



Earth & Sky

Thinking globally – acting locally.

Earth & Sky was devised as a short, free course of lectures open to the general public. It presented an integrated perspective on natural science, exploring how the Earth and its ecosystems fit into the larger picture provided by astronomy and planetary science. It emphasised also the socially positive role of practical community initiatives in promoting the well-being of ecosystems (particularly through stewardship of urban wildlife corridors). Meetings were held in the Francis Peek Building, Dulwich Park, London Borough of Southwark (UK), a purpose-built community and education facility.



The series was presented on behalf of the Ecospheres Project by Dr. Martin Heath: *“This was an opportunity to combine my research interests with my role as an environmental campaigner. On one hand, the lectures discussed how the appearance of complex life on Earth has been controlled by a hierarchy of environmental windows, cosmological, galactic, stellar and planetary. On the other, they explored how human activity is undermining the global environment and how everyone can contribute to initiatives to protect and restore the ecosystems upon which we all depend.”*

Earth & Sky was made possible through the support of Paul Highman, Dulwich area parks manager, and Anderson Springer, Facilities Officer, London Borough of Southwark. Störm Poorun provided projection equipment and Penelope Stanford provided transport and logistics. John Bellamy provided access to his home, which enabled useful photography of the River Effra drainage basin. Becca Thackray conducted an appraisal survey. Thanks to all participants for their individual contributions.



Schedule.

Section I. The Earth and its place in the universe.

May 6, 2010: Planets, stars, and galaxies.

May 13, 2010: Comparing the Earth and the Sun's other planets.

May 20, 2010: Our Sun, sunlight, and how plants use sunlight.

Section II. Earth history and our landscape.

May 27, 2010: The history of the Earth and its Moon.

June 3, 2010: How did we get our local landscape?

June 10, 2010: Climate, seasons and the cycle of the ice ages.

Section III. Ecology and campaigning.

June 17, 2010: A global environmental crisis & the climate controversy.

June 24, 2010: Ecology in our landscape - making a difference.

Section IV. The quest for other Earths. July 1, 2010: Other suns, other worlds.

July 8, 2010: Forests and the search for habitable planets.

Promoting biodiversity.

The evenings provided an opportunity to publicise bodies conserving biodiversity. Left: Ashley White of the London Wildlife Trust elaborated on how ecologists may maximise urban biodiversity. Andrew Warren, a supporter of the Galapagos Conservation Trust, alerted participants to the 2010 Galapagos Day event.



New Leaf - a partnership for ecology & social justice.

New Leaf is an innovative project which seeks to rehabilitate young offenders and inspire them with enthusiasm for constructive projects. *New Leaf* has been creating a small botanical garden, arranged to illustrate the evolution and phylogeny of the plant kingdom, beside West Dulwich railway station, South London. It has been providing workers also for a project to enhance local wildlife corridors through nearby Belair Park.



Young people drawn into the scheme have been encouraged to develop their own positive interests and to realise their potential. This is not always easy, because, in many cases, their previous experiences have not equipped them to achieve this. Some, however, have become enthusiastic and pro-active proponents of greening the urban environment. *New Leaf* thus contributes not only to education and ecology, but also to restorative social justice. The concept has received widespread recognition.



Upper left: Vinnie O'Connell founder and director of *New Leaf*, outlined its objectives and achievements. Centre left: Helen Saunders (now O'Connell) summarised the history and importance of plant phylogeny studies, and how the botanical garden promotes the public understanding of science.



A mural on one wall of the *New Leaf* premises (top right), painted by local artist Marlon Brown, celebrates Carl von Linnaeus (1707-1778), Charles Darwin (1809-1882), and also the diversity of life on Earth. Another wall (lower left) is reserved for selected figures who have advanced biology or promoted the public understanding of the sciences.



Portraits include (clockwise) Sir David F. Attenborough (1926-), populariser of natural history, Rosalind E. Franklin (1920-1958) and Maurice H. F. Wilkins (1916-2004), of Kings College London, whose work enabled Francis H. C. Crick (1916-2004) and James D. Watson (1928-) to explain the structure of DNA, and marine biologist Rachel Carson (1907-1964), whose 1962 book *Silent Spring* raised public awareness of environmental issues. Right lower: O'Connell explained *New Leaf's* goals to music mogul Mark Ronson, who encouraged young people to give their time and energy to ecology projects (Sept. 2010).