

If plastic ends up where it's not meant to be, it will stay there for years and years. Until eventually the weather breaks it down into smaller and smaller pieces. Of plastic.

A huge amount of this plastic eventually ends up in the ocean.





dropped into rivers

from storm drains

dropped on the beach

lost fishing equipment

dropped from boats



Some of it floats to the top of the ocean and stays there.



And some of it sinks to the bottom of the ocean and stays there.

All of this is a really big problem for animals.





Some of them get tied up in it.

Some of them try  
to eat the plastic.

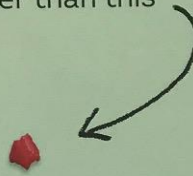
Because of circular currents in the oceans, the bits of plastic have collected together, creating five enormous garbage patches full of plastic.

The most famous is called the North Pacific Garbage Patch. It is currently THREE TIMES the size of France.



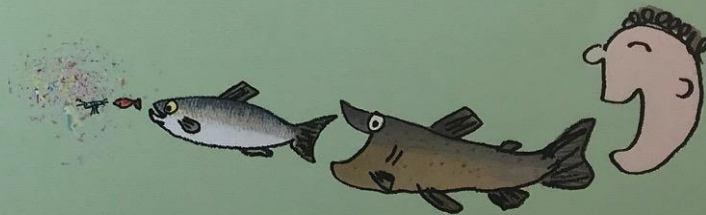


Most of the plastic in these patches has broken up into pieces that are so small you can hardly see them. A microplastic is any piece smaller than this



These are even more of a problem than big bits. Animals think they are food, so they eat them. The microplastics fill up their tummies, leaving no room for proper food.

And the plastics often carry and contain nasty toxins, so if a small fish eats them, it can be poisoned. And so might a bigger fish that eats the small fish for dinner. And then all the way up the food chain!



Some scientists think there will soon be more plastic than fish in the sea.