

Saturday, October 31, 2009

Samhain

Tonight is Samhain (pronounced SOW-in), the third and final harvest of the year. The dark half of the year starts tonight.

Samhain is one of the eight annual festivals, or Sabbats. In many Wiccan traditions, this is the beginning of the New Year, because as the end of a cycle, it is also the beginning. The seeds from the dying plants previously harvested lie in the Earth, waiting for new life to begin. For Wiccans, the God has died, or gone into the underworld, awaiting his own rebirth at Yule, when the light begins to return.

As the God has passed into the underworld, the Goddess becomes the Crone, stirring the cauldron of life, death and rebirth. The veil between the worlds is thin on this night, making it easier to communicate with those who have passed on. The mundane laws of time and space are temporarily suspended, allowing those in the spirit world to intermingle with the living. Many Samhain rituals involve paying respect to ancestors, loved ones, friends and pets who have died. The spirits of the departed may be invited to attend the festivities.

Since the veil is so thin, this is a good time for divination of all sorts. Tarot, runes, scrying and pendulums are just a few of the ways to look ahead into the future and see what the upcoming year may have in store.

The modern holiday of Halloween (which comes from the term "All Hallow's Eve") started out as the night before All Souls (or Saints) Day, the Roman Catholic Church's day of remembrance of the Saints and the dead. Many pagan practices were "Christianized". Trick or treating came about this way. Pagans would leave gifts of food and drink on the doorstep for the spirits who wandered that night to keep them from coming into the houses looking for food. In the Christian tradition, beggars could come to the door and ask for "All-Souls Cakes" in return for saying prayers for the recently deceased of the household. (Stinginess was rewarded with vandalism.) This has evolved into our modern tradition of going door to door and trick-or-treating for candy. In ancient times, people wore masks so that they would not be recognized by the wandering spirits. This became the custom of dressing up in costumes.

But the wandering spirits were not necessarily feared. In Celtic countries, food offerings were left on altars and doorsteps for departed loved ones. Single lit candles were left in a window to help guide their spirits home. Extra chairs were put at the table and a place set for the unseen guest. Apples were buried along roadsides for those spirits who were lost or had no descendents to return to.

Many Witches and Wiccans celebrate this holiday twice. The astrological date for Samhain occurs when the sun has reached 15 degrees Scorpio (usually around November 7). This is the astrological midpoint between the autumn equinox and the winter solstice. You can celebrate the "party" aspect on October 31 and the "worship" aspect about a week later.

However you choose to celebrate, either partying, with solemn rituals and worship, or a combination of the two, be sure to take a moment to remember those loved ones who are no longer with us. Who knows - if you listen hard enough, you may hear them again.

Posted by Dryad in Wheel of the Year at 01:53

Friday, October 30, 2009

South African Rhinos Under Attack

The Black Rhino: listed as critically endangered. Less than 4,000 now exist. Rhino horn is worthless in most parts of the world, but in the east rhino horn can sell for thousands of dollars.

Why? Because in countries like China and Vietnam the horn is perceived as medicine and as an aphrodisiac. The result is an increase in illegal rhinoceros killing.

Famous wildlife parks like South Africa's Kruger Park aren't immune, and over 84 rhinos have been killed there this year alone.

The modern poachers are well equipped, flying in by helicopter to slaughter the animals.

Although rhinos have made a bit of a comeback in recent years, this escalation in poaching threatens to undo the gains made in the last ten years.

The Green Man Blog is written to spread environmental awareness and appreciation of the natural world around us. Thank you for visiting! Stay green, support the organic movement, and be sure to visit www.greenmantshirts.com or www.robjuszak.com for the best in organic cotton and bamboo t shirts!

Posted by Green Man in Environment at 03:00

Thursday, October 29, 2009

Going...Going...Gone?

Aral Sea 1964

In the 1960s, the Aral Sea was the 4th largest lake in the world. But because the two major rivers feeding it have been diverted away for nearly 40 years, the lake is disappearing.

Aral Sea 1973

The rivers now irrigate millions of acres of land for cotton and rice, but an ecological disaster is occurring for the Aral Sea and its human neighbors.

Aral Sea 1987

The Aral Sea is now half its original size, and the salinity content has increased from 10% to more than 23%. The local fishing industry has been devastated as the fish have died off.

Aral Sea 1999

The exposed lake bed is prone to massive dust storms, blowing up to 75,000 tons of soil, salt, and pesticide residue each year across the land.

Respiratory conditions are common throughout the area, and inhabitants say the overall climate is hotter and drier than ever before.

Abandoned fishing boats now lie on dry sands miles from the receding shore.

With the fishing industry gone, abandoned boats sit miles away from the ever shrinking sea.

Posted by Green Man in General at 04:29

Wednesday, October 28, 2009

Trailer for the Cove Movie

At right is a trailer for the Sundance Film award winner "The Cove."

From the promotional blurb: "Winner of the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, The Cove follows a high-tech dive team on a mission to discover the truth about the international dolphin capture trade as practiced in Taiji, Japan.

Utilizing state-of-the-art techniques, including hidden microphones and cameras in fake rocks, the team uncovers how this small seaside village serves as a horrifying microcosm of massive ecological crimes happening worldwide.

The Cove exposes not only the tragedy of dolphin slaughtering in Japan, but also the dangerously high levels of mercury in dolphin meat and seafood, the cruelty in capturing dolphins for entertainment, and the depletion of our oceans fisheries by worldwide seafood consumption.

We also see how the mandate of the International Whaling Commission has been manipulated by the Japanese Fisheries Agency for its benefit and its subsequent effect on the rest of the world."

The Green Man Blog is written to spread environmental awareness and appreciation of the natural world around us. Thank you for visiting! Stay green, support the organic movement, and be sure to visit www.greenmantshirts.com or www.robjuszak.com for the best in organic cotton and bamboo t shirts!

Posted by Green Man at 08:09

Monday, October 26, 2009

A Mysterious Concrete Dome on an Island

After World War Two, the United States tested dozens of ever-larger nuclear bombs in the South Pacific.

By the late 1970s, something had to be done with the radioactive debris left behind from all the explosions. In the end, the government scraped up over 100,000 cubic yards of "dirty" soil and put it on Runit Island (part of the Marshal Islands).

Years earlier, a giant crater on that island had been blasted out by an 18-kiloton nuclear test code-named Cactus. The contaminated soil was used to fill that crater, and then the entire thing was concreted over.

The structure today is 18 inches thick and covers 11,000 square yards. Signs warn visitors away, but people visit anyway.

The picture below is from Google Earth, showing the concrete dome on the island.

The Green Man Blog is written to spread environmental awareness and appreciation of the natural world around us. Thank you for visiting! Stay green, support the organic movement, and be sure to visit www.greenmantshirts.com or www.robjuszak.com for the best in organic cotton and bamboo t shirts!

Posted by Green Man in General at 19:46

Friday, October 23, 2009

The Eruption of Mt. St. Helens

Mt. St. Helens erupting May 18, 1980It was nearly thirty years ago that Mt. St. Helens erupted.

The mountain, the smallest of five major volcanic peaks in Washington State, stood at 9,677 feet before the May 18, 1980, eruption.

Weeks before, a large bulge pushed up on the north side of the mountain. Scientists knew an eruption was coming, but exactly when no one knew for sure.

By May 17, the bulge measured over 450 feet.

The large bulge forming weeks before the eruptionThe next day, at 8:32 in the morning, a 5.1 quake rocked the mountain. The top part of the volcano, 1300 feet worth, collapsed and then blew out.

People nearby who had failed to heed the warnings to leave the area were killed; 57 in all.

Pyroclastic flowThe ash plume billowed upwards for 9 hours. The plume traveled east, covering everything in its path for several hundred miles.

During the eruption, pyroclastic flows moved down the slopes at over 60 mph and reached temperatures of 800 degrees Fahrenheit. At least 17 of these flows came down the mountainside the day of the eruption.

Spirit Lake before the eruptionSpirit Lake, previously a beautiful jewel near the mountain, was destroyed by debris.

Spirit Lake after the eruptionToday, Mt. St. Helens is still slowly recovering. The mountain can be seen live on a "VolcanoCam" by clicking on the link below:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/volcanocams/msh/>

Posted by Green Man at 04:12

Thursday, October 22, 2009

James McKenna and the Mysterious Cave of Flashing Lights

Photograph by R. Wilkerson
The Black Range is a rugged and remote area of New Mexico's Gila National Forest that contains deep forest covering mountains ranging to 10,000 feet. It is filled with mysterious spires of reddish colored stone, dark twisting canyons and high passes.

James McKenna was one of the early travelers through this area. As a young man, he had come out to prospect for silver and gold. It wasn't far from here, around 1884, he nearly met his end at the hands of Apaches.

He was out fishing the streams one day, which he described as full of trout. Afterwards, he returned to his campsite near a cabin owned by the McKenzie brothers. McKenna walked into the middle of an Apache raid.

He discovered his friend and prospecting partner, Baxter, had been shot and killed by Apache Indians. His face and limbs had been mutilated by knives. McKenna himself was surrounded by 30 to 40 Indians, and two of them forced him back up against a tree and held him there. The others resumed their ransacking of the McKenzie cabin, ripping open the mattresses, throwing clothing about, and scattering the flour and other food all about.

The Indian women were gathering a large pile of brush, which McKenna took to mean he was intended to be burned alive. The squaws spit at him and one of them ran a mesquite thorn into his leg.

Fortunately for McKenna, the Indians' stock of horses was stampeded by what McKenna believed was a grizzly, and in the resulting chaos he was able to run away.

He made his way to safety eventually, but only by saving himself once more by acting crazy when he ran into more Indians. The Indians, according to McKenna, were superstitious about lunatics and usually left them alone.

McKenna rejoined other prospectors and ranchers who had taken refuge, and learned the Apaches had attacked cabins and killed settlers all through the area. Although a loose group of 25 men formed a posse, called a Territorial Militia, to track down the Indians, none was ever caught.

McKenna traveled 100 miles southeast to near Kingston, but there were still sporadic attacks all through the area. Within six months, he lost another partner to Indians. McKenna claimed that for two years after that period of his life he had become so nerve-wracked he couldn't sleep more than three hours a night, and every sound had him up with a hand around a gun. His hair fell out, and what grew back was white, though, as he said, he was still a young man.

McKenna eventually wrote a book about his prospecting years and therein related one of the strangest tales of the southwest. His travels had taken him to just south of the New Mexico border with Mexico. In a canyon he discovered an Indian cave that had been cleverly concealed with a large rock. The rock was so carefully shaped and placed it easily swung open at a push. Inside the cave was a well twenty feet across that erupted in spray coinciding with flashes of light. These flashes, McKenna said, were so bright inside the dark cave that he could clearly see the bones under his skin. Hundreds of feet into the cave he discovered a dozen skeletons. The air inside the cave was heavy with the odor of sulfur, and he could go no farther.

Years later, he revisited the area and found large boulders had filled in the canyon and the whole mountain landscape covered with volcanic ash. He never found the cave again, and the mystery of the flashing lights and water spray remained unsolved.

Posted by Green Man in Adventures at 07:21

Wednesday, October 21, 2009

Sea Lion Rescued

Eric Otjen of Sea World shows the fishing net that was removed from sea lion's neck. Sea World photo - Good news on the sea lion that had fishing line wrapped around its neck: after 10 days, Sea World rescuers were able to capture it and remove the line.

It turns out the fishing line was actually plastic netting. The sea lion appeared healthy, although it had a cut on its chin. After the removing the plastic netting, the sea lion waddled over to the water and swam away.

The Green Man Blog is written to spread environmental awareness and appreciation of the natural world around us. Thank you for visiting! Stay green, support the organic movement, and be sure to visit www.greenmantshirts.com or www.robjuszak.com for the best in organic cotton and bamboo t shirts!

Posted by Green Man in General at 07:07

Sunday, October 18, 2009

World's Largest Cave Shaft

Here's a cave for you: the Cave of the Swallows.

Located in San Luis Potosí, Mexico, the cave, with an opening 160 feet by 205 feet and over 1,000 feet straight down, is the largest cave shaft in the world.

So what should one do when exploring a cave like this? Jump in, of course.

Watch the YouTube video narrated by David Attenborough for amazing footage of base jumpers at the Cave of the Swallows.

The Green Man Blog is written to spread environmental awareness and appreciation of the natural world around us. Thank you for visiting! Stay green, support the organic movement, and be sure to visit www.greenmantshirts.com or www.robjuszak.com for the best in organic cotton and bamboo t shirts!

Posted by Green Man in Environment at 04:20

Saturday, October 17, 2009

Jobs or the Environment?

The choice is difficult: plan ahead for sustainable energy policies that benefit all of us in the long run, or provide needed jobs now?

When things are going fine economically, people tend to prioritize environmental initiatives. But once it gets economically tougher, the green initiatives tend to go out the window.

Witness Australia, where a few years back the people voted climate change as a top concern. But now, with Australia facing rising interest rates and job loss, the top priority is now saving jobs. Fighting climate change has fallen to seventh in public opinion polls.

Still, Australia, the hottest driest continent on Earth, is committed to cutting carbon emissions by 5% by 2020.

If there is strong international support, the Australian government would like to increase it to 25%.

Australia is the world's biggest coal exporter, and plays a key role in coal-fired energy production. Any move they make will be huge.

It's the short-term view that will keep on destroying the environment. And when we say environment, we are talking about our planet. Our rivers, lakes, oceans, air, wildlife, - we are its caretakers. We owe something to all who will pass through in the future, including our children, our children's children, and on forever.

Only by taking a long-term view can we change the destructive path we now tread. The end result of our human economy is waste, poison, chemicals, and garbage.

Looking down the road we can see the huge mess we'll eventually all choke on.

The Green Man Blog is written to spread environmental awareness and appreciation of the natural world around us. Thank you for visiting! Stay green, support the organic movement, and be sure to visit www.greenmantshirts.com or www.robjuszak.com for the best in organic cotton and bamboo t shirts!

Posted by Green Man in General at 04:39

Friday, October 16, 2009

A Sea Lion Dies Slowly From Strangulation

Photo by Angela Harrell, owner of Hike, Bike and Kayak, La Jolla. It breaks your heart to see an injured animal like this: this sea lion, on the rocks in La Jolla near San Diego, California, has several loops of fishing line tangled around its neck and is slowly strangling to death.

A fishing hook is embedded in its head.

Sea World officials, alerted to the problem, can't attempt a rescue because of the difficult area the sea lion is in.

Nearby lifeguards are watching the animal in case it moves to a more accessible area. If so, they'll call the Sea World Rescue Team for a capture attempt.

If the sea lion cannot be rescued, it will surely die an excruciating death.

The Green Man Blog is written to spread environmental awareness and appreciation of the natural world around us. Thank you for visiting! Stay green, support the organic movement, and be sure to visit www.greenmantshirts.com or www.robjuszak.com for the best in organic cotton and bamboo t shirts!

Posted by Green Man in General at 04:41

Thursday, October 15, 2009

That Aussie Dust Storm Really Moved Some Dirt

Back in September we wrote about that Aussie Dust Storm that blasted across New South Wales and southeast Queensland.

This dust storm was the biggest in 70 years. But only now are scientists giving us the staggering facts behind the storm.

Get this: at its peak the storm carried 140,000 tons of soil per hour from central Australia.

Hard to grasp that, isn't it?

The scientists also say that 4000 tons of dust settled on Sydney, while another 3 million tons landed in the Tasman Sea between Australia and New Zealand.

To put that in perspective, 3 million tons of dust is equal to 7,894 dump truck loads, if you used the world's largest dump truck, the Caterpillar 797.

That's moving some dirt.

The Green Man Blog is written to spread environmental awareness and appreciation of the natural world around us. Thank you for visiting! Stay green, support the organic movement, and be sure to visit www.greenmantshirts.com or www.robjuszak.com for the best in organic cotton and bamboo t shirts!

Posted by Green Man in Environment at 05:24

Wednesday, October 14, 2009

Time for A Light Change

I discovered at the local Dollar Tree store that our utility company is promoting fluorescent light bulbs. They had the bulbs there for, naturally, a dollar each.

At Walmart and Target the prices are still \$3.00 to \$4.00 for the same bulbs.

So I grabbed 16 or so and switched out all my incandescents. Some fixtures I couldn't switch out because the new fluorescent bulbs didn't fit. But I got 14 lights switched over.

Then of course I had to break out the calculator and see what wattage I saved.

The new bulbs are 100 watt bulbs, but only consume 23 watts. So I am now using 322 watts for those light fixtures, whereas I was using over 1900 watts before. (I had mostly 100 watt incandescents, but also some 250 and 150 watt).

I kept my incandescent bulb in my reading lamp. The fluorescent bulb just wasn't cutting it.

But everywhere else they work great. Hopefully, I'll start seeing a 70% to 80% in my light bill each month.

The Green Man Blog is written to spread environmental awareness and appreciation of the natural world around us. Thank you for visiting! Stay green, support the organic movement, and be sure to visit www.greenmantshirts.com or www.robjuszak.com for the best in organic cotton and bamboo t shirts!

Posted by Green Man in General at 08:39

Tuesday, October 13, 2009

Sailing Out From the Past

Photograph by A J Stevens
The Star of India, the world's oldest active sailing ship, is docked at San Diego. This beautiful ship is currently undergoing needed repairs, including a \$42,000.00 sandblasting job of her hull.

All told, the entire refurbishing project is expected to cost close to \$300,000.00.

The Star began her sailing life in 1863. Originally named Euterpe, she was built at the Ramsey Shipyard on the Isle of Man.

Her first two voyages did not go well. On the first, Euterpe suffered a collision and a mutiny. On the second, a cyclone caught her and tore away the topmasts. On the same trip her captain died and was buried at sea.

But the great ship carried on and eventually logged 21 circumnavigations, carrying cargo to India and hauling immigrants to New Zealand, Australia, California, and Chile.

The Star of India was officially retired in the 1920s, and after a series of failed plans to restore her she was left decaying in the San Diego harbor.

But famed writer and sea-adventurer Alan Villiers, visiting San Diego on a 1957 lecture tour, rallied San Diego citizens to raise money to begin restoration.

In 1976, the Star of India put out to sea once again for a short sail through the San Diego harbor, now a yearly tradition for the great sailing ship.

The Green Man Blog is written to spread environmental awareness and appreciation of the natural world around us. Thank you for visiting! Stay green, support the organic movement, and be sure to visit www.greenmantshirts.com or www.robjuszak.com for the best in organic cotton and bamboo t shirts!

Posted by Green Man in General at 07:02

Saturday, October 10, 2009

What You Need to Know About Bamboo T-Shirts

Bamboo t-shirts are very popular, as they should be. They feel great, come in bright colors, and use bamboo as the raw material.

But, strictly speaking, bamboo t-shirts are not made of bamboo fiber. They are made of rayon derived from bamboo.

We wanted to explain more about bamboo t-shirts, and shed some light about what bamboo t-shirts are and are not.

Posted by Green Man in Videos at 17:03

Wednesday, October 7, 2009

River Deltas Sinking?

Human activity is causing most of the world's river deltas to sink. The biggest impact is from dams and reservoirs trapping sediment that normally flows downstream, but other factors such as manmade channels and levees are causing problems also.

Without the constant replenishment of sediment, the deltas are slowly sinking.

Of the world's 33 major deltas, 24 are in trouble. About 85% of the deltas have experienced severe floods. As the ocean levels rise the problem will only get worse.

Since the combined delta area represents over 100,000 square miles, with over 500 million inhabitants, delta sinking and flooding will continue to be a growing problem.

Storm impact will increase along these low-lying deltas, and will get worse over time as the areas continue to sink. As delta areas sink they no longer act as buffers to major storms, allowing storm surges to hit with greater impact.

In the United States, this effect was illustrated by Hurricane Katrina.

Photographs:

Top: Lena River Delta (Russia)

Bottom: Mississippi River Delta (United States)

The Green Man Blog is written to spread environmental awareness and appreciation of the natural world around us. Thank you for visiting! Stay green, support the organic movement, and be sure to visit www.greenmantshirts.com or www.robjuszak.com for the best in organic cotton and bamboo t shirts!

Posted by Green Man in General at 03:57

Tuesday, October 6, 2009

Surfing the Giants

Watching the waves is a universal phenomenon. People from all around the world sit and stare out to sea. The ocean is part of our collective unconscious, a force onto itself we cannot escape.

Some brave souls do more than stare, however. They throw themselves out into the curling sea, if not exactly conquering it then at least becoming one with it for a few seconds of grace and fluidity.

The photograph above is from Mavericks™, a world-famous surfing location in Northern California. It is just north of Half Moon Bay. Waves here can top at 50 feet.

According to popular legend, in 1961 three surfers, Alex Matienzo, Jim Thompson, and Dick Knottmeyer, decided to try the distant waves they saw off Half Moon Bay. With the surfers was a dog named Maverick, who jumped in the water and dog paddled (naturally) out with the surfers.

From that day, the surfers called the break Mavericks™ Point, and later just Mavericks™.

In 1975, a surfer named Jeff Clark began to seriously study Mavericks™, and for 15 years he had the break to himself.

But by 1990, Mavericks™ was becoming famous, popularized by surfing magazine articles and visits by famous surfers.

The death of legendary big-wave surfer Mark Foo in 1994 at Mavericks™ gained worldwide attention, and in 1999 the first big-wave surfing contest was held at Mavericks™. It was won by Peter Mel.

These days, surfers tackle the biggest waves imaginable. They use jet skis to tow themselves into position. After that, the surfers are on their own. This YouTube video, filmed from a helicopter, shows extraordinary footage of a surfer tackling one of nature's monster waves.

Posted by Green Man in Adventures at 05:25

Monday, October 5, 2009

Rollover Javascript for Changing T Shirt Colors

We've had a few people ask about the inline rollover javascript we use on the Green Man T Shirts website. This is the color-changing script to illustrate the different colors of our organic t-shirts.

Like many others, we had problems using two-part scripts where some of the script had to go into the head section and some into the body section. We use GoDaddy as our host, and we don't have access to the head section of the site (not easily, anyway. There is always user-modified CSS, but we aren't that smart). Plus, any javascript we used had to xhtml validate for us, and that kept creating problems for us code-challenged newbies.

What we needed was a simple javascript we could cut and paste into the body section, and finally we cobbled one together. Look at some of the organic t-shirts at Green Man T Shirts to see how it works.

Rather than make someone use Firebug and grab it off the site, we just put the entire javascript into a downloadable zip file to study and use. Put the code into a txt file (use Notepad or something similiar) for easy viewing. Once you see it and compare it against our site it's pretty easy to see how it works.

Just replace the images we made with images of your own (Please! It's bad form to "borrow" bandwidth); use your own color terms; add or delete lines depending how many colors you wish to show; and you are all set. Just cut and paste it into the body section of your website.

We used t-shirt mockups generously provided by Tom Neal, and we found out about him from the great guys over at Assault Blog. They have a link where you can download the free mockups. In the future we might be buying the GoMedia Mockups. They look pretty darn good.

Hopefully this will help other t-shirt guys like us who are more into designs and shirts and styles, rather than writing xhtml, CSS, and javascript.

Download the Rollover Javascript below:

Rollover Javascript

Posted by Green Man in T-Shirt Information at 18:12

Weather Anomalies

The United Nations Environment Program publishes some interesting material. Below is a illustration showing weather anomalies for 2008/2009.

Much more can be found at: <http://www.unep.org/compendium2009/>

Posted by Green Man in General at 05:02

Sunday, October 4, 2009

Our Border Wilderness is in Trouble

We tread lightly on political issues here at the Green Man Blog. We prefer to leave the shouting and screaming for the political pundits on television.

But some of our pristine wilderness areas are being destroyed, and it needs to be talked about. The problem is this: illegal immigration.

The numbers are staggering. Consider the following:

The Tohono O'odham Indians, caretakers of 2.8 million acres of wild, beautiful wilderness running along the Arizona/Mexico border, cleaned up in one year over 7,000 abandoned cars and 65,000 pounds of narcotics left behind by the drug trade running through the area.

Human smuggling gets even worse, in terms of trashing the environment. Since 2007, Arizona's Undocumented Migrant Waste Program has collected thousands of pounds of trash, nearly 100 tons of it so far, throughout some of the most isolated and formerly pristine wilderness areas close to the border.

Illegal immigrants collect in huge sites known as "layups," and here all manner of garbage is dumped. When we say garbage, we're talking about piles of human feces, tampons, drugs, backpacks, clothing, food cans, toothpaste, blankets, toys, water bottles, syringes, and used condoms.

One site, north of Nogales, Arizona, was so heavy with debris one could walk one-half mile over the garbage without ever touching the actual ground.

It's so bad that the sites qualify as "biohazards," and volunteers who clean the mess up have to be protected and trained to avoid exposing themselves to infectious diseases and contamination.

There are thousands of these layup sites. Experts estimate illegal immigrants leave behind 2,000 tons of garbage in our border wilderness every year.

Besides the garbage, hundreds of miles of trails are haphazardly cut through wildlife habitats, including those of coyotes, bears, mountain lions, deer, bobcats, and more. Streams are polluted and watering holes trampled, leaving wildlife struggling to source water in the desert areas.

Private groups have been documenting the destruction for years, shooting videos and posting it on YouTube.

Saturday, October 3, 2009

Harvest Moon

Tonight at 11:10 p.m. PDT (EDT 2:10 a.m. tomorrow) is the Harvest Moon. This is the name given to the Full Moon closest to the autumnal equinox. The Harvest Moon usually occurs in September, but this year October's full moon is closer and so gets the honor.

On average, the moon rises 50 minutes later each day than it did the day before. But near the equinox, the narrow angle of the ecliptic (the path of the sun, moon, and planets) to the horizon means that the moon rises less than 30 minutes later than the previous day. So during the Harvest Moon and just before and after, the moon rises very shortly after sunset. Nowadays, that doesn't seem like such a big deal. But in days of old, having no long period of darkness between sunset and moonrise for several days meant farmers could work in the fields much later, harvesting by moonlight. Hence the name Harvest Moon.

The Harvest Moon supposedly is especially big, bright and orange. But it's not really any bigger or brighter or orange than any full moon. After sunset around any full moon, the moon has just risen and is near the horizon. When you look toward the horizon you are looking through a greater thickness of Earth's atmosphere than when you look up and overhead. The atmosphere scatters blue light (that's why the sky looks blue). When the atmosphere is thicker, it scatters blue light most effectively, but also lets red light pass through to your eyes. This makes a moon near the horizon look yellow or orange or reddish. The large size of the moon near the horizon is a trick your eyes are playing called the Moon Illusion. It's really not any bigger, it just looks that way!

In Wiccan traditions, this is the perfect time to clear the clutter in both your mind and your personal life. Go deep within and sort through your own strengths and weaknesses. The full moon represents the Goddess at her most fertile. This is the optimum time for creating change.

This month is a time of hearth and home. As cold weather arrives, our thoughts turn to the comforts of home. Set up a hearth or kitchen altar for when you are cooking and baking. Use that time for contemplation and to clear out both emotional and physical clutter before winter forces you to spend the days inside.

Posted by Dryad in Moon Talk at 01:00

Friday, October 2, 2009

Looking Across the Universe

After undergoing a few refurbishments, the 19-year old Hubble telescope is producing its most spectacular images yet.

This past May, NASA astronauts installed new instruments that gives Hubble more depth and range.

Hubble is able to "see" across a wide electromagnetic spectrum, from ultraviolet to near-infrared light.

It's like slicing through billions of light years, giving further information about the origins of the universe.

The result is hundreds of new images and data for scientists to study.

Posted by Green Man at 04:10

Thursday, October 1, 2009

The Chapel of St. Michael

It's not unusual for man to incorporate shrines onto dramatic natural features, and the Chapel of St. Michael in France is but one example.

The chapel was built in 962, on a bare basalt needle rising 269 feet high. The top diameter is only 187 feet. To reach the top one must climb 268 stone steps.

How the builders were able to transport all the raw materials up the needle is beyond us. It must have been one heck of a job.

Sometime in the 12th century the chapel was enlarged to its present size, and the huge bell tower was added. The tower only survived a few years, but it was rebuilt in the 1800s.

The entrance is protected by a large stone arch covered in carvings. Among the images are two mermaids, one with a snake's tail, and one with the tail of a fish.

But look closely: see the Green Man images?

The images sit under the feet of the two figures holding the vines trailing over the top of the arch.

Posted by Green Man in General at 01:00