

# A sea of problems and polluting waste

*Billy and Aaron – Thursday 16 March 2017*

The Earth's oceans are one of the most expansive, diverse and precious resources we have and are still largely unexplored. Unfortunately, they are being threatened by pollution from people on land; this is causing some marine species to drop in number. This means that the entire oceanic ecosystem is under threat if we don't take action soon.



Before it was assumed that because the oceans are so vast and cover 71% of the Earth's surface, effects of dumping litter and waste into the sea would have little to no consequences. But as we have seen this is not the case and over the past decade the rate of pollution has accelerated dramatically.

80% of the pollution in the oceans comes from land based activities such as fertiliser runoff and the dumping of solid rubbish. Only 12% of the oil entering the oceans every year is caused by oil spills; 36% of the oceans oil intake is from down drains and river waste from large cities and industry.

"Today we're dumping 70 million tons of global-warming pollution into the environment, and tomorrow we will dump more, and there is no effective worldwide response. Until we start sharply reducing global-warming pollution, I will feel that I have failed." Al Gore – American Politician and Environmentalist, 45<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United States. ([www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/pollution.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/pollution.html))

Plastic waste, which decomposes very slowly, can be mistaken by marine life for food, this causes issues such as: blocked breathing passages and stomachs. The species' most affected are dolphins, turtles, seals and whales. This plastic waste can also be washed onto the coastlines, polluting beaches and coastal habitats. This can lead to beach closures and even outbreaks of human disease, so it's not just the wildlife that suffers, we do too!

Actions are starting to be taken by many wildlife trusts such as WWF (World Wildlife Fund) and most governments have passed laws to protect these ecosystems from the dumping of waste. An example of this is the London Dumping Convention of 1972 and its amended treaty of 1996. This prohibits the dumping of the most toxic materials into the sea. One of the main problems is not necessarily new waste being dumped, but the already dumped toxic materials sitting at the bottom of the world oceans, contaminating the waters. As the late Jacques Cousteau said: "Water and

air, the two essential fluids on which all life depends, have become global garbage cans.”

All of this shows that while we are doing what we can to save the Oceans, we’ve only scratched the surface and much more needs to be done before it is too late to protect these vital assets to life on Earth.