

# Protect Our Species

Earth Day 2019



**MOBILIZEDU**

Student  
Toolkit



EARTH DAY NETWORK

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# Introduction

Earth Day Network (EDN) is a non-profit organization that works year-round to broaden, educate, and activate the environmental movement across the globe. This year for Earth Day 2019, our focus is to:

# Protect Our Species



EDN is undertaking an effort to engage people, institutions, businesses, and schools across the globe to define and understand the ethical guidelines that should inform our relationships with other living things. Humans constantly make decisions that impact other living things. What ethical parameters should we take into consideration when making those decisions? From deciding how to control living things that we call pests, to buying products made of other animals, to using plants and animals for our own benefit, to developing and destroying natural habitats — all these activities imply some trade-offs between protecting species and economic development. Ethically navigating those trade-offs will determine the survival of all species, including our own. We aim to develop a conservation ethic in all students through educational activities which help you to understand the complexities of our natural systems and how each species is a valuable component of our planet.

In order to protect species across the globe and create a more sustainable future, preserving and restoring biodiversity is a key factor. This toolkit has the objective of getting students engaged in the conversation by learning about the problems and issues that impact other species, how those problems result from interactions with humans or human activity, the ethical issues humans must negotiate while making everyday decisions, and the actions we can take to prevent the rapid disappearance of entire populations of other species.

For more information and resources about our 2019 campaign, check out these links!

- [Earth Day In A Box](#)
- [History of Earth Day](#)
- [What is Earth Day?](#)
- [Earth Day 2020: The 50th Anniversary](#)
- [Protect Our Species Primer & Action Toolkit](#)

## TOGETHER WE CAN WORK TO PROTECT OUR SPECIES

It is our responsibility to understand the importance of biodiversity both locally and globally. This resource will help you be an active participant in protecting biodiversity in your community, on your campus, and ultimately across the globe!

# How to Use this Resource

## MOBILIZEU

Mobilize U is how Earth Day Network is bringing the environmental movement to university and college campuses across the world. This higher education campaign, launched by Earth Day Network in 2012, aims to create an international movement of concerned and active students and administrators passionate about creating a sustainable future for all. By recognizing the power, energy, innovative abilities, and organizing capacity of students across the planet we can unite around a common interest of environmental action and continue to work toward a healthier planet.

### OBJECTIVE

This toolkit has the objective of getting university students and young adults engaged in the health and sustainability of the environment on and around their campus. This includes learning about issues that may be impacting your campus and community and implementing options and solutions to combat those problems. There are many activities individuals and groups can organize to create positive change for their campus, these can be as simple as changing a daily habit to as complex as coordinating a large group event. All it takes is that first step and this toolkit can help!

This MobilizeU student toolkit contains many actions that individuals and groups can take to help **Protect Our Species** on your campus and in your community. These actions are organized from simple, individual actions to more involved, time consuming group activities. There are also sections for groups, such as clubs, sport teams, social organizations, or others and information for commuting students who do not live on campus. The toolkit also contains information and resources to understand the *what* and the *why* before engaging in the *how* action pieces.

Individual actions matter! Individual actions add up! There is power in numbers! YOU can make a difference! This resource is designed to help you mobilize your campus!



In the end we will conserve only what we love,  
we will love only what we understand,  
and we will understand only what we are taught.

**Baba Dioum**

# Background

## WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY?

Biodiversity is the number and variety of plant and animal species in an environment. Depending on the type of climate or region you live in, the types of species you will see can change. Whether your campus is in a rural, suburban, or urban setting, you may see varying numbers and types of plant and animal species. Biodiversity doesn't only exist in the depths of the amazon rainforest, it occurs all around us with plant, animal, and insect species making up our local ecosystems. Even urban areas with gardens, tall grass, or trees can all contain a rich variety of species within them. Though you may not think about biodiversity while between classes, places you walk by everyday are likely very rich in species diversity!

## WHY IS BIODIVERSITY IMPORTANT?

All around the world, human activity is leading to the destruction or rapid reduction of plant and animal populations. These activities have led to species becoming extinct and habitats to rapidly shrink. As habitats decrease and become isolated from each other, fewer species can live there. Biodiversity is a key measurement of the overall health and well-being of an ecosystem. Ecosystems with a higher biodiversity are also generally stronger and more resistant to disease than those with less variety of species. Unfortunately, biodiversity is decreasing faster than ever before.

All species are interconnected and valuable to the successful functioning of our ecosystems. While it may not seem like one species going extinct will change much in the world, the consequences may ripple throughout the ecosystem affecting other species, including humans. For example, bees and other pollinators carry pollen from one plant to another, allowing that plant to reproduce. If the population of bees is dramatically reduced due to pesticide use and habitat loss, there will not be as many pollinators for those plants to rely on. This could then reduce the biodiversity of those plants, since they would not be able to reproduce at the same rate. Many businesses and industries rely on other species in the same way. Industries, such as agriculture, fashion, and pharmaceuticals depend on the resources they get from plant and animal species, while not always in a sustainable way. Widespread biodiversity loss would cause detrimental ecological and economic impacts worldwide. If habitats and biodiversity continue to be threatened, it will have a disastrous impact on the capacity of the planet to sustain life, including human life.

## LEARN MORE

See our [Species Fact Sheet](#)

## HOW BIODIVERSE IS YOUR CAMPUS?

The first place to start is to understand what is the current biodiversity level of your campus or surrounding area. This resources can help you! Developed by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, this [Schoolyard Biodiversity Investigation](#) helps you do an inventory of species on your campus and includes additional resources and information.

# Mobilize You!

Environmental issues often feel overwhelming and too large and complex to solve as an individual. However, there are more options than you may think to create positive impacts on local biodiversity and to bring awareness to environmental issues on your campus or around where you live. This section includes a variety of actions that you can take as an individual or with friends that will help to promote and increase biodiversity. You can expand on these ideas or make them your own. Be as creative as you want! The objective of this resource is to help provide potential ideas and be a launching off point for further environmental action. It is that first step, that first action, that makes all the difference.

## INDOOR ACTIONS

### WATCH WHAT GOES DOWN THE DRAIN

Always be careful of what liquids you are pouring down the drain. Things like oil, paint, cleaners, medications, or sanitary products can all contain toxic chemicals that enter into our local water sources if left untreated. These household wastes need to be safely disposed. Call or go online to check with local government and environmental agencies on locations and options for properly disposing of this kind of waste in your area.

Polluted waterways, like streams, rivers, lakes, and even the ocean, can fatally harm aquatic life and their habitats. A loss in aquatic species can severely affect biodiversity and impact human resources. Products and food that are derived from the ocean, such as seafood, medicines, beauty and hygiene products, rely on a rich biodiverse ecosystem. By being aware and encouraging others to do so, our water sources can remain clean and healthy.



Sea turtles and coral reefs are some of the many marine species threatened by changing oceans and human influences, such as pollution.



Examples of common cleaners and products that may be flushed down the drain or disposed of improperly.

## FOOD CHOICES

Something as simple as what you choose to eat can create a large ripple effect within the environment. Meat production has a much heavier environmental impact than you may think. Agriculture is a large contributor to global warming and is responsible for 15% of all emissions, half of which come from livestock alone. Beef requires 160 times more land and produces 11 times more greenhouse gases than other agricultural crop. While, you don't have to completely cut meat out of your life forever. It may be beneficial to reassess how much and of what that you eat in a day.

In order to reduce the carbon footprint from what you eat, try incorporating more plant-based options into your diet. This will reduce your carbon impact, while also reducing the stress our food demands have on the land as a whole. This can be a great opportunity to explore and discover new foods and flavors, while remaining environmentally conscious.



Along with benefiting the Earth, plant-based diets come with added health benefits as well. By reducing the amount of meat you consume, you can increase your heart health and reduce your risk of diabetes and obesity.



## Make a Bigger Impact

Reach out to your on campus dining service about featuring more plant-based food options into the menu. There are plenty of delicious high protein options that would make great additions to regular dining on campus. Weekly themes, like meatless-Monday, can help encourage other students to choose more plant-based options as well.



## Campus Spotlight

As part of an international and on campus campaign, Cornell students are pledging that, for at least one day a week, they will not eat any meat. More than 2,500 students have already pledged since 2017. Plant-based meal options through the Cornell dining hall help to give students healthy meatless food options. Find out more on Cornell's [Meatless Monday Campaign](#) and [sign up to pledge!](#)

Cornell University Ithaca, New York



# OUTDOOR ACTIONS

## CLEAN UP AND PREVENT LITTER

This is an easy option for anyone wanting help create a greener environment without too much hassle. While walking on campus or within your local community, stop and pick up any trash you might see. Dispose of this litter in the appropriate trash or recycling containers.

By collecting and disposing of the litter lining our streets and roads, you are preventing it from ending up in local waterways and areas where wildlife is abundant. Wildlife can easily ingest or become tangled up in this litter, which can become fatal. If you notice that there are not many convenient places to dispose of this litter, talk to your university or city about adding more trash cans and recycling bins. You can even take this a step further by requesting bins specific for compostable waste, recyclables, and trash. This is a small action that can make a big impact where you live!



Trash and litter lining the streets. This litter can be easily blown or washed away into a nearby water system or habitat.



Recycling containers separated by material type, all of which are brightly colored and labeled.



Make a Bigger Impact

If you notice certain water bodies or roadways that continually have a high amount of trash covering them, try organizing a group cleanup. This could be a one time cleanup or an annual event depending on its success. Reaching out to local environmental groups can be a good place to start. Earth Day Network is coordinating the [Great Global Cleanup for Earth Day 2020!](#)

Groups and teams can also volunteer to paint, decorate, or install proper recycling and disposal containers across campus. A fun and colorful bin may help to increase the number of people aware of which containers are for what items.



Campus Spotlight

Students from the University of Minnesota organized a student-led cleanup day for Dinkytown, MN. Students noticed an excess of trash and litter within the town, particularly around holidays such as Halloween and homecoming. By collaborating with local businesses, organizers were able to incentivize other students by exchanging litter collection for coupons to local restaurants. Through these efforts UM students were able to make a change in their neighborhood, while also inspiring town residents and other students in the process. Read more about the [University of Minnesota cleanup day](#).



UM students gathering bags of trash from collection efforts throughout Dinkytown to be properly disposed of.

*Photo by Jack Rodgers.*

## REDUCE PESTICIDE AND FERTILIZER USE

While many of you may not use pesticides or fertilizers, they may be used more often on campus or by friends and family members than you may think. Just like with chemicals being poured down the drain, a majority of pesticides and fertilizers use harmful chemicals that when applied to vegetation can eventually wash away in local water sources during rain storms or floods. Again, these chemicals can create many problems for aquatic plants and animals and water systems.

Pesticides in particular are an even bigger problem when thinking about biodiversity. Pesticides are fatal for many pollinator species that we rely on to pollinate food sources. Bees, bats, birds, butterflies, and many other species are vital for sustaining healthy food sources around the world. An abundance of pollinator species is also linked to greater variety of plant species, creating a rich biodiverse environment.

Reach out to friends, family, and your university landscaping about limiting fertilizer and pesticide use. Instead encourage them to use safer alternative methods.



Bees and butterflies are two vital pollinators that we depend on for sustainable crop sources, other pollinators include bats, birds, moths, and other insects.

Some alternative methods you can use are:

- **Plant specific plants that will drive unwanted pests away.** Plants like marigolds, mint, basil, or garlic are some common ones that are known to drive pests away from that area, however the plants will depend on what type of pest you are dealing with.
- **Introduce natural native predators, such as birds and other predator insects, that will help to reduce the pest population.**
- **Compost and grass clippings make great organic fertilizer options, without harsh or toxic chemicals.**



### Campus Spotlight

The campus of Seattle University (SU) is maintained without the use of chemical pesticides. SU made the shift to sustainable landscaping practices in 1979 and today they use only [OMRI](#) rated products on their grounds. The environmentally friendly maintenance of the SU grounds is an example of how sustainable management and species protection can still be a practical option on a college campus.

Learn more about their [sustainable land practices](#).

Seattle University, Seattle, Washington  
[seattleu.edu/grounds](http://seattleu.edu/grounds)



## INCREASE HABITAT

Even while living in an apartment or dorm, there are things you can do to help increase habitat space for pollinators and other species. Plant boxes or window gardens are an inexpensive and simple way to create a space for pollinators to rest and get food while living in a campus or urban environment. Bird houses and insect boxes are another addition that can be easily hung up outside of a window to create essential wildlife habitat. This can also be a fun way to add an extra bit of decoration to your home and even inspire others to do the same.

When planting anything, always try to pick native plant species! Local insects, birds, and other wildlife have co-evolved with these species and are dependent on local plants for their survival. If you have noticed a large amount of non-native plants in your area, encourage your university and community to plant more native species instead.



A group working to install a habitat space within their community.



### Make a Bigger Impact

Want to create more or even larger habitat spaces? Contact your university about a potential habitat creation project that can be done with a group or club. This habitat could be a garden or the installation of insect and bird houses on campus. Work with university landscaping on where to plant and how these spaces will be maintained. Invite faculty, staff, and other students to become involved or participate in a habitat opening!



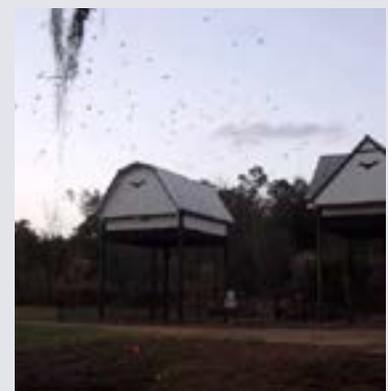
A window flower box, an easy way to increase habitat for pollinators with low cost or effort.



### Campus Spotlight

The University of Florida is home to the world's largest occupied bat houses. This habitat creation began in March 1991 and now contains an estimated population of 450,000-500,000 bats. The most common of which being the Brazilian free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*). Bats are an important pollinator species and are critical in pollinating the agave plant, which is used to make tequila. These bat houses show one of the many ways your school can work to protect pollinator species, while adding a unique feature to the campus.

Learn more about the bat houses and other [environmental initiatives at the University of Florida](#).



Bats flying around University of Florida bat houses, located in Gainesville, Florida

## PROTECT HABITAT

While creating more habitat is extremely beneficial for increasing biodiversity in your community, protecting already established habitat is equally as important. These are areas which wildlife rely on for survival. These areas are all around you, even if they may be hard to notice at first. Reach out to university representatives about creating no mow zones and areas of the campus that are designated habitat areas. These could be parts of campus that are frequently unused or out of the way.



A designated no-mow area created to help preserve essential habitat space, complete with proper signage and information.



## Make a Bigger Impact

Try to expand the size of the habitats you are advocating to be protected. Depending on the area you are located, there may be many other potential habitat locations around your campus that could be protected. Areas like wetlands, heavily forested areas, and shorelines or beaches are rich in biodiversity. Protecting these areas may require contacting your local government, property owners, or working with local environmental organizations.

Areas already owned and protected by another organization could be potentially adopted by your club or group in exchange for your agreement to pick up trash and maintain the space.



## Campus Spotlight

Protecting vital habitat can be done in many unique ways. One way that the University of Mary Washington (UMW) is protecting habitat is through assessing and mapping Heritage Trees. By collaborating with on campus landscaping, UMW works to collect data on the oldest and most unique tree species on campus. This data is presented as an [easy to use map](#) that will help guide on campus landscaping decisions and calculate the ecological benefits these trees have to the campus. Through these efforts, UMW has been consecutively named a [Tree Campus USA](#) by the Arbor Day Foundation and continues to implement environmental initiatives on campus.

Check out more information on the [UMW Heritage Tree Project](#).



Students and faculty measuring the diameter of the Brompton Oak, located on the UMW campus.

Photo by [Norm Shafer](#).

# REACH OUT

## CONNECT WITH EDUCATION

A great way to learn more and stay informed about the environmental issues that concern you is to attend local lectures, webinars, and events. Check your university website for a listing of speakers and lectures set to happen. Talk with your professors about potential extra credit opportunities that can be earned by attending these events and relating them to your course.

You don't need to be a science major to connect environmental issues to what you're studying. These issues extend to a variety of subjects and disciplines. Let your faculty know that these topics are important to you!

### Examples:

*History* - history of the environmental movement, historical events linked to habitat and biodiversity loss, how were environmental disasters dealt with in the past versus now?

*Economics & Business* - What would the economic cost of a loss in biodiversity be? How would various businesses be affected by biodiversity loss (ex. Fishing, agriculture, cosmetics)? What are some environmental practices that businesses are adopting?

*Social Justice & Policy* - Which communities are the most vulnerable to the negative impacts of current environmental issues? What major environmental policies have been put into place to protect these communities? How do different cultures, ethnicities, and religions connect with the environment? What indigenous groups have strong connections to their land?



U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt with the naturalist John Muir



Refugee camp for those left without homes due to environmental disasters. These are the communities most vulnerable to climate change.



Protesters calling for change and marching for the environmental issues they believe in.

*Literature* - How do classical writers and their works refer to the natural world and the themes that are connected? Explore the works of many environmental authors and books that had an impact on the environmental movement - John Muir, “Silent Spring” by Rachel Carson, Henry David Thoreau, and many others.

*Art & Music* - Who are some artists that are creating environmentally based art pieces? What kind of natural or environmentally friendly art products can be used? How have environmental issues been presented in art pieces?

What songs have environmentally driven themes or lyrics? What bands and musicians are environmental advocates? Many musicians work with [REVERB](#) to create green concerts, events, and tours, while engaging fans to take environmental action.



Maroon 5 is passionate about the environment and wants to inspire that same passion in their fans. The band has been involved in a variety of environmental projects, including working to end illegal logging in Peru and Guatemala to promoting whale protection in the Pacific.



By collaborating with environmental organizations and implementing carbon offsetting practices, Dave Matthews Band continues to promote a sustainable earth. In 2018, their tour focused on supporting wildlife conservation efforts in Africa.



## Make a Bigger Impact

Talk to professors or your university about organizing a biodiversity fair. This could be an opportunity for all departments and majors to show how they connect with the environment and how biodiversity can be applied through a variety of subjects.

[Organizers Toolkit](#) - Everything you need to organize Earth Day events



Examples of environmental art pieces that both comment on and enhance the natural setting they exist in.

## HOST A TEACH-IN

If you want to gather other concerned students, faculty, staff, or community members, try hosting a teach-in! A teach-in is a series of lectures and discussions on a subject of public interest, such as environmental issues, focused on taking action. Teach-ins are meant to be practical, participatory, and oriented toward action. They are a place where people can learn about the issues, like habitat degradation or biodiversity loss, and work together to figure what the next step should be. It is an ideal environment to brainstorm ways you as an individual, group, or community can help protect our species. Activism that works to educate and mobilize citizens led to landmark accomplishments, like the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts, and can be used again to bring about environmental change that will benefit us and the other species we rely on.

Our [Teach-In Toolkit](#) resource will help you in your efforts to plan, host, and organize this type of event, plus any additional tips you may need.

## JOIN A CLUB

A great way to get involved in environmental projects around your campus, is to join a club or group! Many universities have already established eco or green clubs that work to promote sustainability on campus. By joining a group, you will be able to meet like minded people who are also passionate for the environment. Most schools have an online directory of clubs and other on campus organizations that you can browse through in order to choose the group that is right for you. You could also check out an on campus club fair or sign up day. This allows you to meet members of the club before joining. Ask questions and get to know what kind of projects your university's eco club is involved in. This will allow you to make a better decision on whether or not you want to join.

If your campus does not have an already established environmental club or other groups that work on environmental projects, start one yourself! For tips and advice on starting your own green club, refer to our section on Creating a Club on [page 17](#).



A university club fair, where students can see the different clubs available to join, learn more, and even sign up.



### Make a Bigger Impact

If you have joined or are already a part of club on campus that isn't specific to the environment, try to brainstorm some ways that you can implement green initiatives into your club activities. This can include just trying to be more environmentally aware or trying to reduce your club's carbon footprint. There are plenty of ways you can combine your club's passions with a passion for the earth.

## CONTACT REPRESENTATIVES

To keep your community and environment as healthy and protected as possible, contact your local or regional representatives and encourage them to support bills and laws that will protect habitats, reduce chemical pesticide and fertilizer use, protect endangered species, and do good for our environment. Don't be afraid to ask your representatives questions on the issues that concern you and your campus.



A representative hearing where important decisions concerning the community and the environment are made.



## Make a Bigger Impact

If you have a larger group of people or an organization you are working with, try to set up a meeting with a representative and talk to them in person. You could also organize a town hall or local forum with your local elected representatives. This can help advocate for your cause and connect with your government representatives. Collaborating with other groups on campus, such as young leader or government group, can help to get more people involved and create more of an impact for your cause. Reaching out to political science departments or professors specializing in government can be a good supportive resource as you make your voice heard in government.

Starting a petition on a specific environmental issue or solution that you would like to see implemented on your campus or within your surrounding community can help to generate interest in your issue and activate other students on campus. This signed petition can be shown to your university administration and local government representatives to help show how many people feel the same about the problem as you do. It can show government leaders that this is an issue their community cares about and demands action for.

- **[Cities & Local Leaders Toolkit](#) - Share this toolkit with your local representatives and encourage them to get involved!**

An example of how young adults can reach out to governments on environmental issues can be seen in Greta Thunberg. Greta is a 16-year old environmental activist from Sweden. In ninth grade, Greta organized the first school strike for climate outside the Swedish parliament building, demanding that the Swedish government to reduce their carbon emissions. Through this, she inspired school students around the globe to participate in similar strikes. From then, she has gone on to deliver a ted talk at [TEDxStockholm](#) and address the [2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference \(COP24\)](#).



August 2018, Greta Thunberg, then in ninth grade, sits outside the Swedish Parliament building to demand environmental action by the Swedish government.

## SPREAD THE WORD!

Social media keeps us connected. It allows us to reach out, stay informed, and easily spread messages to a wide audience. Sharing and reposting environmental news, research, and events is a quick way to advocate for a more sustainable planet while going about your day. By following a variety of environmental groups and pages, you can get daily updates on the environmental issues that interest you from around the world. Talking about environmental issues, such as biodiversity loss, can help encourage others to take an interest in that issue as well. Sites like [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Tumblr](#), and [YouTube](#) are full of environmentally based content and can be a fun way to find others that share the passion and interests for the environment as you.



## Make a Bigger Impact

Use an existing or try creating a hashtag or filter for the environmental issue you are sharing. This can help increase the number of people the message reaches. See if you can get your hashtag to start trending on your campus or how many people are using that filter. You can always share your stories using the **#EarthDay2019** and **#ProtectOurSpecies** hashtags. Tag us [@EarthDayNetwork](#), and you might get a shout-out!



## Campus Spotlight

The TUM Bottle Challenge is a challenge started by the Technical University of Munich (TUM), in Germany. This challenge aims to draw attention to water scarcity with bottles that “travel around the world” and spread symbolic water drops. Participants in this challenge were given bottles filled with balloons and took pictures of themselves, family members, or friends at locations around the globe, all with these balloons (a.k.a. water drops). They then captioned these photos with the challenge name and began spreading the word on water scarcity issues. Participants could also win prizes and awards for longest distance traveled and best picture!

Learn more about the [TUM Bottle Challenge](#).



[desalchallenge.com/index.php/en/tum-desal-challenge-2016/tum-bottle-challenge](http://desalchallenge.com/index.php/en/tum-desal-challenge-2016/tum-bottle-challenge)

# Mobilize Others

Individual actions are the foundation of making change for the better and are the first steps to being more environmentally aware. As you work to protect and preserve our earth that we love, you may want to start involving more people in the process. Other students, groups, professors, and university administration can be tremendous resources during larger environmental projects. While one person working to create change makes a difference, multiple individuals working together can create an impact on a much larger scale. By mobilizing others you can work as a team and have a much louder voice to advocate for environmental issues. You can also help inspire the same passion and energy that you have for the environment in others. Here are a few ways you can gather support and be involved in more group specific environmental activities.

## CREATE A CLUB

Do you want to encourage and involve others in environmental activities? Start a club! Starting a green club on your campus can give you university support that will make making an impact easier. You will be able to take on bigger projects and meet new people with the same interests all while having fun!

### Tips and Advice:

- ✓ Review your university website for directions or rules for starting a club — some universities may have different requirements than others.
- ✓ Reach out to a professor to help advise and support the club and its activities.
- ✓ Recruit members — depending on university rules, there may be a certain number of members you may need in order to be considered a club and receive support.
  - Club fairs, advertising around campus, reaching out on social media, and word of mouth are all ways that you can recruit new members and peek interest in your group.
- ✓ Spread out the work. Once you have a few members, start delegating different positions and duties for people — president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, outreach and social media team, event planner, etc. This will make the workload seem less overwhelming and create more of a team environment.
  - This is something that may also be required from the university for club creation.
- ✓ Get organized! Create an agenda for each club meeting, including the goals of the meeting and the different activities planned. This will help meetings run smoothly and keep your club on track.

## VOLUNTEER!

Whether you are an individual or part of a group, volunteer projects are a great way to become involved in your community while doing good for the environment. There are many volunteer projects that help improve biodiversity on your campus or community. These projects can help to inspire teamwork throughout the group, be a good way for new members to get to know everyone, or fulfill a mandatory volunteer requirement for your group.

Examples: Tree planting, organizing a habitat or garden installation, build and install bird/insect houses around campus, participate or organize a clean up of a local water body, adopt a local high-way or road – clean and pick up trash every month.

Look up local environmental groups or community organizations for details on volunteer opportunities and who to contact. Professors and university staff may also be able to help connect you with groups that have worked with university students in the past.

## GREEN YOUR CAMPUS

### Events:

Whether you've started a club or are already a part of a group or team, planning an on campus or community event can help raise awareness for environmental issues and encourage participation from other students and community members. Don't be afraid to get creative. There are many different ways you can host a fun engaging event in a unique way.

### Tips and Advice:

- ✓ **Pick a venue - pick an area where students and community members often visit or walk by (examples — local park, campus quad space, library, auditorium, sports stadium, theater) The more people that can see your event the better.**
  - Make sure to reserve your venue ahead of time — the earlier you reserve your event spot, the easier it will be to plan and the earlier you can advertise.
- ✓ **Get everyone involved. Within your group, divide the event responsibilities and make sure everyone can contribute to the project.**
- ✓ **Check weather - if you are hosting an outdoor event make sure to check the weather ahead of time and have a backup location or plan, just in case.**
- ✓ **Be environmentally conscience. It can be counter productive to plan an event surrounding an environmental issue when the event itself causes negative environmental impacts.**
  - *Advertising* - Try to reduce the amount of paper flyers and posters used. Utilize social media and other options, like writing event information in chalk on sidewalks, instead.
  - *Swag* - Try to steer clear of heavy plastic based swag and freebies to give away to event participants. Eco-friendly promotional products can still have the group logo and information printed on them and will avoid a large amount of paper brochures and informational packets.

Some alternatives could be:

- Flower or herb seed packets
- Reusable bags
- Notebooks, brochures, or paper products made with recycled paper

- *Decorations* - Decorations like confetti, balloons, and glitter can easily end up as litter and be washed away into a water system. Try to use more biodegradable or natural options when decorating your event.

Remember to utilize your space! Hosting your event in an area already established with flowers, trees, and other plants can reduce the amount of decorations needed.

Some alternatives could be:

- Non-waxy paper based decorations - these will biodegrade easier and quicker in the environment
  - Bubbles or sparklers
  - Crushed up or punched out leaves as confetti
- *Waste* - Large events can result in a large amount of waste being produced. Make sure all trash cans and recycling containers are properly labeled and easy to see. Be sure to check if containers are overflowing or if waste is being thrown on the ground.

For more advice, check out our [Organizers Toolkit](#).



## Campus Spotlight

At the University of British Columbia (UBC), the annual Sustainability Fair is a chance to celebrate student and community initiatives in sustainability. The fair is organized by UBC Sustainability Ambassadors and works to inspire students, faculty, and staff to become involved in sustainability efforts. The fair showcases both student groups and outside organizations.

University of British Columbia Vancouver, Canada



Photo by [UBC Sustainability](#).

## Athletics:

Sporting events are a fun and entertaining way to spend a day rooting on your favorite team with your friends. They draw in huge numbers of people, including those events on university campuses. These high traffic events are the perfect opportunity to engage your fellow students and community in environmental practices while having fun and rooting for your team. When attending your next game try to keep these ideas in mind.

- ✓ **Practice campus respect. While walking around or tailgating, stay on designated walking paths and tailgating areas. Hundreds of people all walking over the same habitat area or green area can quickly destroy that space and leave the species living there without a home.**
- ✓ **Keep things clean! While attending the game, be sure to dispose of all your waste in the proper trash and recycling bins.**
  - This is another time when you can reach out to your university about increasing the number of clearly marked disposal containers if you notice that they are hard to find.
  - This is also an opportunity for a group project: after sporting games clubs, teams, and other groups can volunteer to clean up leftover trash and litter from the area. This can help reduce the amount of litter being spread throughout the area and washed away.
- ✓ **Is your school mascot an animal? What do you know about your mascot? This could be a fun way to connect your team to the environment and advocate for environmental issues.**
  - Things to find out about your mascot:
    - What kind of habitat does it live in?
    - Is it a local species?
    - Is it endangered or threatened?
    - What role does it play in the ecosystem?
  - If your mascot is a local species, such as a bird, insect, reptile, or small mammal, you could create a habitat specific for your university mascot located in front or near the stadium.
  - This would include native plants that your mascot pollinates, eats, uses as shelter, or for another purpose to encourage this animal to visit the habitat. This habitat can have informational signs surrounding the area so visitors to the stadium can learn about and appreciate your university mascot.



### Campus Spotlight

In order to create a more environmentally friendly tailgate culture, Clemson University in South Carolina has become the national champion in the 2018 [GameDay Recycling Challenge](#). In order to claim this championship, it took a combined effort of athletics operation staff, the university recycling team, student volunteers, and fans working together. In total, fans and employees recycled 123,661 pounds (around 56 metric tons) of gameday refuse.



Photo Credit: [Dave Vandeventer](#)

## Dining:

Your university dining hall is one area of campus that has a continually large impact on the environment. Everyday hundreds of students and faculty utilize dining services on campus, yet how many are aware of the ways their dining experience is affecting the environment around them? Through communication and understanding with your school, there are a variety of ways you can help create a greener more sustainable on campus dining experience.

Talk to your dining hall or student representatives about eliminating wasteful and non-recyclable products, such as plastic straws and styrofoam containers or trays. This kind of non-biodegradable waste can pile up quick and sit in our landfills for hundreds of years. Encourage your dining hall to offer more reusable container options instead. Make sure that there are enough proper waste and recycling bins located throughout the dining hall. Just having enough recycling and food waste containers can change how much waste is being disposed of improperly.

For many students, the on campus meal options can become routine and unappealing very quickly. By encouraging your dining hall to add more plant-based meal options to their menu, your school can increase the variety of food being offered while still keeping the environment in mind. Themed days, like “meatless monday” or “vegetarian saturday” can help to increase the number of people choosing these plant-based options. Many students may enjoy the change of pace and discover new food options that they love.

Food waste is another typical issue that comes with dining services. With the amount of hungry mouths campuses need to feed there needs to be a large variety of food options, however not all of this food gets eaten. Commonly, food that isn’t eaten gets thrown out. This food waste could be donated to local food banks and shelters instead. Composting is another way to dispose of this waste without it ending up in a landfill. Try talking to your university on adding more compost bins and disposal areas. This compost could even then be used by campus landscaping or other groups for outdoor projects.



### Campus Spotlight

The Dining Commons at Bastyr University in Seattle, Washington has embraced a greener more sustainable dining service. Their facility features plant-focused meals that come from organic regional sources and responsible local companies. All disposable utensils used are 75% biodegradable and compost from dining services is used within their campus vegetable garden.

[Bastyr’s dining hall practices and other sustainable initiatives.](#)



[bastyr.edu/student-life/sustainability-bastyr](http://bastyr.edu/student-life/sustainability-bastyr)

## CAMPUS COMPETITIONS

Whether it is between residence halls or rival universities, competition is a great way to encourage others to become involved in protecting species, while also encouraging teamwork and creative ideas. While the options are limitless, here are some examples of how competition can be incorporated into environmental initiatives:

- **Who can recycle the most?**
- **Who can use the least amount of energy — turning off lights and unplugging things before you leave your dorm**
- **Essay, poetry, or creative writing competitions**
- **Short film competition**



### Campus Spotlight

A popular environmental competition among college campuses is [RecycleMania](#). RecycleMania is a competition designed to promote waste reduction on college campuses across the United States and Canada. Schools are ranked based on the amount of trash and recycling collected each week over an 8-week period. By raising awareness and mobilizing students, [RecycleMania](#) can help create a more recycling friendly environment on campus.

# Off-Campus Students and Commuters

We recognize that not all higher education students live on campus. If you are located off campus or commute, keep in mind that many of these ideas and actions can still be applied. There are also many things you can do as a commuter to help promote biodiversity and create positive change for the environment.

## TRAVEL

Traveling back and forth to classes can become a real strain on your wallet, as well as the planet. Get in touch with other commuters on campus about traveling to campus together. This can reduce your carbon footprint, save money, and help you get to know your classmates in the process. By carpooling at least once a week, you can shrink your carbon footprint by 20%. It will also make parking on campus easier for everyone.

If you live close enough to campus, try riding a bike instead. This will reduce the amount of gas you are using on a regular basis, as well as avoid sitting in traffic. By reducing stress from traffic and getting regular exercise, you are opening up a whole world of physical and mental health benefits in addition to the benefits to the planet.

Public transportation can be another helpful alternative when commuting to class. It is often cheaper and will allow you to spend your time on other activities, such as reading, getting some last minute homework done, or just relaxing and listening to music.

The way you drive makes a much larger impact on the environment and the amount that you are spending on gas than you may think. **By keeping to the speed limit and avoiding sudden starts and stops, you can improve your miles to the gallon by 30%.** These small daily driving habits add up and are an easy everyday way to help the earth.

If you want to avoid commuting as much as possible, check out what online options your university or other universities offer. Online classes can be cheaper than traditional course, while advancing you to your degree all the same. By taking online courses, you have the freedom to work from home or wherever is convenient for you. You will also be able to work around work schedules and other commitments more easily. Plus, it avoids having to drive to class in potentially dangerous conditions, such as snow, thunderstorms, etc. Of course, keeping the majority of work online and reducing travel will have a positive benefit on our environment and carbon use.

## LANDSCAPING

By living in a house or apartment off campus, you have more options when it comes to increasing biodiversity through landscaping practices.

Increasing the amount of green space around your home is vital to creating a more biodiverse habitat. This can be done through the installation of different gardens, such as rain gardens or pollinator gardens. Also, allowing spaces to remain un-mowed or contain longer grass can create habitat with little to no effort on your part. These can be areas towards the edge or border of your yard that get very little use. Always remember to plant native species when creating any type of green space, these are species that are already suited for where you live and the wildlife in that area. Try installing a few bird and insect boxes as well!

For more tips on habitat creation, refer to [page 10](#) and [page 11](#).

Pesticide and fertilizer use is another area that can threaten the biodiversity of an environment. By reducing the amount of pesticide, fertilizer, and herbicide that you use you will help decrease the number of essential pollinators being lost and the number of waterways being polluted with these chemicals. Try some natural alternative methods to the harsh chemicals. You can find some examples of these alternative solutions and more information on [page 9](#).

## HEALTHY HOME

Within your home, there are endless ways to create a greener and healthier environment. A change in everyday habits is a good first step in this process:

- **Turn off lights and appliances when they are not in use. While it may not seem like such a big deal at first, all that electricity can add up.**
- **Unplug appliances when you are not using them. Appliances, such as toasters, coffee makers, or chargers still draw energy when plugged in, even if they are not in use.**
- **Utilize reusable containers and bags when buying or storing food. This will reduce the amount of plastic waste that you are creating, as well as reducing the amount of trash you need to take out.**

Everything that goes down the drain has to end up somewhere and the somewhere is our oceans. Watching what you pour down the drain is a big way to reduce the amount of contaminants and chemicals entering into our waterways. Cleaners, oils, and paints, are small examples of the liquids that can do serious damage to our environments. Being aware of what you are disposing of is an important part of protecting our oceans and aquatic species.

For more information on what can and cannot go down the drain, go to [page 6](#).

Your food choices are another area that can be turned into a positive environmental impact. When grocery shopping, pay attention to what it is you are buying. Purchasing eco-friendly products, like those with a USDA Organic label, are biodegradable, or are made with sustainably sourced ingredients, can make a big impact and can send a message to retailers about what products consumers would rather buy.

Try picking food options that come from local sources or even check out your local farmers market. The closer your food is coming from the less environmental impact that food had while making its way to you. This is also a good way to support local farms and businesses and ensure that your money is going to the right place. If you want to get the most organic food that you can, try growing it at home! Vegetables like tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, as well as herbs are easy to grow in a garden or pots. This has multiple benefits from creating habitat for pollinators to encouraging a healthy more plant-based diet.

In addition to how and what food you get, how you dispose of food waste is just as important. Instead of piling up food waste in your trash container, try composting instead! Composting helps to keep material out of landfills where they won't be able to decompose properly. Compost can be used as a natural fertilizer that enriches and reduces the need for chemical fertilizers. Composting should be done in a dry area with little light. Composting can be done even if you live in an apartment or do not have a backyard. You can purchase or create a special type of bin where your compost can be kept. These bins are typically small and won't take up too much space.

Some examples of compostable items:

- **Egg shells**
- **Coffee grounds**
- **Vegetable waste and food scraps**
- **Grass clippings, dead leaves, twigs and branches**

For tips on how and what to compost, check out these [helpful articles](#) by the EPA!



## Campus Spotlight

At Colorado State University, nearly half of faculty, staff, and students use alternative forms of transportation to get to campus. This is made easy by the many transportation programs and options available on campus. This includes the addition of separate bicycle and pedestrian paths, bicycle repair stations, and bike share stations. CSU also offers car sharing and car pooling networks for students to use. This helps to reduce the added costs on students to maintain, insure, and park a personal vehicle.

Check out [CSU's website](#) to see all of their different transportation options.



**Photo Credit:** [Colorado State University Campus Bike Advisory Committee](#)

# EDN Student Ambassador Program

## WHAT IS IT?

Join the environmental movement by becoming an Earth Day Student Ambassador! This program aims to unite students and universities across various regions and countries that have a passion for creating a better sustainable future. Work with other students and faculty on your campus on fun and engaging environmental initiatives. This program will provide students with the tools and support needed to become environmental leaders on their campus.

## BENEFITS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

By becoming a Student Ambassador, you will gain valuable skills and connections, all while bolstering your resume. As an ambassador, you will have the opportunity to participate in EDN events, webinars, and even be featured on the EDN website or other publications.

Some responsibilities of this program include hosting events and meetings with other student ambassadors on your campus, checking in with EDN on your progress and current projects, and sharing events and information through social media.

## HOW CAN YOU JOIN?

[Sign up to become an EDN Ambassador](#) and learn more about how you can become a leader on your campus!

# Appendix A

## UNIVERSITY RESOURCES TO MAKE CHANGE ON YOUR CAMPUS

Your university may have a variety of student groups that already exist to help address environmental problems on campus. You can join these groups, or start your own, and help start action to a problem that you would like to fix. You can also reach out to Student Government groups and request their support in a project, as they often are able to take issues to key decision makers at your school. Your school paper is another great way to inform your classmates about an issue or project that you want to address. You can also reach out directly to an office at your school and share your interests!

- **Office of Sustainability/Sustainability Coordinator**
- **Office of Civic Engagement**
- **Community Service Office**
- **Facilities/Landscaping**
- **Office of Residence Life**
- **Dining Services**
- **Office of Transportation**



## EARTH DAY NETWORK

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**Produced by Earth Day Network for the Protect Our Species Campaign, 2019.**

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This toolkit was last updated March 2019.

For more information, email [education@earthday.org](mailto:education@earthday.org)

Developed by Samantha Alvey & Tracey Ritchie.

Additional resources were created by many others working to fight against species loss. They are given credit and websites referenced when their work was incorporated into this toolkit, though we did not follow strict citation guidelines. This Toolkit can be copied and disseminated for free as long as the format is not changed, and Earth Day Network is cited or given credit.