


It takes about 185 L (49 U.S. gal.) of water to produce just one glass of milk. This includes the water the cow drinks, the water used to grow food for the cow and the water needed to process the milk.

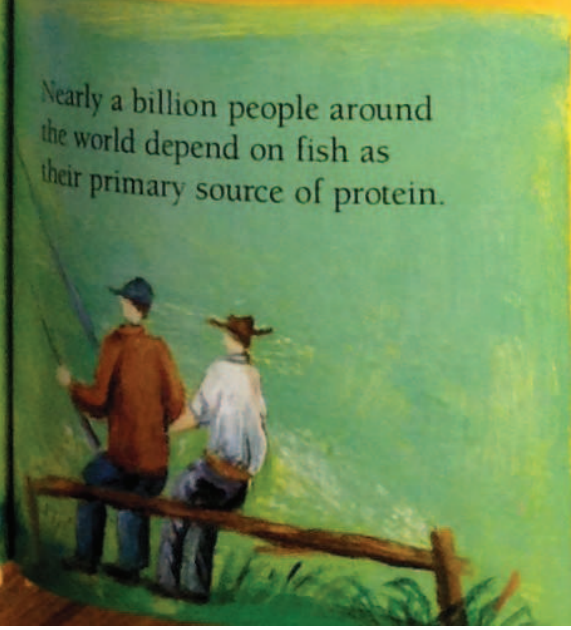
About 147 000 L (38 800 U.S. gal.) of water was needed to make your family's car.



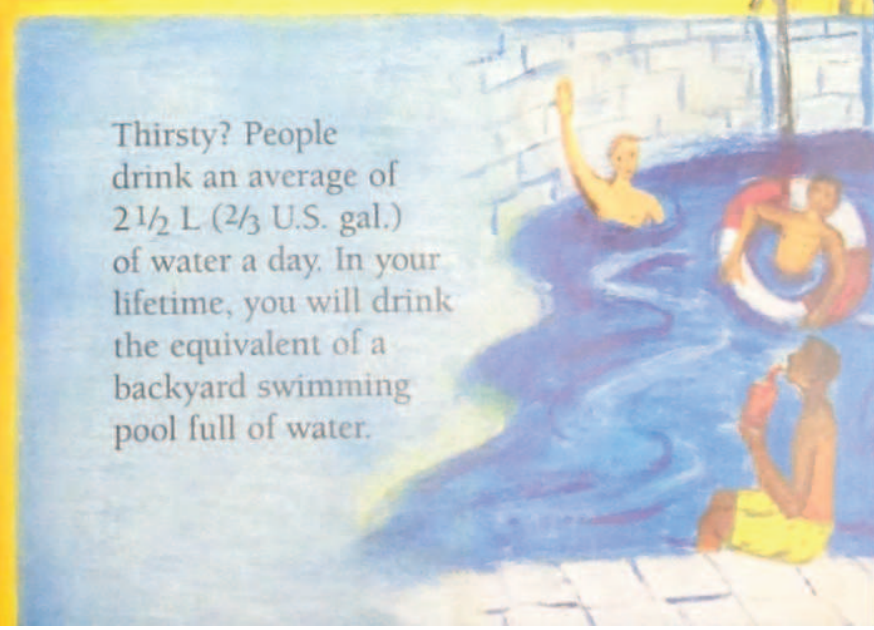
In North American homes, the bathroom is where about three-quarters of all water is used. One flush of the toilet uses nearly 13 L (3 1/2 U.S. gal.).



A lot of water is required to produce the food you eat. Approximately 5200 L (1375 U.S. gal.) of water is needed just to make one fast food lunch (burger, fries and a soda).

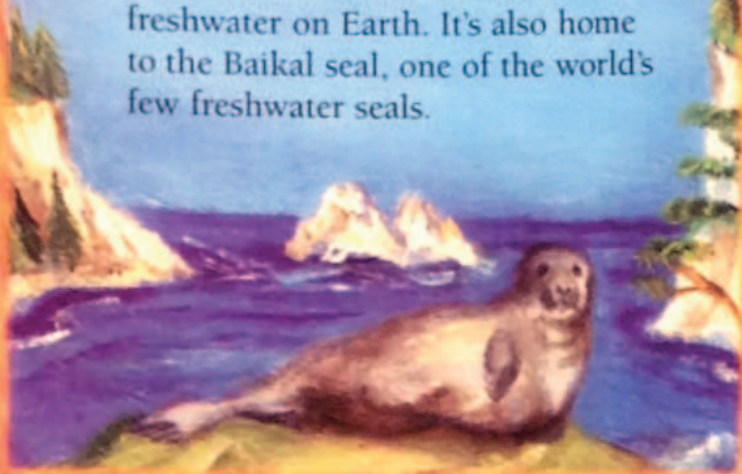


Nearly a billion people around the world depend on fish as their primary source of protein.



Thirsty? People drink an average of 2 1/2 L (2/3 U.S. gal.) of water a day. In your lifetime, you will drink the equivalent of a backyard swimming pool full of water.

Lake Baikal in southeast Siberia contains almost one-fifth of all the freshwater on Earth. It's also home to the Baikal seal, one of the world's few freshwater seals.



The Bering Glacier in Alaska is the largest glacier in North America. It's about five times bigger than New York City and nearly twice as tall as the Empire State Building.



Approximately 0.001 percent of all water on Earth is in the atmosphere. If a tanker truck represents all the water on Earth, the water in the atmosphere would barely fill a third of a pop can.



Around the world, more than half the drinking water we use comes from underground aquifers — layers of gravel, porous (holey) rocks or soil that trap large amounts of water.

Freshwater in the Well

Though we live on a watery planet, not all of that water can be used to meet our needs. That's because we humans and many other species depend on freshwater, and supplies of freshwater are limited.

Most of the water on Earth is saltwater—almost 97 percent. Only 3 percent is freshwater. If a tanker truck filled with water represented all the water on Earth, then the water used to fill a large bathtub would represent all of the planet's freshwater.

But most of the freshwater—over 99 percent—is frozen in icecaps and glaciers, trapped deep underground or in the atmosphere, so we can't use it. How much freshwater is available to us? Remember that bathtub? Imagine filling nine pop cans from it. This represents all the freshwater we can use.

While there is a lot of water on the planet, we have access to less than 1 percent of it.



Access to the Well

Some families are lucky. They can turn on the tap for drinking water, to fill a bathtub, wash their car or water the garden. But other families around the world are less fortunate. One billion people, almost 16 percent of Earth's population, have to walk more than fifteen minutes to get to the nearest water supply. There, they gather water for the day—just a few jugs, barely enough for drinking, cooking and cleaning. Other families don't have access to enough water to meet even these most basic needs.

While the amount of water on Earth is always the same, the *distribution* of water across the world isn't. Huge differences in rainfall can happen from country to country and even within the same country. Less rainfall means less water available in lakes, rivers and aquifers. Sometimes there just isn't enough water where it's needed most.

Because water is not evenly distributed across the globe, nearly one-fifth of the world's population does not have access to enough water. Many of these people live in Africa and Asia.



A bucket of water weighs about 10 kg (22 lbs.). Imagine if you had to carry a bucket or two from a well to your house every day.

North America has one-third the population of Africa, yet North Americans use three times as much water. How is this possible? Nearly 300 million people in Africa do not have access to enough freshwater.

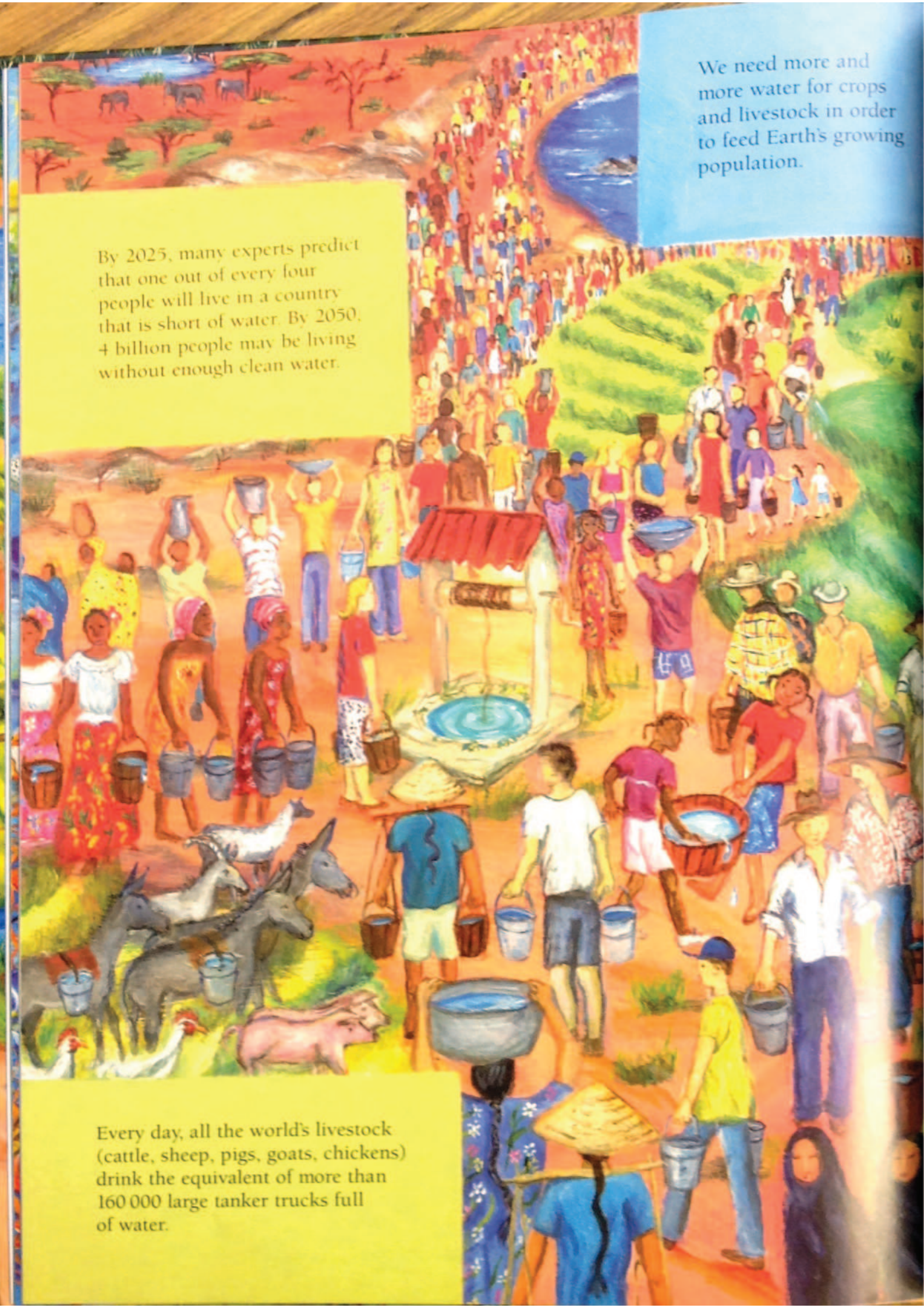
Place Average daily water use per person

1 bucket = 10 L (2.6 U.S. gal.)



China and India are home to over one-third of the world's population, yet they only have access to one-tenth of the world's freshwater.

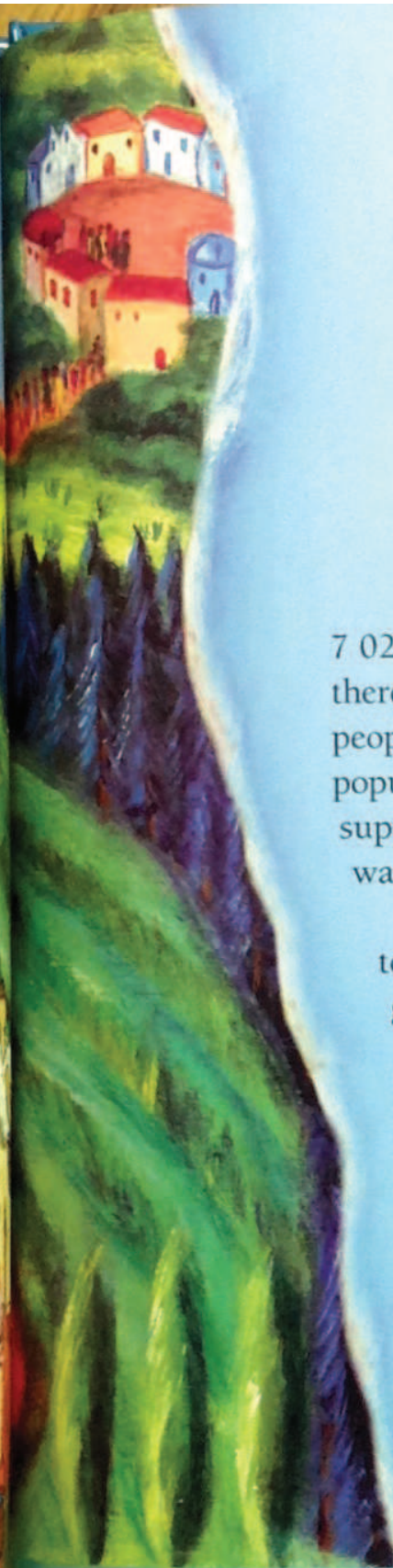




We need more and more water for crops and livestock in order to feed Earth's growing population.

By 2025, many experts predict that one out of every four people will live in a country that is short of water. By 2050, 4 billion people may be living without enough clean water.

Every day, all the world's livestock (cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, chickens) drink the equivalent of more than 160 000 large tanker trucks full of water.



Demands on the Well

7 021 836 029 ... give or take a few. That's how many people there are on Earth, and that number is growing every day. More people mean a greater demand for water. But this growing population isn't the only thing putting a strain on our water supplies. The average person today uses about six times more water than a hundred years ago.

A growing population also means we need more space. As towns and cities grow to accommodate all these people, they gobble up land, which also affects nearby water. Houses, buildings and roads sometimes take the place of wetland habitats where animals live, which puts species at risk. They also change the way rainwater, lakes and streams flow. And pavement and concrete block rainwater from refilling underground water supplies.

There are more of us, and our demand for water at home, in industry and in agriculture has grown tremendously. But all the water we have is all the water we ever will have. There is no more water now than there was 100 or 1000 or even 10 000 years ago. And there will be no more 100 years from now, when the population may be closer to 10 billion.

We need to find a balance between our demands for water and the amount of water that's available to us.

While dams make more water available, they also change the flow of rivers and damage habitats.

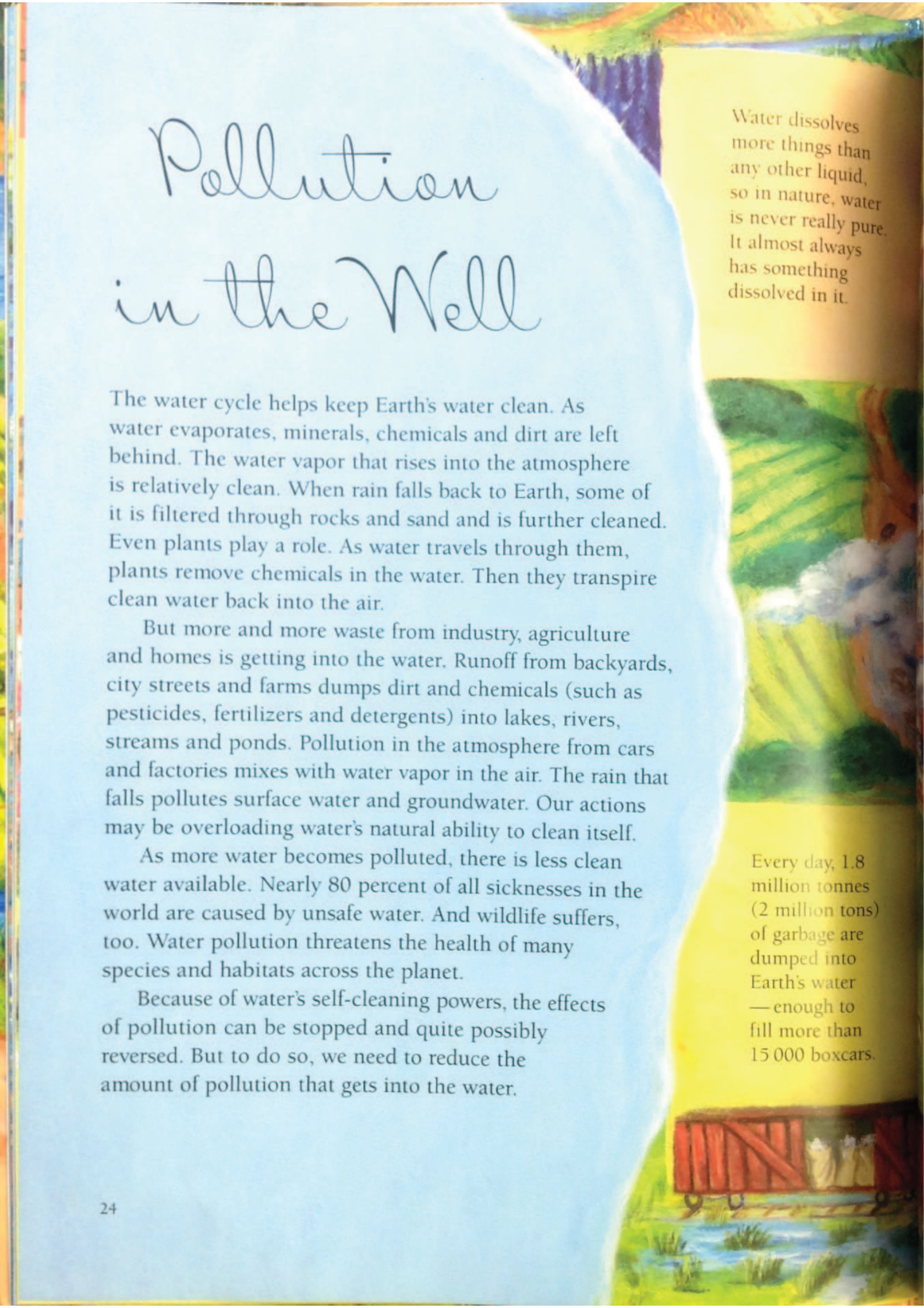
Pollution in the Well

The water cycle helps keep Earth's water clean. As water evaporates, minerals, chemicals and dirt are left behind. The water vapor that rises into the atmosphere is relatively clean. When rain falls back to Earth, some of it is filtered through rocks and sand and is further cleaned. Even plants play a role. As water travels through them, plants remove chemicals in the water. Then they transpire clean water back into the air.

But more and more waste from industry, agriculture and homes is getting into the water. Runoff from backyards, city streets and farms dumps dirt and chemicals (such as pesticides, fertilizers and detergents) into lakes, rivers, streams and ponds. Pollution in the atmosphere from cars and factories mixes with water vapor in the air. The rain that falls pollutes surface water and groundwater. Our actions may be overloading water's natural ability to clean itself.

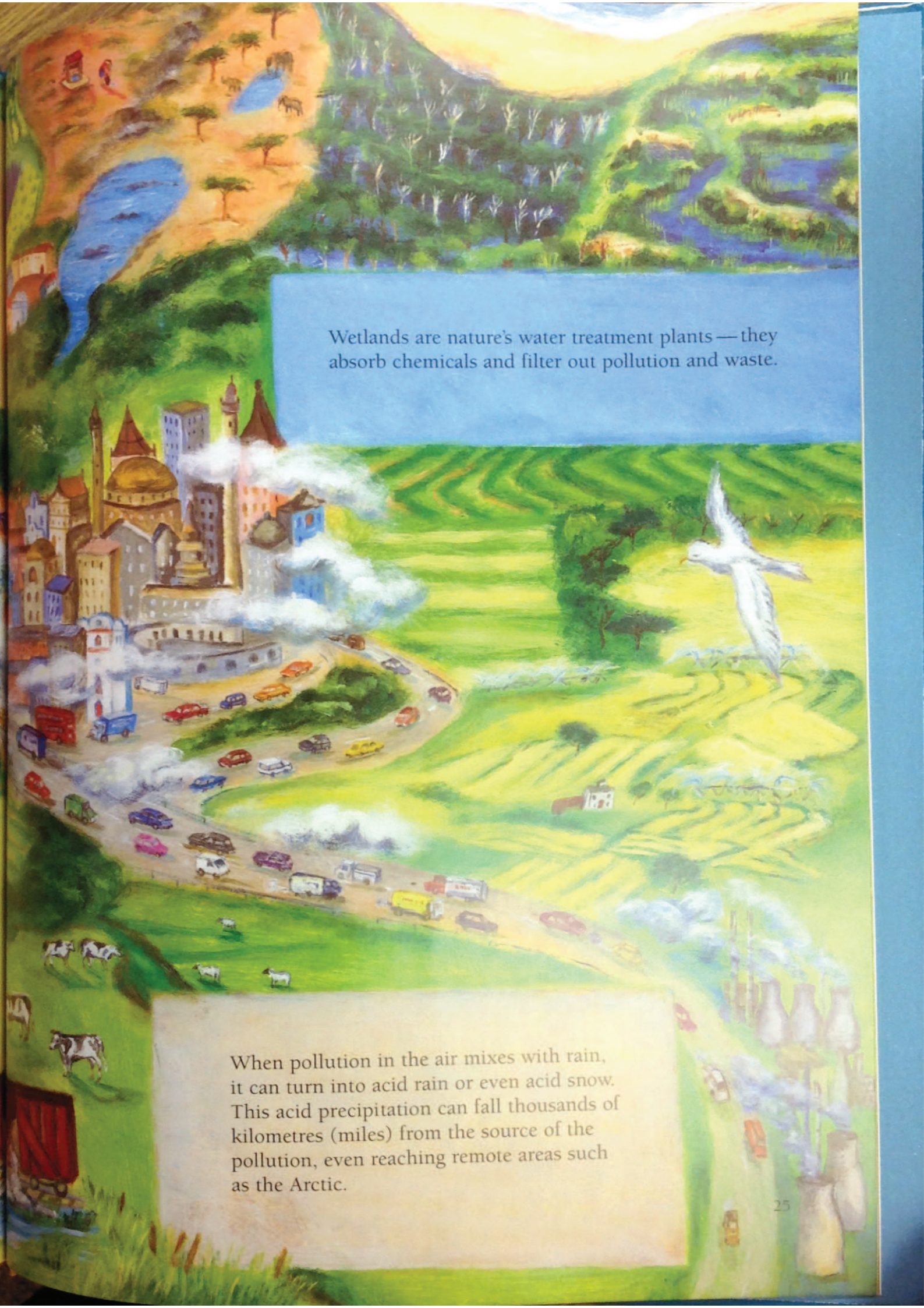
As more water becomes polluted, there is less clean water available. Nearly 80 percent of all sicknesses in the world are caused by unsafe water. And wildlife suffers, too. Water pollution threatens the health of many species and habitats across the planet.

Because of water's self-cleaning powers, the effects of pollution can be stopped and quite possibly reversed. But to do so, we need to reduce the amount of pollution that gets into the water.

A colorful illustration of a landscape. At the top, there are green hills and a blue sky. Below that, a river flows through a green valley. In the foreground, a red wooden wagon is on a bridge over the river. The scene is bright and vibrant.

Water dissolves more things than any other liquid, so in nature, water is never really pure. It almost always has something dissolved in it.

Every day, 1.8 million tonnes (2 million tons) of garbage are dumped into Earth's water — enough to fill more than 15 000 boxcars.



Wetlands are nature's water treatment plants — they absorb chemicals and filter out pollution and waste.

When pollution in the air mixes with rain, it can turn into acid rain or even acid snow. This acid precipitation can fall thousands of kilometres (miles) from the source of the pollution, even reaching remote areas such as the Arctic.

Saving the Water in the Well

Water has the power to change everything. A single splash can sprout a seed, quench a thirst, provide a habitat, generate energy and sustain life. It also has the power to unite—or divide—the world. Water is the most basic and important need of all life on Earth.

But Earth's One Well is in trouble. There is simply not enough clean water to go around.

Taking actions to conserve water can help save the well. Conserving water means protecting both the quantity and quality of water on Earth. For example, using less water helps prevent water sources from drying up. And reducing water pollution protects the overall health of the well. Water conservation can help ensure there is enough clean water for everyone on the planet.

By becoming more aware of how you use water and by using less, you too can protect the water in Earth's One Well. Remember—every drop counts!



Becoming Well Aware

Water conservation isn't just something for governments, corporations and environmental groups to think about. Everyone needs to get involved in water conservation — even you. And it's not hard to do. It doesn't even mean living without water. It just means becoming "Well Aware" of every splash of water we use.

By reducing your water use, you too can become Well Aware. Even the simplest actions can make a huge difference. Imagine all the water you could save just by keeping drinking water in the fridge instead of letting the tap run to get cool water. And by making sure to turn off faucets so that they don't drip, you can save up to 10 000 L (2650 U.S. gal.) of water a year.

But becoming Well Aware doesn't just mean using less water, it also means taking better care of the water we have. You can protect water from pollution by walking more and driving less, which keeps car exhaust from polluting water in the atmosphere. Organizing shoreline cleanups keeps trash from entering lakes, rivers and streams. Planting trees anchors the soil so that it doesn't wash into waterways and make them muddy.

Imagine what would happen if each of us did just one thing to conserve water

and protect Earth's One Well. These actions would add up. Together, they would help to ensure that there is enough clean water now and for years to come.

Here are just a few ways you can become Well Aware:

Learn More and Educate Others. By learning more about Earth's One Well, you can make choices in your life that help conserve and protect water. Then share what you learn. Help the people around you become Well Aware, too.



Join Others. There are many organizations working to protect water or helping people get the water they need. Find out more about organizations that interest you, and support their work by raising money, volunteering your time or helping to spread their message. Or start your own campaign.

Conserve Water. With your family, explore all the ways you use water and then brainstorm ways to reduce your water use at home. Some suggestions include:

- turning off the water while scrubbing your hands and brushing your teeth
- running the dishwasher and washing machine only when full
- asking your parents to fix leaky faucets

- collecting rainwater to water the plants in your garden or house
- watering your lawn only when it needs it and only in the early morning or evening, when less water will evaporate

Protect Water. Rainwater can wash waste and pollution into storm sewers, which flow into local rivers or lakes. Oil, grease, salt from roads, fertilizers and pesticides from gardens, paint, oil, leaves and litter can all end up in local waterways. Many communities paint fish or other symbols near sewers to remind people that sewers empty into waterways. Does your community have such a program? If not, why not try to start one.

Improving Access, One Well at a Time

More and more children and their families are becoming Well Aware. Some, like Ryan Hreljac, are helping to make water more accessible to those who need it most. In 1998, as a six year old, Ryan learned that many people in Africa didn't have access to clean water. He raised enough money to build a well near a school in Uganda. But he didn't stop there. With his parents' help, he started the Ryan's Well Foundation, which continues to raise money to build wells in Africa and educate people elsewhere about the need to conserve water.

