Marine Plastic Pollution As A Worldwide Problem

Oceans cover about 75% of our planet, which equals to more than two-thirds of the earth's surface. If you think about it, a lot of the resources that we need in order to survive come from this large body of water. For example, marine plants produce 70% of the air we breathe in. And the dark, deep, blue waters of the sea is home to many beautiful and mysterious creatures, including some of the world's largest ones.

The ocean provides us with food, jobs, and life. But what do we give in return? Around 8 million tons of plastic debris enters the ocean each year, killing the precious marine animals that live in the sea along with their natural habitats. Scientists predict that by the year 2050, plastic utilization will reach to nearly a shocking amount of 400 million tons per year. Marine plastic pollution is a major environmental concern (Law, 2010). It's one of the greatest threats to humanity and nature. The accumulation of plastic waste in our oceans and on our beaches has led to a global catastrophe. All of which can start from just one plastic water bottle.

Plastic pollution is caused from the buildup of plastic substance waste. Plastic debris, as well as any other trash on this planet, cannot decompose, or in other words, bio-degrade. And it can remain in the ocean's current for up to 1,000 years. Fish as well as many other marine animals that breathe through their gills are progressively at risk from tiny particles of plastic debris. Not only does plastic pollution harm many different species of fish, it also takes a toll on humans due to the fact that we consume fish. When eating seafood, you are actually consuming plastic. The higher the food chain, the more likely you are to be consuming larger amounts of plastic. Around 25-30% of the fish that we eat have visible amounts of plastic in their bodies. The majority of the sea mammals in the sea have all been affected by plastic pollution in some way. Microplastics, which are tiny bits of plastic that have been broken down, are consumed by plankton, the smallest organisms at the bottom of the food chain. Plankton in turn are consumed by small fish as well as some different types of larger fish. And as the food chain goes on, plastic makes its way from the bottom to the top. And as we eat seafood, the poison from the plastic that has entered the food chain imperils human health. It can leak out of the microplastics and can cause cancer, birth defects and many other diseases.

Commercial fishing is a necessity for many parts of the world, and a lot of people consume fish on a daily basis. However, commercial fishing has not been very helpful when It comes to solving the problems of plastic pollution. Fishnets that are tossed out into the sea can cause some major issues among marine wildlife. Numberless amounts of sea turtles are injured or killed every year from being tangled in abandoned fishing nets or other types of plastic pollutions. Turtles as well as many other oceanic species can also consume small bits of plastic debris, mistaking it as food. Ingesting sharp plastic bits can harm the turtle's internal organs and plastic shopping bags can cause intestinal blockages, causing the poor turtles to be unable to eat, which leads to starvation.

Dolphins and whales may also unintentionally swallow plastic waste, thinking that they have caught food to eat. Microplastics may sneak into a whale's mouth, given that they have rather largemouths. And while dolphins hunt for food, they also may accidentally catch plastic along with their prey and eat both.

Plastic debris also sadly kills a numerous number of seabirds every year. Studies show that more than a million seabirds die every year. Turns out that the plastic waste releases a scent that many seabirds find appealing. In the mind of the bird, if it smells like food, then it must be food, right? Little do they know that what they're consuming is slowly killing them inside. They may also unintentionally consume plastic while diving into the sea to catch their daily meal of fish, squid, and other little sea creatures.

So, as we can see, many animals end up mistaking the plastic we dispose of for food, and can get hurt or even worse, die due to our litter. These are just but a few of the many marine animals that are severely harmed by plastic pollution. Animals are taking the consequences of our wrongdoing. And because of all this, organisms are slowly dying, which is causing the food chain to be thrown into disarray.

Even though people have been well educated on the fact that our ocean is very much polluted, the pollution has not slowed down. Rather, it has increased. As humans, we have been given the ocean, one of earth's greatest and largest ecosystems. But in return, we have contaminated it with our waste.

So, what can we do about it? Plastic pollution has received growing recognition as an issue of global concern, including the question of how to regulate it at the international level (Carlini, 2018). There are many things that we can do to help prevent plastic pollution. Lifestyle changes, although small, can still make a difference. Recycling, for example. Recycling your plastic products reduces the amount of trash that is sent to landfills and helps keep plastic products out of the ocean currents, preventing even more "new" trash from being sent into the ocean waters. We can also reduce the amount of single-use plastic products that we use on a daily basis, such as plastic straws, cups, forks, knives and grocery bags. We should try our best to always use the re-usable versions. Reusable water bottles are a good start in helping the environment. More than 60 million plastic water bottles end up in landfills every single day. By using reusable water bottles, we can help reduce the number of plastic bottles that are being thrown out every day.

Another thing that we can do to help our sea is participate or organizing a beach cleanup. Not only is this a great chance to meet new friends, or gather family members together, it's also a great way to help the ocean remove the plastic trash by the shore, preventing it from being washed into the sea and harming animals. And of course, spread the word around! Tell your family members and friends. Start by making small changes. Set an example and educate them on how we are harming the marine ecosystem, and what we can do to help save it.

Though it may seem like it, not all hope is lost. We're not the only ones who are concerned about our oceans. People all over the world have finally recognized the severity of plastic pollution and have stepped up to help make a difference. The California Senate passed a proposal that forbids the use of plastic microbeads in cosmetic and certain hygiene products such as shampoos and soaps. The Ocean Cleanup is a non-government organization founded in Delft, Netherlands. Their mission is to develop and launch technology into the ocean to extract the plastic waste (Roland Holst, 2019). The Tasmanian town of Coles Bay was the first to ban the use of disposable plastic bags in Australia, 2003. By December 2018, the usage of plastic bags has dropped down to an estimated 80%, leading to 1.5 billion fewer plastic bags nationwide (Measham, 2018). Every country existing is suffering from the consequences of plastic pollution. Towns and cities all over the world are affected by it.

In conclusion, marine plastic pollution is a worldwide problem that is causing many creatures to live in pain. Oceans produce half of the air that we breathe in and is our greatest water source. Many of the things we use in everyday life comes from the ocean in some way. What would we do one day if all the fish in the ocean dies and is instead filled with filthy trash? Without the ocean, we surely wouldn’t be able to survive. This is why it is so important that we do our best to take good care of our ocean and beaches and raise awareness of this vital situation. We live on one planet and we have one ocean. The different oceans around the world are all connected. We have to appreciate the ocean we were given. We should care for our ocean instead of dumping our trash into it. If humans continue to do so, one day, the ocean may be no more. Everyone on earth would be affected. No matter where we are in this planet, there is always a way that we can contribute to saving our planet. Together, step by step, we can make a difference together. So, the next time you go grocery shopping, don’t forget to bring your own reusable paper or cloth bag!