



Our Polluted Planet

The story of pollution begins like a fairy tale; ?Once upon a time, the world was green and pleasant with grasslands and forests, clean rivers and pure lakes.?

Certainly there were climatic and topographical changes from time to time, but life abounded almost everywhere on the face of the earth. About seven or eight million years ago a new animal appeared among the varied species already living here. This ape-like creature was Early Man; so early in fact, that we know very little about him. Our real knowledge of our ancestors dates back only about one million years ? and so we can claim to have made great strides since those early days of the Old Stone Age.

Even in 1850, the total population of humans in the world numbered no more than one thousand million (1 billion), but already Man was learning how to conquer disease on the one hand and to produce more children in safety on the other. Since 1850 the human population of the world has increased to six thousand million (6 billion). We are faced with a birth rate of approximately 14,000 new babies every hour of the day and night ? against a death rate of about 5,500 every hour.

To keep pace with this vast increase in population we have had to develop our industries by building and expanding factories, we have taken over great areas of wild land for farming, we plunder the interior of the earth for its raw materials, iron, coal, oil, minerals and gases?..and we strip massive areas of trees in our ever-increasing demand for timber. Our towns and cities expand like great ink blots over the adjacent countryside?..and new towns spring up where there were once green fields and woods. Every day we lose over 800 more square miles of wild land as we build over it?..and slowly but surely, the wild land and its wildlife are being pushed out by the flood of humans.

Humans create incredible amounts of waste matter in their daily lives. Not only does human sewage create disposal problems ? but also simple things like washing-up water, rich in detergent foam, the outflow of dirty water or used chemicals from factories and the fumes and mucky smoke from chimneys, motor cars and aircraft. Bottles, tins, cars, bedsteads and other cast-off items are choking ponds, canals, streams and rivers of the world. Massive loads of terrifying lethal chemicals and atomic waste have been dumped into the oceans ? where they quietly lie like time bombs, waiting for the decomposition of their metal or concrete containers to be set loose on the world.

The rivers throughout the world act as drains, carrying a great mass of chemical and organic waste into the oceans?..until even the sea becomes dangerously toxic in places. The oceans are a vital source of food for the future?..and yet we are permitting them to be poisoned. It has been estimated that 40% of all life in the sea has been destroyed over the last 25 years as a result of pollution?..and this represents a serious threat to future generations. Our task must be to check pollution before it is too late??or one day our polluted planet may become a DEAD one.



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