

# Earth First! journal here to stay

By Lia Saliccia  
Oregon Daily Emerald

The *Earth First! Journal* began in 1980 as a crude, photocopied newsletter, published from "wherever they happened to be at the time."

After 13 years, five more locations and an offer from the Eugene-based Southern Willamette Earth First!, the publication is now a polished, tabloid-formatted journal with a fixed home in Eugene.

"The environment is not just falling apart, it's being destroyed," John Green, one of the long-term editors of the journal, said. "When you take any action that's going to affect the earth, you have got to put the earth first in making your decision. And if you believe that, you're an Earth Firster."

Earth First! and the journal that carries its name were born at the same time, the journal being a major networking and informational tool for the many Earth Firsters scattered about the globe.

Just as the group believed mainstream environmental groups such as the Sierra Club did not represent the same interests because of the Sierra Club's willingness to compromise, they believed the mainstream media ignored or trivialized the important issues in the fight to save the planet.

The journal is published in true alternative style — structured as a collective of four long-term people with rotating short-term positions, put together on computers in the house of the four main editors/publishers, run on a shoestring budget and relying on submissions for copy.

"I haven't had a whole lot of experience in newspapers," Kimberly Dawn, another long-term editor, said, "but ... I've had seven years of experience as an Earth Firster."

The four people who were willing to do the journal for the next year were also the only ones who showed up to a meeting who were willing to commit for a year.

Printing costs are covered by subscription rates (a year of eight issues for \$25), donations and the sales of items such as T-shirts.

The editors don't claim to be journalists — they see their functions differently. Kimberley Dawn, who has committed herself to the journal for one year, said the mission statement of both Earth First! and the journal is "no compromise in defense of Mother Earth."

Hence, they try to stay away from articles about what Dawn calls "anthropocentric issues," or the presentation of environmental issues through the angle of its impact on humans.

That is essentially the niche of the journal,



MORGAN SMITH for the Emerald  
**John Green, one of the editors of the Earth First! Journal, speaks at an Earth First! meeting.**

which coincides with the philosophy of Earth First! — "That humans are seen as just one species amongst countless many with no rights superior to other species," long-term editor Craig Benneville said.

Often the recipient of negative press from mainstream journalism, Earth First! has an opportunity with its journal to present its side of the issue. The group has been called terrorist for such controversial actions as tree spiking and sabotaging logging equipment, to name a few examples prevalent in the Northwest.

But Earth First! operates upon a different definition of terrorism than its accusers.

"The media defines property destruction as violence," Dawn said. "Earth First! has never done violence to any living thing."

Green said Earth First! has been called a terrorist organization partly from "propaganda by the government" and partly from "misinterpretation of what we do."

Turn to JOURNAL, Page 6A

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