.rutgers.edu/Documents%20PDF/forms/threecoursesequence_1_2010.pdf](http://humeco.rutgers.edu/Documents%20PDF/forms/threecoursesequence_1_2010.pdf)
Looking to lower your heating costs as well as prevent wasting resources? Here’s how:

**Tips:**
1. **Lower your thermostat:** one degree at a time can make a big difference. For every degree that you lower your thermostat, you can save 1-3% of your bill.
2. **Switch your ceiling fan:** flip the rotation direction on ceiling fans. As hot air rises in winter, switching the direction will blow air upward and circulate the hot air back down in the room. Many fans come with a switch to rotate counterclockwise.
3. **Caulk and weather-strip your windows:** leaks can sap energy efficiency by 5-30% per year.
4. **Open your blinds:** letting sun in will help to warm rooms.

**More Information:**
Want more tips or more information about winterizing your home? Energy Service Corps (ESC), a joint project between NJPIRG and AmeriCorps, is a group right here on campus that works to weatherize homes in New Brunswick as well as perform energy audits. They take a proactive approach by actually going into homes to weatherize: doing things like caulking windows, weather stripping, and sealing up cracks. These small actions have the ability to save students up to 30% per month on their energy bills. For more information, please contact Annabel Pollioni at pollioni@eden.rutgers.edu.

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**History of Valentine’s by Dara Zaleski**

February 14th has long been a time to show the ones we love how much we really care about them. This may be by simply giving a box of chocolate or sending a cheesy Valentine’s Day card, but why do we do all of this? Where did it start? We have Saint Valentine to thank for the holiday that is now second behind Christmas in most greeting cards sent and received.

Legend has it that Saint Valentine was a priest who served during third century Rome under Emperor Claudius II. Claudius firmly believed that men fighting in his army should be single men so they wouldn’t be distracted while away from home. He ordered that if anyone was married, they were to immediately separate from their wives and become single men. Valentine believed this to be a terrible injustice. How could anyone live without love? He decided to become a servant of love and secretly marry young couples without the emperor knowing. When the emperor found out about Valentine’s dishonesty, he was sentenced to death.

But not all misery and sorrow came out of this terrible ending. It was because of this dreadful life sentence that Valentine was able to find his true love. While in confinement waiting for the day he would be executed, Valentine fell deeply in love with the jailor's daughter. On the day before he was to be executed, he sent the very first Valentine’s Day card, when he wrote his love a letter and signed it “Your Valentine”.

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**Dr. Bonnie McCay: Keynote Speaker at the Katoomba XVI Meeting to Focus on Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services**

For those of you interested in marine and coastal ecosystems, the subject of Dr. McCay’s talk “The Role of Community and Other Institutions in Providing Innovative Solutions for Marine and Coastal Conservation,” summarized as “Community and other institutions, both formal and informal, play a critical role in setting the stage for development of marine markets and market-like mechanisms. But communities can also be at risk from private sector investment, if issues of equity, access, common property, and governance are not well understood and appreciated.”

The Katoomba Group is an organization dedicated to sharing information, ideas and developing the implementation of payment for ecosystem services, or PES, where the providers of an ecosystem service (e.g. fishermen) receive some sort of incentive from the consumers of an ecosystem service to incorporate sustainable practices. According to the Katoomba Group, ‘the oceans provide a great many critical but undervalued ecosystem services that are nearing thresholds for healthy functioning, putting coastal populations ever more at risk. Given the failure of many conventional management measures and the insufficient resources available for effective management, the time is ripe for the development of new market-based tools. This first-ever Marine Katoomba Meeting capitalizes on ever-expanding interest in finding innovative solutions to conserve our valuable marine ecosystem services.’ The meeting was held February 9th & 10th at the Moore Foundation in Palo Alto, CA. Find more information at http://www.katoombagroup.org/event_details.php?id=37.
German Dealer Fined for Smuggling Endangered Corals

PORTLAND, Oregon, January 14, 2010 (ENS) - Gunther Wenzek, a German national, was sentenced today to serve three years on probation and pay a criminal penalty of over $35,000 for smuggling more than 40 tons of coral into the Port of Portland, Oregon, the Justice Department announced.

Judge Anna Brown of the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon imposed the penalty, including a criminal fine of $16,510, nearly $10,000 in restitution to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and a community service payment of $8,890.

Wenzek owns a company named CoraPet, based in Essen, Germany, that sells various coral products to retailers in the United States. The investigation was launched in 2007 after Wenzek tried to ship a container loaded with fragments of endangered coral from reefs off the Philippine coast to Portland.

After this initial shipment, agents seized two full containers of endangered coral shipped by Wenzek to a customer in Portland. These two shipments made up a total of over 40 tons of coral.

Florida First State for EPA Nutrient Limits in Surface Waters

WASHINGTON, DC, January 18, 2010 (ENS) - The U.S. EPA is planning to impose limits on phosphorus and nitrogen in Florida waters that will be the first federal standards for nutrient pollution in the waters of a state.

Phosphorus and nitrogen, known as nutrients because they nourish plants, enter lakes, rivers, streams, springs and canals from fertilization of crops and livestock manure, stormwater runoff and municipal wastewater treatment. Nitrogen also forms from the burning of fossil fuels, like gasoline.

The proposed action, developed with state environmental officials, was released for public comment Friday, meeting a court ordered deadline in a case brought by five environmental groups.

The standards would set a series of numeric limits on the amounts of phosphorus and nitrogen that would be allowed in Florida's surface waters.

Nutrient pollution can damage drinking water sources and form byproducts in drinking water from disinfection chemicals, some of which have been linked with serious human illnesses like bladder cancer, the EPA said in a statement announcing the proposed action.

These nutrients increase harmful algal blooms, which are made of toxic microbes that can cause damage to the human nervous system or even death, the agency said.

Feds Plan to Ban Import, Transport of Giant Constrictor Snakes

WASHINGTON, DC, January 20, 2010 (ENS) - The Burmese python and eight other large constrictor snakes that threaten the Everglades and other sensitive ecosystems could be classified as "injurious wildlife" under the Lacey Act, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced today.

The Burmese python, which can reach a length of 19 feet, and these other alien snakes are destroying some of our nation's most treasured and fragile ecosystems, the secretary said.

The nine species proposed for listing as injurious are: the Burmese python, northern African python, southern African python, reticulated python, green anaconda, yellow anaconda, Beni or Bolivian anaconda, DeSchauensee's anaconda, and boa constrictor.

The Interior Department and states such as Florida are taking action to control and eliminate wild populations of these snakes, but it is difficult in ecosystems where they have no natural predators. Burmese pythons and other large constrictor snakes adapt easily to new environments and are opportunistic in expanding their geographic range, wildlife officials warn.
Dr. Clark’s Strange News

Lame: Ex-convict John Stephens told a Floyd County (Ind.) judge in December that he had a full-time job and intended to turn his life around, but had slipped when he tried to rob the Your Community Bank. "If I hadn't been watching the news and seeing (other successful) bank robberies," he said, he wouldn't have been tempted. He said he was especially impressed by one serial robber, who had made it look easy by vaulting over banks' counters.

In Kansas City, Mo., in December, the mother of Charles Irving tried to protect her 27-year-old son from a charge of being a felon in possession of a gun. She told police (without success) that he had needed the gun to protect her from vampires.

A central purpose of the California Milk Board is to convince consumers to buy local dairy products to keep the spending in-state to help California's farmers, but the board acknowledged in November that its promotion campaign’s advertising contract had gone to an agency in New Zealand. Said a board official: "We have a responsibility to spend (taxpayers') hard-earned dollars as efficiently as we can."

Did you know? Valentine’s Day

- 110 million roses, the majority red, will be sold and delivered between February 12th and 14th in America.
- 15% of U.S. women send themselves flowers on Valentine’s Day.
- California produces 60% of American roses, but the greater majority of those sold on Valentine’s Day are imported from South America.
- Teachers receive the most Valentine’s Day cards, followed by school age children, mothers, wives, and lastly “sweethearts”.
- Hallmark has over 1300 different cards for Valentine’s Day alone.
- More than 35 million heart shaped boxes of candy will be sold this month in America.