



December 14, 2006

ENN's 2006 Guide to Green Holiday Gift Giving

'Tis the season for overindulgence.

During the holidays, it seems that everything is put into overdrive. Of course, feelings of good will thrive, charitable donations usually rise and there's just something about this time of year that can make a believer even out of your average Scrooge. But there is a yin to Christmas' yang. Increased spending and conventional gift-giving (not to mention all that wrapping paper) not only tax our wallets, but also our planet.

One way to combat that would be to take a vacation from exchanging presents. To quote the ever-popular epiphany of the Grinch – 'Maybe Christmas,' he thought, 'doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.'

But rather than shock our yuletide systems – after all, let's be honest, what would Christmas be without presents? – why not try spreading holiday cheer with some more unconventional gifts, gifts that will not only please the recipient, but also the Earth.

Toys and Games

Sometimes the smallest people can be the hardest to please. But there is a way to feed a child's imagination while also teaching them a thing or two about helping the planet.

Check out Xeko a two-player trading card game for kids aged 8 to 12 that allows participants to wage turf wars, defend their habitats and compete and cooperate to build a balanced ecosystem. Cards, which can be traded with friends and fellow Xeko "masters," are played for eco-points and, in the end, the player with the most eco-points wins. Cards are sold in starter sets of 25, and in booster packs.



To date, the game has two "missions," Madagascar and Costa Rica, two of the world's 34 hotspots – the most threatened and species-rich places on earth.

"We started with Madagascar because it's the hottest hotspot," said Mark Gross, director of marketing and communications for Matter Group, makers of Xeko. "The island contains an incomprehensible array of species found nowhere else on earth."

Gross said each year, Matter Group will add new collections of cards. "Since the hotspots contain a mind-boggling array of interesting plant and animal species, we have a vast pool of potential Xeko characters to choose from," he said.

Matter Group has partnered with Conservation International a nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving the Earth's living heritage. Not only do they contribute 4 percent of the net sales of Xeko to the group, but CI's ecologists supply scientific data that is used in the Xeko cards and the Xekopedia, the online storehouse of all Xeko knowledge. "We call Xeko 'organic entertainment' for kids, because like organic food, our products are good for people, good for the planet, and of the very highest quality," said Gross. "That makes it a great gift for the shopper hoping to use his or her dollars in a more enlightened way while bringing something of real value into the gift recipient's life."

Also, check out Matter Group's first in a new line of Eco-Pals – plush animals based on Xeko animal characters. The first, called Hairy, is the hairy-eared dwarf lemur of Madagascar and is made of Soysilk™ - fabric produced from the byproduct of turning soybeans into tofu.