

## LUCA'S GUIDE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

by Luca Massoni Grade 8



Plastic. We see it all the time. On the ground, in the sea, everywhere. Everybody knows the saying 'Reduce. Reuse. Recycle,' but how much of our plastics actually get recycled? According to NPR less than 10% of all plastics have been recycled. All of the waste that never gets recycled is just dumped into the ocean, or buried. These plastics take many years to decompose, which is too slow for the environment to keep up. In this edition, I will specifically focus on the oceans and what plastic does to it.

First of all, plastics have an incredible impact on the ocean's ecosystems. At least 14 million tons of this harmful invader end up in the ocean every year. These common plastics we use all the time get broken down into microscopic pieces of plastic called microplastics. As stated previously, these plastics take a long time to break down, so when these plastics get ingested, plastic builds up and affected animals eventually die from starvation. For example, if a fish were to eat a certain amount of microplastics they would get trapped in the stomach. This is because the fish's stomach acid cannot break down the plastic due to its durability. This plastic stays in its stomach and other food cannot get digested due to the blockage leading to eventual starvation. Due to their small size, animals accidentally ingest them all of the time. But how does this affect us?

It actually affects us quite a lot. If animals are dying via plastic constantly, this will have an extreme effect on fish yield which is the primary source of livelihood and diet of over 3 billion people. But this is the least of human worries. The chemicals that go into the production of plastics when mixed with seawater for too long turn into toxic contaminants, says International Union for Conservation of Nature. If humans eat contaminated seafood which is most likely a widespread problem it can lead to a world of problems for their endocrine system as well as neurological disorders in humans and wildlife. As for the plastics that wind up on shores, tourism for the area is hit hard. Not to mention, the production and incineration of plastic is awful for the environment. This is because of CO<sub>2</sub> and methane release but that is a discussion for another issue.

The question is, what do we do? A normal awareness article like this would say that people should do their part and recycle, but as stated previously only a tiny percentage of this actually gets recycled. And even if everyone kept on trying to be mindful, that wouldn't stop plastic corporations from mass producing this stuff. There have been efforts in the past to go against these corporations but to no avail. The U.S. has finally joined the Paris Climate Agreement and hopefully the World Government can stop plastic production before it's too late.