

From: The Ecologist newsletter@theecologist.org
Subject: Fashion 'lays waste to wetlands'
Date: July 4, 2025 at 3:08 am
To: maryannsteggles@icloud.com



Friday 4th July 2025

The Ecologist

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TOP STORY THIS WEEK

Fashion 'lays waste to wetlands'

Discarded clothes from UK brands found
in protected Ghana wetlands



A pile of 67 jeans found by the Wildlife and Countryside Centre in Ghana, illustrating the article's theme of fashion waste.

A pair of Zara jeans found in the vveija Asnbread landrill, an older textile dump site sited on the Densu river, upriver from the protected wetlands, outside Accra, Ghana. Image: Greenpeace.

Fashion waste from UK brands including Next, Asda and M&S have been found in protected wetlands in Ghana, according to Greenpeace. Report by REBECCA SPEARE-COLE

The campaign group's investigative unit Unearthed and its Africa branch gathered stills and footage of discarded clothes at a huge new dumpsite growing in a protected nature site which is home to rare birds and turtle species.

The team found garments discarded by UK consumers from high street brands in areas at or close to two open-air waste dumps that recently appeared inside the Densu Delta – designated as a habitat of “international importance” under the Convention on Wetlands.

Garments

One of the dumps, Glefe, has been established for four years, according to Google Earth historical images, and looms taller than a two-storey building in places. The second, Akkaway is less than a year old but rapidly expanding, Greenpeace said.

Clothes from Zara, H&M and Primark were also found at a third dump on a riverbank outside the nature reserve,

Meanwhile, local communities say their fishing nets, waterways and beaches are clogged with synthetic fast fashion exported to Ghana from the UK and Europe, they said.

Ghana is the world's largest importer of used clothing, with 15 million items of discarded garments arriving each week, according to Greenpeace research.

Dump

Meanwhile, UN trade data shows the UK sent 57,000 tonnes of fashion waste to Ghana last year – more than to any other country except the United Arab Emirates.

This overspill has overwhelmed Ghana's capital city Accra, resulting in new waste dumps appearing just outside, Greenpeace said.

The Densu Delta provides a habitat for birds such as rare roseate terns, which migrate from the UK, and curlew sandpipers, which visit from the Arctic tundra.

The endangered leatherback and green turtles lay their eggs on the conservation area's beach, as does the olive ridley turtle, known for nesting en masse on the same beach where it hatched, local wildlife experts

from where fashion waste often floats downstream, polluting the wetlands.

The campaigners said they are concerned about the impact of microplastics and chemicals released from the textiles waste on the local wildlife.

say.

Laura Burley, Greenpeace UK's plastic campaigner, said: "It's heartbreaking to see a protected nature site turning into a waste dump because of our addiction to fast fashion.

[Read Rebecca Speare-Cole's full article on The Ecologist website.](#)



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