

Text A

Why I Like Rhinos

Rhinos mind their own business. They like nothing better than to stand around and eat grass from the ground, or, depending on what kind of rhino, nip leaves off bushes. They love to roll in the mud, too. Mud keeps rhinos cool, and they use it for sunscreen.

I've sat in my car and watched rhinos many times. Recently, I watched one lick a rock for 20 minutes.

"Rock-licker," I called him.

Then he rubbed his chin on the rock. And his stomach. And his hips.

"Rock-rubber," I called him.

Rhinos have marvelous ears. Have you ever looked at a rhino ear? It is somehow like a curled leaf, or flower petals, or a gracefully rolled paper cone for holding nuts.

Rhinos seem mythical or magical to some people. Maybe that is because they have a horn. Actually, they have two horns, but one is more prominent. Maybe rhinos are behind the idea of the unicorn. When people see something near-magical in an animal, they want that thing. In the case of rhinos, it's the horn. So people kill the rhinos and cut off their horns, even though the horns are made of the same kind of protein that's in your hair or fingernails. But people who want magic horns don't like to hear that. They don't seem to care that there are only about 30,000 rhinos left in the world today.

I wish they would mind their own business.

Rhinos mind their own business. They eat grass. They lick rocks. They rub rocks. They don't try to sell you anything or ask for favors. A living rhino makes a fine acquaintance. Take time to get to know rhinos on World Rhino Day, celebrated every year on September 22.

Text B

The Pacific Garbage Patch

Did you know that water currents in the northern Pacific Ocean capture a huge amount of garbage? Plastic and other types of man-made waste float on the surface and circulate below the water. It is difficult to measure how much trash is in the ocean because a lot of the trash has broken down into tiny pieces. As a result, this polluted region is more like “trash soup” than a solid “island of trash” that is easy to see. Some reports estimate that this area, known as the Pacific Garbage Patch, covers 700,000 square kilometers (270,000 square miles), while others say the area is as big as 15,000,000 square kilometers (5,800,000 square miles).

The Pacific Garbage Patch causes many environmental concerns. The small pieces of plastic in the patch are called “microplastic”; they are hard to collect and clean up. Microplastic that escapes the garbage patch washes up on shores. In the United States, plastic pollution from the patch is a big problem in coastal Alaska. Also, fish and other creatures, like sea turtles and birds, think microplastic is food. Eating microplastic can harm animals; it can choke them, poison them, and affect their ability to reproduce. People also consume fish that have eaten microplastic, exposing them to harmful chemicals found in some plastic products.



POLAR BEARS

DID YOU KNOW?



Polar bears live in Arctic coastal areas and on sea ice.

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Polar bears do spend time in the water and on land, but they hunt for food, rest, and raise their cubs on the sea ice.

Aa SCIENTIFIC NAME
Ursus maritimus; "sea bear"

 WEIGHT
800 - 1,300 pounds (360 - 590 kg)

 HEIGHT
6 - 10 feet (1.8 - 5 m)

 POPULATION
22,000-31,000

POLAR BEARS CAN SWIM more than **60 miles** (100 km) without rest TO FIND FOOD.

WILL THAT BE FAR ENOUGH IF SEA ICE KEEPS MELTING?



 In 2008, these marine mammals were listed as a threatened species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act because their habitat is being lost due to climate change.

Text D

The Grasshopper

I was in the airport in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. I walked into the little duty-free shop. The woman who worked there decided to follow me around, maybe to keep an eye on me. And my eye fell upon two boxes of perfume on a glass shelf, and in between them was a large green-and-gold grasshopper holding itself perfectly still. I said to the woman, "A grasshopper?" And she said, "Yes, a grasshopper." And I said, "Oh? Is he alive?" And she said, "Yes, alive." And then she turned and walked away as if I were crazy to think that there would ever be a dead grasshopper between their perfume bottles on a glass shelf.

Text E

Taking Care of Our Oceans

Oceans provide a home to amazing creatures like fish, marine mammals, sea reptiles, and coral. Oceans are a renewable source of food and power for humans, and they generate most of the planet's oxygen by supporting sea plants like kelp, algae, and plankton. Oceans also help to regulate global temperatures.

Unfortunately, although humans receive many benefits from oceans, we are their biggest enemy, as consumers of energy and as polluters. Have you thought about how your daily activities affect the health of our oceans? Making simple changes in your routines can have a positive impact. Here are a few things you can do:

- Dispose of trash properly. Don't litter on land or in water!
- Recycle or reuse materials. Plastic items, including bottles, can be particularly harmful to oceans and to sea creatures. Use reusable food or drink containers. Buy or make reusable shopping bags.
- Reduce your "carbon footprint" (the amount of energy that you use from nonrenewable sources). Bike, walk, carpool, or take public transportation to work and school. Use energy-efficient lights and appliances, and turn them off when no one is using them.
- Participate in a beach, river, or lake cleanup project. Or just pick up trash you see in these areas when you visit them.