

# going green



After taking the *RW Eco Runners Challenge* HARRIET EDMUND discovers just how much we can do, as runners, to reduce our impact on the environment.

**A**RE RUNNERS ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY? Well, you would think so – we love nothing more than hitting the pristine trails of the great outdoors, right? But the results of our *Eco Runners Quiz* show, Australian and New Zealand runners are big emitters of greenhouse pollution – the type that's increasing the Earth's temperature and contributing to the frequency and severity of freak natural disasters such as bushfires, cyclones, hailstorms and floods.

I, like many of our 880 quiz respondents, thought I was pretty 'green' when it came to limiting my impact on the environment – my parents are old hippies after all. So, it was second nature to wash my running gear in cold water and grow my own veggies. But when I set myself this challenge – to be a genuine eco runner – with the help of the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), I was amazed at how much more I could do to save energy and water. You will be too.



## THE TRUTH

Put simply, the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse polluting gases that we create from doing things like running on a treadmill, driving to training and buying the latest running apparel are contributing to why Australians have the fourth highest eco-footprint in the world, and why New Zealanders have the sixth highest.

Once released into the atmosphere, this pollution absorbs heat from the sun forcing the globe's air and ocean temperature to rise. The damage? Bruce Paton, project officer of ACF's GreenHome campaign, says greenhouse pollution is already damaging our natural assets such as the Great Barrier Reef, the Murray Darling Basin and the environments around some of Australia and New Zealand's most pristine running trails.

"The good news is that we can all have a hand in helping to solve the problem and, by making simple changes in our everyday life, we can help to move towards a low-polluting future," he says.

## ENERGY EASE

The easiest place for runners to start, when it comes to cutting our eco-footprint, is where we run. And while 91 per cent of runners prefer to run outdoors, according to our *Eco Runners Quiz*, it's worth considering the environment when you choose to hit the gym on chilly mornings. Research shows a 45 minute treadmill session produces one kilogram of greenhouse gas pollution.

Brendan Condon, race director of Run for a Safe Climate, says if you are a treadmill runner, consider asking your gym to take responsibility for the emissions by measuring and offsetting your personal carbon footprint. See [climatepositive.org](http://climatepositive.org).

When it comes to saving energy, Paton suggests shutting down computers completely after downloading running data is one of the easiest eco-habits to develop. "Switching off computers and other appliances saves about 115 kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions a year," he says. And, with electronic-waste responsible for 70 per cent of the toxin chemicals found in landfill, it's easy to flick a switch or two.

**THE CHALLENGE 1** Run outside instead of on a treadmill  
**2** Shut your computer down completely after downloading your running data  
**3** Dry your running gear on a line or rack instead of in a dryer

## WATER WISE

When Pat Farmer, ultramarathon runner and former federal MP, sets out in November to run from the South Pole to the North Pole he will spread one clear message: "water is life so don't waste it."

The average Australian uses 285 litres of water a day in their homes, according to Australian government research, compared to 10 litres a day for the average person in the developing world. But climate change is affecting everyone's access to water, says Farmer. "As the world's population increases and our demand for clean drinking water becomes greater, it is vital that we control the pollution of our water ways and our water waste," he says.

While Farmer claims runners know more than anybody how valuable the resource is saying "without it we don't survive", 31 per cent of runners don't have a water-saving shower head – including me! Taking this challenge made me realise I could save

16 litres of water per minute with a water-saving shower head. For a runner who showers sometimes twice a day, depending on when I workout, that's a massive saving.

When it comes to reducing our water waste, using a front loading washing machine saves 163,800 litres of water and 1683 kilograms of greenhouse gas emissions a year. But for the 51 per cent of runners who do not have a front loader, Paton suggests washing your running gear in cold water and using a line or rack to dry your clothes instead of a dryer.

**THE CHALLENGE 1** Get a water-saving shower head  
**2** Use a front loading washing machine  
**3** Wash your running gear in cold water

## WASTE NOT

When you think about being an eco runner, it's logical to consider how we use electricity and water, but Matthew O'Callaghan, marketing manager at Brooks, says as the environment continues to be a critical social issue runners will also consider the implication of what we wear. As 96 per cent of our quiz respondents attest, it's best to buy good quality running apparel that lasts. The environmental benefit? A saving of 1.5 kilograms of chemicals – pesticides and fertilisers – needed to produce just one cotton or synthetic t-shirt.

However, when quizzed about running shoes, 66 per cent of runners don't know if their shoes are environmentally friendly and made of biodegradable products. A running shoe midsole can take up to 1000 years to breakdown in landfill, but Brooks claims its BioMoGo midsoles will decompose 50 times faster, saving 13.5 million kilograms of landfill waste over 20 years. Nike also uses factory scrap materials in the midsole air unit of the Nike Air Pegasus 25, while Asics uses less harmful glues and recycled materials across many models.

"New technologies and processes are ensuring the environmental impact of running shoes is being reduced without compromising performance," says O'Callaghan, a 21 minute 5K runner. "By supporting products that are leaders in this area, runners can indicate to manufacturers that this is the direction they want the industry to take."

**THE CHALLENGE 1** Buy good quality running apparel that lasts  
**2** Wear environmentally friendly running shoes made of biodegradable products  
**3** Refill your drink bottle instead of buying bottled water

## TRAVEL TOGETHER

Nothing spoils a good run like breathing in smog and car fumes, says Condon, CEO of Safe Climate Australia and adventure sport specialist. But, when it comes to travel, runners are big polluters with 48 per cent of quiz respondents choosing to drive places instead of running or cycling, 60 per cent saying they don't car pool, and 52 per cent driving non-eco-friendly cars.

In Australia, the transport sector accounts for a whopping 80 million tonnes (or about 14 per cent) of our total net greenhouse pollution, according to ACF. While in New Zealand transport generates 20 per cent of the country's greenhouse gas emissions each year. Aside from the environmental impact of how we travel, Condon says the health effects of motor vehicle pollution are

asthma and premature mortality. "So, isn't it in our best interest to drive low-emission vehicles, use public transport, ride a bike and car pool?" he asks.

Sometimes it's not always possible to leave the car in the garage with hectic work, family and training commitments, but it's worth making the effort when you can – and not just for the environment's sake. I was amazed to learn if I run or ride to work and cut my driving by 50 kilometres a week, I'll save more than A\$500 (NZ\$631) a year.

**THE CHALLENGE 1** Run or cycle places instead of drive  
**2** Car pool with your running buddies  
**3** Drive an environmentally friendly car (see [greenvehicleguide.gov.au](http://greenvehicleguide.gov.au))

## FOOD FIT

We can't run without fuel, but it's important to note that what we eat (and don't eat) can have some major environmental consequences. For example, did you know Australians throw away A\$5.3 billion worth of food every year?

With almost half of an average household's eco-footprint attributed to food production, Paton suggests runners should 'think before you buy'. "Things like using artificial chemicals, processing food and then transporting it long distances use up a lot of energy and have a big impact, which is why organic, fresh, locally produced food is often the best," he says to the 53 per cent of runners who reported they don't buy organic fruit and vegetables.

The production of meat is another environmental, well, snag. University of Sydney researchers found producing a single 150 gram serve of meat (say, one small steak) takes more than 200 litres of water – mainly in growing animal feed and washing abattoirs. The same steak creates five kilograms of greenhouse pollution, including emissions from haulage, storage and packaging. Based on the *Eco Runners Quiz* findings, we runners love our meat, with 54 per cent eating it twice a week or more. But don't worry; you don't have to give up your muscle repairing protein to protect the environment. Simply choosing grass-fed beef instead of grain-fed will make a big difference.

**THE CHALLENGE 1** Eat everything you buy  
**2** Buy organic fruit and vegetables  
**3** Eat less meat

## THE LAST SHOUT

So, are you an eco runner? Find out at [runnersworldonline.com.au/eco-runners](http://runnersworldonline.com.au/eco-runners). Take the challenge and try committing to some easy steps such as washing your running gear in cold water using a front loading washing machine and taking short showers with a water-saving shower head. This already saves more than five tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions a year – that's more than you'd save by not driving your car for an entire year.

If you already do these things try limiting the amount of red meat you eat or restraining from buying the latest running apparel this season. The emissions generated from producing the food we eat and the goods we purchase are together more than four times the emissions from our personal use of electricity. You'll be surprised, just as I was, at how much we can do to protect our planet.

## WASHED UP

Scientists predict climate change will increase the severity and frequency of natural disasters but, as Tina Thompson attests, it's already taking a toll.



**Name** Tina Thompson  
**Age** 51  
**Lives** Emerald Beach, NSW  
**Running PB** 42.2 kilometres in 3:26  
**Climate Catastrophe** Coffs Harbour Floods, New South Wales

"Everyone is still traumatised from the floods in March, 2009. It has affected real estate, business, and some people who went under are still living in tents.

I remember going to work that morning thinking it was just a normal day – I had no idea I would be going home in an SES boat. At about lunch time the rain started to get heavier and by 2.15pm the water was pooling in the car park. We moved our cars to higher ground, but two hours later they were completely under water. We stood in the show room at Coffs Plumbing Supplies and watched the water rise until there was a river rushing down the main street. We moved the computers up and tried to clear as much stock as possible, but when the water came flooding into the store, much of the business was ruined. I waded outside into chest deep water and was picked up by a rescue boat. When I finally got home I was relieved to find my animals were okay, but water had run down the hill and seeped into my son's room, which took hours to mop up. Waking up the next morning everyone was totally shocked. I decided to go for my morning run at Emerald Beach to clear my head, but it was devastating. The 20-year-old trees along the dunes had been completely up-rooted and rubbish had washed up along the beach. For a runner who normally starts the day with a mental high of running by the ocean, where I often see dolphins and whales, it was a depressing sight.

Coffs Harbour was hit by two freak one in 100 year floods in a matter of months, and to think it could happen more frequently because of climate change is devastating. I think people are starting to understand the effects of climate change and many are taking action by installing solar hot water systems and water saving appliances. But everyone has to help because the climate is all we've got."

Thompson continued to train along the flood affected Emerald Beach and ran the Gold Coast Marathon three months later in 3:54:33. She's now training for the 2010-11 triathlon season.



## RUNNING WILD

In early 2009 Jeff Riseley, Australian middle distance runner, faced a contest like no other – saving his house and favourite running trails from the Victorian bushfires.

**Name** Jeff Riseley  
**Age** 23  
**Lives** Harkaway, VIC  
**Running PB** 1500 metres in 3.32.93  
**Climate Catastrophe** Black Saturday Bushfires, Victoria



“It was unbearably hot when I woke on the morning of Black Saturday. I trained early and spent the rest of the day in the pool. When my uncle called that afternoon to say a grass fire had broken out nearby, my sister and I jumped in the car to check how close it was. We didn’t get very far before we saw huge smoke clouds coming over the hill. The fire had jumped the road and was moving towards our house. We raced home and got my mum and sister ready to evacuate. They loaded our three horses into the float, grabbed the dog and cat, the family photos and got out.

My brother, dad, uncle and I tried to wet everything around the house with buckets of water and the garden hose. We’re on tank water, so we knew if the electricity went out we had nothing. We also lined our cars down the street in case we had to make a quick getaway. At one point we couldn’t even see the backyard because the smoke was so thick.

Suddenly flames came rushing down the hill and on to our five acre property. As the fire reached 100 metres from the house I was ready to bail, but I wasn’t going anywhere without my family.

The wind stopped and a man, who we didn’t know, pulled up in a Ute with a water tank on the back and hosed down the fire. As we started thinking everything was okay, we turned around and realised another front was coming towards the other side of the house. The water helicopter Elvis was flying overhead ready to dump 10,000 litres of water on us, but I watched eight guys with blankets beat at the fire and stop it in its tracks 50 metres from my house.

The fire didn’t have the ferocity that it did in other parts of Victoria that day. I hate to think what a lot of other people out there went through.

That night I could barely sleep. The trees around our house were glowing red in the darkness and we knew the CFA was still out there. I could hear the trees cracking and falling as they continued to burn out through the night.

At 8.30am the next morning I decide to meet my training group for our regular long run at Ferny Creek. Training doesn’t stop for anything, and the run helped me process what had just happened.

## BACK IN THE BUSH

We moved to Harkaway about four years ago and it was around that time when I started training seriously. I fell in love with running in the bush. There are so many trails to choose from, you can run flats or hills and it’s so peaceful – I do my best thinking out there. But after that summer, three of my favourite training venues were destroyed. Police Paddocks Reserve where I do my one and two kilometre reps was burnt out earlier in the summer and closed off. Birdsland Reserve where I do my threshold runs was also destroyed and closed for several months – part of the track where I used to do my figure eight runs is still not open.

On a Sunday afternoon, about three weeks after Black Saturday, I drove to Ferny Creek for a long run. I’d been hearing about the fires on TV every day and it was really getting to me. I just wanted to run and feel normal again without worrying about the heat and

the aftermath. I could see smoke coming from the direction I was heading, but I kept going anyway. I must have got there just before the road closures and was 10 minutes into a 1:45 minute run when I got pulled up by a policeman. He told me a fire had started and was coming up the hill towards us. I ran back to my car and got out of there. When I went back two weeks later, the fire had torn through exactly where I going to run that day.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The brutal summer heat in Australia makes running for everyone that little bit harder. I have to modify my sessions and train earlier or do my afternoon runs later to avoid the heat. If it’s already 32°C in the morning you can’t do your regular training load because it completely knocks you around and will leave you feeling flat for the next session. You also sweat a lot more and have to watch how much weight you lose during a hard workout. That’s when sports drinks and supplements become really important to top up hydration and fuel stores.



A lot of natural disasters are out of control around the world and climate change is a contributing factor. I think everyone should do their bit to slow the effects of climate change and global warming. We can’t single out any one group to take action, we’ve all got to do what we can otherwise it’s going to get worse.

My family lives on tank water and we catch rain off our sheds and roof. It’s good to see new housing developments incorporating fresh water tanks into their infrastructure, but I think everyone should look at hooking up tanks and using grey water.

There are little things you can do to make a difference as well, such recycling your running shoes. I go through a lot of shoes and always pass them on to family and friends who reuse them.

## RUNNING AHEAD

The adversity that came with the heat and bushfires in the 2009 summer was no excuse when it came to my running. When I won the national 1500 metre title that March it was really important to me. I hadn’t won a national title, even though I’d been to the Osaka World Championships and Beijing Olympic Games. After the nightmare in Beijing (Riseley was struck down with a virus) it made me hungry to prove to people who doubted me that I can run. I think staying positive and working hard that summer allowed me to have an undefeated domestic season and go on to set a 1500 metre PB in Rome during the European summer. I believe if you want something bad enough you’ll make it happen, no matter what you’ve been through.”

*Riseley is recovering from plantar fascia surgery and looks forward to rebuilding for the 2011 season. See [runnersworldonline.com.au/video](http://runnersworldonline.com.au/video).*

**AFTERMATH:** Photographs taken by Riseley after Black Saturday (left). Despite the interruptions he completed an impressive domestic season (below).



**FACT** Having a shower after a run uses half a kilogram of CO2 emissions every minute. Try reducing your shower time by three minutes each day to save 550 kilograms of greenhouse pollution a year.

## HOME GROWN

How does your city rate when it comes to green living? Check out Australian Conservation Foundation's 2010 Sustainable Cities Index.

City	Position	Score
Darwin	1	119
Sunshine Coast	2	121
Brisbane	3	123
Townsville	4	129
Canberra-Queanbeyan	5	133
Hobart	6	139
Melbourne	7	142
Gold Coast-Tweed	8	143
Cairns	9	145
Bendigo	10	150
Toowoomba	11	152
Sydney	12	161
Launceston	13	163
Adelaide	14	165
Ballarat	14	165
Albury-Wodonga	15	167
Wollongong	16	171
Newcastle	17	172
Geelong	18	174
Perth	19	183

**66** The percentage of runners who don't know if they wear environmentally friendly running shoes made of biodegradable products.

## CLIMATE CONTROL

If you want to become eco-conscious this spring, check out this top-to-toe combo.

### Icebreaker LS Rush Crewe

A\$149.95; NZ\$149.95

Using biodegradable merino fibre straight from New Zealand's southern alps, the Rush Crewe is part of Icebreaker's new GT Run range. Check out [icebreaker.com](http://icebreaker.com) to trace the eco-friendly making of the Crewe from the living conditions of the sheep, to how the garment turns from wool to high performance running apparel. Available in men's and women's. [icebreaker.com](http://icebreaker.com); 1800 554 224.



### Columbia Silver Ridge™ Ball Cap

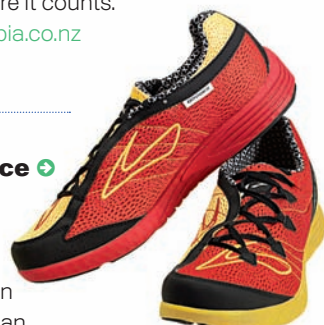
A\$34.95; NZ\$39.95

Doing its bit to reduce environmental waste; Columbia released the Ball Cap in Australia and New Zealand in August. Made from 89 per cent recycled polyester, the cap is packed with omni-shade technology to give UPF 30 sun protection and a wicking, highly breathable sweatband to keep you dry and comfortable where it counts. [columbia.com.au](http://columbia.com.au); [columbia.co.nz](http://columbia.co.nz)

### Teko Organic Merino Wool Socks

A\$22.95; NZ\$28.95

Without using pesticides, herbicides or machinery, Teko claims to have the best running socks on the planet and for the planet. The company offsets all carbon emissions, uses recycled packaging and soy inks. The seamless toe and strike-zone cushioning prevent hot spots and make for a comfy run. [tekosocks.com.au](http://tekosocks.com.au); [tekosocks.com](http://tekosocks.com)



### Brooks Green Silence

A\$180; NZ\$220

With a 100 per cent biodegradable midsole designed to break down in landfill 50 times faster than most midsoles, the Green Silence is a competition shoe setting the eco-pace. After three years of research, Green Silence uses water-based adhesives and non-toxic dyes and colourants, 100 per cent recycled shoe laces and 70 per cent recycled shoe materials. [brooksrunning.com.au](http://brooksrunning.com.au); [brooksrunning.co.nz](http://brooksrunning.co.nz).

### ASICS Women's Commitment Merino Tight

A\$85; NZ\$ N/A

ASIC'S Commitment Merino range uses one-third of the energy needed to produce polyester. This Tight is made of 100 per cent Australian merino, a renewable, sustainable and natural fibre. The benefits: it's itch-free, odour-resistant and UV protecting. Guys should check out the Commitment Merino Tee and Tank. [asics.com.au](http://asics.com.au); 02 9835 2300.



## Tough minds Strong bodies Big hearts

Runners ascending Timms Spur, March 2010



3  
DISTANCES  
160/100/60KM

48  
HOURS

1  
EXPERIENCE  
OF A LIFETIME

## Alpine Challenge

Incorporating the 100ml Alpine Skyrun, 100km Corporate & Team Challenge and the 60km Alpine Experience 19 – 21 March 2011

Imagine taking part in Australia's toughest and most scenic trail ultra over 48 hours! Choose from 3 events – the 100 mile (160km) Alpine Skyrun, the 100km Corporate / Team Challenge or, the new 60km Alpine Experience. Commit to as little as 15km in a relay team or 160km as an endurance runner.

Set in Victoria's stunning Alpine National Park, the Alpine Challenge will test you to the limit as you traverse some of the toughest and most exposed areas of the Australian Alps. You will be doing it tough, but not as tough as some in our community who you will be raising funds for as you run.

If you're looking for something different – If you want great scenery – To push yourself to the limit – To make new friendships and – An experience you won't forget – **The Alpine Challenge is the event for you!**

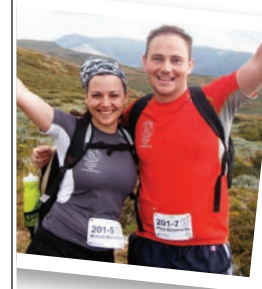
### Categories

Enter either the 100 mile/100km/60km events as:

**Solo endurance runner** or **2-4 person endurance team** running/walking the entire distance together

or **4-8 person relay team** running/walking different stages in pairs (*The 100 mile event is only open to runners*)

To register and enter visit [runningwild.net.au](http://runningwild.net.au)



"A huge challenge and a wonderful experience. When the going got tough and it did, it was great to draw strength and motivation from our team mates. We will be back again!"

Team Aida



Proudly supported by



## EUREKA CLIMB



CLIMBING HIGHER TO  
REBUILD YOUNG LIVES

SUNDAY 14 NOV 2010

Eureka Tower  
Southbank, Melbourne

- 88 Levels, 300 Vertical meters
- Individual and team entries
- All ages and fitness levels
- Challenging and unique



[www.eurekaclimb.com.au](http://www.eurekaclimb.com.au)

