

How beach pollution harms marine life

With more people visiting South Africa's beaches in summer, this comes with an increased amount of litter left on the beach. This, in turn, harms marine life and causes a massive environmental impact.



Image source: Gallo/Getty

According to the Two Oceans Aquarium, there are more than 51 trillion pieces of microplastic in our oceans. Plastic pollution comes in many forms with straws, plastic bottles and plastic packaging being some of the many things that people leave behind after a visit to the beach. Many of those who fish also leave behind discarded gear that end up in the ocean. Here's how this pollution affects our oceans:

- **Marine life mistake it for food:** In December 2018, the Two Oceans Aquarium rescued a green sea turtle and had to remove a plastic bag from its throat.
- **Animals get tangled up in the debris:** Abandoned fishing gear is known as “ghost gear” and suffocate and kill marine life, this according to World Animal Protection. The organisation claims that a whale trapped in ghost gear will suffer, suffocate and starve for up to six months before eventual death.
- **Coral reefs are dying:** According to the United Nations Environment Programme, over 50% of the world's coral have been lost due to a number of reasons including plastic pollution, which is currently smothering over 90% of the coral in the ocean.

Pieter Twine, general manager of MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet, is passionate about the environment and believes that everyone can do their part in helping to conserve the ocean and all that live within it.

“Over the years, working at MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet, I have been able to see how important an organisation such as the Two Oceans Aquarium Education Foundation is when it comes to protecting our oceans,” says Twine. “This organisation as well as others such as SANCCOB go to great lengths to ensure that our marine life is well taken care of and that the public are constantly informed and updated on how they can do their part to ensure that we reduce pollution and keep our sea creatures from harm.”

To become a supporter of organisations such as the Two Oceans Aquarium Education Foundation and SANCCOB, sign up for free as a MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet supporter at www.myschool.co.za.

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