

Ecobears

by David Sterrick



Illustrated
by Calvin Innes

The Ecobears

David Sterricker

~

Yvonne Jane Wright

Illustrations & Cover by Calvin Innes



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Hessle . East Yorkshire . HU13 9DG

First Published in the United Kingdom 2011

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ISBN: 1-907746-03-X

ISBN-13: 978-1-907746-03-1

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A HISTORY OF THE ECOBEARS

Ecobears is a concept that was created by Yvonne Jane Wright & David Antony Sterrick, and began February, 1996. Under the Ecobears umbrella the collaboration now includes Calvin Innes, and creates characters, mascots, illustrations, stories, cartoons, toys & games - to bring a global awareness of alternative materials and solar energy.

Ecobears began life many years ago, as a combination of two passions: soft-toy making and environmental interest - with the first Ecobear named 'Harvest' - born on February 29th, 1996. Using a hemp/recycled cotton/recycled wool mix fabric, which was very unusual at the time, making Ecobears the first toys of the 20th century to be made from such materials. They were honored with the '2000 Best Newcomer Award' from The British Toymakers' Guild.

Ecobears encourage an awareness and interest in the versatility of natural fibers. Hemp is making a positive impact on society these days. Its fabric is one steeped in tradition. Burlap, which was used to make soft-toys in the 1800s is a woven cloth created from hemp, jute or flax fibers. Ecobears are helping to revive this tradition.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

'A special thanks goes out to the following for their generous assistance in making this book happen. Their time and expertise have been gratefully received.'

Gareth Rivett, Geoff from the Corn Exchange – Leeds,
Ronald Micallef, Gale Anderson, The British Toymakers'
Guild, Felicity Percival, Sylvia Farley & Calvin Innes



I. THE ECOBEARS

My name is Dessa, and I have quite a tale to tell. This is a story that stretches across galaxies, from the distant edges of space: a story about creatures from another world who have much to teach us about the plants and animals on Earth; a story about a race who want to save us from ourselves.

Imagine a world, a trillion light years and a billion galaxies away from Earth. This world drifts gracefully through the eternal night sky against a blanket sprinkled with stars. It is a lush and vibrant green planet, gift-wrapped with cotton wool clouds and lit up by the light of a giant yellowish orange sun.

A dozen moons rotate lazily around the planet while a myriad of brightly coloured meteors and comets skim their surface, each one sending clouds of dust and ice spray into the night sky, reflecting brilliant white and blue light in every direction.

Welcome to the magnificent Planet Vynen.

Purple snow-capped mountain ranges stretch for thousands of miles across the planet's surface. Perfectly

clear seas lap the white sandy shorelines on islands that bustle with life. Each dawn, innumerable different species of hopping, dancing, flying and skipping insects collect in swarms, each a mile wide. Their pulsating, swirling displays last for hour upon hour as the world awakens.

Gigantic waterfalls a mile high and ten miles wide thunder and roar over the jagged cliff tops into vast lakes below. Torrents of translucent shimmering water rush down over the purple rocks, worn smooth by the endless flow. A fresh, clean spray rises gently in the wind and falls as rain on the distant horizon.

Long, tranquil summers drift languidly into short, crisp winters where the glistening dew freezes in crystal clear droplets on every plant and flower. The entire planet glistens in space like a festive bauble.

Vast stretches of forest sway in the breeze as millions of neon birds spring from branches and take to the sky in a beautiful aerial dance. An unimaginable variety of creatures live side by side. The air is filled with the sound of bird song and crickets chirping a chorus. Tall olive green trees twist and arch their way up into the sky as far as the eye can see, forming vast rainforests.

Hidden amongst these endless forests lives a wise and magical race known as the Ecobears.

The Ecobears are the guardians of Vynen. Each day they

tend the plants and animals, ensuring that all forms of life exist in harmony together. To an Ecobear all life is equally important, from the smallest Flip Beetle to the largest Momomouth. Large or small, slimy or furry, fins or legs, they are all essential to the rich ecosystem on Vynen.

A Flip Beetle is a miniature creature, no larger than a grain of rice, which moves around by performing back flips. A Momomouth is an Elephant-like creature who has incredibly hairy ears and stands so tall it can peer over the top of even the largest Vyne trees.

From the moment the Ecobears wake up under a brilliant blue sunrise to the moment they lay their heads down under a star speckled sky, their main task is the protection and preservation of Vynen and all of its many plants and animals.

Hyred, the Supreme Ruler of Vynen, watches over the Ecobears as they work. He is the most important and respected bear on the planet, answerable only to the Elder-Ecobears. Hyred gained his grand title because of the immense knowledge he possesses of nature, the sky and the stars and the spiritual forces at work on Vynen. He knows more than any other bear about the plants and animals that cover Vynen's lush green surface. It is said that he can even name each and every species of insect on the great planet.

Hyred is three times larger than the biggest of the

Ecobears. He is famous across the whole of Vynen for his wisdom, kindness and compassion for all living things. He was also the first Ecobear Traveller and his bravery is legendary. Hyred guides the young Ecobears as they learn to care for the planet. They are taught to show diligence in their work and to love and care for all those around them. Once Hyred decides that his students are ready, they are awarded their own Ecosac.

An Ecosac is a very special type of backpack which contains everything an Ecobear might ever need. It is the highest honour an Ecobear can receive and is only awarded after a bear spends many months studying under the Supreme Ruler of Vynen. As the Ecosac is presented Ecobears must choose their 'Life-Task', a job which they will be trained in and will provide as a service for their fellow Ecobears. For their society to run smoothly there must be cooks, farmers, builders and doctors. There are scientists, carpenters, artists and teachers, bakers, blacksmiths and scholars, each of them an expert in their own area, working for the good of all other Ecobears.

Preservation tools, fresh seeds and, most important of all, a copy of 'The Ecobear Book of Knowledge' are all contained within every Ecosac. Each copy of this prized book has inscribed on the cover the words: 'This very special book. If studied assiduously, learned and carried out with a true heart, it will enable an Ecobear to evolve and become as good a bear as he or she can be.'

Each Ecosac also contains several specialist tools, depending on the bears chosen Life-Task. Cooks will have their utensils and pans, scholars and artists will have their brushes and paper and builders will have their mallets and Twotsits (similar to a screwdriver, but carved from a tough section of Vyne tree branch). Almost all the Ecobears' tools are hand crafted from various parts of the Vyne tree.

Ecobears live off the land and need to be able to provide their own food and shelter. They must know how to cultivate, maintain and process the precious Vyne trees, which are used to make homes, clothes and fuel. The beautiful flowers of the Vyne tree, when cooked correctly, make a wonderfully aromatic soup enjoyed by Ecobears all across the planet. When heated and soaked in a rare type of sap, Vyne tree wood becomes as hard as steel. It can be cut, shaped and used to build everything from houses to boats, and even spaceships. All this valuable knowledge, and ever so much more besides, is contained within the sacred 'Ecobear Book of Knowledge'.

Ecobears are a highly advanced race. In fact, their technology is hundreds of years ahead of that on Earth. They have learned to monitor carefully and regulate every aspect of their planet's ecosystem. When they need the rain to fall or the clouds to clear and reveal the bright yellow-orange sun, giant machines whirr and buzz into action. Perfect conditions for all types of animals and plants are created across the planet, resulting in the

incredible variety of life on Vynen.

The Ecobears' scientific knowledge has allowed them to build advanced machinery that produces no pollution whatsoever. Most of their machines actually make the atmosphere cleaner as they run. Even their spaceships run on a potent clean-burning fuel made from the oil of the Vyne tree seeds.

Some of the greatest Ecobear scientists have created incredible ships that can travel the vast distances of space. These ships are used to study and research other planets and the life-forms that inhabit them. The next time you see a shooting star, it could, in fact, be an Ecobear ship whizzing past our own little blue planet.

A circular purple mountain protrudes from the olive green forests and scrapes the clouds of Vynen.

A colossal three-towered castle perches on top of the highest point, with a clear view for two hundred miles in each direction.

At the base of the purple cliffs lies the village of Rudalis: a complex and twisting collection of huts built entirely from the multi-functional Vyne tree. Long rope bridges hang from several doorways, connecting the houses to a wooden walkway that encircles a huge and very rare dark green Vyne tree in the centre of the village. Smaller houses are dotted around the forest, connected by wide clearings between the rich green Vyne trees.

Thousands of different flowers speckle the village with a rainbow of colours and dragonflies dart from plant to plant.

It is a bright morning. The sun is breaking over the tree tops, casting its early morning rays over the village of Rudalis. The homes of all of the Ecobears who live there are cast in brilliant sunlight. As the sun warms the faces of the sleeping Ecobears, they begin to wake. It is another beautiful day on the Planet Vynen. Birds start to sing and the insects all begin to hum their lazy songs.

Gazing down from his cliff top castle, the wisest of all of the Elders has already been awake for hours.

Master Dante is a magician with legendary powers. As one of the oldest Ecobears he, with the help of a dozen other Elders, compiled the instructions and teachings in the prized 'Ecobear Book of Knowledge'. His wisdom is as vast as the oceans that spread out across Vynen and as limitless as the crisp clear air that surrounds them. He spends most of his days deep in thought, studying his ancient books and papers.

Master Dante is one of twenty-three Elders, a group of the most ancient and the wisest bears on Vynen, who are responsible for overseeing the whole planet. Some of the Elders are several hundred years old and have witnessed some of the biggest changes in Ecobear history. The epic floods of the Bluponi Valley, the first Albino Momomouth baby and the 'Year of Butterflies'.

But these are all stories for another time.

A selected few Ecobears will be sent to Master Dante for further teaching: a lucky few who will go on to be trained as 'Travellers'. These 'Travellers' are Ecobears who are sent out to discover, research, study and on occasion save other planets in far off galaxies. They are treated as heroes and are respected by bears across the Planet Vynen.

Many centuries ago, the first Ecobears realised that to understand their own planet fully, they needed to understand how other planets work. By studying how species have become extinct, they can ensure that the same fate doesn't claim the creatures and plant life on the Planet Vynen. The Travellers use the knowledge gathered from a thousand years of space exploration to save worlds in danger. Sensors aboard the Ecobears' spacecraft can detect changes in a planet's atmosphere. They can detect damage to its ecosystem and endless details on the exact state of every life-form on the planet's surface.

Now, as the sun's first rays throw a brilliant light over half of the planet, Master Dante calls for his assistant to deliver a message. He has carefully been studying star charts since the early hours of the morning. A report has come in of a planet in a distant galaxy being in serious trouble, a small blue planet that supports a rich variety of plant and animal life.

‘Y..y..yes Master Dante?’ chirps Berry Scout, an eager young Ecobear who has recently begun working as the great wizard’s assistant in the hope of one day training as a Traveller. ‘Y..y..you called, Master Dante?’

‘Calm down, boy,’ he replies with a wise and friendly smile. ‘I need you to deliver a message for me.’

Master Dante, who always moves very slowly, shuffles his way towards his desk, which fills half of the small room packed to the ceiling with books and old scrolls. He lowers himself slowly into a large wooden rocking chair and places a single piece of paper down in front of him.

Taking a quill pen from his desk, the great wizard begins to scrawl a note on the piece of paper. After several long pauses and what seems to Berry Scout like much thought, he signs the note with a large, spiralling ‘M.D.’ and folds it in two.

Master Dante never rushes anything. Even when all of those around him are in a mad panic, he remains calm and collected, carefully thinking out his every move. After living for several hundred years, he has learned to take his time and think things through very carefully.

‘Now run along, boy.’ says Master Dante as he hands the note to Berry Scout. ‘A planet is in danger and we must do what we can to help. Deliver this note to Hyred, please, boy.’

The young bear grips the note tightly in both hands, puts on his most serious face and runs swiftly out of the door. He almost trips as his feet get ahead of him on the long winding stone path down to Rudalis. Stumbling over the make-shift wooden fences, through bushes and under hedges, Berry Scout nears the village entrance. As he brushes past a particularly large collection of blue flowers a fine yellow cloud of pollen fills the air.

‘Hyred,’ he calls at the top of his voice. ‘Hyred, Master Hyred, I have a message for you, sir.’

Before he can pause to catch his breath, Berry Scout finds himself standing in the shadow of the huge figure of Hyred. He instinctively thrusts his hand out, presenting the great Ecobear with a crumpled and torn scrap of paper.

Hyred glances down at the tattered paper and casts a questioning glance at his young messenger. ‘Not bad for your first task, young bear,’ he says with a smile, ‘Now run along, back to Master Dante.’

Pleased with himself for a job well done, Berry Scout clicks his heels together and salutes Hyred. ‘Thank you, sir.’ He takes a long, deep breath and sets off running back to the Elders’ castle. ‘Thank you, sir,’ he shouts again.

Hyred wipes a little mud from the note. He flattens out the crumpled piece of paper and holds it up to his nose. Shielding his eyes from the bright morning sun,

he carefully inspects the note from Master Dante.

‘Dearest Hyred,

I require your help with the most urgent of tasks. It has come to my attention that a life-supporting planet in a far off galaxy is in great danger. Please assemble a crew immediately. I would like to send a crew of Travellers to assist the planet and see what we can do to help. We will require a crew of six, including yourself and me and we shall also take one trainee. We launch at dawn tomorrow. Our target is the Milky Way galaxy, and the planet known as Earth.’

‘Earth it is...’ says Hyred as he glances up to the brilliant blue sky. ‘Until tomorrow...’



