



PULSE (<https://www.techly.com.au/category/pulse/>)

## Shoes made of algae will help us save the planet



By [Jessica O'Reilly](#) (ht...

20 NOV 16



Rob Falken is the dude of all dudes. A passionate surfer with a dream to save the planet. Dude!

If you've ever spent time by the water you've no doubt, at some point, seen blue-green algae. But you probably didn't know that it's actually a toxic bacteria called cyanobacteria.

The stuff thrives all over the world, thanks to thoughtless water contamination and the looming monster that is global warming.

When the algae is in full bloom, it depletes oxygen levels in the water, which causes species like manta rays to become endangered.

There's also a shifty toxic domoic acid in the cyanobacteria that introduces itself to the food chain and causes a pretty drastic domino effect for our underwater friends. And quite frankly, it sucks.

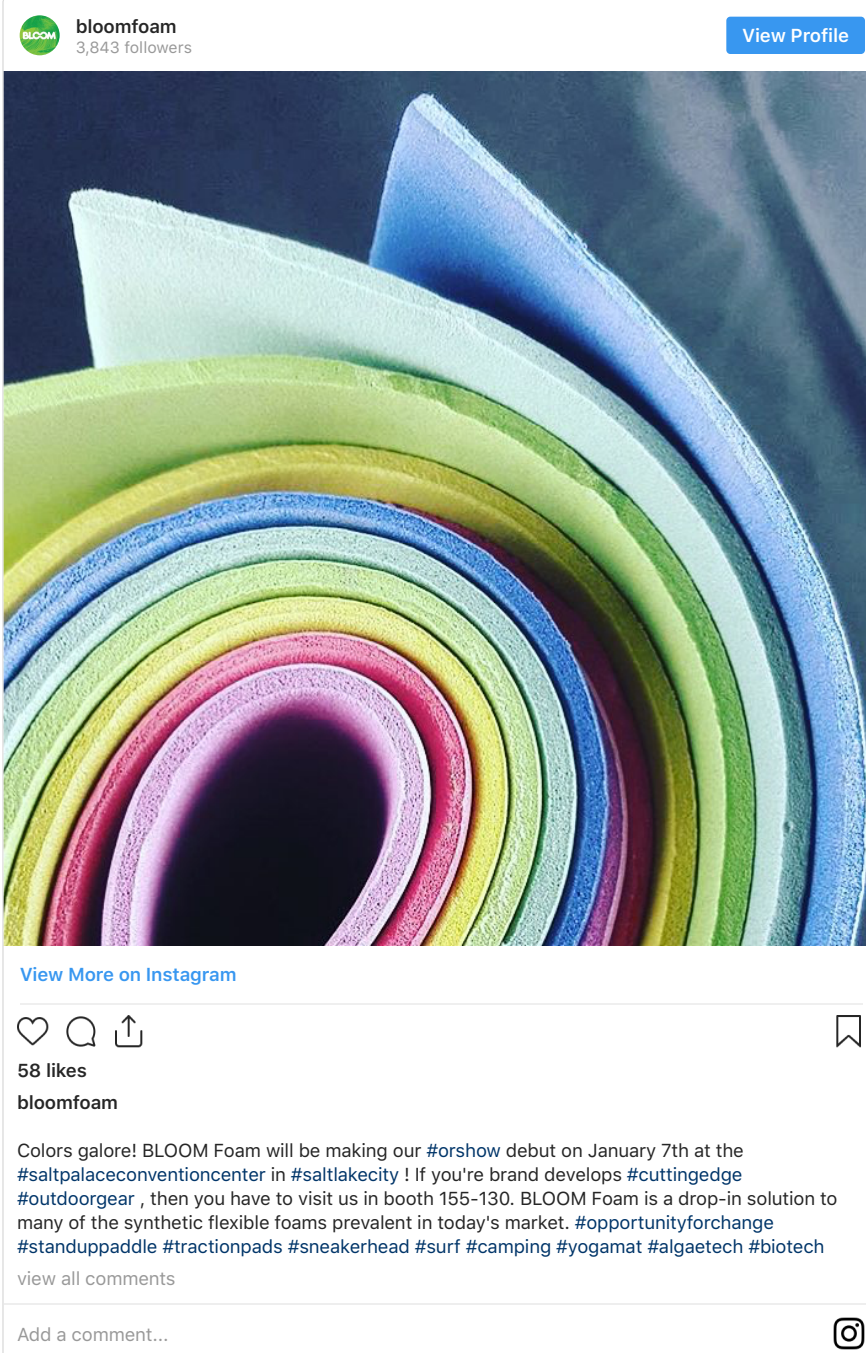


But all hope is not lost, because inventor Rob Falken, the dude mentioned above, came up with another awesome idea, which is set to solve the problem:

Make your next pair of shoes out of the harvested algae.

Rob's been inventing surf and water-related products since he was just a 17-year-old surfer. He grew up in Southern California and has said that surfing was the lifeblood of his youth, and it taught him sensitivity to the natural world.

So far, he has given us a skateboard made from reclaimed wood, a biodegradable surfboard with a foam base derived from sugar cane, and a buoyant foam life vest used by tow-in, big-wave surfers – among other things.



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Colors galore! BLOOM Foam will be making our #orshow debut on January 7th at the #saltpalaceconventioncenter in #saltlakecity ! If you're brand develops #cuttingedge #outdoorgear , then you have to visit us in booth 155-130. BLOOM Foam is a drop-in solution to many of the synthetic flexible foams prevalent in today's market. #opportunityforchange #standuppaddle #tractionpads #sneakerhead #surf #camping #yogamat #algaetech #biotech

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It was only in 2014 that Falken decided to focus on foams, the kind we might associate with soles of running shoes or yoga mats. But obviously the planet-loving surfer wanted to find the most sustainable way of doing it.

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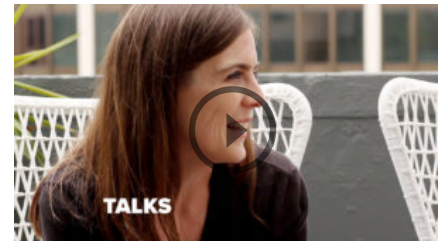
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Now he works under his company name, Bloom (<http://bloomfoam.com/>), which manufactures foam out of the naughty algae damaging our waterways.

A mobile harvester collects (or sucks like a vacuum) algae biomass from waste streams in the USA and Asia, which is then dried and pulverised into a toxin-less powder. This powder is converted into pellets, which are made into fibres, and the foam-based products are brought to life.

“We can dry anything with 40-plus percent protein content because that protein makes the plastic” says Falken (<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/startup-harvesting-wild-algae-make-your-next-pair-sneakers-180960872/?no-ist>). “We really focus on the plastic side. Plastic is a chain of amino acids, which is the definition of a protein. We have a perfect solution that requires no arable land, no pesticides to grow, and a never-ending feedstock. We’re for profit, but we’re trying to make better solutions that put the planet first”.

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The image shows an Instagram post from the account 'bloomfoam', which has 3,843 followers. The post features a photograph of a blue, textured traction pad with a repeating geometric pattern, resting on a piece of yellow 'ECO>LITE' bubble mailer. The post has 115 likes and includes a caption that mentions a collaboration with @firewiresurfboards and @kellyslater, and promotes their products made from pond scum. The caption includes several hashtags: #bloomfoam, #prettyamazing, #pondscum, #opportunityforchange, #algae, #biotech, #surf, #tractionpad, #firewire, #herewelcome, and #2016. There is a link to view more on Instagram and a comment input field at the bottom.

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115 likes

**bloomfoam**

We're psyched we got to work with @firewiresurfboards and @kellyslater to bring some exciting innovation to traction pad technology. If you don't know us, we're #bloomfoam and we do some #prettyamazing things with pond scum. Check us out online by following the link on our profile. #opportunityforchange #algae #biotech #surf #tractionpad #firewire #herewelcome #2016

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Sounds like he knows what he's doing.


At the moment, the only product for sale is the [algae foam traction pad](http://www.firewiresurfboards.com/traction/) (made by surfer Kelly Slater's design firm, btw), but they are aiming to produce foam for over two million pairs of shoes by early 2017, and 100 million pairs by 2018.

## About the author

Jess believes that the best stories come from exploring and discovering new thoughts, ideas, people, places & ways of doing things. In turn, she spends a large proportion of her time on the outskirts of her comfort zone, writing her blog, [comfortisforwimps.com](http://comfortisforwimps.com)

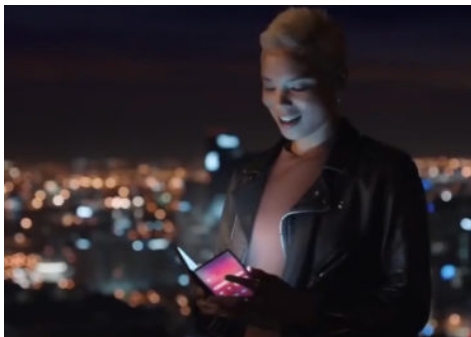
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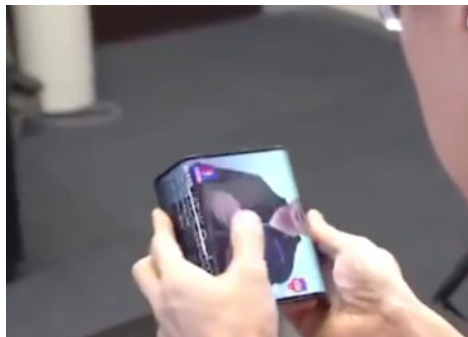
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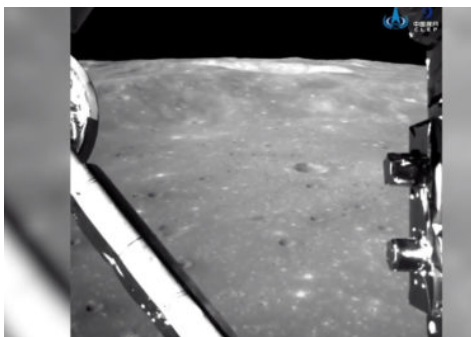
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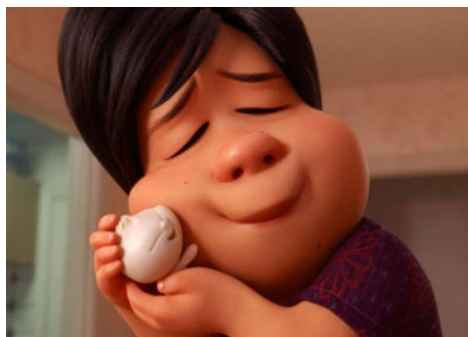
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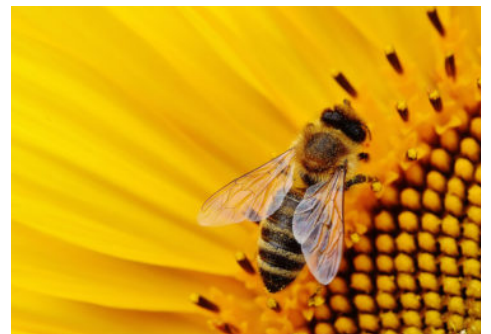
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