

# San Francisco Chronicle

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

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## Use a condom, save a critter Friday is giveaway day in S.F

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By Carolyn Lochhead

San Francisco native Kristin Tieche, a documentary filmmaker and bicycle blogger, will be among five local volunteers handing out free Endangered Species Condoms in the city to members of a species that is anything but endangered, commemorating World Population Day on Friday.

"People love the condoms, and so I love distributing them," Tieche said.

The condoms are part of a national volunteer project by the Center for Biological Diversity that is intended to call attention to the fact that humans are overrunning their terrestrial home, and that they can do something about it. The volunteers will be giving them away at various places — Tieche is handing them out at a gathering of bicyclists.



San Franciscan Kristen Tieche, left, handing out an Endangered Species condom to French journalist Edwige Poret

As we've noted, population growth is at the heart of nearly every environmental ill. It's no mystery why, if you're a certain age, places no longer look the way you remember them.

In less than a lifetime, the world population has tripled, to 7.1 billion, and continues to climb by more than 1.5 million people a week, heading to a projected 9.6 billion by mid-century. Between now and 2050, more people will be added to the planet than existed in 1950.

California's 38 million residents own 32 million registered vehicles and 14 million houses. By 2050, an estimated 51 million people will be living in the state, more than twice as many as in 1980.

Loss of habitat, pollution and other consequences mean that Earth's sixth mass extinction is well under way, as chronicled by UC Berkeley paleobiologist Anthony Barnosky. Mass extinction is "an event characterized by the loss of between 17,000 and 100,000 species each year," according to National Geographic, in which "half of all plants, animals and birds on the planet will die off before 2100."

Tieche said she loves how San Franciscans respond when they open the Endangered Species Condom boxes, graced with such rhymes as, "In the sack? Save the leather-back."

"I love the fact that every time they open the box they start seeing what's written inside the box," Tieche said. "It's about endangered species and the connection with the overpopulation of humans on planet, and they get it, especially in San Francisco."

Tieche's epiphany came in the Panamanian rainforest in 2007. "It was my first time in a tropical rainforest, and I couldn't believe how much biodiversity I encountered — monkeys, sloths, bats, toucans, frogs, iguanas — so many species of animals and plants," she said. "Life emerged from every tiny crevasse. When I realized that the rest of the Earth once teemed with life in the way I was experiencing at that moment, I was forever changed. I have always been a nature lover, but that was the turning point for me."

When she's not handing out condoms, Tieche is working on a film on the decline

of bats. She also writes a San Francisco bicycle blog called Velo Vogue.

Dave Gardner, producer of the documentary "GrowthBusters: Hooked on Growth," which includes a scene in which he passes out Endangered Species Condoms, tells us he has a new family stick-figure bumper sticker that tries to turn "childless" from stigma to cool:

Tieche, who would prefer to adopt, said people feel very strongly about the idea of parenting.

"I've got so many friends that are hellbent on having children no matter what, and more power to them," she said. "They've got their vision and their goal and they want to be parents, and I totally get that, but sometimes they don't understand me — the opposite. People say, 'You don't want to have children?' No. There's lots of children in the world. I don't need to reproduce my own DNA."

The Center for Biological Diversity has given away more than half a million condoms since 2009. Here's what's inside:

