

# Going Green Takes Many Forms

## Despite the Economy, Green Toys Penetrate the Toy Market

by Reyne Rice, toy trends expert

Many toy companies have been quietly and successfully producing earth-friendly toys for years. Other companies are just starting to branch out into this segment of the market. Recent economic factors have slowed the growth of green toy placement on retail shelves at mass market over the past two years, yet the specialty market continues to support this eco-friendly toy segment as a point of difference for discerning and eco-conscious consumers. With the focus on the Copenhagen Summit for Climate Change in Denmark in December 2009, the visibility for eco-friendly options has been raised to new heights.

Kids are also actively engaging with environmental awareness, through both educational programs in the schools and grass-roots community efforts. Many of their favorite TV and film characters have promoted the environment for years.

Nickelodeon's *Dora the Explorer* and *Go Diego Go* series have been promoting care for the environment with a focus on endangered animals for 10 years. Bindi Wear by Bindi Wear International, supported by toys from Wild Republic, has promoted the awareness of wild animals through a child spokesperson, Bindi Irwin, and through the efforts of the late Steve Irwin, Bindi's famous animal-advocate father.

In October, the United Nations went one step further and named Disney's Tinker Bell the "Honorary Ambassador of Green" in an official induction ceremony at the U.N. Headquarters in New York City. This event was timed to promote environmental awareness in the month leading up to the Copenhagen Summit.

"This beloved character can help us to inspire kids and their parents to nurture nature and do what they can to care for the environment," said Kiyoko Akasaka, the United

Nations' under-secretary general for Communications and Public Information. At the Disney Fairies Pixie Hollow online destination [www.PixieHollow.com](http://www.PixieHollow.com), more than 16 million fairies have been created. Children can take their personalized fairies on quests and help change the seasons through interactive games and activities in a rich 3-D world.

The greening of the toy industry will take on many forms in 2010, from completely green manufacturers who use sustainable products and processes in their manufacturing and packaging, to mainline manufacturers who have single product line launches that represent a green alternative. Products will incorporate wood, quality high-grade natural materials, soy and bamboo materials, low-impact packaging, low-impact manufacturing techniques, and more. Categories include dolls, organic plush, infant/preschool products, games and puzzles, arts and crafts, building and construction, activity toys, science toys, and more.

**ECO-FRIENDLY EDUCATION:** Some products focus on the educational component by teaching kids about endangered species and about the beauty of nature. Licensed products re-create the incredible HDTV visual imagery from TV and DVDs with products that teach children about the world around them. **DVD Discoveries! Animal Planet Baby Animals Edition**, from Screenlife Games, delivers crisp and engaging DVD content about baby animals around the world, paired with a tactile six-sided puzzle game. Late for the Sky offers an **Earthopoly** game and USAopoly continues with its successful **Planet Earth Monopoly** game.

Other manufacturers focus on how kids can make an impact on their little corner of the world, such as IdBids plush and mini-books. Trading card company XEKO



Disney's Tinker Bell is named "Honorary Ambassador of Green"

expanded its collectible trading cards range to cover additional endangered species in **Mission: China**, as well as with cards representing Indonesia, Costa Rica, and the original Madagascar Series. The plush **Xeko-Eco Pals** add another element of coordinated play for this eco-educational range.

**CRAFT KITS, HANDS-ON SCIENCE, AND "UPCYCLING":** Kids learn with hands-on experiences and eco-friendly craft kits are the perfect green activity to explore this natural curiosity.

The **PirateShip** is the newest addition to the ÜberStix Scavenger Series, which teaches kids about green living at an early age by encouraging them to scavenge and hunt for recyclables in order to build real working models. The 112-piece kit includes a scavenger list of recyclable items that kids must collect to build a ship that really floats. Items kids search for include paper clips, plastic water bottles, wooden ice pop sticks, plastic grocery bags, cups, rubber bands, and Scotch tape. ÜberStix inspires creativity while teaching kids basic to advanced concepts in geometry, math, engineering, and physics, and stands out as the first toy to reward kids for recycling. The kit also introduces kids to "upcycling"—the art of transforming recyclables into something of greater value.

DIY (do-it-yourself) solar-powered kits, hydrogen model cars, and other science and discovery kits encourage tactile first-hand learning experiences. OWI Products, Thames & Kosmos, and Uncle Milton all have solar-powered discovery kits that support this fascination with alternative energy sources.

For artistic kids, the **Safe Art Activity Dough** by Bluedominoes is an allergen-free molding compound. Lisa Manaster, co-founder, states:



Recycling Fun Stuff by Amav



PirateShip by Überstix

"We took into account the needs of all children, parents, and teachers when developing our Safe Art Activity Dough, including children with celiac disease, children with autism, children with ADHD, and 'green' kids." Safe Art Activity Dough is free of the eight most common allergens (including soy and wheat) and is the first art supply product in history to be approved by the Celiac Sprue Association. The activity is also Feingold accepted. Debbie Lindgren, co-founder and president of Bluedominoes, adds, "We were so diligent with our standards and met our goal to create a superior product with a long play life and one that provides parents peace of mind."

EcoCraft kits, by Amav, are recognized by their recyclable packaging, and are available in a wide variety of activities, including **Mosaic Crafts**, **Claypot Crafts**, **Recycling Fun Stuff**, **Natural Craft Fun**, **Rock Painting**, and **On the Move**, which uses pre-cut wood pieces to construct a locomotive or steamroller.

**SUSTAINABLE MANUFACTURING:** Plan Toys has manufactured its wooden toy products in Thailand since 1981. The company creates eco-friendly, natural wooden toys that respect the environment. Non-toxic colored paint and glues adhere to the products, and all packaging and promotional materials are recyclable. A newer entry into this sustainable segment is Blue Orange Games. Many of its games use all-wooden components, and are packaged in wooden boxes. The company plants two trees for every tree used to create its games.

# Green Toys



Green Pieces by TDC Games

Goldberger Lifetime Guarantee, these products provide affordable organic materials at the mass-market level. The new manufacturer **Bamboo Bear** offers organic products for infants, with whimsical and touchable designs that will delight older kids as well. Dandelion continues to expand its range of infant-friendly organic plush and wooden products, with sophisticated yet simple executions. Aurora's eco-plush line for infants and older kids is manufactured from organic and natural materials, and has a focus on endangered species.

Aurora's newest sensation, the **YooHoos**, continues to expand the company's offerings of endangered species, and has been widely accepted in multiple territories worldwide. Mary Meyer's **Earthmates** range incorporates quality plush, created from 100 percent post-consumer recycled plastic PET bottles. The **Kids Preferred Peter Rabbit Naturally Better** plush range is made of eco-friendly certified organic cotton. The plush bunnies mesh with the World of Beatrix Potter Initiative, which has an aim of developing products that are better for the environment, better for the mothers and children who play with them, and better for the people who make them. Hosung has had huge success with its organic and non-toxic MiYim baby and plush toys, and has also introduced a **Natural Good Earth Fairy** for the holidays, packaged in a trademark reusable, recycled cardboard gift box.

**GAME AND PUZZLE MANUFACTURERS:** Late for the Sky offers **Earthopoly**, an eco-friendly game that educates

**SAFE AND SECURE FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS:** Goldberger has created its **Seedlings** line of soft and cuddly dolls, made from natural materials, to provide comfort to infants and older children. Offered at the \$10 price range, and backed by the

young and old about climate change, conservation, and taking care of the Earth. TDC Games has created **The Green Game** to teach kids to uncover the ecological myths and facts about environmental efforts. The game is made from 100 percent recycled materials and is 99.8 percent bio-degradable. TDC's **Green Pieces** earth-friendly jigsaw puzzles can be recycled after puzzle play by soaking the pieces in water overnight, and planting the wildflower-embedded pieces in soil to bloom, thereby reducing the user's carbon footprint. Sprig Toys incorporates flower seed packets into its already successful indoor-outdoor product range, adding another element of hands-on green thumb productivity for kids. University Games has created **Jungle Walker Elephant—The 3-D Puzzle that Moves**, an interesting puzzle that, once completed, allows the child to walk the elephant with the use of sticks.


There are many opportunities for retailers to expand into green, eco-friendly, and sustainable products, with a wide variety of manufacturers and price points. While some offer a hint of eco-friendliness, others are green from top to bottom. As long as consumers are interested in caring for and learning about the environment and prices remain reasonable, these products will continue to flourish. ■

## Reduced-Waste Packaging

**A**nother environmentally conscious tactic has been to create different versions of packaging that reduce the shipping weight, the package size, and the colors used on the packaging. Amazon.com has pioneered an entire program designed to reduce packaging, including twist-ties, and clamshell packaging. Its Frustration-Free Packaging option is available on selected toy products this holiday season, including products from Fisher-Price, Idbids, Mattel, Melissa & Doug, Playmobil, Radio Flyer, Sprig Toys, VTech, and Wild Planet.

# Green Toys

**DVDiscoveries! Animal Planet Baby Animals Edition** from Screenlife Games is an activity DVD full of Animal Planet footage and features. Viewers can learn about baby animals and their habitats with the help of the DVD kit's on-screen activities, video clips, and wooden puzzle blocks. Included in the product are six puzzles on nine puzzle blocks, three puzzle block mats, and an instruction sheet.




**BamBoo Bears'** soft organic fur and eye-catching colors give these little bears an eco-friendly style with a twist. The fur of the toy is made from natural bamboo and organic cotton fleece. Their corduroy ears, tails, and paw pads are made from naturally grown hemp and organic cotton. Hypoallergenic corn-fiber stuffing, embroidered faces, and non-toxic dyes make BamBoo Bears safe for babies, while their bold colors and playful designs stimulate older children's developing minds.



The **Animal Adventures** plush items are 100 percent certified as organic, inside and out, down to the thread. All hangtags and sewn-in labels use recycled materials and the brand adheres to the guidelines of the Organic Trade Association. The plush feature a variety of animals including a bear, turtle, monkey, dog, and frog.



**Jungle Walker** is a puzzle, activity, and toy all in one, and made from environmentally friendly materials. Each toy can be put together in less than 30 minutes and comes with a walking stick that is used to bring the animal to life. The eco-friendly activity, which can be enjoyed by the whole family, includes 25 scored puzzle pieces, a two-piece walking stick, and assembly instructions.



Amay takes on the challenge of saving the earth by launching the EcoCraft series of craft kits, which includes earth-friendly, natural, and recycled materials. From the outer packaging to the components, these new products are aimed at using safe, green, earth-friendly materials. The EcoCraft kits are available in a wide variety of activities, including **Natural Mosaic Crafts**, **Claypot Crafts**, **Recycling Fun Stuff**, **Natural Craft Fun**, **Rock Painting**, and **On the Move**, which uses pre-cut wood pieces to construct a locomotive or steamroller.

**YooHoo & Friends** by Aurora World are some of the company's best selling plush toys. Kids join the animals on magical journeys online as they travel around the world to find the lost seeds from the Tree of Life, which is in the forest Yootopia. Each online story encourages parents and their children to value friendship, harmony, honesty, and courage while learning about endangered species in their natural habitats from around the world. Website users can also play games, watch previews for upcoming YooHoo animations, and adopt and raise YooHoo & Friends.



**Fairytale Wishes, Inc.** is a new line of aromatherapy sprays created from natural ingredients and designed to soothe kids' bedtime fears. When her daughter had a fear of the dark, Debbie Glickman invented a homemade mist—lavender-scented Sweet Dreams—that she sprayed on the young girl's pillow while telling stories, aiming to ease her anxiety. Now three other distinct scents are available: bubblegum-scented Monster Repellent, peppermint-scented Super Hero Spray, and grape jelly-scented Happy Camper Spray. Each of them are packaged with stories and phrases to recite as the mist is sprayed.



With the **Green Toys Recycling Truck** from Green Toys, Inc., kids can sort bottles, cans, and paper. Eco-conscious little ones will learn recycling basics while playing with this recycling truck, which has a movable recycling bed and open and shut rear door. The eco-design has no metal axles and is made in the U.S. from 100 percent recycled plastic milk containers that save energy and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, all in the name of good green fun.

**See Page S5 for  
More Green Toys**

# GREEN TOYS BRANCH OUT

Learn about alternative energy and sustainable living by conducting experiments and building energy-related models. In this **Green Essentials Edition** of **THAMES & KOSMOS**' Power House kit, users can find 30 experiments and building projects from the original kit. Kit users can experiment with the temperature and insulation of the house, test passive solar collection methods with a solar collector, assemble a solar power array, and build a model refrigerator and air conditioner to learn about heat transfer.



**The Green Game** by **TDC GAMES** is an eco-friendly board game that teaches the facts and myths of trying to live green in today's world. The object of the game is to teach players ages 8 and up how to lessen their carbon footprints through a series of questions on subjects ranging from science and food to celebrities and clothing. The packaging materials are made from recycled and biodegradable materials, soy inks, and wood composite game pieces. As an added bonus, the game also includes a carbon offset of six drink coasters that are embedded with wildflower seeds, which can be planted into soil.

**PLAN TOYS, INC.**, starts with 100 percent recycled rubberwood that is cured using a chemical-free, kiln-dry process; constructed using non-formaldehyde glue; and finished with water-based colors. The **Pull-Along Fire Engine** is printed with recyclable soy ink and packaged in recyclable boxes. Plan Toys has manufactured its wooden toy products in Thailand since 1981, and focuses on making its toys green and safe. The company's natural wooden toys are colored with non-toxic paint, and all packaging and promotional materials are recyclable.



The **My Natural Good Earth Fairy** by **MIYIM** is a natural cotton rag doll that is 12.5 inches tall. The doll, which features whimsical wings and linen accents, comes packaged in a reusable recycled cardboard gift box.

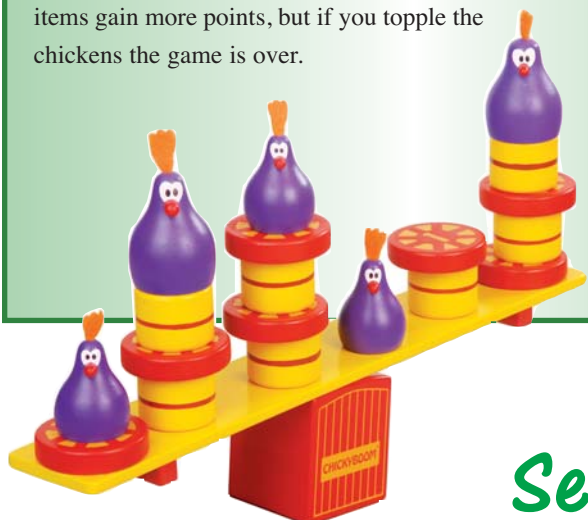


**OWI, INC.** manufactures educational RobotiKits (construction kits for all skill levels) and Mini Solar Kits, with solar panels that spring to life when activated by the sun. The **6-in-1 Educational Solar Kit** allows builders to create a car, puppy, swamp boat, windmill, or two different airplanes. The parts of this kit can be disassembled and reconfigured to make any of the six choices again and again. OWI's **Mini Solar Kits** teach kids the benefits of renewable energy while they create their own fun, battery-free toy. There are eleven Mini Solar Kits available.



**GOLDBERGER's Seedlings** are cuddly, soft plush that are safe for baby and the environment. Featuring Ivy, Baby Blossoms, Willow, and others, Seedlings is a family of nature-friendly cotton friends that are made without harsh chemicals and use natural fibers for all of their surfaces and clothing. The boxes are also eco-friendly, made of recycled material.

**BLUE ORANGE GAMES** has been creating wooden games from sustainable wooden materials for more than five years, with new introductions including **Chicky Boom**, a colorful balancing game for kids. The game comes with a variety of chickens, large hens, and little chicks, along with hay bales and wagon wheels. In the game, kids learn about balance since the items are weighted differently. Heavier items gain more points, but if you topple the chickens the game is over.



The colorful wooden **PuzzlePlay RainForest** puzzles by **IMAGIPLAY** will ignite children's imagination through the environmentally themed products. The intricate puzzles are crafted in earth-friendly, chemical-free rubberwood, and hand-painted in vibrant shades of child-safe paint. The PuzzlePlay Rainforest is a puzzle and playset in one, ideal for children ages 3 and up.

**See Page 32 for More Green Toys**