

Impact of Sea Life with Plastic Pollution

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Editorial

The poisonous effects of plastic are wreaking havoc on our ocean and the diverse creatures that call it home. The grey whale that stranded near Seattle in 2010 with more than 20 plastic bags, a golf ball, and other trash in its stomach, to the harbour seal pup found dead on the Scottish island of Skye, its intestines fouled by a thin piece of plastic wrapper, are only a few examples.

According to the United Nations, aquatic pollution affects at least 800 animals globally, with plastic accounting for up to 80% of the waste. Every minute, up to 13 million metric tonnes of plastic is expected to end up in the ocean, the equivalent of a trash or garbage truck load. Suffocation, malnutrition, and drowning can occur when fish, seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals become entangled in or consume plastic debris. This hazard is not limited to humans: Although it takes hundreds of years for plastics to decompose fully, some of them decompose even faster into small fragments, which then end up in the seafood we eat.

According to research, half of all sea turtles have consumed plastic. Some people starve as a result of this, assuming they have eaten plenty that their stomachs are full. Plastic waste is so widespread on many beaches that it is impacting turtle reproductive rates by changing the temperature of the sand where incubation takes place.

According to a new report, marine turtles who swallow only 14 bits of plastic have a higher chance of dying. Young people are more vulnerable because they are less selective in what they eat than their parents and, like plastic, prefer to float with waves.

Per year, up to a million seabirds are killed by plastic waste. Seabirds, including sea turtles, eat plastic, which takes up space in their stomachs and can lead to malnutrition. Many seabirds have been discovered dead, their stomachs stuffed with this garbage. According to scientists, 60 percent of all seabird species have consumed plastic, a number that is expected to grow to 99 percent by 2050. While dolphins are highly intelligent and unable to eat plastic, they may be contaminated by preys that have consumed synthetic substances. Plastic in our waters has an effect on both big and small animals. From seabirds, whales, and dolphins to small seahorses and schools of fish that live in coral reefs and surrounding mangroves, there is plenty for everybody.

In the ocean, plastic waste can promote the development of pathogens. Scientists concluded in a new report that corals that come into contact with plastic have an 89 percent risk of contracting disease, compared to a 4 percent chance for corals that do not. Scientists estimate that by 2050, the weight of ocean plastics will surpass the total weight of all fish in the oceans unless immediate action is taken to resolve this critical issue.

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