

Earth Day--Celebrate Our Earth!

By Linda Butler

Wednesday, April 22 marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day! The first Earth Day was held in 1970 when 20 million Americans joined together to protest oil spills, polluting factories, toxic dumps, the loss of wilderness and other important environmental issues. Since then every April 22 has been a celebration of the Earth. Kind of like an Earth Birthday. Happy Earthday to you!

Taking care of the Earth is important. Learning about the Earth is important, too.

Did you know that all the planets—except Earth—were named after Greek or Roman gods or goddesses? “Earth” is an English/German word meaning the ground. The German word for earth is *erde*, the Old English words for Earth were *eorthe* or *ertha*.



The Earth is not perfectly round! It's actually slightly pudgy. The diameter at the equator is 3963 miles, while the polar diameter is 3,950 miles diameter. The bulge at the equator is due to the planet's rotation.

There is actually more water than there is earth on the surface of the Earth! 70% of the Earth's surface is covered in water.

The earth is mostly Iron (32.1%), oxygen (30.1%), silicon (15.1%), and magnesium (13.9%). The iron is more concentrated at the core—it's 88% iron. And at the surface, the earth's crust is 47% oxygen.

The Earth's atmosphere is thickest within the first 10 miles from the surface, but it extends 300 miles into space. People often have difficulty breathing above 20,000 feet altitude.

Earth is the only planet known to have life. There are over 8 million species of life on land and over 2 million species in the oceans.

The hottest spot on Earth is El Azizia, Libya, where the temperature reached 136 degrees Fahrenheit In 1922. The hottest spot in the US is Death Valley, California, where temperature reaches 130 Degrees Fahrenheit.

The lowest temperature ever recorded on Earth came from Russia's Vostok Station in Antarctica, where the temperature was a bone-chilling 128.6 degrees below zero. This was on July 21, 1983. (Remember,

July is winter in the southern hemisphere.)

The world's longest mountain range is actually under water. The mid-ocean ridge is over 40,000 miles long, beginning near Iceland, traveling through the Atlantic ocean, ending north of Antarctica.

The "General Sherman" giant sequoia, in Sequoia National Park, California, is the largest known stem tree. By volume, the tree contains 52,500 cubic feet of material.

The largest living animal, the Blue Whale, is 98 feet long and weighs 200 tons. There are two things that are considered to be the world's largest living organism. The aspen grove, Pando, here in Utah is believed to be the largest in mass. The entire grove is genetically identical. It is thought to be 80,000 years old. Pando encompasses 106 acres and weighs nearly 6600 tons. The Honey Mushroom in Oregon is also huge. It covers nearly 2400 acres and is thought to be over 8000 years old.



While reading about the Earth is fun, Earth Day is a great day to get involved with the Earth!

Give the Earth a gift by picking up trash, planting flowers, vegetables, or a tree.

Receive gifts from the Earth by taking a nature walk and finding treasures along the way. A paper, cloth or plastic bag can be a great collecting bag. After your nature walk, celebrate your Earth treasures by making a mobile. You'll need to find an interesting stick from about 1 ½ to 3 feet in length to hang things from. Use string and/or yarn to tie and hang the souvenirs which you collected on your Earth Day Nature Walk on the 50th Earth Day!

This was made by a 5-year-old. Older children might want to try tying two Earth treasures onto a smaller stick, about 5-7 inches long, and balancing them and tying that balanced stick onto the main stick. 4-7 treasures make a great mobile!

