



THE BULLETIN

March 2008 No. 471

2007-2008 EXECUTIVE

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Events calendar

Botany Group Meeting **Monday April 1, 2008. 12:30pm**

Executive Meeting **Tuesday April 8, 2008. 7:30pm**
Where: Robert Holland Centre

Bird Group Meeting **Wednesday April 9, 2008. 7:30pm**
Local outing OR Video: History of Point Pelee
Host: Martin Chen - 905-709-0246

General Meeting **Thursday April 17, 2008. 6:00pm**
2008 AGM & Pot Luck!
Speaker: David Tomlinson
Topic: Changes in Birdlife Caused by Humans
Location: Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church,
Wallace Hall. 10066 Yonge St.

Check for more Events and Outings on Page 2



Bambi & Thumper are Real

Two shy and timid creatures have found safe companionship in each other.

A well known photographer who travels the world photographing animals had just returned from a long trip when he spotted these little guys in his backyard.



He set up a camera on his porch and wound up getting award winning photos in his own back yard.



You are seeing through the lens of Tanja Askani of Alberta, Canada.





The Bulletin is published 9 times per year, from September to May inclusive, by the **Richmond Hill Naturalists**, and is mailed free to members. The Bulletin is the official publication of the Richmond Hill Naturalists, a non-profit organization the objectives of which are to stimulate public interest in natural history and to encourage the preservation of our natural areas.

Address Correspondence to: **Richmond Hill Naturalists, P.O. Box 32217, RPO Harding, Richmond Hill, ON, L4C 9S3**

Deadlines: The editor encourages submissions from any member on any topic related to nature or conservation, and in particular, any issue that might be of interest or concern to members of this club. e-mail: editor@rhnaturalists.ca **Deadlines are the 2nd Thursday of each month.**

Bulletin Advertisers have been selected because of their relevance to member interests.

Members are encouraged to patronize our advertisers and please mention that you saw their ad in our Bulletin.

Change of Address: Any change of email or street address should be sent to Mike Turk who prints the envelopes for the Bulletin mailing. See the Executive List for contact information.

Editor: Lloyd Helferty

Mailing Database: Mike Turk

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Visit our Website at www.rhnaturalists.ca

MEMBERSHIP IN RHN

The *Membership Application Form*, is available at each General Meeting from Mike Turk, or in our club brochure, available from any executive member. You may also sign up or renew at <http://www.rhnaturalists.ca/membership/>

NEW MEMBERS:

No new members

Meet new members at club events and say Hello!

EVENTS FUTURE



- **Monday April 1, 2008.** 12:30pm. Botany Group Meeting.



- **Saturday, March 29, 2008.** 2pm – 4pm. **RHN Walk at David Dunlap Observatory.** Join Joe Agg for a tour around David Dunlap Observatory and Park. Meet at the front gates of the Observatory at 123 Hillview Drive. Also on **Saturday March 29, 2008** from **6:45pm** to 9:30pm come and celebrate 'Earth Hour' under the beautiful skies of our [David Dunlap Observatory](#) (DDO) and Parkland! At 6:45pm a talk will be given by Professor Tom Bolton in the main lecture room of the Administration Building on 'Light Pollution - How we stemmed the skyglow in Richmond Hill'. There will be a \$5.00 entrance fee for this once-in-a-lifetime informative talk which will last about an hour. Also at 7pm, Dr. T. Koktay will lead an evening tour of the magnificent DDO Administration Building, which will explore the beauty, history and science of this historic Pre-Confederation structure.



- **Tuesday April 8, 2008.** 7:30pm. **Executive Meeting** will be held at [Phyllis Rawlinson Park](#).



- **Wednesday April 9, 2008.** 7:30pm. **Bird Group meeting.** This month's meeting will be a local outing. If the weather is poor we will show a video about the History of Point Pelee. The host this month is Martin Chen. Location: 398 Highcliff Dr, Thornhill. Call 905-709-0246 for more info.



- **Saturday, April 5, 2008.** 2pm – 4pm. **RHN Walk at David Dunlap Observatory.** Meet Joe Agg in front of the Observatory at 123 Hillview Drive. Weather permitting.



- **Thursday April 17, 2008.** 7:30pm. **General Meeting, AGM & Pot Luck** featuring David Tomlinson, discussing the Changes in Birdlife Caused by Humans. David is best known as a Landscape Architect and creator of Merlin's Hollow in Aurora. He is also an avid naturalist and birder with a keen eye for detail in the flora and fauna in the world around us. Meeting will be held at the Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church, Wallace Hall. 10066 Yonge St., first block North of Major Mackenzie Dr., West side.
For info contact Marianne Yake at 905-883-3047, or visit www.RHNaturalists.ca.



Please note: Richmond Hill Naturalists welcomes anyone to volunteer as an outing leader.



- **Thursday March 20, 2008.** 4:10pm. [John Eyles](#) presents a seminar on the field of environmental health entitled "**At the margins: will environmental health ever get its place in the sun?**" John Eyles is a university Professor, at the School of Geography and Earth Sciences and Past Director of the Institute of Environment and Health at McMaster University. University of Toronto Centre for Environment, Health Sciences Building Room 106, 155 College Street, Toronto. This is a free event. No registration or fee required; all are welcome.



- **Saturday, March 29, 2008. Sustainable Living Symposium** @ Loyalist College in Belleville. Sessions on Agriculture, Food, Community Gardening, Locally Grown, Sustainable Buildings, Geothermal, Renewable Energy and Exhibits on Sustainable Living. Panel Discussion on Renovations, Restorations, Ecological Lawn Care, Healthy Shorelines and an Off-Grid Eco-Friendly Home Tour. See Program details at www.quintesustainability.ca. Pre-registration required. Spaces are Limited. \$30.00pp (student: \$20.00) *lunch and refreshments included.



- **Saturday March 29, 2008. 8pm. Earth Hour.** Turn out the lights -- turn on the night! Cities around the world will literally "turn out the lights" for Earth Hour, a World Wildlife Fund (WWF) event to raise awareness about climate change. Earth Hour symbolizes that, working together, the people of the world can make a difference in the fight against global warming. Officially announced in December 2007 at the United Nations Climate Change meeting, Earth Hour has grown from a single event in Sydney, Australia in 2007 to a global phenomenon that will occur across six continents and as many as 20 cities in 2008. Toronto will be the flagship city in Canada to commemorate Earth Hour 2008. Our goal is to get thousands of businesses and individuals to participate in this historic event, so we can show the nation and the world that we are leaders in addressing climate change, one of the most critical issues facing our world today. Visit www.wwf.ca/EarthHour to sign-up and add your name to the Earth Hour movement. The Toronto Star also has a website devoted to Earth Hour at www.thestar.com/earthhour.



- **Thursday April 3, 2008 & Friday April 4, 2008. The Green Transition Conference:** "Sustainable Practices for a more Profitable Future" at the Toronto Botanical Garden at 777 Lawrence Avenue East, Toronto, a LEED Silver certified building. Get ahead of the **GREEN WAVE!** Apply sustainable development strategies and build an environmentally sound business. Two value packed days of insightful learning. Promote a healthy environment while improving your business practice by discussing strategies to overcome environmental limits to growth. More information at www.enlightenedevents.ca or call 647-723-3693.



- **Friday April 4, 2008. 10am to 2pm. The First Annual Rouge Park Alliance Annual General Meeting (AGM).** This will be an opportunity to highlight the achievements of the Rouge Park Alliance and to share accomplishments and future plans. The meeting will take place at the Rouge River Community Centre, 120 Rouge Bank Dr., Markham (at the intersection of 14th Ave & 9th Line). RSVP by March 15, 2008 by calling Doreen at 905-713-6038.



- **Tuesday April 8, 2008. Container Gardening Workshop.** Presentation, talk and demonstration of organic container gardening. Learn tips on growing organic vegetables, herbs and other useful plants in containers. Includes a demonstration of planting containers that may be grown on a balcony, patio or rooftop. Scarborough Garden and Horticultural Society, Scarborough Community Centre, 3600 Kingston Rd. at Markham Rd.



- **Thursday April 10, 2008. 7pm. Organic Lawn Care Workshop** at Elgin West Community Centre. Learn how to eliminate your dependency on pesticides and the overuse of fertilizers. Join the York Region Environmental Alliance for this free and informative workshop sponsored by the Town of Richmond Hill. The workshop includes a presentation, displays and draws for prizes. The workshops are free but registration is required. Call 905-771-8870, ext 3491 or e-mail naturalheritage@richmondhill.ca Address: 11099 Bathurst Street



- **Saturday April 12, 2008. Ontario Nature Regional Meeting.** RSVP to barbaraw@ontarionature.org



- **Sunday April 13 to Saturday April 19, 2008. Environmental Education Week (EE Week),** the largest organized environmental education event in North America. Participate in EE Week by encouraging your children to make a difference in their school, home, and community. This year's theme for National EE Week is "Carbon Footprints".



- **Saturday April 19, 2008. The 28th Annual Earth Day.** The Week of April 19 to 25 is also the Worldwide "**International Downshifting Week**", an awareness campaign designed to encourage participants to slow down, green up, live a more sustainable life and get a better work and life balance. For more details, please visit the website www.downshiftingweek.com.



- **Sunday April 20, 2008. 10am. Spring Tree Planting Event** at Grovewood Park on Grovewood St., south of King Rd. east of Bathurst St. in Richmond Hill. Shovels provided. Wear proper footwear and clothing, including hat and work gloves. For more information call Richmond Hill Natural Heritage 905-771-8870, ext. 3885.



- **Friday May 23 to Sunday June 1, 2008. Huron Fringe Birding Festival** at MacGregor Point Provincial Park. Register at www.friendsofmacgregor.org.



- **Saturday April 26, 2008. 10am. *Oak Ridges Community Clean Up* Day.** Clean up the winter litter from our parks, wetlands and public areas. If you can assist with a few hours to help put up signs, contact local merchants, assist with set up and registration and other tasks we would love to hear from you. Call 905-773-7415 or e-mail orfe@oakridgesfriendsoftheenvironment.ca. Note: This is good for students who need community service hours.



- **Saturday and Sunday June 14 & 15, 2008.** The second "*Moraine For Life*" **Adventure Relay**. 24 hour relay from Rice Lake to King City. Find out more at www.moraineadventure.com or 1-877-319-0285.



Carden Nature Festival and Ontario Nature's 77th AGM

These two events are combining to bring you an amazing jam-packed weekend of nature that you will not want to miss. Set aside June 6, 7 and 8, 2008 for a weekend of exploring the wild side of the Carden Plain.

There are more than 60 nature activities, 29 of which are new this year, to enjoy, here is a small sampling:

- o Birding (sparrows by voice)
- o Plants (medicinal and edible plants)
- o GEOCACHE team Challenge
- o Wine tasting
- o A "Wet N' Scaly" Program for the kids
- o Insects (moths by uv light leader)
- o Paddling
- o Art (watercolour painting)
- o Tours of Cameron Ranch and Dufferin Quarry
- o and the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre is providing a youth program

There really is something for everyone..... so go on-line and sign-up now.

Take advantage of your membership in the Richmond Hill Naturalists and sign up for a Group Festival Pass. Registering will support RHN as we will receive a rebate of 25% of the registration fees of our members when you provide our Group Number on your registration form.

Go to www.CardenGuide.com/festival for a full listing of activities and to register. Events have already started to sell out!

Fees: Except for Single Event registrations, the fee has two components: a Festival Pass (\$22 or \$39) for the weekend, and an Activity Fee for each activity you choose (usually \$5.00 per person, unless otherwise noted). Note that while a Festival Pass for families is available, the Activity Fees are always calculated on a per-person basis. If you wish to only attend a single event then you pay for a single event pass (\$12) and the associated activity fee (likely \$5) for a total of \$17.

The Richmond Hill Naturalists Group Number is: **0708**

[Please quote this number and our group name "Richmond Hill Naturalists" when you register to ensure you receive your rebate.] The 'home base' for the event will be the [Sir William Mackenzie Inn](#) in Kirkfield Ontario.

For more information please contact Diana Piché at 905-773-4199 or diana.piche@sympatico.ca

MEMBER SUBMISSIONS

EXPLORING NATURE: A Collection of Ecological Monitoring Experiences

A Call for Submissions was made by [Citizens' Environment Watch](#), who is currently compiling articles for a new publication that provides a forum where students, teachers, scientists, and volunteers can write about their experiences, findings, and projects involving community-based ecological monitoring.

Content will be a combination of youth submissions and articles written by professionals, teachers, adult volunteers, or stakeholders in the field of community-based natural science. They are currently seeking submissions from teachers, scientists, community members or industry professionals who could share their experiences and projects.

Articles, proposals, or outlines should be sent by e-mail to vanessa@citizensenvironmentwatch.org. Submissions should include a summary (a 100 word paragraph outlining your main topics and arguments) and a 35-50 word biography of the author.

- Sharon Bradley

February Bird Group Meeting

Seven members of the Bird Group met at Dana Jonak's home and while enjoying her delicious refreshments we discussed the latest Dunlap Observatory news and talked about various bird sightings. Our two birds for February were Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*, 6-1/4" -17cm) and Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax Nivalis* 6-3/4" -17cm).

The males of both species arrive on the Arctic tundra in late March or early April -- 3 to 4 weeks before the females -- and establish their territory by flying 30 feet or higher, descending on stiff wings, while singing their sweet musical warbling songs.



The **Longspur** males have a black crown, fan and breast with a brown-white or buffy stripe extending back from the eye and down the sides to the breast; their nape is reddish brown. In winter sparse black streaks, a rusty nape, and a smudge across the breast help with identification. Females are duller in all plumages. The female builds a cup-shaped nest in a depression, preferring wet hummocky areas under a shrub or with grass covering the nest. She usually has a clutch of 4-6 greenish-grey to olive green eggs, blotched and speckled with browns and spotted black. She incubates the eggs 10-14 days, with the altricial and downy young leaving the nest at 8-10 days ~ 3-5 days before they are able to fly.

In summer they tend to feed mainly on insects, although some seeds are also consumed. In winter they glean the ground for some seeds and waste grain usually in large open fields. They spend much of their time on the ground and usually run instead of hopping, often associating with flocks of snow buntings and horned larks.

They migrate southward from wearily September to late November - peaking in late October. They winter in southern Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and



Ontario, across the US from Oregon in the West, going as far south as North-central Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Mississippi along the Eastern seaboard to southern Maine and Nova Scotia.

Snow Bunting

The rust and pale edgings of the adult winter plumage wear off by spring, producing a mostly white male bird with black back. The wings are largely white with black tips, white patches and central tail feathers. The summer female is similar but duller, with dark brown not black markings. The nest is cup-shaped and built by the female in a protected cavity deep among rocks or a hole in the ground, where she lays 4-7 whitish to pale blue-green eggs marked with brown and black. Incubation by the female is for 10-15 days. The altricial and downy nestlings are incubated for about 5 days while the male brings food to the nestlings and female. Both parents bring food for the subsequent 10-14 days. The young are then active for 8 days and may come out of the nest and return. Their diet, in both summer and winter, is similar to the Longspurs'.

The southward migration sees them wintering across Southern Canada and Northern US as far as the North Carolina coast in the East and as far south as Northern Oregon in the West.

Both birds are circumpolar.
- Muriel Farrant

NATURE NEWS

The following news was reported in the [Toronto Star](#) on Friday February 29, 2006 on page A15.

The US paper company Boise decided to stop using wood fibre from the Whisky Jack forest near Kenora, a forest that the [Grassy Narrows First Nation](#) claims as its traditional lands.

This Northwestern Ontario forest that has been the subject of a lengthy dispute. The aim of the moratorium by Boise is to lend support to negotiations over logging.



Growing the Greenbelt

The Ontario Government wants to hear from Ontario residents about ideas on how to consider requests to expand the boundaries of the Greenbelt and further protect countryside areas.

The Premier made this announcement on February 21, 2008 and comments must be received by April 30, 2008. The government has developed draft criteria that, once finalized, could be used to consider requests from regional, county or single tier governments to expand the boundaries of the Greenbelt. Requests to decrease the size of the Greenbelt will not be considered. To read the full announcement, go to <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca:80/Page5288.aspx>.

To add your comments and show the government how much we appreciate the Greenbelt, go to <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page5275.aspx>.

- From the Oak Ridges Friends of the Environment E-news

EVENTS PAST



Eleanor Wood, the wife of Cecil Wood of Thornhill, died in the first week of February. The Woods, who are current members, have been faithful members of the Richmond Hill Naturalists for over 30 years, which spans nearly 23rds of the entire club's history. The length of their membership in the club is nearly unprecedented.



Richmond Hill Naturalist member and participant in the Birding and Botany groups, Shirley Mihalik, passed away while traveling in Mexico on February 18th, 2008. A visitation was held at the Marshall Funeral Home in Richmond Hill on Sunday March 2nd, 2008, followed by a reception at the Legion.

At the end of February Richmond Hill learned that its bid to acquire a portion of the Dunlap Observatory Lands from the University of Toronto, the 12-acre 'Parcel B', a peninsula where the Elvis Stojko Arena and an adjacent park are located, was declined by the University of Toronto. A letter from the University of Toronto indicated that the university will **not** be making any special considerations for the town. The confidential bid from Richmond Hill to purchase part of the lands, estimated to be in the vicinity of \$7 million, was, in the words of the University, "not competitive". The town currently holds an eight-year lease on the facilities.

The town will be appearing before the provincial Conservation Review Board to convince them that the western half of the site should be designated as a heritage site.

York Mills
GARDEN CENTRE
LANDSCAPING SOIL DELIVERIES LARGE TREES

13532 Yonge Street
Richmond Hill, ON L4E2E9

905-773-3773
Rick Aguanno

In November 2007, the Regional Municipality of York's "Long Range and Strategic Planning Branch" adopted their final **York Region Sustainability Strategy**, dubbed "Towards a Sustainable Region".

The Final Strategy is based on extensive consultation with stakeholders over two years, with input derived from a [Sustainability Symposium](#) at the Kortright Centre, the 'Towards Sustainability in York Region' (TSYR) Advisory Group, a series of Growth Management Public Meetings, and the Sustainability Multi-Stakeholder Focus Group, among others.

The Sustainability Strategy provides a new approach to decision-making integrating the environment, economy and community, as well as, emphasizing engagement, monitoring and continuous improvement. This sustainability perspective will inform all Regional initiatives to address the dynamic growth forecasted for the Region. The Final Strategy consists of nine guiding principles and over 100 action items including training programs for staff, updates to Master Plans, a [Natural Heritage System](#) plan, a Growth Management Strategy, and a "Regional Centres and Corridors" development model. The Next steps include finalizing an implementation plan for the Strategy consisting of a sustainability assessment, outcomes and responsibilities.

For questions, comments or a printed copy of the Sustainability Strategy, contact futureyork@york.ca.

On Sunday February 17, 2008 David Grey Eagle, together with the assistance of his People, performed a "[Four Directions Teaching Ceremony](#)" on the grounds of The David Dunlap Observatory in Richmond Hill.

This sacred aboriginal ceremony was intended to invoke the spiritual protection of this beloved property. The message of the ceremony was a reminder that we must remember where we came from so we will know where we are going. We live on the land and the land sustains us, we share the land with all living creatures and we take shelter in the land's green arms - if we destroy the land then we ultimately destroy ourselves.

GENERAL INTEREST

[Planetfriendly.net](#) has launched a **Canadian Green and Environmental Conferences Calendar**, the most comprehensive listing of green and environmental conferences in Canada.

Topics range from climate change, to organic gardening, to pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods. NGO's, education, government and industry are all represented.

The Conferences Calendar is a new addition to the well-known Planetfriendly Calendar, which features green and environmental courses, workshops, speakers, films, festivals and more.

Green and Environmental Conferences can be viewed at: www.planetfriendly.net/conferences

To view all kinds of Green and Environmental Events go to: www.planetfriendly.net/calendar

To post your own conference or event go to either URL above and click "Post an Event". There is no charge! Make good use of the Calendar and join with other Canadians who are working to build a greener, healthier world!

- Peter Blanchard

Green Photography Contest

The Windfall Ecology Centre is proud to be partnering with the Municipality of York Region to celebrate Earth Week 2008. A region-wide **Digital Photography Contest** is being held. The theme for the photography contest is "**What on Earth Are You Doing? It's Easy Being Green!**"

Show us how individual or group action can bring about change in an easy way. For example, an entry might be someone using a push-mower to cut their lawn.

You are invited to submit photos that reflect everyday actions that can help the environment. All entries must be received by April 4th, 2008 along with the entry and waiver form. Submit photos in JPEG (.jpg) format through the Windfall Ecology Centre website at: www.windfallcentre.ca. All entrants are eligible to win prizes.

Two categories of prizes are available:

Category 1 – digital or scanned photos which have not been enhanced. These photos can have red eye removed or be cropped.

Category 2 – enhanced photos that are altered, merged or superimposed.

Prizes will be awarded in each category. Winners will be contacted on Monday, April 21st.

Photos will be judged on relevance to theme, composition, visual impact and technical quality.

For more information and detailed contest rules contact the Windfall Ecology Centre at www.windfallcentre.ca or call 1-866-280-4431.

- Sharon Bradley

Glass dumped in blue boxes through most of Greater Toronto and Hamilton will be processed at a new [Brampton plant](#) starting this summer, saving millions for local municipalities.

The new plant will turn mixed glass high-value products such as bottles, fibreglass insulation and tiles, a big step up from using ground glass in roadbeds, which is where it often ends up. Municipalities currently have to pay processors at least \$40 a tonne to take mixed glass. Having a plant close to the city will mean that shipping costs will be sharply reduced, saving the more than 700km round-trip to Syracuse, N.Y for each load.

Once the plant gets going Toronto, Hamilton, Peel, York and Durham regions estimate they will collectively save at least \$10 million over the next seven years, substantially reducing the cost of their Blue Box programs.

Processing recycled glass takes less energy and produces less air pollution than making new glass.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS

Please submit Bird Observations using our electronic database, which can be found at: www.rhnaturalists.ca/bird_sightings_form.php

Submissions can be sent by e-mail to:

Sightings@rhnaturalists.ca or birds@rhnaturalists.ca

Written submissions can be sent by surface mail to:

Gene Denzel, 9 Idleswift Dr., Thornhill, ON L4J 1K8

Bird observations are viewable online or, if you prefer to receive a paper copy of this month's bird observations, contact Marianne Yake at 905-883-3047.

From the Editor



On March 05, 2008 the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) issued a statement indicating that “the world must deal with climate change **now** – or pay a ***much higher price*** later”.

The most recent OECD report looked at the environmental outlook until 2030, concentrating on climate change, water shortages, energy needs, biodiversity loss, transportation, agriculture and fisheries. It stated that “increasing pressures on the environment could cause ***irreversible damage*** within the next few decades” and that “ambitious actions to protect the environment ***are affordable*** and can go hand in hand with economic growth”.

The report said that “governments ***must*** create such policies as ‘green taxes’ to encourage sound technologies and practices” and that “the rich world must help poor countries develop” by “providing technology and expertise”.

It also said ecological advances bring “multiple benefits”. For example, cutting motor vehicles' greenhouse gas emissions would improve air quality in cities or better insulated homes that cut power bills for consumers while reducing power plant emissions.



The World's economy is expected to double between 2005 and 2030, with “severe environmental consequences” if business-as-usual policies lead to “unchecked growth in energy consumption”. The report indicated that with the appropriate measures, “growth would be nearly the same, at 97 per cent, but with a much healthier environment”.

The [OECD](http://www.oecd.org) is made up of 30 nations, focusing on both economic and social policies.

Back in November 2007, Canada's Environment Minister, John Baird, had set mandatory targets for all major industrial sectors which would presumably cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020 and by 60-70% by 2050.

The message is that climate change must not only be an environmental priority, it is also an ***excellent economic opportunity***. As Manitoba premier Gary Doer said last year while attending a meeting on the environment with Canada's premiers, “If you do not green your policies, technologies and manufacturing standards, you will die (in the marketplace).”

Lloyd Helferty, Bulletin Editor editor@rhnaturalists.ca
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Green Tip: If you have to fly, buy [carbon offsets](http://www.carbonfund.org). Some people call them “guilt money”. But at least the money is used to invest in projects that introduce renewable energy or projects to plant trees that can help sequester CO₂. Make sure you pick a gold-standard company, certified by the World Wildlife Fund, like <http://planetair.ca/>.

