

The first Belgian Peace Dove flies high



By Dave Meyer, Sunbeams

Monday 21 September was the International Day of Peace. Of course, if you weren't in the Park at Tervuren, or if you watched any of the television news channels that night, you may not have noticed it. Between the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Congo, Colombia and elsewhere, "peace" isn't exactly the order of the day. Still – if you were in Tervuren, you might have thought otherwise...

Last Monday, the first-ever Belgian Peace Dove flew in the Park at Tervuren. The effort was organized by Sunbeams, the expat environmental organisation, as an extension of the Peace Dove campaign of the Jane Goodall Institute and Roots & Shoots, the institute's youth movement. The day itself, which was created by the United Nations in 2001, is supposed to serve as a day for the entire world to live in peace and free of violence. When Jane Goodall was appointed a UN Messenger of Peace in 2002, the doves were flown for the first time to commemorate the event. Ever since then, Roots & Shoots, a movement of tens of thousands of young people in over a hundred countries, has supported the construction of the huge, handmade doves for each International Day of Peace. The birds have since flown in over 40 countries – ranging from Tanzania to Mongolia, from Mt. Fuji to Rome – and, now, in Belgium.

Work on the Tervuren dove took a few hours of preparation the night before and then a morning of work by the 7 to 11-year-old students at the International Montessori School. The dove itself, in true ecological fashion, was built entirely from recycled material – old white sheets, long wooden poles, chicken wire, and whatever else the students had to hand. In the afternoon, the group adjourned to the park for the dove's maiden voyage, and amid a series of poems and songs written by the students especially for the event, there was lift-off!

The dove then flew for an hour as the students jostled to take a turn carrying it – and in the end, this was the most hopeful part of the day. Even if the television news didn't bring us much news of a peaceful nature, the enthusiasm of the students, the poems, flags and songs they created, and the energy they brought to the event couldn't help but make you optimistic for the future. And in the meantime, the dove is nesting at the International Montessori school, preparing for its next appearance – either at an event at the commune this spring, or maybe in the upcoming school play...



Upcoming Sunbeams Events

Tuesday 17 November, 9.30 am: Workshop in Tervuren on how to have an eco-friendly holiday season.

What can you do to make your celebrations more eco-friendly? Demonstrations of alternatives for wrapping gifts, many ideas on (and sales of) eco-friendly presents, and hints on how to reduce the eco-footprint of your party dinners. Make this season great – have both a good conscience and lots of fun, and save some money as well! For more information, contact ilke@sunbeams.eu.

Saturday 21 November: Sunbeams will have a stand at the Christmas market in Bergestraat 24 in Tervuren, organised by the International Montessori School. Lists, samples and addresses of where to buy eco-friendly presents and wrapping will be available. We will also be selling great items, e.g. from the Jane Goodall Institute. More details on the event will be available soon on www.international-montessori.org.