
The Environmental Issues of Littering and Deforestation

There are many issues that the earth faces and two big ones are the effects from littering and deforestation. These specific things affect the world around us and our communities. When people litter, they damage our oceans and when people chop down thousands of trees every day it damages a very crucial plant in the survival of all breathing things. The earth is where we as people live and create. Build families and friendships that last life times. I hate to see the world go to such a waste and stand by it by doing things like keeping plants around the home and recycling, trying to celebrate earth day every day like I hope many more will do after learning more about the affects these two issues have on the earth.

Around the world many people don't really see how something as small as a plastic bag or a soda can can affect the earth. In truth, a plastic bag and soda can don't do much but thousands or millions of them do. The litter adds up at an alarming rate and can take very many years to decompose if they even decompose at all. Things like plastic bags and bottles "can take up to 1000 years to decompose" (How Litter Impacts the Environment, 2016), and by then there will just be more sitting on top of the previous litter. So, if you thought waiting would just solve the issue you are wrong because as the old stuff is almost gone new stuff will either still be in the process or just put on the ground. Whenever you argue with someone you care for you try not to go to bed angry and thus fix the issue. You talk it out not just lather on more angry abuse or slurs that just cause the situation to become worse so why do that to your home?

There are communities out there that are really good at keeping the streets and surrounding rivers clean. Our own Third Ward has fairly clean streets, cleaner than other parts of the city. The river is not the greatest but that is why there is a group called the Milwaukee Riverkeeper that works to make the water clean again. The program was started in 2006 and "since that time have trained 230 volunteers who have monitored close to 170 sites throughout the Milwaukee River Basin", (Milwaukee River Keeper, 2016). These volunteers are people from the community trying to make a change in the pollution of the water for the river to become a beautiful fishing place. There are many days I wake up and walk to class to just smell the stinky river. It's not a good smell to say the least. What is a reason the smell is so bad? Well, within the last couple years Lake Michigan has had many problems facing litter and one big one in particular is tiny pieces of plastic.

According to chemist Dr. Sherri Mason who was testing the water in 2013, they found more than 19,000 strands per square kilometer during a 2013 sampling run. These tiny strands come from polyester found in sports jackets and other polyester jacks when put through the laundry. The strands are so small that they don't get caught up in most filters and just get swept away into the

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lake. These plastic bits can also absorb chemicals and bacteria that can be very harmful to many marine life and to our water sources. Fishermen and marine awareness groups are also finding the tiny bits of plastic in fish because the smaller the piece the easier it is to get stuck in the stomach or intestines. The fish consume the plastic and, in turn, it is giving them a much higher chance to get toxic poisoning. Some toxins that are in plastics are PCBs, flame retardants, and polyaromatic hydrocarbons which can transfer from the plastic to the fish.

Along with the littering in the great lakes and oceans there is also a big global issue of deforestation. In the United States the issue isn't as profound as it is in South America. The Tropical deforestation in the amazon is happening at an alarming rate and continues to skyrocket being one of the most damaging deforestation places in the world. Deforestation in the Amazonia had increased by almost one-third in the past year, and if that wasn't bad enough 50 football fields of forest are destroyed every minute since the year 2000. This rapid take down of forests are done for room for agriculture, mining, and minerals. The locals in the area don't get to see any of the profits either and if anything, are only affected by it. When they cut down trees at an alarming rate not only do they affect themselves in a sense but they also are affecting other locals in the area, animals. Any animal that lives in the Amazon gets greatly affected by the deforestation because the trees are their homes and protection. The deforestation in the Amazon has "condemned 38 species to regional extinction in coming years, including 10 mammals, 20 bird and eight amphibian species" and the numbers will only grow with more deforestation coming to the area.

The issues of litter and deforestation are a big conflict that can be helped even a little just by throwing away the trash in proper trash cans and recycling. When you see trash on the streets pick it up and throw it away or devote one day out of the week or month to going and picking up litter in your surrounding neighborhoods. Some other ways to fight against deforestation would be to go paperless, plant a tree or use only recycled materials. While I was scrolling through Facebook the other day I came across an ad that was about paper made from rocks. It was waterproof and felt mostly just like normal paper but the ad stated that it had a slight grit to it like if you felt the most ultra-fine sand paper on the planet. When I saw this I thought, wow that is so cool and I would love to have this and maybe just go completely rock paper. DIY network is a very popular channel to watch and there are many shows on Netflix and Hulu that are from DIY network. Some things they cover are other great ways to be a little earthier every day. Make a garden in your apartment or backyard by building simple little boxes to put around the home or out in the yard. Fill them with dirt and plant vegetables and pumpkins for the fall time. It is so satisfying to be one potato sort and to simply walk outside to grab another or make sweet strawberry jam to give your family and friends. Around my dorm, we have many plants and always try to recycle as effectively as possible. Two weeks ago, as I was waiting for the bus at around 5:30 am I started to pick up litter around the street. No one was around and it just seemed weird to have it be so silent almost so I felt restless. When I was done cleaning the

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single block I felt for a moment pride in myself and gratification in seeing a sidewalk not filled with trash.

As someone who can be a “tree hugger” most of the time and loves to try to help the earth in my day to day activities, I hate to see how the earth is being treated. I grew up in the country and my house is nestled in a grouping on trees. I love to wake up in the morning with the simple pleasure of seeing shadows of leaves dance around my room when the sun comes up. If littering and deforestation continue the earth will continue to grow sick. Almost like one never ending stomach ache and head cold. I can almost go as far to say this treatment of the earth makes humans out to be a very bad cancer tumor. We as people pollute the earth and in turn harm ourselves and animals with it. Littering and deforestation affect how the earth looks and how it can sustain life, our lives. Unless everyday day by day people don't open their eyes and see what is happening I can only fear the worse. I can hope that picking up litter will soon become as popular as actors and tv shows.

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