

HOLIDAYS & HEROES

*Let's Celebrate*  
**EARTH DAY**



BY Barbara deRubertis

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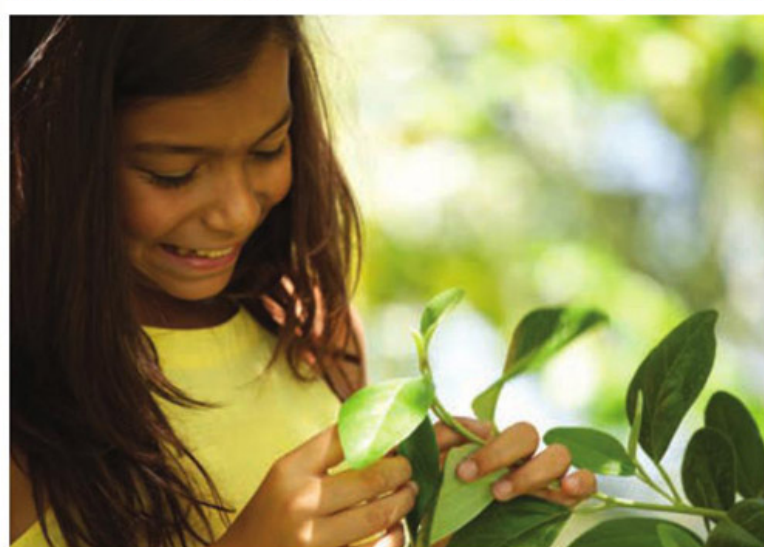
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Planet Earth is a wonderful place to live! Its land and oceans are home to millions of plants and animals. The air, sunlight, water, and land provide everything needed for healthy life. And the amazing beauty of Earth fills us with awe and appreciation.

But in the 1960s, people were becoming more and more worried about the health of Planet Earth. What was causing them to worry?

In 1962, a scientist named Rachel Carson wrote a book that shocked people. *Silent Spring* was about the dangers of some of the pesticides being used on our crops to kill insects. These pesticides were also making animals and people sick.

In 1981, the United States Postal Service honored Rachel Carson with a stamp.

A pesticide called DDT caused the shells of peregrine falcon eggs to become so thin that few survived to hatch.





The air pollution in some of our big cities was also making animals and people sick. The pollution was created by burning oil, gas, and coal to run our vehicles, factories, and power plants.

Sewage and poisonous waste were being dumped into our lakes and rivers. This waste was killing fish and polluting our water supply.

Dirty water flows from a pipe polluting a river.

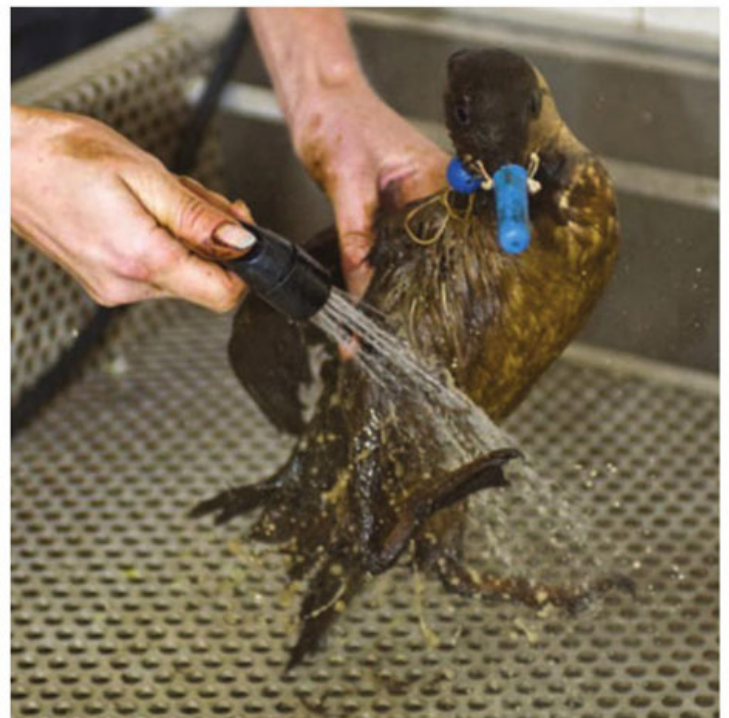




Oil is washed up on a beach after an oil spill.

And in 1969, there was a massive oil spill from a drilling accident off the coast of California. This spill caused many sea animals and plants to die. It damaged beaches and water. And it called for huge, costly clean-up efforts.

People said, “We have to do something to stop all this pollution!” But where to start?



A worker carefully cleans oil off of a duck after a spill.

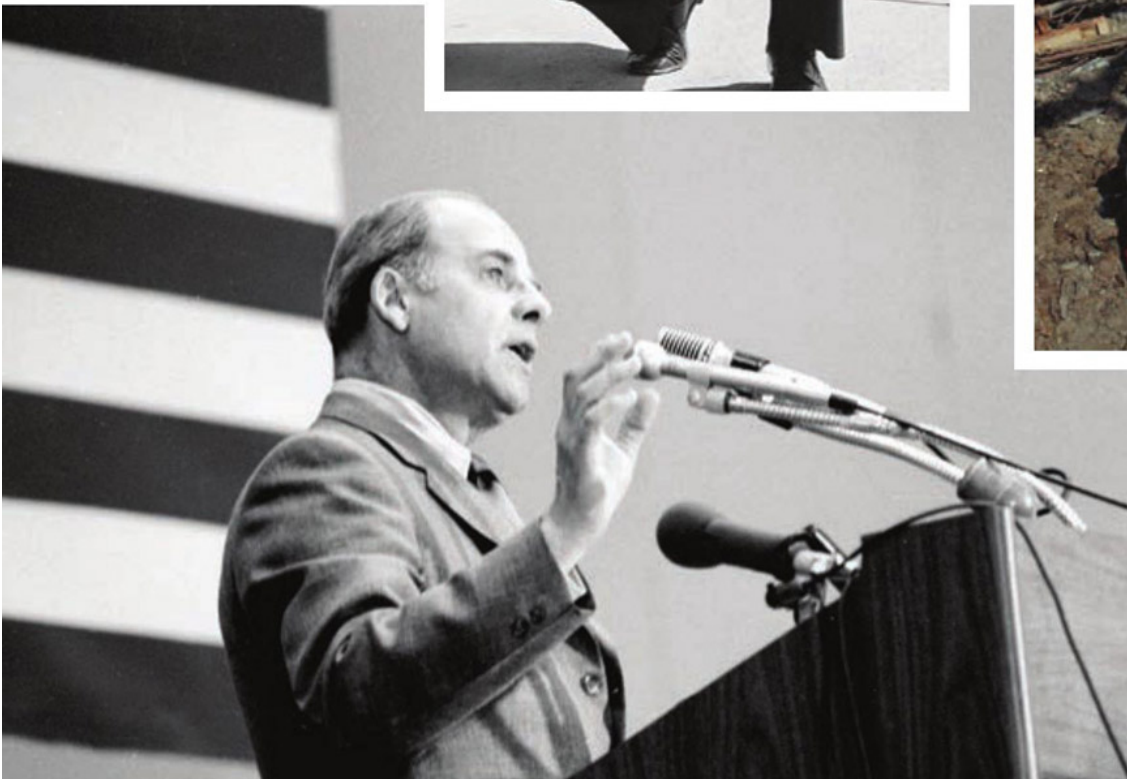
Democratic Senator Gaylord Nelson got the idea of founding a holiday called Earth Day. He asked Republican Congressman Pete McCloskey to help him sponsor an Earth Day event on April 22, 1970. They asked a man named Denis Hayes to organize the event.

Earth Day would teach people about the environment. And people would also learn how to help solve Earth's problems.

Congressman  
Pete McCloskey  
in 1980



Senator Gaylord Nelson  
speaks on Earth Day,  
April 22, 1970.



Denis Hayes visits a  
dump in April 1990 and  
displays bottles and  
cans that could have  
been recycled instead  
of thrown away.

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