



# Impact on wildlife

**Plastic pollution has a really negative impact on the natural world. Did you know that plastic in the ocean impacts all species, big and small - from marine mammals like whales and dolphins to the smallest fish and plankton.**

## How does plastic pollution impact marine life?

### Entanglement

Fish, birds and turtles can become entangled in discarded fishing nets and other plastic items and drown.

Check out this website - it shows that over 2,000 animal species are known to die from plastic, or be affected by it. And that number is constantly increasing.



[litterbase.awi.de/interaction](https://litterbase.awi.de/interaction)

### Eating plastic

Animals often eat plastic because they can't tell the difference between plastic and food. Lots of animals of all kinds are effected, including plankton, shellfish, turtles and whales. Whales can accidentally scoop up mouthfuls of plastic when they are eating.

What do these marine animals eat?



### Plastic enters the food chain

When an animal eats plastic it can stay in its body. When one animal eats another, these plastics can move through the food chain. We are still learning about the impact the these plastics are having on animals, including us! For example, we already know that this process can concentrate toxins and chemicals.

### Did you know

Balloons can travel thousands of miles and pollute the most remote and pristine places? When an animal swallows a balloon, it can stop it from being able to eat/digest food, leading to starvation.

### Pollution causes threats to marine ecosystems

When plastic gets caught on corals the likelihood of disease outbreak increases from 4% to 89%. That means corals that come into contact with plastic are 20 times more likely to get sick than those that don't. Scientists have some theories around why plastic-contaminated reefs are more likely to get sick. Part of the problem is that plastic can block light and oxygen from reaching the coral. These are two things which corals need to survive.

### Did you know!

**It's estimated that plastic takes 450-1000 years to biodegrade?**