

Tracy Aviary encourages the public to continue to stay green long after Earth Day has come and gone. ☺ Earth Day offers up activities and events for everyone, but to get the most out of your experience it's important to choose an issue that means something on a personal level and do what you can to help out. Here are some ideas to help you get started:

1. **Combat habitat loss**

Of all the animal species in the world, 97 percent are invertebrates—think jellyfish, worms, spiders—and more than half of them are on the list of endangered species. Why? The cause is primarily habitat loss: with nowhere to live, these species—and other endangered animals—can't survive.

Earth Day Activity: Start turning your backyard into an official National Wildlife Federation Habitat. Even the smallest urban garden can sustain the basics for local fauna—food, water, shelter, and space—and you can implement sustainable gardening methods for an even greener green space.

2. **Stay rooted against deforestation**

The steady decline in the world's forests—right now, about half of the earth's tropical forests have been cut down—has a huge impact on many of the other issues on this list, from the release of carbon dioxide that encourages climate change to the loss of countless animal habitats. Buying recycled and recyclable items helps, but you can take a more active role, too.

Earth Day Activity: It's an Earth Day tradition, but planting trees is one way to build forests back up; also, try working with a group that rescues otherwise-trashed wood from buildings and construction sites for reuse.

3. **Help preserve biodiversity**

The variety of animals, plants, insects, and sea life in the world isn't just a coincidence; the diversity of life on the planet represents the health of the planet as a whole. A slow but steady loss of biodiversity can also indicate an impending mass extinction.

Earth Day Activity: Find a conservation organization to volunteer with; they can fill you in on what's going on around you, what's threatened, and what's responsible for those threats.

4. **Stop climate change**

Ah, climate change. It's the biggest issue facing our planet today, but it's also one of the most controversial: People just love to deny that it's even happening, or blame it on the Earth's natural biorhythms. What's not arguable, though, is that human action is making it worse.

Earth Day Activity: Rather not get your hands dirty? Study up on the problem and prepare yourself to politely counteract the next person who tells you climate change is a lie.

5. **Clean up water pollution**

Saving water is a great green step—no more leaving the faucet on while brushing your teeth!—but it's equally important to keep clean the water we do have. Litter, chemical waste, industrial run-off, and other improperly-disposed-of trash can spread sickness and harm sea life (see above for more info on the importance of biodiversity).

Earth Day Activity: Grab a pair of old sneakers or galoshes and find (or start) a clean-up initiative at a local stream, river, or pond. Find a water-related event near you through Planet Green's Green Apple Festival & Earth Day Network Volunteer Central.

6. **Dig in to food production**

If it's true that you are what you eat, then you might want to take a second look at the ingredients label on those processed foods you're picking up at the grocery store—and you might want to delve a little deeper into the processes, pesticides, chemicals, and synthetic fertilizers that go into your "fresh" produce. The average meal travels roughly 1500 miles before it's consumed, so eating organic food from local farms and orchards is not only better for your body, it's better for the earth.

Earth Day Activity: Volunteer to get your hands dirty at a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in your neighborhood, planting fruits, vegetables, and herbs that you can enjoy all summer long and into the fall. Find an organic farm or CSA near you to get started.

7. **Transport to a greener place**

A huge portion of the world's carbon emissions come from something we all do nearly every day: travel. Calculating your carbon output and purchasing offsets for your plane, car, and train trips will give you a sense of just how much you're contributing—but don't stop there.

Earth Day Activity: If you didn't take the day off from work, organize an Earth Day carpool with coworkers who live in your neighborhood, or coordinate an office-wide walk to a nearby

restaurant for lunch instead of ordering delivery. Then use the experience to make both activities a part of your regular routine.

8. **Think global**

As you've seen, supporting Earth Day in your own community offers up plenty of opportunities for hands-on help. But if you're ready to think bigger, consider an environmentally-focused volunteer vacation, where you can do some good while getting a change of scenery. And, of course, choose eco-friendly lodging, purchase carbon offsets, and, if you need new luggage, choose green.

Source: <http://planetgreen.discovery.com/go-green/earth-day/earth-day-activities-tips.html>