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EARTHTALK FOR YOUNG READERS

Week of 11/28/2004

From Stacy Clark, Youth Editor of E/The Environmental Magazine

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Dear EarthTalk Young Readers: What are the major causes of ocean pollution?

—Anna Lucas, Santa Fe, NM

Hi Anna,

My guess is that you already know that human activities have created quite a major problem for Earth's oceans! Chemicals and oil from factories located near the ocean can endanger marine life, if

they are not stored or handled properly. Rivers and streams that begin their journey thousands of miles away from the ocean can transport chemicals and oil from inland cities and towns over long distances. When rivers make their final journey into the ocean, these chemicals and oil are transferred from the land to the sea. Even fertilizers and pesticides used on lawns and farms in the Midwest—far from any ocean—contribute heavily to the pollution of the oceans.

Chemical and oil spills from tankers at sea can seriously endanger marine habitats too. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the United States uses approximately 250 billion gallons of petroleum products every year. With so much of our oil imported from foreign countries, it is not surprising that spills do occur during various stages of production, transportation and distribution. A spill's specific environmental impact depends upon the type and amount of oil, the speed with which an oil recovery team can be in place to "clean-up" the spill, and the population of marine animals and plants in the area. The weather can certainly play a role, as well.

Fortunately, more and more oil companies are building double-hulled tankers to transport oil from one part of the world to another. Double-hulled tankers have a second (outer) steel hull built on top of the first. If the tanker runs aground or has a collision, the double-hulled design helps to contain the oil inside the vessel.

Many people are surprised to learn just how many chemicals are discharged from holiday cruise ships each year! From the photographic chemicals used to develop pictures to the wastewater and sewage generated by hundreds of passengers, these ships compromise the chemical balance of our oceans as well.



◆ Ask an Environmental Question

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- *Keep organic foods organic
- Politicians and big businesses want to gut organic food laws. Help us stop them. **Take action!**
- *Something is fishy
- Mercury is a toxic contaminant that is showing up in dangerously high concentrations in the fish we eat, yet the FDA isn't protecting us!? **Take action!**

GO Add the Action Box to your site!

Many ocean scientists and researchers from around the world believe that much more work needs to be done to protect Earth's oceans. They have suggested that an official system of ocean parks be created to help protect marine life—much in the way that many national park systems, like the Grand Canyon and Yosemite, protect wilderness areas on land. After all, the Ocean Conservancy (www.oceanconservancy.org) reminds us all that Earth's oceans are home to mountains taller than Mount Everest, canyons deeper than the Grand Canyon, and the largest animals on Earth! And when you add in the fact that oceans provide food for the world, absorb carbon dioxide from the air and help balance extremes of heat and cold across the planet, it makes a lot of sense that we protect them as best we can!

CONTACTS: The Ocean Conservancy Toll-free: (800) 519-1541, www.oceanconservancy.org U.S. EPA Oil Program, (800) 424-9346, www.epa.gov/oilspill/index.htm; Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, (508) 289-2252, www.whoi.edu.

Dear EarthTalk Young Readers: My class is researching ways we can give gifts that support the environment this holiday season. Can you help me come up with a few ideas?

— *Virgie K., New York, NY*

One of the quickest, easiest, and least expensive ways for your class to connect with friends – *and the environment* – this season is by sending environmental e-cards, which save paper and a stamp! **E** researched the web and found some great e-cards – many from well-known environmental organizations. Some are funny like the Caribbean Conservation Corporation and Sea Turtle Survival League's sea turtle wearing Santa's hat! Check it out on <http://www.cccturtle.org/cards/>

Some, like the ones from the World Land Trust (<http://www.worldlandtrust.org/Christmas/ecard.htm>), look like illustrations from a children's wildlife picture book.

Others are so colorful and realistic that they could melt the winter ice away! **E**'s favorites include the World Wildlife Fund's collection at <http://www.worldwildlife.org/fun/postcards/> and Red Jelly Fish's vivid collection, which is made possible by the Endangered Species Chocolate Company of Talent, Oregon <http://www.redjellyfish.com/ecardsframe.html>

Another way to show you care this holiday is by adopting an endangered animal for someone you love. **E** recommends that you survey the **Adopt-an-Animal** page at the Endangered Species Chocolate Company website – yes, a chocolate company! The company's founder, Jon Stocking has put together one of the most comprehensive animal adoption links pages we could find! Whether your friends love dolphins, gorillas, polar bears, rhinos, snow leopards, sea turtles, seals, chimpanzees or manatees, this site will connect them with an irresistible (and grateful) wild friend! <http://www.chocolatebar.com/Page.asp?ID=33>

And finally, check out the National Arbor Day Foundation – it's a great resource for gift giving and exploring. Here you can order and mail baby trees to anyone interested in combating global warming in their own back yard! <http://www.arboday.org/shopping/gifttrees/gifttrees.cfm> Don't miss the group's Rain Forest Rescue Program which

- Organizations
- Personal Care
- Recycled Products
- Restaurants
- Services
- Supplements



includes e-cards complete with sound and animation, and the "Who Wants to be a Treellionaire?" and "Treevial Pursuit" games.

GOT AN ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTION? Send it to: EARTH TALK for YOUNG READERS, c/o E/The Environmental Magazine, P.O. Box 5098, Westport, CT 06881; submit your question at: www.emagazine.com; or e-mail us at: stacy@emagazine.com.

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