

Good News!

Undercovered #45. More stories not in the mainstream press.

The Earth Charter is the best blueprint we know of for a future. Launched in 2000, it outlines "principles for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society" — a Universal Declaration of Human Rights that includes nature as well as people. Thousands of NGOs and cities throughout the world have endorsed the charter and work to implement its principles. Two succinct, lyrical pages are divided into four sections: respect and care for the community of life; ecological integrity; social and economic justice; democracy, nonviolence, and peace (earthcharter.org).

• Though the U.S. has refused to sign the Kyoto Treaty, mayors of 136 U.S. cities, including Eugene, Corvallis, Portland, Seattle, L.A., and New York, have pledged their cities will meet or exceed Kyoto's seven percent reduction from 1990 greenhouse-gas emission levels by 2012 (kyotousa.org).

Researchers in Singapore have invented a system to allow people to stroke chickens over the Internet, a breakthrough that may lead to long-distance hugs and dance lessons.

• Following passage of the repressive Real I.D. Act, senators and representatives introduced a compassionate, comprehensive immigration bill, strongly supported by both parties in Congress and by immigrant rights groups. The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act would allow people who have been living and working in the U.S. and their families to earn permanent legal status over time, and it would create fair legal channels for foreign workers to come to the U.S. It would also help foreign relatives trapped in visa backlogs to be united with their U.S. families (*La Raza*).

• This spring the pioneer sea otter has returned to Simpson Reef; Elakha Alliance is supporting DNA studies of otter bones in Oregon middens, searching for a genetic match to reintroduce to our coast. Since 1907, when the last Oregon sea otter was killed for its \$900 pelt, kelp forests along our coast have been gobbled by sea urchins, otters' favorite food. Without the kelp, beaches have eroded and fisheries declined (ecotrust.org).

• In northern Iraq, 800 families are learning construction skills by rebuilding their destroyed homes, schools, and water systems with technical support from Counterpart International (goodnewsexchange.org).

• Working with courageous Iraqi doctors and volunteers, International Peace Angels delivers humanitarian aid and medical supplies to women and children in war-torn areas of Iraq (internationalpeaceangels.org).

• On May 26, Rep. Woolsey introduced an amendment to the \$491-billion Pentagon budget, calling on President Bush to make a plan to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq. Although Woolsey's amendment lost 300 to 128, five Republican representatives and two-thirds of Democrats, including Rep. DeFazio, voted for it. Woolsey's separate House bill also calling for withdrawal has 30 co-sponsors, not yet including Rep. DeFazio (Pacifica Radio).

• Volunteers near Big Sur counted 338 mother-calf pairs of gray whales swimming north from Mexico, down from last year's impressive 455 pairs but far better than the 87 pairs counted in 2001. Scientists theorize that fluctuations in Bering Sea food supplies impact whale pregnancies (learner.org).

• Researchers in Singapore have invented a system to allow people to stroke chickens over the Internet, a breakthrough that may lead to long-distance hugs and dance lessons, allergic owners caressing furry pets remotely, and zoo visitors patting lions (*Wired News*).

• Women employees of a New Jersey sex-toy store sent three dozen vibrators to Iraqi women. One of the Americans wrote, "The sisterhood of women is stronger than politics ... stronger than any doctrine or rhetoric. It unites us all, and through this bond we can find peace. Enjoy this gift, my faraway sister" (harpersweekly.org).

• The Climate Stewardship and Innovation Act, recently re-introduced in the U.S. Senate, would cap greenhouse gas emissions and increase funding for renewable energy and energy-efficient vehicle research. Although the bill also includes funding for nuclear power, it is the best current legislative path to fight global warming (Environmental Defense).

• Millions of painted lady butterflies have arrived in Oregon from California deserts, where record rains and lush growth have led to what could be the biggest butterfly migration of modern times (U.C. Davis).

• A Hunan restaurant has introduced abalone dishes simmered in human breast milk, so customers can "experience maternal love" while dining (BBC).

• Berkeley recently adopted a Zero Waste Goal for 2020, joining San Francisco, Seattle, and other cities in the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand in coupling resource recovery with industrial redesign to end waste (ecologycenter.org).

• Ethiopia held its third-ever national election May 15. Despite reports of fraud and harassment, and long lines at polling sites, it was peaceful. Election officials estimated turnout at 90 percent of registered voters (AllAfrica.com).

• China has ended the use of naked women as sushi platters in restaurants (BBC).

• The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network celebrated its tenth anniversary of working to make schools safe for LGBTQ students. Today 3,000 U.S. schools have Gay-Straight Alliances (tolerance.org).

• Elephant-human conflicts in Africa and Asia have been soothed by the efforts of the Elephant Pepper Development Trust. Chili peppers, a new cash crop, keep elephants out of farmers' crops (elephantpepper.org).

• Scottish scientists have developed a new fuel cell that uses sunlight to break down pollutants in water while simultaneously producing electricity (*Scotsman*). **EW**




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