look around
New York City

Don't Trash It New York:

Now You Can Recycle Those Plastic Shopping Bags

One stormy day in New York City, you were bored and **LOOKED OUT** your window. You saw a plastic bag flying outside on the street. It crashed into trees, trashcans, cars, people, and many more things before it flew far, far away from your view. This was not the first time you saw a plastic bag. They are probably piled high in a closet somewhere in your home. You might even be wary of opening the door because the bags might all come tumbling down on you!

But a solution has arrived. On January 9, 2008, the New York City Council passed a law on recycling plastic shopping bags. This law directs stores with five or more branches in the city to collect plastic shopping bags. These stores must contain large plastic bins where customers can drop off the bags and must also collect the plastic shopping bags from smaller stores. Then the larger stores must find companies to recycle the plastic bags for them because the sanitation department will not pick them up. Many stores sell the plastic bags they collect to companies who reuse them to make new items, like insulation and roof tiles.

The New York Times reported that Mayor Bloomberg has given his approval for this law, which took effect in May 2008. Some stores collecting bags are ShopRite, Stop and Shop, and Food Emporium.

New York City is one of the first cities to have a plastic shopping bag recycling law. (This is not surprising because it is estimated that people living in New York City use over 2.5 billion plastic bags per year. Nationally, people use 100 billion plastic bags per year! – this is an extraordinary number of bags.

Recycling plastic bags is a large step toward a cleaner environment. By recycling plastic bags, we can work toward a future where we will no longer find them hanging from our trees or floating in our ocean.

by Nadia Islam

Birds Recycle Too!

I love birds! Love them! I can't say it enough. I love to watch them, feed them, take pictures of them and sing with them, I said it before and I'll say it again, I love birds. Lately, I've realized they have a talent I hadn't thought of before: *recycling*. As if intelligence, beauty, and fantastic musicianship weren't enough they are also wonderful recyclers! I know that when birds build their nests they use all sorts of materials that they find on the ground (twigs, leaves, feathers), but they also use things they find that are rather unusual. One day I was looking up and there in the bushes I found a Twizzler wrapper carefully placed in a nest! Some clever bird was cleaning up after a naughty person who didn't recycle and found a nice windbreaker at the same time!

A few months ago I saw that the red-tailed hawks in Riverside Park had part of a kite hanging down from the nest. It was beautiful and very stylish!

So hooray for the birds for one more wonderful thing that they do. We should follow their example and build nests…I mean we should recycle!

Dr. Lulu Mapoopala, Bird Brain

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LOOK IT UP! COOL SCIENCE AND RECYCLING ACTIVITIES: HHP://PBSKIDS.ORG/ZOOM/ACTIVITIES/SCI

WASTING

Organic waste is trash that comes from fruits and vegetables. Examples of organic waste are apple cores, banana peels, and rotten lettuce. Paper is also organic waste because it comes from trees, just like fruit. Each household in New York City throws away about 2 pounds of organic waste every day. New York City has about 3 million households. How many pounds of organic waste are thrown away every day in New York City? (Answer below!)

by Anna Gale

Read About It

Here is a wonderful book to read more.
The Earth Moved: On the Remarkable Achievement of Earthworms,
by Amy Stewart.
You could recommend this to teachers and parents.

Story Problem Answer:
Six million pounds of organic waste are thrown away in New York City every day! That's as much weight as 10 subway cars! And that's not even counting inorganic waste, like bottles, cans, and man-made materials.

How Can I Help?

When organic waste is kept in a warm environment for a few days, it gets smelly. This is because the warm air allows bacteria to grow. The bacteria eat the organic waste in tiny, microscopic bites. When the bacteria eat the organic waste, decomposition happens. Decomposition is when something big is broken down into smaller pieces. Other helpers that decompose organic waste are worms. Worms eat the organic waste and turn it into soil. The soil is full of vitamins and healthy minerals for plants. You can encourage worms to produce rich soil in a box right in your house! Then you can use the soil to plant seeds! All you need is a plastic box with a lid, newspaper, vegetable food scraps, and water. Follow these directions to make your own worm bin.

WORMS LOVE
Bread and grains
Cereal
Coffee grounds & tea bags
Fruits and vegetables

WORMS HATE
Dairy products
Fats
Meat
Oils and greasy foods

NEW YORK CITY AUDUBON RUNS PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN. **LOOK IT UP** AT: WWW.NYCAUDUBON.ORG.

AWAY

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MATERIALS NEEDED:

An 8-10 gallon plastic container
Drill for making vents and drainage holes
Newspaper
About one pound of red worms
Vegetable and fruit scraps
A plastic tray as big as the lid
Paper cups

1. **Make ventilation holes.** Have an adult helper drill the holes. On the bottom of the container drill about 20 evenly spaced holes with a 1/4 inch size bit; across the sides of the container drill evenly spaced holes about 1" apart using a smaller 1/16 inch size bit; for the lid drill about 30 small holes.
2. **Shred the newspaper** into strips that are 1 inch wide. Moisten the newspaper by soaking it in water and then squeeze out all the excess water. Worms need bedding that is moist but not soggy. Fluff up the paper. You can throw in a handful of leaf litter if you have it.
3. **Wash vegetable scraps.** Place in the bottom of the bin with the shredded newspaper.
4. **Add the worms.** There are many different kinds of worms. The worms you should get are called red worms. Go to The Lower East Side Ecology Center to find them! (www.lesecologycenter.org/products.html)
5. **Cover the worms and food scraps** with more of the shredded newspaper. **Spray the newspaper with water** until damp, but not soaking. Never let your worm bin dry out or the worms will die! The worms need water, just like you.
6. **Cover the worm bin with the lid.** The worms like darkness. Raise the bin a few inches (overturned paper cups make good legs) with the tray below to catch the the waste. Check the bin periodically to make sure it doesn't dry out. After 1-4 months you should notice dark soil developing. This is the worms waste.
7. **Move the leftover scraps to one side of the bin and the newly made soil to the other side of the bin.** The worms will gradually move toward the scraps and away from the soil allowing you to collect the rich soil without touching your worms. Take the new soil out of the bin as soon as possible as it is toxic to the worms. The soil will kill them if it is not removed .
8. **Replace the soil** that you collected **with more fresh organic waste and dampened newspaper.**

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TO FIND TRIPS FOR KIDS, GO TO WWW.NYCAUDUBON.ORG/TRIPS & CLASSES. LOOK FOR *LOOK AROUND* PROGRAMS

Hot Topic:

How Is Glass Dangerous to Birds?

©Don Riepe

Things that are good for people can be very dangerous to birds. Birds do not know to be afraid of these dangerous things, one of which is glass. Glass windows can be very harmful to birds.

The problem is that glass is reflective. When you stand in front of a glass mirror, what do you see? Yourself! A glass window on a building can act just like a mirror. If green trees are planted in front of the window, the glass will reflect them. The birds are fooled! They think the reflection is more greenery where they can land, and they fly into the windows. They can hurt their heads. Sometimes they hit the glass so hard that they are killed. Scientists have discovered that these collisions are one of the main reasons we see fewer birds in North America now than people did in the past.

by Nicole Delacretaz

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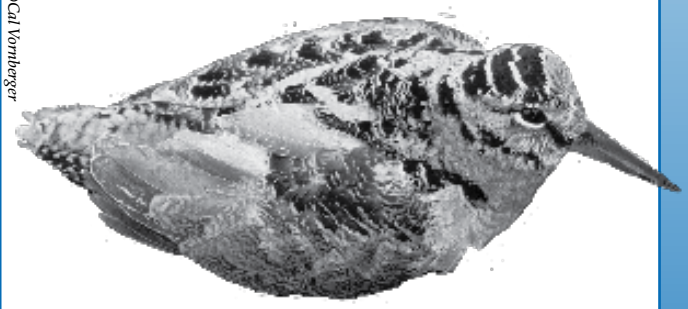

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The American Woodcock is one of the birds that collides often with buildings

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Look Around

at a window that acts like a mirror. LOOK AT yourself in its reflection. Do understand the problem now?

Birds get close to glass windows when they eat food in your backyard. Birds also get close to glass when they *migrate*. When birds migrate, they move far away. They move to find a warmer place to live and find food during the winter. While birds migrate, sometimes they stop in cities to rest and eat before flying away. Since 1997, New York City Audubon volunteers who work for Project Safe Flight go out during the migration seasons. The workers **LOOK AROUND** for birds that have been hurt by glass and take them to animal hospitals who will try to heal them.

How Can I Help?

If you have a bird-feeder, ask your parents to put it close to the window (within 3 feet) or very far away from the window (beyond 30 feet). That way no birds will get hurt.

Make bird-safe windows. Bird-safe windows are windows that are not mirrors. You can make a window bird-safe by hanging colorful decorations in front of the glass or by putting decals on the glass.

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