

Activity: Trash Talk



Garbage can kill wildlife

Objective

To investigate how harmful litter can be in an aquatic ecosystem and what we can do to prevent this harm.

Indoor Activity

With your hand wrapped in a plastic six-pack ring, try to free it without using your other hand.

Outdoor Activity

Collect litter on a shoreline. Divide the litter into two piles, biodegradable and non-biodegradable. Make a litter collage of the non-biodegradable items. Discuss the negative effects of litter in a marine ecosystem and what we can do to prevent litter and the damage it causes.

Background

Litter in aquatic ecosystems can be deadly. Imagine accidentally eating a plastic bag because it looks or smells like food. Plastic is not a normal part of your diet. It can block your digestive system and remain in your stomach, giving you that "full" feeling, so that you don't eat enough to survive. Imagine getting cut on pieces of broken glass. We are lucky that we have hands and fingers to get ourselves out of a simple bind, like being caught in fishing line or a plastic six-pack ring. Most aquatic animals do not have fingers. Imagine being a duck that has accidentally gotten its head or feet entangled in a plastic six-pack ring, or a gull caught in some old fishing line. How do they get untangled? Many animals can't get free and will starve, suffocate, or strangle. Litter can be deadly.

What can we do? We can start by recycling, reusing, and reducing waste. Consider alternatives to buying overly packaged goods. Don't throw litter in lakes, rivers or oceans or along their shores. And we can also tell others about the deadly effects of litter and how to prevent the damage it causes.

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Every little bit helps. We must all do our part to create a cleaner and safer environment.

Procedures:

Indoors

- Put your hand through the rings of a plastic six-pack ring.
- Pretend your hand and arm are a duck that has gotten entangled in the plastic. Your hand is its head, your fingers its beak, and your forearm is its neck.
- Without using your other hand, teeth, or rubbing against something, can you set the duck free?

Outdoors

- Take a walk along a shoreline. Collect the litter that you find.
Teacher tip: make sure you are well familiar with the site before visiting.
- Divide the litter into two piles, biodegradable and non-biodegradable. What happens to non-biodegradable litter?
- Of all the non-biodegradable products that you collect, are there any alternatives? Can these products be recycled, reduced, or reused? What other things would make a good substitute for these products? Think of ways to cut down on litter.
- Make a litter collage of the things you found.
- Create a list of ideas about how to prevent the creation of the litter that you found by reducing, recycling, and reusing.