

Henderson Island -

A World Heritage Site or Garbage Dump?

Tiny Henderson Island lies in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It is a special place because humans have never lived there, so its ecosystems have not changed much. Many plants, birds and insects found on Henderson Island are found nowhere else in the world.

Sounds like paradise? Well, maybe not. Though humans don't live on the island, their litter certainly does. This year researchers visited the island and found the beaches covered with **38,000,000** pieces of trash!

Most of the trash was made of plastic – hard hats, cigarette lighters, toothbrushes - you name it, it was there, including a baby's pacifier!

Plastic has many excellent uses – the problem is what happens to plastic items when they stop being useful. In Canada, there are many ways to recycle plastic, but in other countries around the world people have no choice but to put it in the garbage. Sadly, much of it then ends up in rivers, lakes and oceans. Here it causes great damage to marine animals and birds, which often eat it or get tangled in it.

The oceans circulate the plastic around the world and a lot gets washed up on the beaches, while rivers and streams spread the plastic along their banks.



The Amazing Waxworm Caterpillar that Eats Plastic!
Waxworms live in beehives where they eat the beeswax. One day a beekeeper cleaned out her beehives and put the waxworms in a plastic bag. She was amazed to find later that they had eaten holes in the plastic!
Scientists are studying how waxworms break down plastic, so one day we can get rid of plastic trash round the world.



Your family, your nature club or your school can take part in the Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up any time of the year.
Contact: www.ShorelineCleanup.ca Make it a fun outing - spend an hour or two cleaning up the shoreline, then have a picnic to celebrate your clean-up.

photo credits: From the belly of seabirds: trevy, CC • Beach Garbage: jschneid, CC • Seal: tedxgp2, CC • Baby Marine Debris: USFWS Pacific, CC • Shoreline clean up Esquimalt: Pearson College Marine Science

Plastic Bags so Useful, so Deadly

Around the world shoppers use 500 billion plastic bags every year - about 150 bags per person! To get some idea of what 500 billion looks like, that's more than there are stars in the Milky Way.

About 10% of plastic bags get recycled (in Canada about 30 - 50% get re-cycled). Most of the rest go into the landfill and many just blow away, ending up in the ocean where they harm many marine animals. Plastic bags look like jelly fish to turtles, whales, seals, gulls and other sea-birds so they try to eat them.

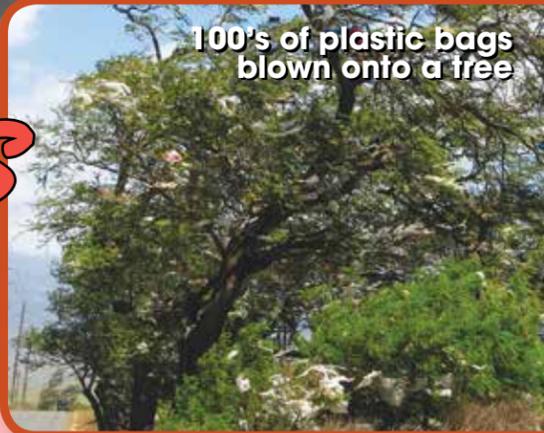


When you do have to take home some plastic bags, wash them and re-use them. If you can't re-use them, tie them in a knot so they won't blow away. Try to use cloth bags for ALL your shopping.

You can be sure of having enough cloth bags if you make the **10-minute t-shirt bag**.

You will need: old t-shirt; sharp scissors, chalk, bowl, sewing machine (optional)

- MARK:** Lay your t-shirt on a flat surface to mark the cut lines. Place a bowl over the collar as a guide and draw the cut lines with chalk. Draw lines to show where you will cut off the sleeves.
- CUT:** Using your scissors cut through both layers of fabric using your cut lines as a guide.
- SEW:** Now you will make the bottom of the bag. First, turn the t-shirt inside out. Decide how deep you want the bag to be. Mark your sewing line. Stitch by hand or with a sewing machine.
If you stitch by hand, make sure to use LOTS of stitches to make it strong enough to carry your things.
- USE!** Now that you've sewed the bottom, turn the bag inside out and use it!



100's of plastic bags blown onto a tree



Wash plastic bags for re-use



And, there are organizations working to get rid of plastic bags and other trash from our oceans. You could start a fundraising drive to help those organizations.
Living Oceans (livingoceans.org) is a BC-based organization and the **Surfrider Foundation** (surfriderfoundation.org) is an international organization with chapters in Vancouver and Vancouver Island.

Plus you can take part in the **Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up!** (See page 10)

photo credits: background - bags: daizuoxin, istockphotos.com • Washed plastic bags: Dave Hollis, B.C. • 10-minute t-shirt bag pictures: Kristine Webber, B.C.