

'The BIG Questions'

Lecture Series



Our plastic oceans: sources, risks and possible solutions to marine litter

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Venue: Lecture Hall, GEOMAR Westshore

Plastic is one of the best materials ever invented, but it doesn't belong in the ocean. Large pieces of it can entangle turtles, birds, sharks, and other marine animals. Tiny bits of plastic, the result of the degrading actions of waves and Sun, can linger around for decades; once they get into the food chain, they too can adversely affect marine life. Many of us — scientists and concerned citizens alike — think that humankind should try to clean up oceanic plastic. But before we can best start the process, we need to understand how plastic moves through the ocean and how and where it poses most risk.

In this presentation, I will discuss how ocean currents move plastic around the globe, and how the floating plastic eventually accumulates in the infamous garbage patches in the middle of our oceans. I will show where plastic poses most risk to marine life such as seabirds and turtles. All of this feeds directly into the discussion on solutions and mitigation strategies to marine litter, whether they be engineering, policy or societal.

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