

LITTERING ANIMAL HABITATS - A LOAD OF RUBBISH!

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RUBBISH and litter that may not be considered 'harmful' by most people can injure native wildlife and other animals and completely destroy natural habitats.

Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary's Curator of Life Sciences and Interpretation, Matt Hingley, says even the smallest piece of litter contributes to a huge national pollution problem.

"Not only is roadside and bushland rubbish unsightly, it poses a real threat to native animals and is a huge contributing factor to injuries, deaths and destruction of natural habitats.

"Cigarette butts are responsible for approximately 52% of all roadside litter.

"Cigarettes thrown from cars spark hundreds of bushfires every year, causing staggering property damage as well as loss of life to both humans and animals.

"The butts are not biodegradable and will remain on the ground until someone picks them up.

"Items like tissues, snack wrappers, ice block sticks, supermarket docketts and plastic bottle tops are small but can pose a choking hazard to animals of all sizes.

"The smell of old food wrappers attracts animals that will eat the trash, often with fatal results.

"Even organic litter such as apple cores or orange skins add nutrients to the soil which can aid the spread of weeds and non-native vegetation.

"Australian plants are generally adapted to low-nutrient soils and adding nutrients from organic waste changes the natural process of the land only encourages the spread of weeds and perhaps even poisonous plants.

"These seemingly small acts can ultimately destroy natural habitats," Mr Hingley said.

Wildlife exists only where there is suitable habitat, but much of it is being altered or eliminated by the careless disposing of rubbish and hazardous chemicals.

Australia is the second highest producer of waste per capita after the USA, sending 18 million tonnes of garbage to landfill each year.

"Roadside litter is particularly insidious because when we drop litter onto the road it ultimately gets washed into stormwater drains and into rivers or the ocean," Mr Hingley said.

"Six pack ring holders, plastic bags, detergents and pesticides are major killers of sea life.

“When at the beach this summer, people should properly dispose of unwanted or tangled fishing lines, nets and bait as they can kill fish, marine mammals, birds and reptiles.

“When it comes to preserving our native animal species and their environments, a small change can make a massive difference,” Mr Hingley said.

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