

Written by Kerry Everitt • Design and illustrations by Judie Shore

## In the News... Here are some amazing things kids just like you have been doing to reduce their impact on the Earth.

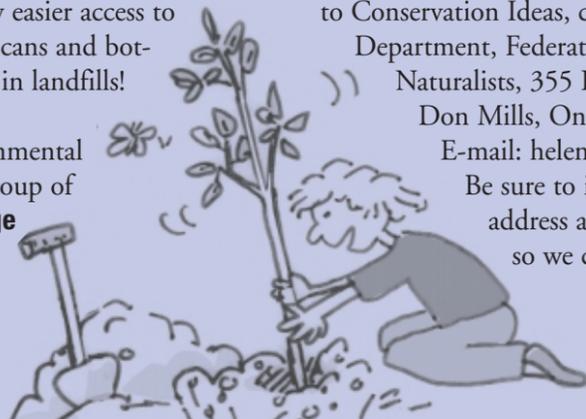
These examples were compiled by "Learning for a Sustainable Future" — an organization that works to integrate sustainability education into schools and curricula at all grade levels.

**High school students in Caledon** were concerned that their peers were not recycling enough pop cans and glass bottles in their cafeteria. They successfully lobbied the school custodians to change the seating arrangement in the cafeteria to allow easier access to the recycling bins. As a result, more cans and bottles were recycled and less ended up in landfills!

Concerned about the lack of environmental education in elementary school, a group of **high school students in Woodbridge** decided to take matters into their own hands. They developed and delivered environmental workshops to grade 5 classes.

In Toronto, **elementary students transformed their schoolyard** into a sanctuary for wildlife and people. Bird populations in this area have increased, and the schoolyard is also being used as an outdoor classroom!

**Let the FON know about your great conservation actions.** Send us a letter, picture or e-mail telling all about your action or event. We will post as many of these as possible on our Web site. Send your entry to Conservation Ideas, c/o Education Department, Federation of Ontario Naturalists, 355 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2W8. E-mail: [heleng@ontarionature.org](mailto:heleng@ontarionature.org). Be sure to include your name, address and phone number so we can contact you.



## Check out these Web sites for more ways to lend a helping hand for planet Earth.

- Water audit**, [www.ec.gc.ca/water/en/info/pubs/brochure/e\\_IWDWW8.htm](http://www.ec.gc.ca/water/en/info/pubs/brochure/e_IWDWW8.htm)
- Federation of Ontario Naturalists**, [www.ontarionature.org](http://www.ontarionature.org)
- Canadian Nature Federation**, [www.cnf.ca/](http://www.cnf.ca/)
- Earth Day Canada's Kids Page**, [www.ecokids.ca](http://www.ecokids.ca)
- Earth Day Canada**, [www.earthday.ca](http://www.earthday.ca)
- Pollution Probe**, [www.pollutionprobe.org](http://www.pollutionprobe.org)
- The Green Lane**, <http://www.ec.gc.ca/>
- World Wildlife Canada**, [www.wwfcanada.org](http://www.wwfcanada.org)
- The Green Group**, <http://www.green-group.com>
- Toronto Environmental Alliance**, [www.torontoenvironment.org](http://www.torontoenvironment.org)
- Canadian Marketing Association**, <http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/issues/priv/involved/fight.htm>
- Canadian Wildlife Federation**, [www.wildeducation.org](http://www.wildeducation.org)

**Reviewer:** Michelle Barraclough and M.J. Barrett  
**Copy Editor:** Joan Clark  
**Editor:** Helen D. Gault  
**Printing:** MPH Graphics Inc.



### Did You Know...

**Aluminum cans, when thrown out in the trash, will take over 300 years to break down. A glass bottle will take an estimated one million years to break down! Both aluminum and glass should always be recycled.**



## Lend a Helping Hand for

# Planet Earth

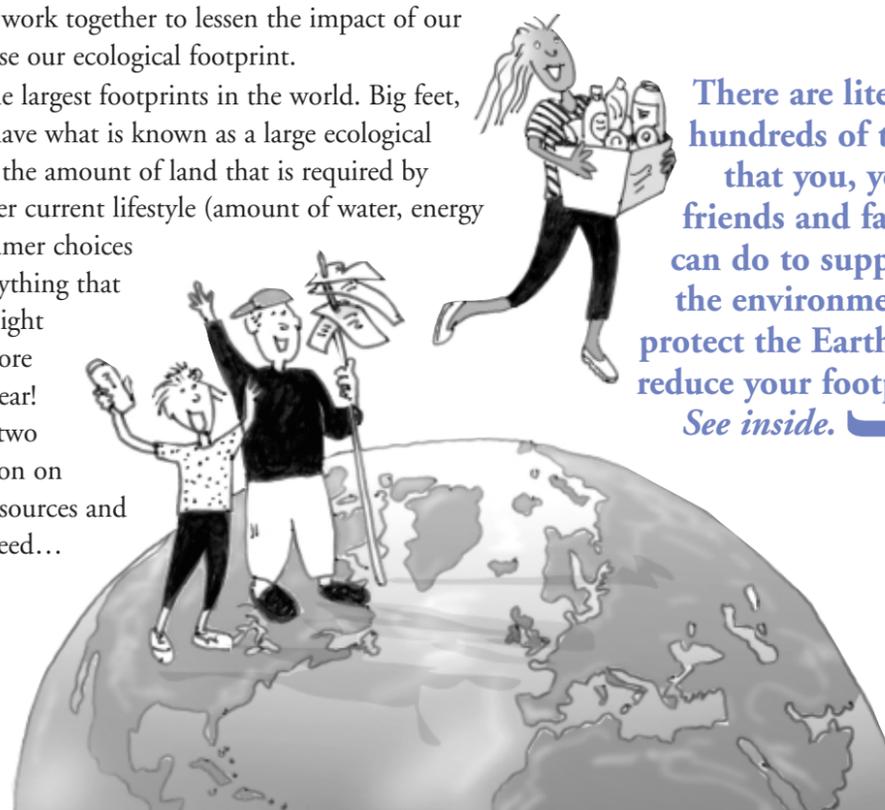


**Everything you do has an impact on the world around you. Some of the impacts we have on the Earth are not positive.**

The average person in North America throws out about 600 times his or her body weight in garbage over a lifetime...that is more than 1.7 kilograms of garbage each and every day! Also, because of residential and other development, we have lost over 80 percent of the natural forests and wetlands in Ontario, and with that, habitat for hundreds of species. Worldwide, between one and three species become extinct every day, never to be seen again.

The Earth needs our help, and you are just the person for the job! It might seem that one person can't have that much influence on the whole planet, but just think of what would happen if everyone had that attitude. Now more than ever, we must work together to lessen the impact of our lives on the Earth — to decrease our ecological footprint.

Canadians have among the largest footprints in the world. Big feet, you ask? Well, kind of — we have what is known as a large ecological footprint. This is a measure of the amount of land that is required by each person to sustain his or her current lifestyle (amount of water, energy and transportation used, consumer choices and wastes accumulated...everything that you do). Each Canadian uses eight hectares of productive land (more than 15 football fields) every year! The problem is there are only two hectares available for each person on the planet. To help conserve resources and protect the environment, we need... smaller feet.



### Did You Know...



**In the year 2000, the people of Toronto created more than 920,000 tonnes of garbage. A whopping 76 percent of this ended up in landfills and only 24 percent was recycled, composted or reused.**

**There are literally hundreds of things that you, your friends and family can do to support the environment, protect the Earth and reduce your footprint. See inside.** ➔



## At Home

### 1. Encourage your family to get your lawn off drugs.

Grass is a hardy species that does not require the amount of water, pesticides and fertilizers that most people apply. The chemicals on most lawns are not only toxic to children and pets but also to butterflies, dragonflies, ladybugs and other creatures, which are important to the food chain. Better yet, rip up the grass and plant a hardy and beautiful native ground cover that doesn't require any fertilizers or pesticides and needs very little watering.

### 2. Just say no...to overpackaging so you can reduce the garbage that you produce. Buy groceries in bulk and carry them home in the reusable plastic bins many stores now offer, or bring your own cloth



shopping bags to the store. **Canadians take home more than 55 million shopping bags each week.** Think of the amount of petroleum products (used to make plastic bags) that could be preserved if people used cloth bags, instead.

### 3. Everyone loves to get mail, but is it really necessary to have dozens of flyers and other pieces of junk mail delivered every day? Put an end to this huge waste of trees and energy by getting off junk mailing lists. In Canada, the best way to have your name removed from mailing lists is to contact the Canadian Marketing Association (contact



information on the back page). You may have to contact them every year to update your file as new mailing lists are continually being developed.

### 4. Take a water audit

(Web site information on the back page). Keep track of all the water your family uses in one week. Remember to include water used for flushing toilets, showers, cooking, laundry, washing hands, brushing teeth, washing dishes and all the other "hidden" uses. Sit down as a family and decide areas where water usage could be reduced. Do you really need to keep the water running while you are brushing your teeth? Why waste litres of water waiting for the tap water to get cold enough to drink? Instead, keep a jug of fresh water in the fridge. After you and your family have implemented a water-saving system, keep track of the water used for an additional week. How much water was your family able to conserve? Conserving water is not only good for the environment, but also for the economy – it costs a lot of money to purify and transport clean water to your tap.

**Earth Day is April 22nd. Take time on this day to be thankful for all of the things that the Earth provides you (everything, in fact!). Don't let Earth Day be the only day that you try to be environmentally conscious. Make Earth Day every day.**

## At School

### 1. As an extracurricular activity, start (or lead) a school environmental club (The Green Team).

Ask your principal about planting trees and shrubs to renaturalize your concrete schoolyard into a beautiful butterfly garden. If you think that a small group of people at your school aren't enough to make a difference, think again. Contact the Evergreen Foundation ([www.evergreen.ca](http://www.evergreen.ca)) for information about how to start your own schoolyard naturalization program and funding opportunities. Don't forget to have your teacher or principal get permission from the school board before starting your project.

### 2. Ask your teachers if you could take on an environmental initiative as part of your 40 hours of community volunteer service. Who knows... this might lead into a career working to preserve the environment. Contact the FON or another environmental organization (see back page) for ideas.

### 3. Skip the zip – challenge your school to have "Litterless Lunch Days" where everyone brings their lunch in reusable plastic containers instead of throw-away plastic baggies.



### 4. Organize a walk / bike to school day

and remind people that there are earth-friendly alternatives to driving a car.

### 5. Hold a fundraiser for the environment. Have a spare change drive. If everyone makes even a small donation, it can really add up! Give your money to a worthy cause such as the FON or a local naturalist club to help them purchase an important forest or wetland.

### 6. Join "Envirothon" and take part in eco-challenges with students from other schools. For more information on how your school can join, contact the Ontario Forestry Association ([www.ontarioenvirothon.on.ca](http://www.ontarioenvirothon.on.ca)).

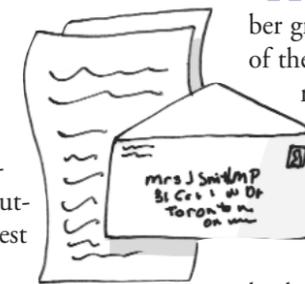
### 7. At the end of the school year when the last thing you want to see is your notes and binders, instead of throwing them all away (or burning them!), reuse the backs for telephone message paper, for shopping lists or to print cool things off the Internet. Don't forget to recycle what you can't use!

## In Your Community

### 1. Volunteer with your local Boy Scout or Girl Guide troupe to lead a litter expedition in a local park or natural area, take a hike to remove invasive species, or plan a renaturalization event where you plant native trees, shrubs and flowers.

### 2. Make a display for your local library or community centre to promote environmental thinking. Show people how easy it is to reduce their water usage, the amount of electricity they use and the chemicals they spray on their lawns.

### 3. If there is something going on that you don't agree with (someone is draining a wetland or cutting down the oldest trees in the park), find out more about the issue, get out your pen (or open up your e-mail) and start writing!



A letter to your local politician telling them how disappointed you are in their lack of involvement in an environmental issue will make them stand up and take note. A letter to the editor of a newspaper expressing your views on a local environmental issue can help to get others involved and may be a very important step in giving nature a helping hand. Contact the FON (information on the back page) to find your local nature club — they will know the issues in your area.

### 4. The FON has over 115 member groups across Ontario. Join one of these groups, get to know like-minded individuals and discover the natural areas of Ontario. Enjoy hiking and walking through your local wetlands, grasslands and forests. Contact the FON (information on the back page) to find your local group — they can tell you more about great natural areas near you.

### These are just a few of the countless things that you can do to lessen your impact on the planet.

The Earth needs our help. Humans are causing global warming, the loss of species, the destruction of wetlands and natural forests, the contamination of drinking water and the pollution of our air. We rely on the Earth for all of our food, air and water. We must work together to prevent further destruction of the planet. Individually, you may feel that there is not much you can do, but together we can make a huge difference.

