

Monday - Articles from The Happy News

TO BUY BOOKS FOR STRANGERS

Each Wednesday, Simon Key, the owner of The Big Green Bookshop in Hastings, starts a Twitter thread called #BuyAStrangerABook.

"It's a thing where I buy books for strangers and then lots of other people join in too for no other reason than because they want to and they can (and they are really lovely)," Simon explains. Sometimes people specify the book they'd like to gift or who they'd like a book to go to, such as a young person who wants to get into reading.

Simon told iNews that he had the idea after a "rotten day" of poor sales. At the end of each working day, he posts how much money he took in the shop and online on Twitter. After a particularly bad Tuesday where he took less than £200, he tweeted: "OK, here's the plan. You lot buy £1,000 worth of books from me".

When one of Simon's followers responded, saying they'd purchase a book when they could next afford it, a stranger offered to buy it for them. *"I thought it was a lovely idea, so I bought a stranger a book too, and said that if anyone else wants to join they can. It completely took off, and I spent the whole day on Twitter."*

Simon has since extended the offer and has added #buyastrangerabook as a product on his website. Now anybody can buy a stranger a book at any time, with a purchase of £10. Anyone who buys a book through the new page will be sent a "small and poorly designed" #buyastrangerabook badge to wear with pride.

Take a look at #buyastrangerabookday and @biggreenbooks on Twitter or visit biggreenbookshop.com

A BABY BOOM FOR MOUNTAIN LIONS

Nestled high in the Santa Monica Mountains and Simi Hills west of Los Angeles lie 13 cubs, born from five mountain lion mothers between May and August.

Although mountain lions largely avoid people, biologists were able to visit dens while the mothers were away to perform health checks on the cubs, determine their sex and apply ear tags.

The study at the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is looking into how the big cats survive in a habitat fragmented by urbanisation, amid threats which include a lack of genetic diversity, highway danger and poisons.

The highest number of dens found in previous years, was just four, which was in 2015. Now, these 13 cubs, with their enchanting blue eyes, curving spots, teeth and whiskers, are inhabiting the landscape and battling against the threats to their existence.

"This level of reproduction is a great thing to see, especially since half of our mountains burned almost two years ago during the Woolsey fire," said Jeff Sikich, a wildlife biologist.

LEGO TO PHASE OUT PLASTIC THANKS TO KIDS' LETTERS

Lego is to trial the use of paper bags (recyclable and sustainably-sourced), to contain its pieces, from early 2021. Children have driven the move by asking the company to reduce single-use plastic in its packaging. Eight-year-old Hannah from the UK remarked in her letter: *"I thought it was a bit silly that the Lego Friends ocean rescue set came in the plastic bags that are harming our beautiful sea creatures"*.

The family-owned Danish toymaker aims to make all packaging sustainable by the end of 2025 – their boxes have already shrunk by 15%.

Reducing single-use plastic is part of a wider programme of initiatives and commitments driving sustainability and social responsibility at the company which will see £310m invested in the next three years. *"It's critical we take urgent action now to care for the planet and future generations,"* noted Lego Group CEO, Niels B Christiansen. *"We will step up our efforts to use our resources, networks, expertise and platforms to make a positive difference."*

The company also aims to make products from sustainable materials by 2030. This will not be easy – the bricks have been made from a robust oil-based plastic since 1963. From 2018, some less rigid items (around 2% of pieces), which do not need to be as strong, have been made from a recyclable bio-plastic sourced from sugar cane, and the company plans to expand this to other pieces. Some 150 experts continue to look for a sufficiently hardy replacement for the main bricks.



GOOD SAMARITAN LINKS FARMERS TO FOOD BANKS

When George Ahern, a businessman in Washington state, found out that potato and onion farmers in the east of the state were giving away and destroying crops because demand had collapsed due to Covid-19, he knew they could be used elsewhere – by food banks in the west of the state.

George soon realised he would need help – farmers had 'truck-loads' of crops, but food banks can only accept products that are clean and in bags. So he asked for assistance on Facebook and connected with two people who would become co-founders of the resulting non-profit company, EastWest Food Rescue.

George now concentrates on sourcing the food, Nancy Balin arranges convoys of vehicles to go across the state to collect the goods, and Zsafia Pasztor organises the dozens of volunteers who process and deliver the vegetables to the food banks. After moving 140,000 pounds, they thought their work was done, but the food was used in three days and proved it was just the beginning.

The enterprise, completely dependent on donations, volunteers, and volunteers' vehicles, has grown to cover neighbouring states, transporting 300,000 pounds of various crops every week. In total, EastWest Food Rescue has moved nearly eight million pounds of produce (over 3.5m kg), and their next target is to save and distribute ten million pounds.

Nancy told The Seattle Times: *"It's amazing and easily the most important thing I have ever done in my life"*.