



EARTH HOUR

- Be Part of It BY DAVID GAMEY

**On Saturday, March 28th, 2009 at 8:30 pm local time Earth Hour arrives.
But what is Earth Hour? How is it different from Earth Day?**

While Earth Day is about general environmental awareness, Earth Hour's purpose is to inspire people to take action on climate change. It shows that by turning off non-essential lighting we can reduce electricity use and greenhouse gas emissions. Energy saved during Earth Hour 2008 was estimated from 2%-10% depending on sources (the equivalent of taking about 50,000 cars off the road for an hour). However, the event is not so much about direct energy savings as education and change. It's a way to make people think about climate change and how they can make a difference.

Earth Hour started March 31st, 2007 in Sydney, Australia, when over two million people and two thousand businesses turned their lights off for one hour.

It went international in 2008 in over 400 cities worldwide. The 35 flagship cities included Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver. Every Canadian province and territory participated.

Earth Hour 2009

Earth Hour 2009 will be a half hour later to be more in line with astronomical twilight and daylight savings in North

America. It's hoped that more than one billion people around the world will turn their lights out. Participants will get the chance to see truly dark skies and better appreciate the impact of light pollution. Amateur astronomers will set up telescopes to show people the wonders of our night skies as they were meant to be seen. Find out more from the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC at www.rasc.org) and local newspapers.

How Can You Join In?

Once you've made the decision to participate in Earth Hour, your choice of what to do will depend on where you are. Will you be at camp? Get outside and go for a night hike; gather around a campfire to sing songs and tell stories.

Will you be at your meeting place, providing a place for the community to come together? Do some advance promotion before the date. Write to your local newspaper and tell them what you're doing. Invite community leaders, parents, your sponsors. Make tin can lanterns to light the area, or beeswax candles to give away. With appropriate permission, fire up the barbecue for hot chocolate, tea and coffee. Organize an astronomy/stargazing event with your youth to take advantage of the darker skies.

Visit the Earth Hour web site (<http://www.earthhour.org/>) to register and receive more information.

The Climate Change Connection

Early environmental concerns focused on pollutants and toxins. Awareness of the impact of greenhouse gases came later. Burning fossil fuels releases CO₂ (that has been out of circulation for tens of millions of years) back into the environment. This differs from the burning of renewable resources such as plants where the CO₂ is part of a much shorter cycle. Excess CO₂ has been building up for the last 150 years.

Much of the electric power used for lighting is wasted as excess heat and light. Outdoor lighting blasts skywards instead of being focused. Light pollution also adversely affects people and animals. The study of this is called scotobiology.

Some of the biggest offenders are:

- ❶ Incandescent lamps waste about 90% of their energy by producing heat.
- ❷ Many large signs are not designed to be shut off.
- ❸ Standby modes for appliances built in the last 20 years may be inefficient and wasteful.

Climate change is controversial with avid believers and steadfast skeptics. But there is substantial and growing scientific evidence that it is real and caused by human activities. Less clear is whether or not it can be stopped or corrected before the consequences are too severe.

How Can we Solve this Problem?

The solution to climate change won't be one thing. Rather it will be a combination of behavioral and technological changes: improvements in conservation, more efficient technologies, different power generation strategies, and possibly sequestering (storing) greenhouse gases.

We need to look carefully at a wide range of solutions. Modern communications technologies may make it possible to reduce travel. Alternate power technologies such as wind and solar will help, but are not likely to be enough by themselves.

Key parts of the solution may yet come from unexpected places. People, business, government, and research need to work on solutions; more attention will result in less greenwash. People will adopt solutions that save money and time – the right direction and motivation will allow real solutions to evolve and emerge.

Climate change may very well be the most serious long-term problem to face mankind. Getting it wrong could lead not only to environmental and natural disasters, but also to wars and man-made disasters as parts of our world are stressed by changes.

Earth Hour is symbolic and while it may reduce some greenhouse gas emissions, its real purpose is to light the way to a better future. So join in, turn off your lights, step outside and look up. And while you enjoy the delights of dark skies, think about how we can work together to overcome this challenge. X

– David Gamey is an enthusiastic Scouter with the 433rd Toronto Scouting Group and an amateur astronomer.

To Celebrate Earth Hour by Cindy Kwok

Last year, World Wildlife Fund-Canada (WWF) partnered with the Toronto Star, City of Toronto and Virgin Mobile to bring Earth Hour to Toronto. The 333rd Markham Scout Group showed full support to this meaningful campaign. During one meeting, most of the youth, leaders and parents committed to turn off their lights in their homes for an hour on that day. Furthermore, to demonstrate that we can make a difference on the planet, the group registered to help plant 10,000 trees on the Rouge River watershed in April 2008.

Scouter Joseph Kwok, who works for Hydro One, reported to his employers what his Scout group had done and committed to, in order to promote Earth Hour. In recognition of our participation in this event, the 333rd Markham Scout group was selected by Hydro One to receive a Canada Adoption Certificate from the WWF.

– Cindy Kwok is the Group Commissioner for 333rd Markham Scout Group, Ontario.

Scouting Adopts Earth Hour at World Scout Youth Forum

Scouting is linking with World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to support Earth Hour in 2009.

Scouts and their families in their homes, offices and communities will be encouraged to switch off their lights for one hour. As this initiative was introduced by the members of the World Scout Youth Forum, and as the environment is of particular interest to young people, we would like this to be a youth-led initiative. Empower young people at all levels of Scouting to share this information, encourage Scouts to be ambassadors for Earth Hour and welcome their families, friends and other members of their community to be involved in this initiative.

More information is available, as well as a neat video, on the World Organization of the Scout Movement web site: www.scout.org/information_events/news/2009/earth_hour.

Join us Saturday, May 9th for the 12th Annual

Jamboree on the Trail (JOTT) 2009

Members of the World Scout Movement hiking together toward a better future through Scouting.

For details check <http://jott.org> or contact Dave Wiebe at sctrdave@niagara.com or phone (905) 635-9614

A great linking activity for your group, area or council.



Leave only footprints,
take only garbage