

IT'S ALL CONNECTED

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Green Gift Giving Revolution

'Tis the season of positive change! While holiday excess often leads to *one million tons* of wrapping materials in US landfills each week, there's hope in making your gift-giving more environmentally friendly.

Consider a green approach, reimagining the entire gift-giving experience—from shopping and wrapping to disposal. Embrace the mantra of consuming less and reusing more, challenge yourself to eliminate unnecessary purchases. Alex Truelove, zero waste program director at the nonprofit U.S. Public Interest Research Group, emphasizes the importance of breaking the strong cultural link between possessions and status.

Rather than indulging in fancy wrapping that quickly becomes landfill-bound, opt for simplicity. Refuse excessive filler, decorative wrapping, and trinkets, choose quality over quantity. Set your sights on meaningful gifts that align with the recipient's desires, avoiding items destined for the trash.

Reduce your personal carbon footprint during shopping—

- minimize trips
- choose items with minimal packaging, shop locally
- provide a gift receipt for ease of return/exchange

- support companies with sustainable practices

While traditional wrapping paper and bows are beautiful, many can't be recycled. Think about all of the trees that were logged for that paper. Or the barrels of petroleum used for the bows.

Reuse boxes, paper, ribbons. Repurpose items in your home for wrapping, such as scrap paper, newspaper, grocery bags. Get creative and make the wrapping part of the gift, such as a cloth napkin, reusable shopping bag, scarf, throw blanket, etc. Rethink tissue and filler materials. Opt for natural fiber string and yarn and shun plastic curling ribbons. Embrace natural decorations like pine cones or dried flowers atop gifts.

Consider a gift exchange instead of buying for everyone, focusing on environmentally themed gifts, such as native plants/seeds, reusable everyday items, fresh foods/produce, homemade or re-gifted (pre-loved) items, art, and even repairs make for very good gifts.

Give the gift of experiences—memberships, classes, digital subscriptions, concert tickets, or outdoor adventures. While cash is an option, consider it as a last resort for a truly personal touch. Skip the gift giving entirely and make a donation to charity in the recipient's name. Making these changes not only [benefits the planet but also your wallet](#), resulting in meaningful and personal gifts that spread joy and sustainability.

Visiting loved ones during the holidays brings another set of sustainability challenges to consider. From the method of travel to the holiday decorations and the festive meals, UCLA Sustainability shares these tips for an [eco-conscious holiday season](#).

Good Night Bear

Dormancy, hibernation, and brumation refer to wintering habits of some animals. True hibernation is rare, even bears are not true hibernators. Hibernation requires three factors: lower body temperature, reduced heart rate, and lowered metabolism.

Rodents are prime examples of true hibernators while bears are not because they don't reduce their body temperature. Bears simply go into a state of dormancy (i.e., take a nice long bear nap) to survive the season of scarcity, even in non-snowy climates.

Snakes enter a state of brumation where they decrease their metabolism in the winter. Some species will gather together in the same hole, known as a hibernaculum, for the duration. Frog species need to find a safe spot for the winter and may also share their space with other frogs.



Bats are true hibernators and will roost in caves, mine shafts, and other protected places during winter. Some species will hibernate for a portion of the winter and then migrate to warmer environments.



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But the reality is that conservation efforts such as ours don't generate revenue in the traditional ways. For that reason, we need your support in order to continue providing these services and growing our offerings. For example, our newsletter service costs \$120/year, and will increase to \$180/year at some point in 2024.

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Thank you for your support, and here's to a better and brighter 2024!
-Michael

Quick Connections

Books, websites, documentaries, podcasts, events, quotes, and more



Quote We're Pondering

"The Earth will not continue to offer its harvest, except with faithful stewardship. We cannot say we love the land and then take steps to destroy it for use by future generations." - **John Paul II**



More Reason Not to Feed Wildlife

This article from [Phys.org](#) highlights research studies indicating that feeding wild animals may increase artificial selection for boldness and/or harassment behavior in animal populations.



Ocean Art

For your holiday gift giving, print out some beautifully rendered artwork available as [free downloads from NOAA](#).



Garden 101

The National Wildlife Federation provides handy [seed saving tips](#) you can use to expand your native plant habitat now and in the spring.

Community Connections

We want to connect with you.

Have your holiday traditions and/or expectations changed due to your climate change awareness? If so, please share your inspirations and stories.

We read each and every response and will share selected reader stories in upcoming newsletters.

Your feedback is important. [Tell us](#) how we are doing and what you would like to see covered in future newsletters.

Every connection counts! Please help grow our community of everyday heroes by sharing this newsletter with a friend or colleague.

Thank you,

Michael Hawk, Founder

Laura Schare, Editor

Jumpstart Nature

PO Box 53842

San Jose, California 95153



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