



OCEAN PRESERVATION: WHAT CAN WE DO TO PRESERVE IT?

CASE STUDY/INSIGHT

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Ocean is an important constituent of earth covering almost 70% of the earth's surface. Oceans are important sources of food, income, employment to human beings, apart from being home to several marine plants and animals. Oceans play a major role in carbon sequestration; capturing almost one-third of the carbon dioxide produced by anthropogenic activities. Mangroves and coral reefs provide valuable protection against extreme weather conditions such as storms and floods.

Such majestic water bodies are prone to pollution and degradation due to various human activities. Oil spills have been one of the major pollutions in oceans causing disastrous impacts on marine ecosystem, environment and economy. Oil in ocean destroys the insulating ability of marine animals and birds, making them vulnerable to temperature fluctuations. It is painful to see the pictures of birds getting soaked in oil, struggling to get back to their normal life. Marine birds and animals ingest oil, which result in improper functioning of their body leading to death. Clean-up and recovery of oil spills is very difficult, expensive and time consuming. So the ship owners must take responsibility to avoid oil spills. They should take all possible contingency measures to prevent oil spills and employ highly experienced captains in their ships.

Another major pressure on ocean is the plastic pollution. The sources of marine plastic are both land and ocean based. Land based plastics are from beach visitors, industrial activities, runoff and illegal dumping of wastes. Ocean based plastic wastes are from fishing and nautical activities. The plastic waste inside the ocean and on the beaches have detrimental effects on marine ecosystem, food safety, human health and tourism.



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Marine animals ingest plastics mistaking to be their food and die out of indigestion and blockage to their breathing pipes. Marine plastics also lead to trapping of animals which leads to suffocation, injuries and death. Plastics wastes that we throw in the ocean have been disturbing the normal life of marine animals leading to injuries and fatalities. Also, micro plastics in sea food & salt enter food chain and result in ending up on our plates. Could we imagine eating plastics and what its impacts will be on our health? Plastics are said to be carcinogenic. Accumulated micro plastics in food cause developmental, reproductive, neurological and immunological disorders. Does it look good to have plastic litters on the beaches, when we visit them? The answer would be no. Plastic wastes dumped and scattered along the beaches reduces tourism and affects tourism based income.

Oceans are a part of our lives. It is everyone's responsibility to protect and safeguard it. Let us pledge not to litter in oceans and beaches. Let us pledge to throw the wastes in dustbins. Let us strongly refuse the usage of single use plastics. Wherever possible, let us start using cloth bags and avoid using plastics. Let us starting following the 3R's – Reduce, Reuse and Recycle of plastics in our everyday life. During weekends individuals can come together as a community and contribute in cleaning the beaches. We can also join with the organizations that work towards cleaning oceans. Also, we should follow the waste management rules strictly. Next time when we see someone littering, let us spend 1 minute of our precious time to say no to litter and ask them to put in trash bin. Let us understand this moral responsibility and pledge towards conserving our oceans.

