

Litter, the great enemy of nature

Ecoembes and SEO/BirdLife have come together to combat the growing threat of rubbish accumulation

Our ecosystems are suffering the consequences of rubbish accumulation. It is a problem caused by humanity; it threatens biodiversity and we cannot turn a blind eye to it. And it is this problem that requires society to speak out so we can stop a monster that is taking its toll on our planet.

LIBERA has come about to combat this growing and alarming phenomenon. This is a project created by SEO/BirdLife, the oldest environmental NGO in Spain, together with Ecoembes, the environmental organisation that promotes the circular economy through the recycling of packaging material with the aim of freeing nature from rubbish and halting the disastrous consequences of littering.

This project bases its three lines of work on knowledge, prevention and participation. We need to know more about littering so we can offer real solutions. In turn, we have to educate and raise awareness to prevent citizens from contaminating our environments and, of course, we need to mobilise the population so that all of us can fight to save our planet together.

The project commenced on 17 June last year with the launch of the campaign '1 sq.m. for nature', in which 5,000 volunteers from all around the country removed the waste from 175 points of great ecological value. Thanks to them all, over 30 tons of rubbish was collected from natural, land, river and marine spaces in 48 Spanish provinces.

However, we are aware that there are no magic solutions to tackling this problem at its



roots. This is why our aim is not only to clean ecosystems of rubbish; we are also promoting citizen science. This involves analysing the waste we encounter in order to extract scientific data that can serve to discover the environmental impact caused by littering and therefore apply specific solutions.

To do this, we organise data collections so that the various groups can identify the rubbish they find. Accordingly, over the past year we have embarked on two campaigns of this type. The first action took place in the first week of October with the campaign '1 sq.m. for the beaches and the seas'. This initiative involved 54 collectives travelling to 70 coastal points in Spain to provide information on the waste that is left on our beaches. The results led to the identification of 15,000 objects in which cigarette ends, industrial packaging and plastic sheeting were the objects collected the most.

In the same vein, the week of 11-17 December saw the holding of '1 sq.m. for the countryside, forests and scrubland', where 64 groups collected information about the rubbish left at 80 inland points. In total, it was possible to identify around 12,000 objects, from cigarette ends to hygiene products. Once again, cigarette ends were the objects collected the most, followed by wet towels.

The aim of all this is to bring about a change in public behaviour on the understanding that education and prevention form the key to generating individual responsibility towards our natural spaces.

Ultimately, we at LIBERA would like to replace the universal paradigm of "don't touch it, it's rubbish" with "don't throw it away, it's rubbish". Apart from highlighting that we have a problem, we want to show that the solution is in everyone's hands. Because, although it's not our rubbish, it is our problem. And now is the time to act. ■

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