



**TRASH FOUND IN 15  
MINUTES**



**RECYCLABLE  
ITEMS**



**NON-RECYCLABLE  
ITEMS**

# #TRASHED



## Trashless, Classless

The Project Green Challenge today is to collect all the trash you make throughout the day. As a sustainability steward at College of Idaho, however, I didn't make ANY TRASH. (Really unusual) It might be because I was extra conscientious today about my consumption- usually I make tea in the morning which has a teabag as trash or compost. Sometimes I finish off food in my fridge and have to recycle or throw away whatever container it was in. Today, however, I ate only leftovers and used food out of containers but didn't make new trash. Sometimes, I'll admit, I leave my reusable cup at home and make a coffee cup as trash. Most days though, I have a reusable coffee cup, utensils and plates that I use throughout the day both at home and abroad. This significantly

reduces the amount of trash I make and today it meant I didn't make any. But I still wanted to compete in the challenge so here's what I did:

## Canal Cleanup

Instead of feeling really good about my day without trash, I felt like I was cheating the system. I still wanted to show how trash is impactful and WHY I strive not to make any. I decided to take a walk to clear my head and within the first few minutes I found the ground was littered with cans, bottles and straws. It wasn't mine but HERE was some trash! I started picking up cans as I walked along guessing that I might stumble upon a plastic bag. Lo and behold, as I was walking past some escaped chickens, I found a Big Smoke plastic bag. I filled it with my cans and started to pick up all the trash I could find. Within 15

Plastic bottles can be traded out for a reusable water bottle to reduce trash. At fast food restaurants, you can refuse plastic straws and utensils for reusable ones.

minutes it was filled to the brim with trash! Mostly, it was filled with beer cans and bottles but there were also some straws, lids, paper and plastic. Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on how you look at it) most of the items were recyclable. After I was done photographing them I was able to put them in the recycle bin. While the presence of this much trash in so little time was impactful, even more surprisingly were the fuzzy friends I met along the way.

## Ecosystem Impact

As I walked along the canal, I found that many different animals lived in the trash that I was collecting. I ran into a bunny, chickens, and a plump (a grouping) of ducks! Who knew so many animals were dependent on this area that many humans think is ugly, ignore, or, as I found, use as a landfill. Seeing these animals wade through plastic bags, pick around plastic caps and step over mounds of garbage hurt my heart and renewed my commitment to reduce my impact by reducing my trash.

## Start the Conversation

As I was walking, I was able to talk to some people and inspire them to pick up garbage while they were out and about as well. A yellow lab ran out of his yard to bark at me as I walked along and his owner followed after him. She asked what I was up to as I walked along and I told her about PGC, my trash predicament and my undertaking of picking up trash on my walk. She applauded my efforts and helped me pick up a few cans outside of her house as we talked. Later, I walked through a park on the way to the canal and ran into some kids. They asked me what I was doing as well and I gave them a summary, telling them I was picking up trash to help the environment- especially the ducks they were there to enjoy. As I walked away, I saw them pick up a few things around their picnic table and it made my heart glad.

## My Commitment

I saw today firsthand how trash can impact the environment- it cluttered up my nature walk but it was the animals that were most affected by the garbage. In order to reduce trash further, I am committing to bringing my reusable mug with me everywhere I go and using it, even when it is more convenient to get a single use cup. I also will buy looseleaf tea instead of bagged tea to reduce the non-recyclable paper trash I create on a daily basis.

*Furry friends impacted  
by human made trash!*

