

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION



Causes of environmental pollution

- ❑ Pollution of the atmosphere by industrial and exhaust fumes
- ❑ Pollution of the sea by sewage and waste resulting in the extinction of many species of fishes, birds and plants
- ❑ The destruction of soil and subsoil by chemicals
- ❑ Plastic pollution



Plastic Pollution

- ▣ Plastic pollution is the accumulation of plastic objects and particles (i.e. plastic bottles, bags) in the Earth's environment that negatively affects humans, wildlife and their habitat.
- ▣ Plastic pollution can degrade land, waterways and oceans. It is estimated that 1.1 to 8.8 million tones of plastic waste enters the ocean from coastal communities each year. Some researchers suggest that by 2050 there could be more plastic than fish in the oceans by weight.
- ▣ But, oceans are not the only place that is exposed to plastic pollution. It is said that terrestrial plastic pollution is much higher than aquatic plastic pollution.
- ▣ We should note that the average person in a modern society breathes in and drinks hundreds of tiny plastic particles daily.

Plastic pollutants & size

▣ Microplastics:

Plastic pieces between 2 mm and 5 mm in size. It is estimated that 10% of the plastics in the ocean are microplastics, posing health risks for marine life.



▣ Macroplastics:

Plastic pieces larger than 20 mm. (i.e plastic bags, fishing nets). Macroplastics are often found in ocean waters, and can have a serious impact on marine life.

For example, fishing nets continue to kill marine organisms even after they have been abandoned (“Ghost nets”).



Negative Impact of Covid-19 on nature

- The last two and a half years, Covid-19 pandemic has brought new “habits”: Masks, self-tests, antiseptics and gloves have become really necessary but often their disposal has not been the right one.
- These single use plastic items often end up in the environment with negative effects.



Positive impact of Covid-19 on the environment...

- reduced electricity demand by 30% or by 12-20% in the big cities
- improved air quality
- reduced the use of fossil fuels because:

the demand for international and domestic flights and the use of other means of transport (ships, railway services, buses, trucks and cars) has been reduced

...but just for a little while. ☹️

No easy solutions for plastic pollution

Plastic is used in every aspect of human life and it has not proven easy to find alternatives.

We should focus on preventing improper disposal and on limiting the use of certain plastic items.

I.e. Various fees or bans on foamed food containers and plastic shopping bags are now common. Alternatives (i.e. wooden, paper made) for some single use plastic products are being produced.



Doing our bit while hiking/trekking...

Any of us can help protect the environment. Even small actions matter:

- ❖ Try reusable products (i.e. flasks, fabric bags)
- ❖ Pick up litter and recycle (if possible)
- ❖ Plant trees
- ❖ Use rechargeable batteries



References:

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plastic_pollution
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7859094/>
3. <https://www.britannica.com/science/plastic-pollution/Plastic-pollution-in-oceans-and-on-land#ref285880>

