

# SUSTAINABLE LEADERS IN ACTION



JANUARY 2021  
VOLUME 2 - ISSUE 1

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# Action of the Month

## Reduce and Reuse by Noah Zakaria

Are you and your family coming out of the holiday season with lighter pockets than usual? Sustainable Contra Costa's Reduce and Reuse challenge provides a means for you to both help our environment and your wallet.

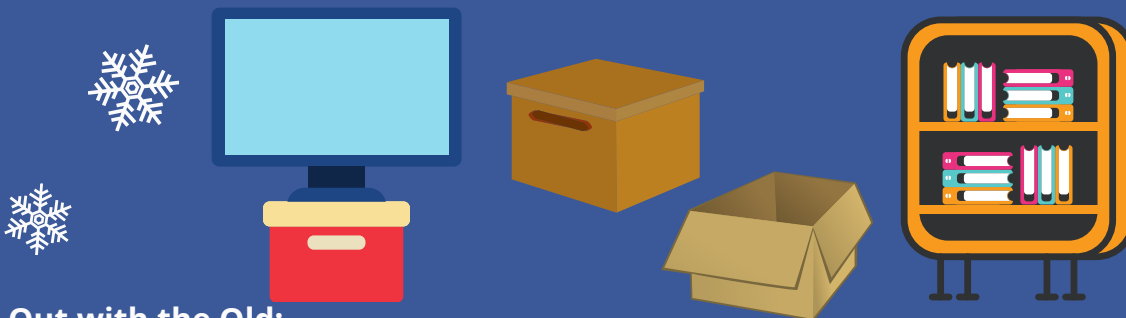
### For Starters:

Reusing bags is one of the simplest ways to start becoming both environmentally and monetarily conscious. Plastic bags' flimsiness and mass amount in circulation make them highly disposable. Taking note of the high level of plastic bags being disposed of, California has taken measures to reduce single-use plastic bags and similar alternative bags. Forgetting your bags when going to grocery stores or take-out restaurants may cost you a couple dimes. Being a college student, I always kick myself when I forget my shopping bags at home, as every bit of carbon and spare change adds up. It goes without saying, but make sure to reuse your reusable bags. Most reusable bags have more intensive production processes when compared to single-use plastic bags. For example, cotton totes need to be used approximately 173 times to have an equivalent environmental impact as one plastic bag. Additionally, single-use plastic bags do not need to be used once, and are excellent trash can liners. Of course, reusing doesn't apply to only bags. In general, the more uses of a product mean lower environmental impact! Also, keep in mind reusability when purchasing products as well.



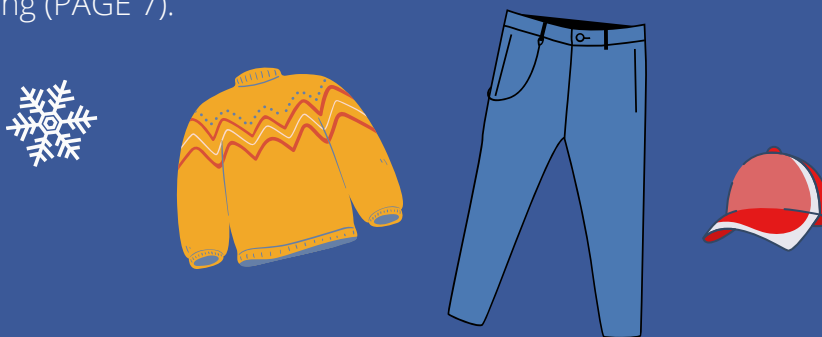
### Getting Creative:

With the gifting season, empty boxes accompany. For those more adept in reusing, upcycling is a way to express your sustainable creativity. From wall shelves to organizers, boxes allow for a blank canvas for upcycling. Personally, my cardboard box monitor stand makes for a great complement to my desk space. [Shoe boxes](#), with their sturdy cardboard, are particularly popular for upcycling projects as well.



### Out with the Old:

New gifts often make other belongings outdated. Before you throw something out, think about whether someone else could get good use out of it. If you no longer have a use for belonging like clothes, electronics, or furniture consider reselling or donating. Most social media platforms such as Facebook and Nextdoor are intuitive ways to advertise resales to those in your community. For donations, there are Goodwills and Salvation Armys scattered throughout Contra Costa County. Also, look for local thrift stores such as the [American Cancer Society Discovery Shop](#) or [Hospice Eastbay Thrift Shoppes](#) to donate to. For those on the buying side of the reduce and reuse cycle, check out our guide to efficient thrift shopping (PAGE 7).



### Other means to sell or buy old goods online:

[Offerup](#), [Craigslist](#), [Depop](#).

Track your household's carbon footprint and take action with us! Learn about the Reduce and Reuse action more in depth on the [Cleaner Contra Costa Challenge](#) website. The Challenge is funded through a grant from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.



CLEANER  
CONTRA COSTA  
CHALLENGE

Click for  
more info!



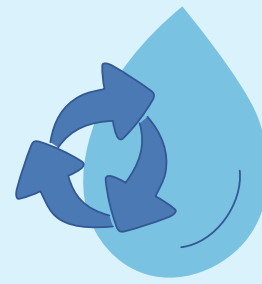
## Gift Wrapping

Save bags, bows, and tissue paper for when you need to give a gift. You can also wrap gifts in a dishcloth, a reusable canvas bag or origami boxes!

## Clothes

Look up some mask patterns online, cut up your clothes and sew them into masks!

If you have a large old sweater and a small dog, make a jacket for them with the sweater sleeves!



## Saving Water

Put a bucket in your kitchen sink to wash your hands over and use that to rinse food off the dishes!

Put a bucket in your kitchen sink to wash your hands over and use that to rinse food off the dishes!

# Upcycling Tips

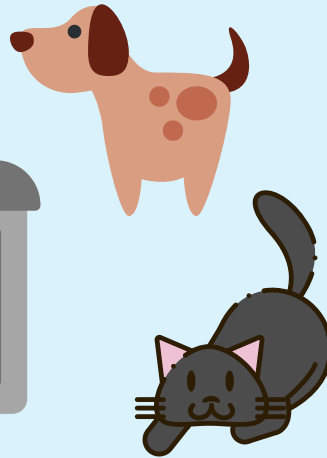
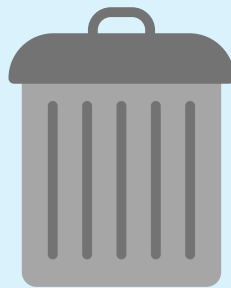
by Alexi Lindeman

## Containers

Clean glass jars to store all types of food, turn into gift packaging, or to sprout plants

Give plastic packaging a second life. Instead of using a disposable Ziploc bag use an old container.

Poke a couple of holes in the bottom to make a pot!



## Any and all Bags

Turn them into trash bags. If you have a mini garbage can, shopping bags serve as the perfect liner. Paper towel, flour and pet food bags also work! If the bag doesn't fit the can, use it for pet feces.

## Scratch Paper

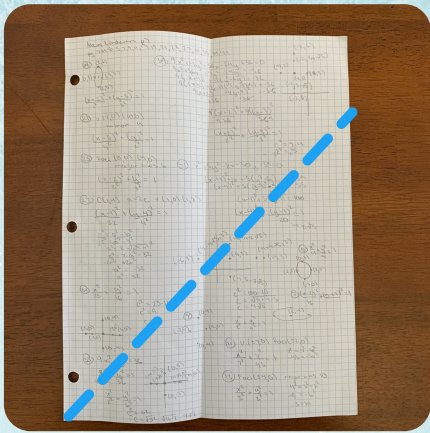
Most pieces of paper only use one side. Set aside paper that can be used again. This also applies for half finished notebooks.

If you are into arts and crafts you have to try origami with scratch paper. Make compostable paper pockets, action origami, gift boxes and more!

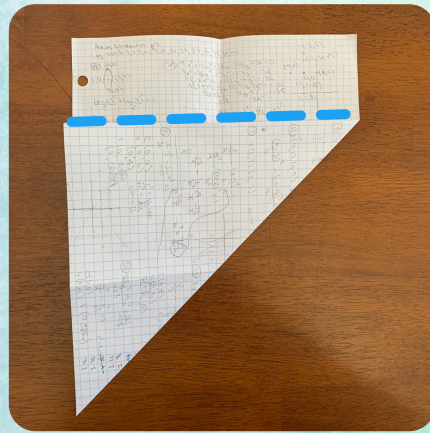


# Paper Pocket

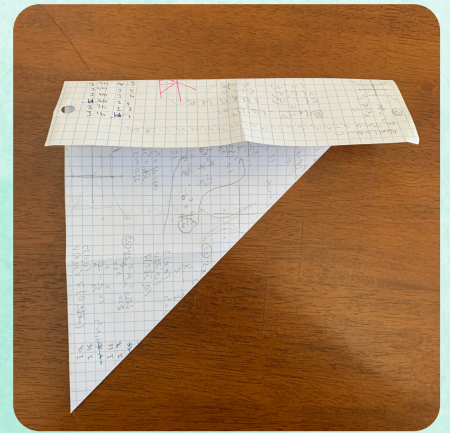
Demonstrated by Alexi Lindeman



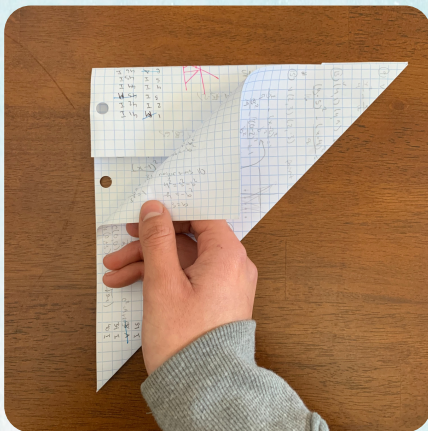
Grab a piece of scratch paper



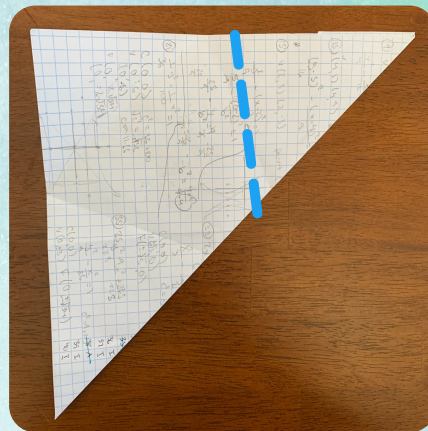
Fold bottom to side edge



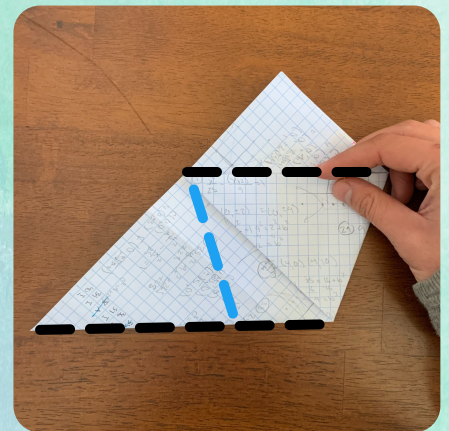
Fold top down



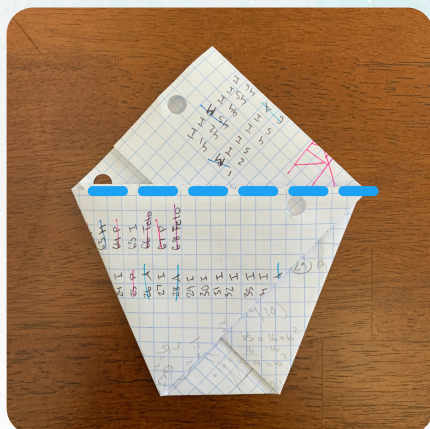
Tuck in the flap that was folded down in the last step



It should look like this



Rotate and fold right corner, make black lines parallel



Fold the left corner up



Tuck the top flap into the cornered folded up in the last step



Use the pocket for anything!



# Why I Joined SLIA

by Abigail Stofer

**GROWING UP IN CALIFORNIA**, it's pretty impossible to ignore climate change with seven year long droughts and increasingly dangerous fire seasons becoming practically year round. In school, they always taught us the bare bones of climate change— the world is hotter because of pollution, so bike instead of driving to school sometimes. And as a young child, this explanation was enough for me.

But then, during my freshman year of high school, I went through a period of searching out the answers to the questions I had always had, but was too complacent to bother seeking. I found my passions in writing and political science. I joined Model United Nations and became involved in my local government through the Walnut Creek Youth Leadership Commission. I started keeping up with the news and reading about social justice issues. So when my school advertised a way to earn volunteer hours while learning more about sustainability and climate change— a topic that, as a Californian, is extremely relevant— I jumped on the opportunity. And when I learned that SLIA had a monthly newsletter that I could help write articles for, I was sold.

Since I joined, I have learned more than I ever thought I would about the effects that climate change has on our Earth, and how I can do my part to reduce my carbon footprint. Through SLIA, I have researched and learned about fast fashion, nuclear energy, wildfires, land degradation, coral reef acidification, the recycling crisis, and so much more.

Learning and working with the other passionate youth in SLIA has helped me grow in my passions and in helping me to figure out where I want to take my future career. It is not set in stone yet, but if I end up taking a writing and journalism route, I will have this experience to thank for that, as this has been my first dive into journalism, and hopefully not my last. If I end up going the politics route, I hope to take the knowledge I have gained from this experience to always remember the impacts of government on our environment and to always keep the health of our planet as priority number one. No matter where my life takes me, I will always advocate for this Earth, because we may not get another one.

# A GUIDE TO EFFICIENT THRIFT SHOPPING

By Abigail Stofer

In recent years, thrift shopping has become increasingly fashionable. The latest trends for teens are baggy graphic t-shirts, distressed jeans, and overall vintage, grunge-looking fits. Second hand clothing, which used to be a source of shame and embarrassment for many kids, is now being celebrated and displayed with pride. But thrift shopping is not just cheap and trendy, it is a sustainable alternative for your favorite stores and helps stand up to the disastrous fast fashion industry.

Fast fashion is inexpensive clothing produced at breakneck speed by mass-market retailers in response to the latest fads (think Zara, H&M, Forever 21, Romwe, Urban Outfitters, Shein, Zaful, etc.). This industry is incredibly wasteful because these clothes are not meant to last long, and while clothes used to be durable and long-lasting, the average American now throws away 80 pounds of clothing a year.

Even if you donate your clothes, the ones that are not able to be sold end up being shipped off to landfills. According to the Ellen Macarthur Foundation, 87% of fabric used for clothing ends up either incinerated or in a landfill. Since more than 60% of fabric fibers are synthetics, which uses 342 million barrels of oil a year to make, these unlucky clothes that have found themselves in landfills will not decay easily. The process of decomposition for these fabrics can take anywhere from 20 to 200 years.



The production of fast fashion clothing is often based out of coal-powered facilities, consequently making the industry responsible for approximately 10% of worldwide carbon emissions. As if that wasn't bad enough, the Institute of Sustainable Communications says that the fashion industry is the second biggest polluter of water, a result of the pouring of toxic chemicals into clean water supplies during the production process. In fact, your favorite pair of jeans most likely used 1,800 gallons of water to make and produced the amount of greenhouse gases equivalent to driving 80 miles. So by buying second hand, you will be wasting less resources, causing less pollution, and keeping more clothes out of landfills.





Thrift shopping excursions can be tiring and overwhelming, so here are some tips for getting the most out of your trip, making it guaranteed for you to walk away with some perfect and unique finds. Before you even leave your home, make sure that you have a plan. This means having a clear goal of what you are looking for or what you need, finding out restock and specialty offer times, making sure you have a set budget (it can be very easy to get carried away), and saving some pictures of outfit inspiration.



Going through every single rack and pile of clothes can be exhausting and time consuming, so avoid this by perfecting the art of the “scan”—scanning the racks for eye catching pieces based on the specific things you are looking for, preferred color palettes, and goal aesthetics. This definitely takes some practice, but if you can get it down, it will be a huge timesaver.

Some other quick and easy tips to make your thrift shopping experience as successful and efficient as possible are: inspect your finds for small defects, holes, stains, etc. (though don't let this deter you if you could easily tailor or fix the piece yourself), dress in fitted clothing to make trying on clothes easier, and sell your preloved garments beforehand to possibly get store credit or a coupon.



With thrift shopping becoming more and more popular, there has also been a conversation arising about whether it is ethical for people who have the money to shop at other stores to be frequenting the thrift stores. But the truth is, the vast majority of suburban or urban areas receive way more donations than they can sell, so as long as you don't egregiously over-buy and are aware of the dynamics and mission of your local shop, there is no harm done in making your environment, and your wallet, hurt a little less. Also, by wearing your preloved clothing with pride and telling everyone about the thrift store you discovered it at, you will be helping to destigmatize secondhand clothing!

While thrift shopping is not going to fix all the issues in the fashion and textile industry, it is an affordable and enjoyable way to do your part to reduce your carbon footprint and take a small step towards a greener future for all. Besides, who doesn't love shopping?

# Fading and Forgotten

by Alexi Lindeman Art by Kyle Suen

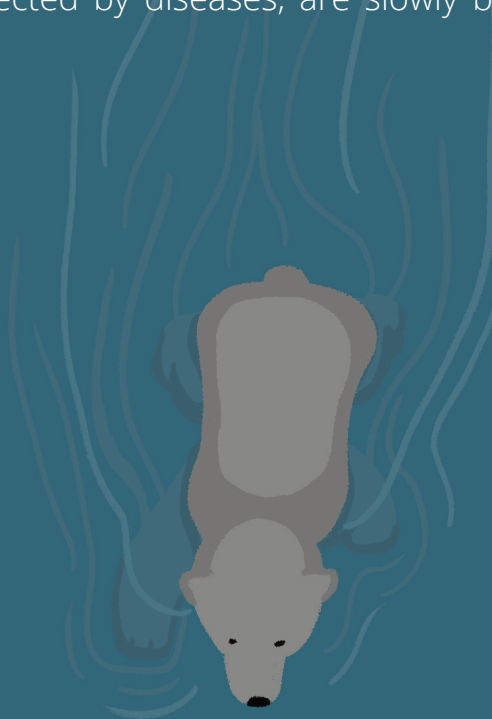


***A forest bare, smoke thickening the air.  
Flooding coasts, drowning those close.  
Drying lands, with no water at hand.  
Ice caps, disappearing fast.  
Ocean reefs, bleached from the heat.  
Every 5 minutes, a species goes extinct***

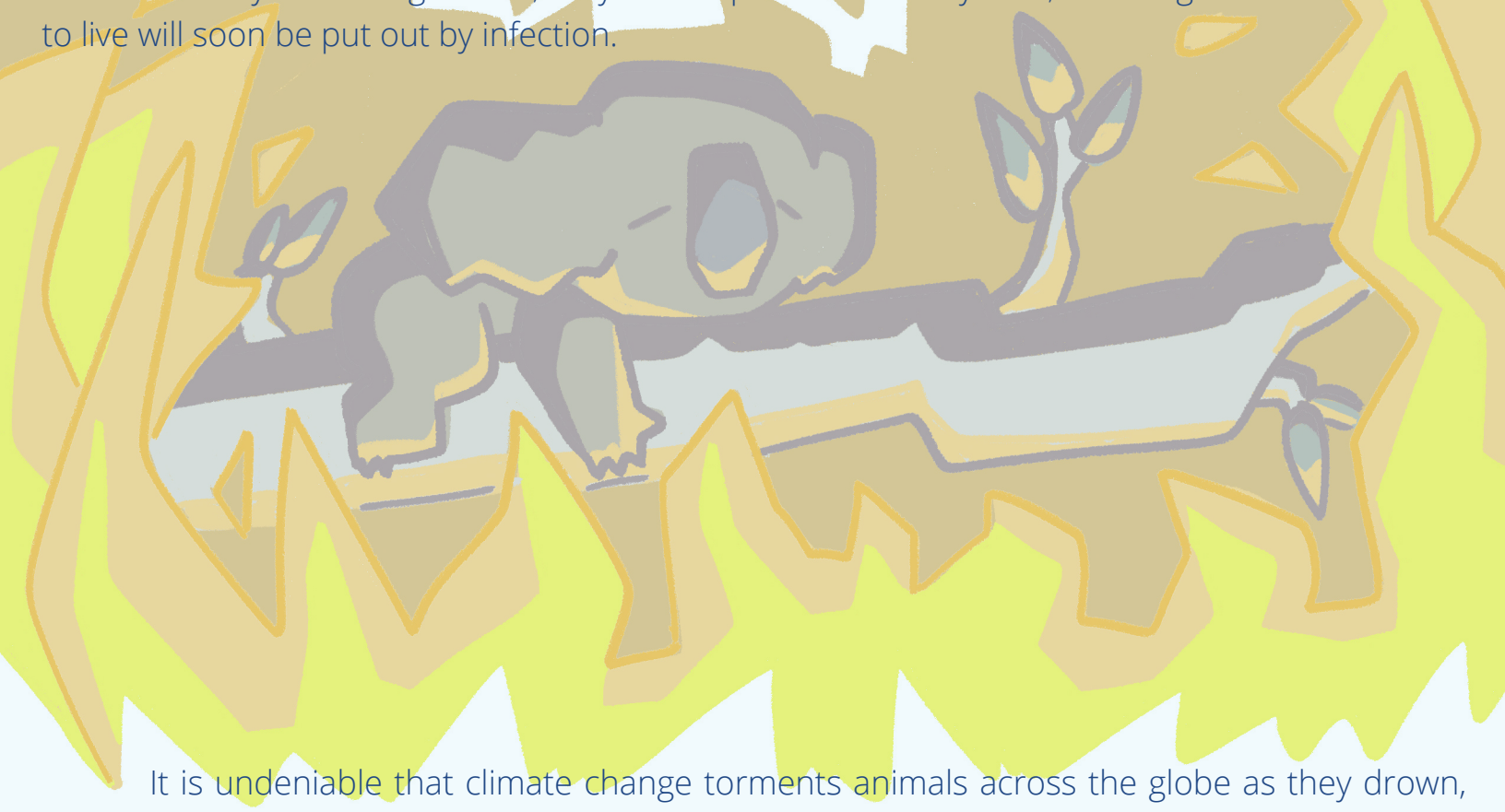
Many people consider themselves animal lovers; yet they support meat and dairy industries who pack cows in pools of their own feces, support mining industries who turn thriving forests into toxic wastelands, and support plastic packaging that fills birds' bellies so they starve while still feeling full. We labeled living, breathing creatures as "it" and "them" to justify our cruelty to these so-called "objects." We have separated ourselves so far from these creatures, that we erase their daily and constant, fear, misery, and pain. The world faces an unprecedented, anthropogenic climate, and animals will have no defense against something nature did not create.

In the oceans, marine life suffers from starvation and its related health effects. For instance, whales' main source of food, krill, have "undergone a 30% decline in density in some areas" due to ocean warming and acidification from increased atmospheric carbon levels. The supply of other food sources also decreases due to warming conditions. Subsequently, the whale's health wanes due to declining food availability. Cristina Castro, an Ecuadorian marine biologist, said that humpback whales are sick. Their bones are visible and they have parasites, something she did not use to see in her past 18 years of studying them. Whale fecundity also takes a toll because they give birth when feeding conditions are favorable. But due to krill's declining abundance, this is rarely the case. And when there is a calf, it is unlikely to survive because of the same circumstances. These enormous beauties are highly intelligent, containing spindle cells, which are only present in humans, apes, and elephants. They sing whale songs in harmony across vast distances, have multiple methods of communication, and display grief for their dead. There is no doubt that these whales feel the indistinguishable ache of never receiving full meals, or compassion for their pod which becomes thinner, sicker, and fewer every year, or the agony of not being able to feed their young. One orca carried her calf's limp body around for 17 days in anguish. She is one of many who will mourn because of climate change's insidious hand, unleashed by humanity.

Animals in the Arctic are among those who will face the worst effects of climate change. Many species around the world migrate to higher latitudes in response to global warming. But for Arctic species, there is no “up” for them to escape the heat. Polar bears are starving because of this. Usually, they wait for a seal to emerge from a hole in the ice, but since “sea ice is shrinking 14 percent per decade” polar bears have to expend more energy swimming to find ice sheets as theirs disappears or hunt for seals in open waves which drastically decrease their chances of catching one. One female bear swam 426 miles in nine days, frantically searching for food. Unfortunately, this caused her to lose “22 percent of her body weight and, worse, the nursing cub that had started the journey with her.” She fought with every ounce of energy she had for life. She is not just an animal going hungry because of nature. No, she is going hungry because her 1.7 million year adaptations render useless against climate change’s swift devastation to her home. She cannot feed herself, or her cub who drowned from exhaustion, like so many others, emaciated and degraded by climate change. Rising disease rates, compound these creatures’ misery. Climate change has caused many species to migrate north, and accordingly spread pathogens to vulnerable arctic species who have no immunity to these new pathogens. Furthermore, polar bears are “fasting weeks longer than they did before while being increasingly loaded with chemicals such as mercury, DDT, PCBs and hundreds of pollutants,” therefore making them particularly susceptible to diseases, preexisting or not. Alopecia, “characterized by severe hair loss and flesh sores” was found in over 25% of polar bears in 2012. These bears, deprived of food and infected by diseases, are slowly being picked off by climate change.



Lastly, climate change harms unfrozen terrains. Warmer weather increases evaporation, making dry areas drier, and wet areas wetter. Accordingly, “superstorms,” in the forms of hurricanes, wildfires, droughts or floods are occurring in 10-year spans, rather than their previous 100-year spans. Due to drier vegetation “fire seasons are lasting, on average, eighty-six days longer than they have in four decades;” consequently leading to some of the hottest, biggest, and longest wildfires in the Amazon, California, and Australia. Every year, hundreds of koalas fall victim to bushfires. They rely entirely on the highly flammable Eucalyptus tree for food, and since koalas are slow, they cannot escape the savage flames that consume their fur, flesh, and home. And if these helpless creatures manage to survive, charred, weakened, and immobilized by the licking flames, they have a poor immune system, meaning that their own fire to live will soon be put out by infection.

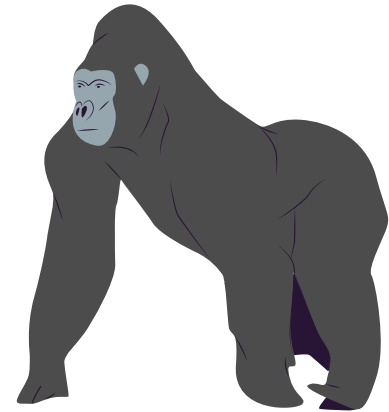


It is undeniable that climate change torments animals across the globe as they drown, burn, starve, dehydrate, and migrate or die from its effects. Sadly, their suffering will only intensify. Climate change will cause adverse disasters to everyone around the world, thus inspiring people to find solutions to limit human demise. But, even with the incentive of world preservation, human inaction on climate change foretells a grim picture. If humans cannot stop climate change for their own sake, then they are even less likely to care about animals suffering from their actions. Accordingly, more resources and money are and will be focused on alleviating human suffering rather than animals. Animals will continue perishing under the full force of climate change, without technologies like air conditioning or agriculture to protect them from heat waves or superstorms. Ironically enough, the one species that caused climate change will undoubtedly suffer the least in comparison to the other 8.7 million species around the globe.



# Zoonotic Diseases

by Alexi Lindeman



HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and its subsequent disease AIDs, have stripped 35.4 million people of their lives and infected 77.3 million since its emergence in the 1980s. While you might know how HIV/AIDs is transmitted and its devastating impact on today's world, thinking of its origins pulls up a blank slate.

Surprisingly enough, the rise of HIV began with a bike. During the early 1800s, the first bike was invented, made with a wooden frame and iron wheels. By the end of the century, the bicycle had evolved to include pedals, cranks, chains, gears, and the pneumatic or rubber blow-up tire we are familiar with today. The invention of the motorcycle and the automobile followed shortly after. The rise of these inventions caused an influx in the demand for rubber, which in turn led to exploitation of rubber trees in the tropics.

At this time European countries “scrambled for Africa” in a rush to acquire power, land, and resources—does the Berlin Conference of 1884 with Otto Von Bismark trigger any memories? The colonists forced the natives to do the unpleasant, and dangerous work of harvesting rubber from rubber trees in the deep tropical forests of Africa. The Africans were left to fend for themselves and, soon hunting, trading, and consumption of apes became common. Due to the increased contact between apes and humans, several strands of the SIV virus the apes carried mutated, infected humans and became HIV. These apes had been coexisting with SIV (simian immunodeficiency virus) for hundreds to thousands of years and had probably even infected local human populations. These previous strands of HIV had died out as they were isolated from the rest of the world. But in this case, colonization and globalization stimulated the spread of HIV, and it plagued the rest of the world.



This was not the only deadly disease transmission from animal to human. Chlamydia came from alpacas, the plague was carried by rats, West Nile Virus originated in birds, swine flu jumped from pigs, coronaviruses (SARS, MARS, COVID-19) from bats along with so many more. For years, scientists have warned of the hundreds of coronaviruses in bat among other animal populations. With human population growth, more and more of wildlife's habitats are replaced each year with farmland, factories, mines, and cities.

There is closer and more frequent contact with these species as they are forced out of their habit, and are left nowhere to go. With more contact, there is a higher chance of diseases jumping to humans. In addition to habitat destruction, the compact, unsanitary conditions of animal farms and wet markets house various pathogens, thus increasing the likelihood of the outbreak of deadly zoonotic diseases. In fact, there already has been an increase in the number of zoonotic diseases. When looking at all human diseases, 60% originated in animals, yet when looking at emerging infectious diseases, 75% are zoonotic.

The global pandemic of 2020 brought the world to its knees, and we still have not recovered from the scythe of this virus. COVID-19 was not the first, nor will it be the last devastating zoonotic epidemic. The answer to this problem will not be wiping out bats or any other disease-transmitting species.

That would only wipe out priceless ecological benefits such as pest control or pollination, which humanity cannot survive without. Rather, the first step to prevention is recognizing that humanity's intrusion of wildlife is the root cause of these zoonotic diseases.

**[Click here to learn more about the history of HIV,](#)**  
**[or here to listen to the "Origins of COVID 19 &](#)**  
**[Other Zoonotic Diseases."](#)**



# Vegan Chocolate Cake

from [Minimalist Baker](#)

## Ingredients

**Prep Time**

15 Minutes

**Cook Time**

30 Minutes

### CAKE

Almond or Oat Milk	1 1/2 cups
Apple cider vinegar	2 teaspoon
Coconut oil, melted	2/3 cup
Strong brewed coffee	1/2 cup
Unsweetened applesauce	1 1/4 cups
Flour	2 cups & 2 Tbsp
Granulated sugar	1 1/3 cups
Unsweetened cocoa powder	1 cup
Baking soda	2 teaspoon
Baking powder	1 teaspoon
Salt	1/4 teaspoon salt



"I can't believe it's vegan!"



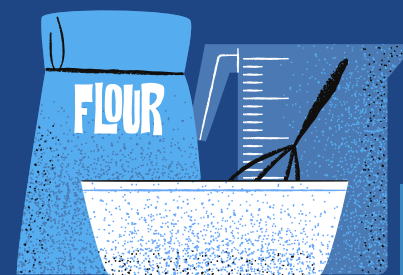
"Rich, moist, delicious."

### FROSTING

Vegan butter, softened	1 cup
Unsweetened cocoa powder	2/3 cup
Vegan Cream Cheese	1/4 cup
Vanilla extract	2 teaspoon
Powdered sugar	2 1/2 - 3 cups

## Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F, spray two 8 in round pans, dust with flour
2. Mix the milk and vinegar and set aside for a few minutes. Add coconut oil, coffee, vanilla extract, and applesauce.
3. In a separate bowl, mix the dry ingredients then slowly add to the wet mixture until beaten smooth..
4. Pour into pans, bake 25-40 min or until a toothpick comes out clean
5. Prepare frosting by beating the butter and cream cheese til fluffy. Add in the rest of the ingredients.
6. Once the cake is completely cooled, frost and enjoy!



If you're planning to visit San Francisco to catch the post-New Year's atmosphere, take a moment to look up ZFP restaurants. ZFP stands for Zero Food Print, and businesses who participate contribute their money from every meal towards sustaining and implementing renewable farming practices. A more detailed explanation how intensive farming practices have affected the world's arable land can be seen in Alexi Lindeman's Water and Land Degradation article in a previous newsletter. Through vegetarianism, you can help fight unsustainable agricultural practices and save the soil!

Some local ZFP restaurants with amazing vegetarian options include:

MISSION CHINESE FOOD | \$\$ || ★★☆☆

- a highly reputed place with a lot of historical renown, with chefs hailing from many parts of East Asia

FLOUR + WATER PIZZARIA | \$\$ || ★★★★★

- A rustic Italian cuisine place known casual and lively atmosphere; their vegetarian side dishes like the cauliflower + pine nut combo are quite unique

HANDLINE COASTAL CALIFORNIA | \$\$\$ || ★★★★★

- All their vegetarian options are locally grown, and their seafood is known for being sustainably sourced!

If none of these fine establishments caught your interest, then just know the typical rule of thumb is vegetarian options will almost always be available at East or South Asian restaurants. It is fairly important to understand that vegetarian items aren't just something that's without the meat—many cultures have created entire cuisines out of the fact that meat is not an option for them. You can definitely find something that works for you. Always feel free to do your own research about vegetarianism, and from there, find out what's available.

Remember that there are many benefits from changing diets— especially the way it positively impacts global warming. It was found that vegetarians are found to produce nearly half the gas emissions that the meat diet has, and vegans had half the emissions that the vegetarians did! In addition to the health benefits, going vegetarian also stops bigger businesses from exploiting the environment in order to give back towards the demand for meat. Of course, don't feel pressured to go vegan immediately, but consider the consequences and benefits,, of what you do for the environment ever day. The most impactful actions start in small steps, and before you know it, the world's a little better than it was before. Solving climate change can start anywhere, and you can start with the very food you eat. If every farmer were to implement regenerative farming, if everyone took the chance to eat lower down the food chain, then perhaps we have a chance against global warming.



# REDUCE AND REUSE!

## Holiday Edition

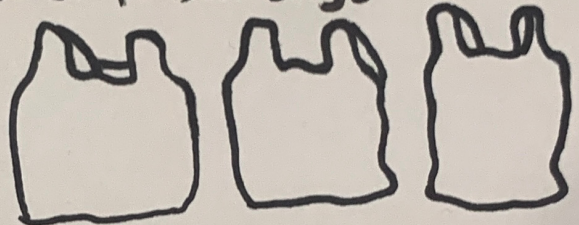


### PERSONAL STORY OF SLIA MEMBER: LUCA MATHIAS

Luca and his family always stocked upon holiday food and gifts during Christmas Time



Luca's problem was his constant use of plastic bags



Plastic bags are bad because they end up as waste in landfills and beaches



Joining SLIA MADE LUCA environmentally conscious



Reusable shopping bags are great because they are made of natural fibers and allow multiple use



For 2020 holiday shopping Luca used a reusable shopping bags for foods and gifts



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## ARE YOU...

Curious about green jobs?

Interested in developing your career?

Wanting to learn from professionals?

Thinking about what to major in?

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# CLIMATE CAREERS CHAT

Thursday | January 28th | 5:30pm PST

Learn from industry professionals!

Explore environmental careers!

Ask questions!



**Missy Stults**

The City of Ann Arbor's  
Sustainability &  
Innovations Manager

## THE PANELISTS



**Adam Ratner**

The Marine Mammal  
Center's Associate Director  
of Conservation Education



Join us for SLIA's second Climate Careers Chat! This youth-produced live interactive panel will feature two industry professionals in sustainability and conservation who will share their education and career pathways and participate in a live audience Q&A session. This event is open to anyone interested in the environment, sustainability, and conservation who would like to learn more about the various educational and career opportunities in these fields.



**SIGN UP HERE!**

**MAILING SIGNUP**

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