

## QUICK FACTS:

# OCEAN PLASTIC

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## Importance of the Ocean



Covering 70% of Earth's surface, the ocean represents 99% of the habitable living space on the planet.



The ocean influences our weather, ultimately providing rain, drinking water and much of our food.



The ocean stores 50 times more carbon than our atmosphere



The ocean produces half our breathable oxygen.



Almost half the world's population lives within 60 miles of the coastline, nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of our biggest cities are by the ocean.



The ocean is home to nearly all living things from the smallest microorganisms to the largest mammals.

## Ocean Plastic Debris

### There are five giant garbage patches around the world

- One in the Indian Ocean, two in the Atlantic Ocean and two in the Pacific Ocean.
- The largest is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. It includes an estimated 1.8 trillion pieces of trash and covers an area twice the size of Texas.



About **26 billion pounds** (12 million metric tons) of plastic is dumped into the ocean each year – equal to nearly 100,000 blue whales.

- Most plastic takes **400 years to degrade**.
- By 2050, ocean plastic will outweigh all of the ocean's fish.

Plastic debris is found throughout the ocean, even in the most remote places including the deep sea:

- On the surface, plastic debris gets lodged in mangroves and coastal ecosystems.
- A plastic bag was found in the Mariana Trench, the deepest point in the ocean at about 36,000 feet below sea level (10,975 meters).
- Within the water column, lost and discarded fishing gear makes up around 10% (640,000 tonnes) of marine litter.
- An estimated 70 percent of ocean garbage sinks to the seafloor.
- Tiny pieces of plastic have been found in ice cores drilled in the Arctic.



# Ocean Plastic and Marine Life

## Microplastics have been found in fish.

- More than 3.5 billion people depend on the ocean for their primary source of food and fish, representing 20 percent of the animal protein consumed globally.
- The global seafood market reached a value of more than 160 billion U.S. dollars in 2019.



More than **1 million seabirds** die as a result of plastic per year. It is estimated that 99% of seabirds will have ingested plastic waste by 2050.



# Ocean Plastic and Climate Change

Between 1971 and 2011 the ocean absorbed more than 90% of the heat gained by the planet, according to a University of Oxford study.



Without our oceans, it's estimated that the average air temperature would be 122 degrees Fahrenheit.



Microplastics found in the ocean are reducing the growth of microalgae which impacts its photosynthesis efficiency.



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