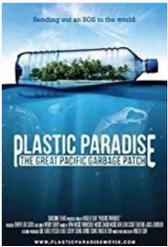


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In the UK just one third of discarded plastic is recycled, to varying degrees of efficacy. However, waste must be sorted carefully, without other mixed plastics in it, to be viable for recycling. What are the consequences? A recent study estimates that 90% of seabirds now have plastic in their stomachs. As environmentalist Robert Swan says, "The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it." It's vital for all of us as consumers to do something to help. Strike microbeads from your shopping list, too - product ingredients won't necessarily say 'microbeads', so look for polyethylene (PET), polypropylene (PP) and polymethylmethacrylate (PMMA), or check your product on websites such as beaththemicrobead.org. In addition to this, the smaller pieces, such as microbeads and micro-plastics, spread throughout our oceans, littering our beaches and swallowed by many forms of ocean wildlife. A further 50% is deposited in landfill sites or incinerated, but perhaps most concerning is that the remaining amount is washed into our seas, contributing to the 12 million tonnes of plastic that enters the oceans every year. And it's not just here that the recycling loop can break down - many companies that label their products as recyclable don't actually use the recycled product in their packaging. Reports on these vary but some accounts describe areas of debris in the North Pacific that are thousands of miles across. 3. Most are, but in practice this doesn't yet translate to a solution. These 'ocean plastics' are being swept by currents, or 'gyres', into rubbish 'patches'. Committing to avoid single-use plastics such as cutlery, straws, bags, single-serving packs and drinks bottles - in the UK we throw away a staggering 16 million of these a day. There are two main ways that the plastic we use lands in our seas and on our beaches. Why is it in the news at the moment? "Marine life doesn't distinguish between plastic from a face wash and plastic from washing detergent, so the ban should be extended to microplastics in any product that could be flushed down the drain," says Greenpeace UK senior oceans campaigner Louise Edge. The other source is microbeads, minute plastic particles that are used in toiletries, toothpastes and home-cleaning products. This is a worldwide problem but it is also very much on our doorstep. These also go down our drains and into the sewage system, which can't filter them out so this results in them being deposited in the sea. You may be able to find the same content in another format, or you may be able to find more information, at their web site. How does it end up in the sea? This content is created and maintained by a third party, and imported onto this page to help users provide their email addresses. This content is imported from Twitter. According to the British Plastics Federation, the UK uses more than five million tonnes of plastic each year, of which only an estimated 29% is currently being recovered or recycled. You can reduce your plastic footprint immediately by... 2. Since the introduction of the 5p levy on plastic bags in 2015, their use has dropped by 85% - from seven billion bags to 500 million in the first six months alone - subsequently slashing the number washing up on our beaches. This has been welcomed by campaigners, but many still feel that the ban, which doesn't cover microbeads in household products, hasn't gone far enough. The most common domestically recycled ones, PET and HDPE plastics, are collected by 92% of UK councils. Deep-sea animals that live 1,830 metres below the surface have also been discovered with it in their systems. Join in with clean-ups such as The Plastic Movement, an initiative set up by Cornish lifeguards to recycle all the plastic found on the county's beaches, or the MCS's annual Great British Beach Clean in September. The answer lies in a combination of legislation, commercial incentive and consumer awareness. As we know, plastic is cheap, versatile and durable - which is why it's an ideal packaging material. As a result the material is working its way into our food chain - when we eat seafood that has consumed microplastics, for example, trace amounts then end up in our stomachs. The CL Verdict The issue of ocean plastics can feel insurmountable but the truth is we can make a difference. The Government has pledged to ban microbeads in toiletries by the end of 2017. Subscribe here. Plastic litter is increasing by an alarming amount and a large part ends up in the sea, damaging the marine environment. The feature is from Country Living magazine. This isn't designed to process them, so they are washed into the sea, where they are eventually broken down into tiny pellets or 'micro-plastics'. However, all that convenience comes at a price - the world has produced more plastic in the past ten years than the previous 100 years combined, and the majority of this has been in the form of single-use items, such as drinks bottles, plastic bags and food packaging, which are immediately thrown away. 'Plastic' means any 'mouldable' material, but now generally refers to synthetic polymers made from oil. You may be able to find more information about this and similar content at plano.io But aren't all plastics recyclable? Small items such as plastic bags, disposable cutlery, food wrappers and bottle lids are either dropped as litter or blown out of rubbish bins or landfill sites into rivers, streams and down storm drains, eventually joining the sewage system. 1. What can be done about it? Can this tide of destruction ever be reversed? The Marine Conservation Society has found an increase in litter of around 140% through its beach surveys since 1994. Notable culprits are soft drinks brands, which obtain less than a tenth of their plastic bottles from recycled sources. How has this become a growing problem?

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