

Plastic Predicament: Humanity's Wake-up Call to Pollution

The reeking corpses of birds with water bottle caps in their stomachs washing up on beaches made of more plastic than sand. Mutilated frogs with three legs in filthy, black ponds as dark as the midnight sky. A cheerful bumblebee suddenly dropping dead after sucking nectar from an innocent looking flower that has been sprayed with pesticide. These scenes are playing themselves all over the world, over and over and over again. And it is scenes like these that remind us of the far-reaching effects of pollution and their permanent grasp on nature.

Have you ever heard of the great pacific garbage patch? Its name is pretty self-descriptive. It is simply a humongous garbage patch in the Pacific filled mostly with plastic. You may think it isn't a big deal since the garbage patch is located deep in the Pacific where no one would reach it on an everyday basis. In fact, you may think the patch is a good thing because all the plastic waste in it wouldn't be around humans. But most plastic in the great pacific garbage patch isn't biodegradable, meaning it won't break down into natural byproducts, but instead will deteriorate into tinier and tinier pieces. These pieces often look like food to animals like birds, so they swallow them, dying because of the harmful materials in the plastic.

Not only is the great pacific garbage patch a big deal to people who take care of wildlife, but it also can affect normal people like you and me. For example, I was once fishing with my dad when we both caught a beautiful fish with that scintillated in the sunlight. The fish was so gorgeous that we both let it go, hoping that it would live for years to come. But did it? Just as easily, the fish could have seen a shiny red piece of plastic that caught its eye and swallowed it, getting poisoned by the toxins in the plastic. Maybe a few minutes afterwards, it was caught by a fisherman to be sold in the market. If that was the case, then the poor person that bought the fish in the market would have swallowed the piece of plastic with a raft of fish, lemon, and pepper, and the toxins from the plastic would have affected them as much as they would have to the fish. And if this person continues to eat fish with plastic in it, they may eventually get poisoned and have to go to the hospital. So you can see how easily plastic can get into the food chain as well as how it can affect normal people.

This is only one of the thousands of ways that pollution is affecting our environment and changing it forever. We also have to consider all the carbon-dioxide we're releasing into the air we breath and the rising acidity of ocean waters due to climate change. There's also the dumping of toxins into river waters and the spraying of crops with harmful pesticides. And now, in the modern age of nuclear weapons, there's even the threat of radioactive pollution. Plastic pollution is only the tip of the iceberg.

So since pollution has such a great hold on the planet, what can we do about it? Should we just bid our time as we wait for the Earth to become a desolate wasteland? Of course not! There are already many people who are trying to deal with the plastic waste problem, and it isn't too hard to join them. If you take a disposable water bottle to school or work every day, you can take a reusable bottle instead and personalize it to your tastes. If you have to use plastic water bottles, try to make sure you buy biodegradable ones, or that you always throw them in the recycling instead of the trash. Some restaurants have even gotten involved, only offering plastic straws by special request. If everyone did tiny little things like this, a piece of the pollution problem would be gone.

Pollution is a Frankenstein created by us humans. And unlike the one in the book, this monster doesn't try to play nice at first. If we continue allowing pollution to penetrate our environment, we soon won't have an environment to live in. That's why it's imperative that every single human being on the planet does their part and helps out the cause. We may never be able to recover the areas already lost to pollution, but at least we can protect the areas we still have for generations to come. And we can only do that if each person does their part.