



Earth Jurisprudence Update

Earth-centred News and Inspiration

Greetings Friends,

This Earth Month, our latest update ranges from the majesty of the miniature (in the form of lichen) to the enchantment of the vast night sky. We also honour inspirational partners and allies forging a path towards life-sustaining futures and celebrate the latest ecocentric legal developments. In the words of Thomas Berry, “the present is not a time for desperation but for hopeful activity.”

With warm, wild wishes,

Carlotta, on behalf of the Gaia Team

Honouring Partners and Allies

Gaia Partner, Tero Mustonen, Wins the 2023 Goldman Environmental Prize

We are thrilled that the 2023 Goldman Environmental Prize has been awarded to Tero Mustonen, president and founder of Gaia’s longstanding partners, the Snowchange Cooperative. Tero has been recognised for rewilding 62 industrial peat mining and forestry sites in Finland – transforming 86,000 severely degraded acres into thriving ecosystems that nourish wildlife, support local subsistence fishing and capture carbon. Crucially, Snowchange have pioneered a collaborative approach to this work that brings together Finnish traditional and Indigenous knowledge holders with scientists.

Remembering Dr. Tewolde Gebre Berhan Egziabher, Defender of Seed Sovereignty

With heavy hearts, we honour the passing of a dear friend and Gaia Associate from Ethiopia, Dr. Tewolde Gebre Berhan Egziabher – one of Africa’s most outstanding advocates and defenders of community and environmental rights. He passed away in March 2023. Winner of the Right Livelihood Award, in the 1990s Dr. Tewolde was instrumental in working with African countries to resist the push for genetically modified organisms and patents on life and to protect community rights.

Kinship

The Guardians of Life

Writing for the *Dark Mountain Project*, researcher-activist Shrishtee Bajpai reflects on her experiences of working with peoples and communities who are defending their waters, territories and ways of being. “They are guarding these territories to protect cultures or languages, so that the knowledge of ecological and kinship systems, healing methods, and alternative ways of conceiving the cosmos are not lost... Are we ready to listen to communities across the world who are already threading a tapestry of possibilities in response to the current crises, and build on these emerging coalitions?”

Kinship with Whales

In early March, the Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA) hosted the webinar *Caring for our Oceans – exploring cultural connections and kinship with whales* in partnership with the Ocean Rights and Kinship Alliance. “Communities and peoples throughout Oceania have had long standing ancestral relationships with migratory marine animals. This webinar, the first in a series of five, invites us to consider how Oceanian cultural connectivity and kinship with migratory marine animals is important today as the world considers how best to care for the ocean for present and future generations.”



Photo by Mike Doherty on Unsplash

Ecocentric Legal Developments

Ecuador Court Upholds Rights of Nature and Blocks Intag Valley Copper Mine

A provincial court has revoked the mining licenses for the Llurimagua copper mining project in the Tropical Andes on the basis that the extractive activities violated the local communities' constitutional right to consultation and the Rights of Nature guaranteed by Ecuador's Constitution. "The decision represents a major victory for communities in the Intag Valley, who have been resisting mining projects in the region for nearly 30 years in what locals say is the longest continuous resistance movement against mining in Latin America."

The Rights of Sea Turtles are Recognised in Panama

Following on from Panama's enactment of a national Rights of Nature law in 2022, in early March the country passed a law that recognises the inherent rights of sea turtles and their habitats. "[T]his law can advance the conservation of endangered sea turtles by ensuring an ecosystem perspective, strengthening standards of conservation, and including the inherent needs and health of turtles and their habitats in decision making. From the comparative experience of the Rights of Nature movement, we have learned the enforceability and the implementation of Rights of Nature requires a specification of Rights of Nature," comments Latin American Legal Director Constanza Prieto Figelist at Earth Law Centre.



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European Parliament Proposes Including “Ecocide” in EU Law

In late March, the European Parliament officially declared its support for the inclusion of “ecocide” in the EU’s revised environmental crime directive. “This is the first time that such a definition has been included in a legislative text at the European level. The final stage for ‘ecocide’ to be definitively recognised in European law will be agreement from the European Council and the European Commission on the Parliament’s proposed position. Over the coming months, representatives from each of the three institutions will engage in a consultation process known as ‘trilogue’ negotiations,” reports Stop Ecocide International.

In Defence of the Night Sky

An Ecocentric Case Against Satellite Constellations

Kate McFarland discusses the deployment of satellite megaconstellations and their potential impact on the Earth community. “They could disrupt the migration patterns of animals who navigate by the stars, and their impact on the brightness of the night sky could result in adverse ecological effects across the globe. Perhaps most insidious of all, human tolerance of this novel threat to the night sky seems to betray a worrisome lack of reverence and respect for the more-than-human universe.”



Photo by Ryan Hutton on Unsplash

Lunar Time

Mari Margil (Center for Democratic and Environmental Rights), Associate Professor Alice Gorman (Flinders University) and Dr Michelle Maloney (Australian Earth Laws Alliance) raise the alarm about recent proposals to standardise lunar time as a precursor to the potential colonisation of the Moon. “If we contemplate deep time, we don’t need scientists to tell us that the Moon is important to life on Earth. It is our connection to our ancestors – of all species – since the first spark of life on our planet, the Moon has been with us. All life forms have emerged under its silvery light; and no doubt every human has gazed at its brilliance. It should be a humbling and marvelous recognition”.

The Majesty of the Miniature

Lichens and the Meaning of Life

Maria Popova of The Marginalian considers how the humble lichen reveals the majesty of life. “Lichens come alive as an enchanting miniature of the miraculous interconnectedness of nature... Having so mastered the art of unselfing, lichens emerge as living testaments to the visionary evolutionary biologist Lynn Margulis’s insistence that ‘we abide in a symbiotic world.’ In their biology lies a poignant metaphor for how we think of the relationships that surround us”.



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