

Birds' stomachs too full of plastic to eat

25th June, 2018



A BBC team has filmed disturbing footage of the devastating impact plastic pollution is having on seabirds in the Tasman Sea, which is between Australia and New Zealand. The film crew was working on the remote

Lord Howe Island for a new wildlife documentary called "Drowning in Plastic". They filmed many birds that had died because their stomachs were literally too full of plastic to be able to eat any food. The birds starved to death because there was no room in their stomachs for food. The documentary team filmed marine biologists working on the island to try and save the birds. The scientists captured hundreds of chicks and physically removed plastic from their stomachs to give them a chance of survival.

Marine biologist Jennifer Lavers explained what was happening to the birds. She said the birds were predators that will eat anything. She said: "When you put plastic in the ocean, it means they have no ability to detect plastic from non-plastic, so they eat it." Adult birds feed the plastic to their chicks, oblivious to what they are feeding them. Professor Lavers lamented that most of the plastic is "entirely preventable". She said: "We find plastic clothes pegs and plastic tooth brushes. Those could easily be swapped out for other materials - aluminium or wood. My own toothbrush is made of bamboo." TV presenter Liz Bonnin said: "We saw...90 pieces of plastic come out of one of the chicks."

Sources: bbc.com / smh.com / mercopress.com

Writing

Plastic should be banned. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

BBC / impact / plastic / pollution / wildlife / documentary / stomach / island / birds / biologist / predators / ability / chicks / preventable / toothbrush / materials / bamboo

True / False

- A documentary about seabirds was made by National Geographic. T / F
- The documentary looked at seabird's on Australia's east coast. T / F
- The documentary is called "Drowning in Plastic". T / F
- The researchers could not remove the plastic from the chicks' stomachs. T / F
- The birds in the documentary were not predators. T / F
- The seabirds did not know whether or not what they ate was plastic. T / F
- A scientist said she used a bamboo and not a plastic toothbrush. T / F
- A TV presenter counted 90 pieces of plastic in a chick's stomach. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 1. disturbing | a. actually |
| 2. crew | b. exchanged |
| 3. literally | c. opportunity |
| 4. save | d. notice |
| 5. chance | e. rescue |
| 6. explained | f. worrying |
| 7. detect | g. unaware |
| 8. oblivious | h. bits |
| 9. swapped | i. team |
| 10. pieces | j. described |

Discussion – Student A

- How damaging is plastic to the environment?
- What can we do to reduce our use of plastic?
- What would it be like to be on the documentary team?
- To what degree are we "drowning in plastic"?
- How sad is this news?
- Should anyone be punished for the plastic problem?
- Who has the biggest responsibility to reduce plastic use?
- What do you think of the chances of the birds surviving?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. filmed disturbing footage of the | a. plastic |
| 2. The film crew was working on the | b. of survival |
| 3. The birds starved | c. is made of bamboo |
| 4. physically removed | d. to detect plastic |
| 5. give them a chance | e. remote Lord Howe Island |
| 6. the birds were predators | f. preventable |
| 7. they have no ability | g. to death |
| 8. oblivious to what they | h. devastating impact |
| 9. entirely | i. that will eat anything |
| 10. My own toothbrush | j. are feeding them |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What do marine biologists do?
- How can we better protect seabirds?
- How easy is it to live without plastic?
- Will you buy bamboo toothbrushes from now?
- Why is plastic so damaging?
- Is it too late to reverse the damage done by plastic to wildlife?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Spelling

- disturbing oogtafe
- the devastating pmitac
- their stomachs were rylaitell too full of plastic
- marine stliibsogo
- scientists rectpadu hundreds of chicks
- give them a chance of uislrvva
- the birds were dtaporsre
- no ability to dceett plastic
- oiuolbsvi to what they are feeding
- the plastic is erinytle preventable
- Those could easily be dpspwea
- made of omabob

Answers – Synonym Match

| | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. f | 2. i | 3. a | 4. e | 5. c |
| 6. j | 7. d | 8. g | 9. b | 10. h |

Role Play

Role A – Toothbrushes

You think toothbrushes are the biggest plastic things that should be replaced. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the last of these to be replaced of these (and why): water bottles, pipes or straws.

Role B – Water Bottles

You think water bottles are the biggest plastic things that should be replaced. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the last of these to be replaced of these (and why): toothbrushes, pipes or straws.

Role C – Pipes

You think pipes are the biggest plastic things that should be replaced. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the last of these to be replaced of these (and why): water bottles, toothbrushes or straws.

Role D – Straws

You think straws are the biggest plastic things that should be replaced. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the last of these to be replaced of these (and why): water bottles, pipes or toothbrushes.

Speaking – Plastic goods

Rank these with your partner. Put the plastic goods that should be replaced most at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|----------|-----------------|
| • chairs | • toothbrushes |
| • bowls | • water bottles |
| • pipes | • car interiors |
| • straws | • CDs / DVDs |

Answers – True False

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a | F | b | F | c | T | d | F | e | F | f | T | g | T | h | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.