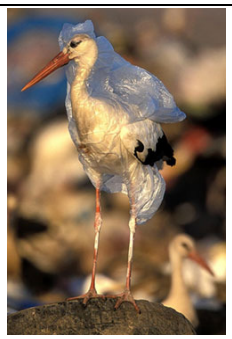
The Problem with Plastic Bags

We thank Greener Footprints (www.greenerfootprints.com) and Taronga Zoo for permission to use the photos and some of the information included here.

Contents of turtle's stomach
Image courtesy Taronga Zoo



Bird entangled in plastic bag
Image courtesy Greener Footprints

Plastic bags clogging drain
Image courtesy Taronga Zoo

1. **Plastic bags are made from non-renewable resources** 8.7 plastic shopping bags contain enough 'embodied' petroleum energy to drive a car 1 km.
2. **Canadians use 9-15 billion plastic shopping bags every year.**
3. **Five minutes versus 1000 years** The average plastic bag is used for five minutes to carry purchases home, but can take up to 1000 years to break down.
4. **Plastic bag recycling is inefficient** The market price for recycled bags in Canada is $55 per tonne (about 150,000 bags). The energy and cost to collect and process plastic bags exceeds the market value after recycling. Therefore recycling plastic bags just isn't worth it.
5. **Plastic bags kill birds, wildlife, and livestock** Plastic bags are known to kill birds, mammals (including livestock), and fish. Turtles, dolphins, otters, ducks, and whales can choke or starve by confusing plastic bags with food; for example, jellyfish or clumps of frog eggs.
6. **Plastic bags block drains, leading to flooding** Plastic shopping bags have been banned in Mumbai, India, and in Bangladesh after they were blamed for clogging drains and sewers, leading to severe floods.
7. **Every piece of plastic ever made still exists** There are approximately 46,000 pieces of plastic floating in each square mile of the world's oceans. In some places there's more plastic than plankton. Plastic bags are in the top 12 items of debris most often found in coastal cleanups.
8. **Most plastic bags never completely break down** Photodegradation, a process that involves a chemical reaction between plastic and sunlight, results in many plastic bags breaking down into smaller and smaller fragments, and contaminating soil and waterways. Animals can accidentally ingest these. Other plastic bags labelled as "biodegradable" are often only partly compostable and most end up as litter.
9. **Canadian plastic bags have been found as far away as Scotland** Because plastic bags are easily transported by wind and water, they can travel great distances.
10. **Not all litter is deliberate** Up to 47% of wind-borne litter escaping from landfills is plastic, mainly plastic bags which end up in forests, grasslands, waterways, and oceans. Approx.80% of marine trash is swept by wind and rain off highways, streets, and landfills, down streams and rivers, and out to sea.

Reusable bags are the solution!

A sturdy, durable, reusable bag will last for years. Start using a reusable bag or container today!