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# Litter is a Killer

“Excuse me, sir? Do you know where the trash can is?” I asked a man walking by. ”Yah, kid, the river is over there!” He replied. “Throw it in the river? Are you crazy? Don’t you know that litter is pollution that affects rivers, oceans, and natural resources, and so much more!”

Gosh, I can’t believe that man knew absolutely nothing about how litter occurs in rivers due to human activities! Litter-bugs throw empty cans, plastic bottles, and other types of trash out their car windows. Fishermen cut their lines and discard them in the river, and sometimes even with the hook on! That can be seriously deadly for marine life. Factories and industries dump harmful chemicals directly into rivers or onto the soil. When it rains, then runoff carries toxins from the soil to a nearby river or ocean (Summit to the Sea). I think people are just too lazy to get up and dispose of their garbage the right way; instead they’d rather throw it on the ground because it’s less work. Humans can be careless about what they do with their trash. Even when on the way to the dump, wind blows garbage out of cars, trucks, garbage trucks, and other vehicles. The wind then carries it to a nearby waterway, and it eventually flows into the ocean! People litter so much; 230 million tons of trash are generated each year in the U.S, which is equal to about 4.6 pounds per person, per day! (Annenberg Learner) If it’s that bad in just the U.S, I can’t imagine what it’s like in the rest of the world; such a dirty world we live in.

Another thing that man was clueless about is how river pollution impacts the soil, water, and plants around a river. Carnivores that eat out of the river, such as an eagle, could eat a piece of trash. Garbage sitting in its stomach will fool it into thinking it’s full, and that eagle’s death will be as slow as a snail, and as painful as a cold slap to the face. It could also get tangled in a fishing line or six-pack ring, which could wrap around its wings causing it to drown, or it could choke as it tries to swallow the human’s killer litter. A plant or natural resource could soak in a harmful chemical out of the river, or from polluted soil, which makes it toxic. Now that the plants are infected, they will poison the herbivore that eats them. Then a carnivore will eat the infected herbivore! The poisons will go up the food chain, destroying it, then the environment. That includes humans that are a part of that toxic food chain. Not only does river pollution affect animals, plants, and soil, but also humans. On a river bank, a person could step on a broken piece of glass. It will cut them open, causing bleeding, infections, a very bad scar, or possibly death. Litter is very harmful to our rivers, but some people just don’t realize it.

Wow, there’s even another thing that man had no idea about: pollution affects the ocean. Not only does water pollution affect river ecosystems, but also ocean ecosystems. Organisms around the ocean, like a seagull, could eat a piece of garbage. Just like the eagle, the seagull would be tricked into believing it’s full from all of the plastic and metal taking up space in its stomach, and starvation is the ugly outcome. Humans by the ocean are in as much danger as the animals

are. Say a wave with oil in it splashed a human, but that human didn't wash it off. It would cause devastating sickness to the person, and even bring death. A person could lie, step, or fall on sharp garbage, and cut themselves so deeply it might feel a mile wide. Serious infection could be really painful, even leading to death. Broken glass seems to be the deadliest garbage, but sadly, it takes a million years to break down in the ocean (New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services). Mankind has littered so much, there's an island of trash the size of Texas floating in the Pacific Ocean (ECO 360). Sea Turtles are even endangered because they eat plastic shopping bags thinking they're food. Then the minute they realize it's not food, they're dead. Ocean pollution is such a horrible thing.

Pollution is terrible, and there's lots of it around, but there are easy ways to clean it up and prevent it. Before you get rid of your garbage, can it, reuse bottles for drinks, use an ash tray, reduce, reuse, and most of all, recycle! You can join a clean-up crew, like the International Coastal Clean Up, and help clean the world, or go on a school field-trip to clean a local beach or river. It's as easy as doing one plus one! A pile of trash that needs picking up may seem like a lot, but it's not hard! Besides, you should do it to help save your environment! I wish that man was here so I could let the cat out of the bag for him. Wait, is that him I see? I should tell him! "Hey, you... I have information that will not only change your life, but change our world! Can we have a chat?"

## Bibliography

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