

Marine Litter and Wildlife

When litter enters the marine environment it becomes a threat to habitats and wildlife. Large fishing nets and ropes that have been lost or dumped at sea can continue fishing and this is known as ghost fishing. Plastic items in the water can break down into smaller pieces due to wave action and sun degradation. These pieces of plastic can become so small that they form a soupy consistency in the water and become easily ingested, entering the marine food chain. Litter can become entangled in fins, flippers, necks and mouths causing suffocation or injury to animals. Plants that become covered by litter can't access their energy source, sunlight. Floating litter can act as a mode of transport for harmful species or diseases to move from one area to another.



Carry out a research project on **Marine Litter and Wildlife**.

Some ideas you could investigate:

- The types of litter that cause harm to marine life.
- How litter affects marine plants and animals, and what types are most affected.
- How litter breakdowns in the marine environment.
- Existing projects, ideas and initiatives which try to deal with issue of marine litter. How can you help?

Resources:

<http://www.unep.org/regionalseas/marinelitter/about/effects/default.asp>

<http://www.kimointernational.org/MarineLitter.aspx>

http://oceantoday.noaa.gov/trashtalk_impacts/

<http://cleancoasts.org/marine-litter/>