

Meet your greens

The green movement is so evolved that it now has a whole ecosystem of subspecies. **Helen Kirwan-Taylor** studies the new tribes in their natural habitat

Fashionable causes have always attracted an overnight following, but green takes the cake. The image of the green has shifted from a tree-hugging bespectacled hippie to celebrities such as George Clooney and Leonardo DiCaprio who don ethical designer wear, holiday in eco resorts and drive electric cars (even if the parts were shipped from India). Green gets you on the cover of *Vanity Fair* and wins you street cred, at least until the real greens take a critical look and blog you (the green version of outing). Most fashionable greens, says George Black, columnist for *OnEarth*, 'are eco narcissists', meaning they do it for their own rather than the planet's sake. Terms such as 'light greens' describe the consumer who buys five pairs of organic cotton jeans rather than wearing the ones he already has; shops only at Whole Foods, where berries arrive from Chile in Boeing 747s; and kits out his three homes - reachable only by car and plane - with photovoltaic panels and recycled plastic. He pats himself on the back about overseas travel because he offsets his 20 transatlantic trips a year with a pledge to plant a tree in the rainforest (conveniently added to his green credit card).

Where we once knew the calorific breakdown of all foods, we now know the carbon footprint. Possessing an excessive amount of it is the modern equivalent of tripping up old ladies. Carbon neutral now prefaces banks, cars, even dental practices. The Church of England suggested its parishioners give up carbon rather than chocolate for Lent.

Already new groups of green anti-shopping crusaders, or froogles, are evolving and forming organisations such as Buy Less Live More, a charity encouraging people to donate to charities and consume less. Buy Nothing Day is now celebrated in 55 countries, but 'green' remains one of the most contradictory terms in the English language. For every 'light green' driving a Lexus Hybrid and wearing hemp, there's a real green not driving at all and darning his old cashmere socks. And for every in-your-face eco warrior there's someone who chooses not to bother with the conversation at all by quoting books such as the anti-green Bjorn Lomborg's *The Skeptical Environmentalist* (a green-debunking bible). Green is now divided into camps, factions and tribes. Which one are you?



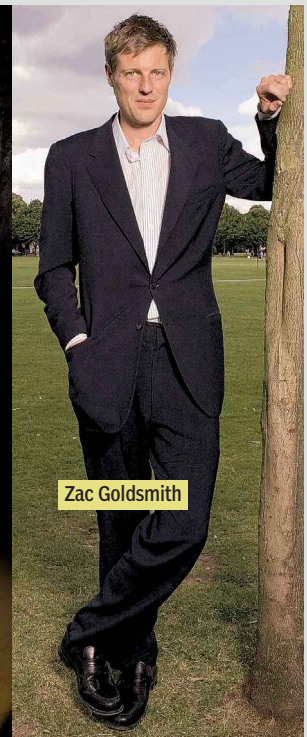
David Cameron



David Attenborough



Tracy Worcester



Zac Goldsmith

AUTHENTI-GREENS

They turned green before anyone knew what it meant and certainly before wormeries and organic decaying apples became the norm. When they drove an electric three-wheeler, slept between hemp sheets or donned a bicycle everyone thought they were weird... or just plain poor. Prince Charles - well known for his tree-hugging tendencies - was described as 'a rock' by Tony Juniper, recently retired from Friends of the Earth and who counts himself as an authenti-green. (His office opened in 1971 when no one paid the slightest attention. By 1991, however, his cause was sufficiently glamorous for *Hello!* to call up and ask if Yasmin Le Bon could be taken to Malaysia to see the effects of the logging.)

Bryan Meehan, founder of the first proper organic supermarket Fresh & Wild, and Alex Michaelis, the über-green

architect - who lives by his creed in a subterranean basement house with solar panels and underground well - both qualify as early green disciples as well as honest-to-God bike and Tube riders. Authenti-greens have the highest status and therefore attract a cult-like following, which means that Michaelis is regularly asked to install photovoltaic panels in homes that also contain heated indoor pools and three 4x4s in the garage. Other authenti-greens include Zac Goldsmith and Sir David Attenborough, although sadly for the planet-hugging presenter to appreciate wildlife closely it means flying all over and around it. Authenti-greens are smart enough to know that you can get caught up in contradictions, so either they come out and admit it (such as David Cameron) or they endlessly campaign on behalf of it (Tracy Worcester).

AUTHENTI-GREENS ATTRACT A CULT-LIKE FOLLOWING