

## Balloons deadliest plastic for seabirds

24th March, 2019



Scientists have made an alarming discovery about what kinds of pollution are most harmful to seabirds. A study led by Australia's Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies discovered that balloons were the deadliest kind of plastic

for seabirds. The research team said balloons were 32 times more likely to kill seabirds than hard plastics. They found that while balloons and other soft plastics accounted for only 5 per cent of plastics ingested, they were responsible for more than 40 per cent of deaths among seabirds. Lead researcher Lauren Roman said: "Hard plastic fragments may pass quickly through the gut, but soft plastics are more likely to become compacted and cause fatal obstructions."

The study examined 1,733 dead seabirds and found that more than a quarter of the deaths were attributed to eating plastic. Ms Roman explained that plastic is becoming an increasing threat to seabirds. She said: "Marine debris ingestion is now a globally recognized threat....We suggest that reducing the presence of balloons and balloon fragments in the ocean would directly reduce seabird mortalities." LiveScience.com said: "With an estimated 280,000 tons of floating marine debris worldwide, about half of all seabird species are thought to ingest plastic on a daily basis. Birds are especially likely to swallow dangerous balloons because they closely resemble squid, according to the study."

Sources:  
cosmosmagazine.com / livescience.com health24.com

## Writing

All balloons and other "party" plastics should be banned. Discuss.

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

scientists / alarming / discovery / plastic / seabirds / responsible / researcher / fatal / quarter / eating / threat / presence / mortalities / marine / debris / species / squid

## True / False

- a) Scientists started alarm clock bells ringing about a discovery. T / F
- b) Research was done on seabirds in the North Pole. T / F
- c) Balloons accounted for over 40% of plastic-related seabird deaths. T / F
- d) A researcher said hard plastics pass more slowly through the gut. T / F
- e) Around 25% of dead seabirds in the research died because of plastic. T / F
- f) A researcher said marine debris is becoming less of a threat to birds. T / F
- g) There are about 280,000 tons of debris floating on our oceans. T / F
- h) Seabirds could eat balloons because they think they look like squid. T / F

## Synonym Match

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

- |                         |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| <b>1. alarming</b>      | a. probable  |
| <b>2. harmful</b>       | b. look like |
| <b>3. likely</b>        | c. consumed  |
| <b>4. ingested</b>      | d. growing   |
| <b>5. fatal</b>         | e. damaging  |
| <b>6. attributed to</b> | f. deaths    |
| <b>7. increasing</b>    | g. globally  |
| <b>8. mortalities</b>   | h. worrying  |
| <b>9. worldwide</b>     | i. pinned on |
| <b>10. resemble</b>     | j. deadly    |

## Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) Why do we need balloons in this world?
- c) How can we educate people about the danger of balloons?
- d) How much of a threat are humans to birds?
- e) What can be done to clean up marine debris?
- f) What will you do from today to use less plastic?
- g) How do you feel when you see a beach covered in plastic?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

## Phrase Match

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. Scientists have made an alarming         | a. of deaths                    |
| 2. balloons were 32 times more              | b. closely resemble squid       |
| 3. responsible for more than 40 per cent    | c. obstructions                 |
| 4. fragments may pass quickly               | d. mortalities                  |
| 5. cause fatal                              | e. to seabirds                  |
| 6. a quarter of the deaths were             | f. discovery                    |
| 7. plastic is becoming an increasing threat | g. likely to kill               |
| 8. reduce seabird                           | h. debris                       |
| 9. 280,000 tons of floating marine          | i. through the gut              |
| 10. swallow dangerous balloons because they | j. attributed to eating plastic |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of balloons?
- Should governments ban all plastics?
- How sad is the sight of a bird killed by a balloon?
- What should governments now do about this problem?
- What could you do to reduce the use of plastics?
- How much plastic is there in our food chain?
- Should balloons be banned?
- Would you like to do research in Antarctica?

## Spelling

- Scientists have made an alarming coedrvisy
- Institute for Marine and traAticnc Studies
- plastics noeuactdc for only 5%
- Hard plastic smrgtafne
- more likely to become cmdctoepa
- cause fatal outncrobssit
- becoming an increasing tteahr
- now a globally cedrenzoig ...
- 280,000 tons of floating marine rsibed
- thought to gnites plastic
- likely to waollsw dangerous balloons
- they closely mesblere squid

### Answers – Synonym Match

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

## Role Play

### Role A – Balloons

You think balloons are the worst pollutants. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as polluting. Also, tell the others which is the least damaging of these (and why): glitter, bottles or carrier bags.

### Role B – Glitter

You think glitter are the worst pollutants. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as polluting. Also, tell the others which is the least damaging of these (and why): balloons, bottles or carrier bags.

### Role C – Bottles

You think bottles are the worst pollutants. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as polluting. Also, tell the others which is the least damaging of these (and why): glitter, balloons or carrier bags.

### Role D – Carrier Bags

You think carrier bags are the worst pollutants. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as polluting. Also, tell the others which is the least damaging of these (and why): glitter, bottles or balloons.

## Speaking – Plastics

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| • food trays     | • balloons |
| • carrier bags   | • bottles  |
| • food packaging | • glitter  |
| • toys           | • pens     |

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.