

## How Can you Help?

- ✓ Dispose of litter in bins provided, or take it with you.
- ✓ Choose to buy products wrapped in environmentally friendly packaging, say **no** to plastic bags.
- ✓ Make an effort to recycle cans, paper, glass
- ✓ Cut all plastic loops (e.g. Six-pac loop rings) before disposal, to prevent wildlife becoming entangled.
- ✓ Try to help with beach cleaning projects.
- ✓ Make your voice heard! Vote for the greenest candidate.
- ✓ Tell your friends about the hazards of 'small garbage' on the sea and coastal environment.
- ✓ Help and support local conservation organisation to protect wildlife and nature.
- ✓ Drink tap water, using a filter if necessary.

*To produce one million plastic bottles, 732,000 tons of greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere!*

### HOW LONG DO THEY TAKE TO DECOMPOSE AT SEA ?

Glass bottle	1 million years
Fishing line	600 years
Plastic bottle	450 years
Aluminium can	80-200 years
Plastic cup	50 years
Plastic bag	10-20 years
Cigarette filter	1-5 years
Newspaper	6 weeks

**Syria: This was once a prime nesting beach**  
© 1991 MEDASSET Photo: M. Kasperek/MEDASSET



Municipality of Athens, Greece

Founded in 1988, **MEDASSET** is an international charity working for the study and conservation of sea turtles and their habitats throughout the Mediterranean, through scientific research, environmental education, political lobbying and raising public awareness. It has received several international and national awards and distinctions.

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**International:** Annual contribution UK£10 (where applicable please allow for exchange commission and bank expenses). Online payments and donations can be made by credit or debit card via our secure website: [www.medasset.org](http://www.medasset.org).

**Greece:** Annual contribution €15 (€9 for students). Please deposit your contribution to Alpha Bank (account number: 124-00-2786-006396, Merlin branch, Athens, providing your name).

Additional donations are more than welcome! "Friends" receive all our publications free.

**Thank you for your support!**



**MEDASSET**

The Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles

## 'The Deadly Illusion'

*Now you see it  
Now you don't!*





# "Small Garbage" ... The Deadly Illusion

Every year in addition to the **150 million people** living along the Mediterranean coastline, over **200 million tourists** contribute to over **15 million tons of garbage**. Close to **40 million tons of garbage** is produced in the Mediterranean and 10% of this ends up in the sea! Garbage is becoming an overwhelming threat to this fragile

ecosystem as the waters of this beautiful "enclosed sea" take more than **100 years** to renew.



Photo: D. Caute/MEDASSET



"Small Garbage", the small pieces of personal waste, casually discarded on beaches or directly into the sea have devastating effects on the marine environment.

"Small Garbage" collected from a 150m stretch of an important nesting beach in Greece.

Each year it is estimated that **6.4 million tons of 'small' and 'large' garbage** is dumped into the world's oceans and seas. Besides looking unsightly, garbage represents a considerable hazard to both people and marine wildlife. Entanglement and ingestion of "Small Garbage", accounts for the deaths of over **100,000 sea mammals and sea turtles** in the world each year.

According to UNEP, about **46,000 pieces of plastic float on every square mile of the world's oceans!**



The most common and destructive objects are made from the extremely durable, lightweight, versatile and inexpensive **plastic!** With varying sizes, colours and shapes, they are often mistaken for food by sea creatures and sea birds.

Floating plastic pellets (a by-product of plastic

manufacturing) resemble fish eggs, and plastic bags in the water look like jellyfish, a favourite food of sea turtles.

It is estimated that worldwide **500 billion to one trillion plastic bags are produced each year!** Billions end up in the sea and on the shores. Turtles who mistakenly eat them may suffocate; their digestive tracts may block causing them to feel full, although in reality they may be starving to death! Air bubbles in plastics consumed can prevent turtles from diving for food.

One turtle found in Greece had nearly **10m<sup>2</sup> of plastic in its stomach!**



Photo: Melbourne Zoo, Australia

Sea turtle emerges from the sea to nest with partially ingested plastic hanging from her mouth

Photo: F. Lantig/CMC-WA,DC



Rubbish collected at sea by an Albatross to build its nest

Plastics contain harmful toxic compounds, such as PCBs, which once ingested, can affect reproduction and the animal's natural ability to resist disease. Toxic substances can remain in their body, so when predators eat sea creatures these substances are passed up the food chain, becoming more concentrated each time (a process called bio-accumulation). Predators, like marine mammals and turtles, at the top of the food chain are affected the most. Declining seal populations and increasing occurrence of miscarriages have been linked to PCB poisoning.

A discarded cigarette packet poses multiple hazards: Firstly the plastic pull strip and wrapper, look like small jellyfish, then there is the foil, which resembles a fish and the empty carton itself further pollutes.

Unsightly cigarette butts absorb toxins like a sponge and appear in their **Hundreds of thousands** on beaches across the Mediterranean, with unknown consequences on marine life.

We treat our seas like a waste bin, an ashtray, a toilet, assuming we have disposed of our garbage, when in reality we have only moved it elsewhere... **The Deadly Illusion!**

Please care about how you dispose of your waste, as you may be condemning an innocent victim, often an endangered species, to a slow and painful death...

Photo: G. Balazs/CMC



A kilo of plastic objects was found in the stomach of a sea turtle

