

lindsay's view

On my morning walk yesterday, while lost in fantasies about my herb garden, something caught my eye. A plastic bag from the Piggly Wiggly—a local grocery store chain—pirouetted across the street in a gust of wind, skipped along the curb, and landed in the gutter. It unhappily reminded me of a documentary I caught while channel surfing the night before called “Addicted to Plastic.” Basically, it says that chemical compounds from plastic bottles, containers, utensils, and anything else you can think of are poisoning our oceans and food chain. The filmmaker traveled to the middle of the Pacific Ocean to find out just how much toxic refuse has accumulated in the waters, and it’s truly shocking. I’ll take paper, please.

Later, at the office, I called our friends at the Ocean Conservancy for some statistics. It turns out that even here in Birmingham, Alabama, 300 miles from the Gulf, the bag I saw can wash into a storm drain, then flow into a river and downstream out to sea where, say, a turtle mistakes the bag for a jellyfish, swallows it, and dies. For as long as I’ve recycled, tried to conserve, and chosen organic when possible, I simply hadn’t made the garbage-ocean connection until now, in this new job. Science makes it clear that the sense of renewal we get at the beach, and the very future of life on Earth, depends on finding global solutions to improving the health of our oceans. No pressure!



ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

I love seeing how artists interpret the coastal landscape. In a recent exhibition of her paintings (including *Sapphire Sea*, above), MaryBeth Thielhelm referred to the environmental and political significance of water and how it may be our most precious commodity in the future. I’ll never forget how she described the opposing truths of the sea: “tranquility and foreboding, beauty and brutality, silence and loudness.” For more about her work, visit searspeyton.com.

That’s why we came up with a new call to action here at Coastal HQ: “Go Blue!” While you’ve seen hundreds of stories on green energy, green solutions, and green living, we’re committed to helping individuals take small actions that, together, have a profound ripple effect on the great blue sea. Here’s an easy suggestion: Take part in the Ocean Conservancy’s 24th annual International Coastal Cleanup this September. Last year, 400,000 volunteers from 42 states and 100 countries removed 7 million pounds of trash from beaches and waters. What they collected—including nearly 950,000 food containers, millions of cigarette butts, and hundreds of thousands of straws, stirrers, and other common litter—matched the weight of 18 blue whales, the largest animals in the world. There were lots of tires out there, too, more than 26,000, enough for almost 6,500 cars. For information on how to get involved this year, see page 18.

In case you’re wondering, I picked up the grocery bag and used it to collect even more debris along the way back home. It helps keep me, a guy who’s all too often landlocked, always connected to the shore.

Lindsay
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