

So long and thanks for all the flowers

Contributed by Debbie Smit
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The first Friday in May is No Pants Day. If you did not celebrate on Friday by donning boxers, bloomers or briefs, diarise the date for 2008.

No Pants Day, like International Talk Like a Pirate Day (September 19), Blame Someone Else Day (first Friday the 13th of the year) and other unofficial observances, is intended to put a joyful spin on our otherwise serious lives. No Pants Day has nothing whatever to do with my intended topic, I just thought I would introduce a spot of levity to help you cope with reality. How else can one deal with the apocryphal problems that are besieging our planet?

Surprisingly, the latest findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are not all doom and gloom. All we have to do is to reduce our carbon dioxide emissions by between 50 and 85 percent by 2050. The IPCC claims that it won't even cost that much: keeping the temperature rise within 2 degrees Celsius would cost just 0.12 percent of annual gross domestic product.

Confiscating the private aircraft of all celebrities should do the trick. The London Daily Mail reports that John Travolta, prone to preachy exhortations to ordinary people to "do their bit" to halt global warming has, thanks to his five planes, a carbon footprint 100 times bigger than the average British citizen. Travolta insists that being a movie star is a big hassle, so he needs them to "get around". When I calculated my carbon footprint online (carbonfootprint.com) I was told: "If everyone lived like you, we would need two-and-a-half planets"! Working on the assumption that I am fairly average (even though I recycle my paper, plastic, glass and organic waste and mostly shun red meat) Travolta needs 250 planets!

What I truly love about the web is its ability to show the lowdown on the high and mighty. Ann Althouse, blogger and law professor (althouse.com) points out the shortcomings of American Idol's altruistic "Idol Gives Back" programme that aired in SA this week. Sponsors donate 10 (American) cents for every call, but only up to 50 million calls. All the extra calls elicit no donations which means that many callers phone in believing that they are "saving lives" when they're not! Althouse is suitably disdainful of Simon Cowell's rather too personal responses to the horrors of life and death in the assorted African slums that he and Ryan Seacrest visited as part of the campaign. His comments: "This is simply awful!" and "That was horrible!" are identical to the comments he has for defaulting Idol contestants. Wonder what his footprint looks like.

Then there is the small matter of bees. I did not really want to go here, but it is hard to ignore a problem that is likely to obliterate the world's food supply much sooner than global warming.

We know why the planet is overheating and we have plans to fix it, but what is killing the bees?

The phenomenon has been labelled many things – Vanishing Bee Syndrome, Colony Collapse Disorder and Fall Dwindle to name a few. It is hard to explain. The Varroa mite, pesticides, immunodeficiency disease, bee renting and genetic crop modification have been proposed as possible causes.

The most alarming theory is that bees hate our electrosmog, that invisible fug that is slowly enveloping our planet. Every cellphone emits molecule-morphing radiation to a distance of about 90 metres!

Others simply believe that we have abused our bees to such an extent that they have been raptured.

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