

WHAT IS MARINE DEBRIS?

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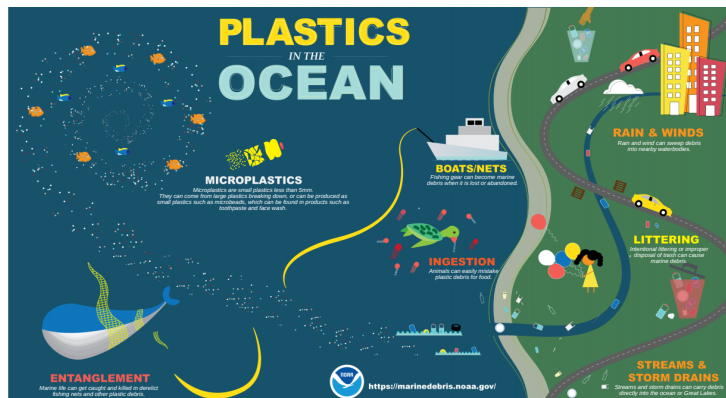
Marine debris is defined as any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded, disposed of or abandoned in the marine and coastal environment (UN Environment Program, 2009), or put more simply, man-made items that end up in the marine environment.

Marine debris can cause harm to marine life, coastal habitats and human health. It is a prevalent pollution issue globally.

WHERE DOES IT COME FROM? ✓

Marine debris comes from various sources. In urban areas most of it comes from the land, washing down stormwater drains and through the sewerage system, or left behind by careless beach users. In more remote areas, sea-based debris is brought in on ocean currents, from other countries or from recreational boats, fisheries or cargo ships where it is washed overboard or intentionally dumped in the ocean.

Objects of any size and shape can end up in the marine environment. Toothbrushes, white goods, shoes, bottles, packaging, furniture, fishing gear, toys and much more have been found. Sometimes intact, more often broken up into smaller pieces.



Credit: NOAA (www.marinedebris.noaa.gov)

FAST FACTS REFERENCES

- <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-brief/marine-plastic-pollution>
- <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/drowning-plastics-marine-litter-and-plastic-waste-vital-graphics>
- <https://wetlandinfo.des.qld.gov.au/wetlands/management/pressures/litter-illegal-dumping/sinks/marine/#citation-reference-16>
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0025326X0100114X>



FAST FACTS



Around 14 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean annually¹ and this is expected to double by 2040²



Plastic makes up 80% of all marine debris in the world's oceans¹



Not all plastic floats, around 196 million tons may have settled on the sea floor since 1950³



In the North Pacific Gyre, also known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, plastic outnumbers zooplankton 6:1⁴

TOP 10 ITEMS FOUND ON AUSTRALIAN BEACHES

1. Hard plastic remnants
2. Cigarette butts and filters
3. Plastic lids
4. Foam insulation and packaging
5. Soft plastic remnants
6. Plastic food packaging
7. Plastic drink bottles
8. Fishing line
9. Broken glass and ceramic
10. Straws/confection sticks/cups/plates/cutlery

Credit: AMDI Database

WHERE IS MARINE DEBRIS FOUND?

Marine debris can be found in all of the world's oceans. It is most visible to us when it is washed up along the coastline, but this only represents a fraction of what is there. The majority of it is found floating in the oceans, both on the surface and throughout the water column, or on the seafloor. Marine debris accumulates in gyres, places in the ocean where the currents converge to form a rotating mass of water similar to a giant whirlpool. The North Pacific Gyre is estimated to be at least the size of New South Wales.



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