

Shocking photo shows Caribbean Sea being 'choked to death by human waste'

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Caroline Power posted the photos of the waste onto her Facebook account. Photo / Facebook
Daily Telegraph UK
By: Mark Molloy

A photographer has captured the damage being done to the planet's oceans with a shocking "sea of plastic and styrofoam" image taken near a tranquil Caribbean island.

Caroline Power, who specialises in underwater photography, has dedicated her career to highlighting the damage plastic waste is doing to our oceans, the [Daily Telegraph](#) reports.

She said witnessing the plastic blanket of forks, bottles and rubbish between the islands Roatan and Cayos Cochinos, off the coast of Honduras, was "devastating".

"To see something that I care so deeply for being killed, slowly choked to death by human waste was devastating," she told The Telegraph.

"Once the trash is in the ocean, it is incredibly difficult and costly to remove. The key is to stop the trash before it enters the ocean.

"In order for that to happen, we need to improve waste management, environmental education and recycling facilities on a global scale. This is a developed nation (first world) problem as well."



The worst of the rubbish the dive team found was about 15 miles off the coast of Roatan heading towards the Cayos Cochinos Marine Reserve

"We were on a dive trip to a set of islands that don't quite break the ocean surface. They are one of the most pristine dive sites in this part of the Caribbean," Ms Power recalled.

"The photo of the diver in the water was actually over one of these seamounts. To see an area that is supposed to be pristine covered in garbage and trash was disheartening."

She said they passed through floating garbage for "nearly five miles", adding: "Everywhere we looked, plastic bags of all shapes and sizes: chip bags, ziplocks, grocery, trash, snack bags, other packaging. Some were whole and the

rest were just pieces. Sadly, many turtles, fish, whales, and seabirds will mistake those bits of plastic for food.

"We then reached an area about two miles wide that had multiple trash lines that stretched from horizon to horizon

"There was also a seemingly infinite number of plastic forks, spoons, drink bottles, and plates. There were broken soccer balls, toothbrushes, a tv, and so many shoes and flip flops."



Blue Planet Society, an organisation campaigning to end overfishing and the overexploitation of the world's ocean, believes the rubbish originated from the Motagua River in Guatemala, washing into the sea during heavy rains.

They said the images were "unbelievable", adding: "We see

a lot of shocking images of environmental destruction. This is right up there with the worst.

"Trash from Motagua River in Guatemala polluting Honduras coast has been an issue in region for some time."

Ms Power adds, "there is a lack of infrastructure and education, so many people either burn trash or throw it into rivers".

Conservationists Oceana Europe said the photos had left them "shocked, sad and angry, but not surprised".



They added: "If we don't change our behaviour now, we're going to have more plastic than fish in the ocean."

Ms Power says she hopes her photos will encourage others to "make changes to their habits and daily lives to help protect and conserve this planet".

"It was also motivating; I drastically increased efforts to

reduce my environmental footprint after seeing that," she said. "I hope the photos will inspire people to do the same."

She has asked anyone who wants to help the region's conservation efforts to donate to the Roatan Marine Park, a non-profit organisation working to protect Roatan's fragile coral reefs.

By numbers | Plastic in the sea

- **300 million** - tons of plastic produced globally each year
- **12 per cent** - amount of plastic which is recycled
- **Five trillion** - number of pieces of microplastic in ocean, with one rubbish truck load added each minute
- **11,000** - number of pieces of microplastic ingested by humans each year from seafood
- **780,000** - number of microplastics humans will ingest by the end of the century if trends continue
- **8.5 billion** - number of plastic bags used in English supermarkets annually before 5p charge
- **6 billion** - estimated number of bags removed from circulation annually at last count, an 80 per cent reduction.

12 minutes - useful lifespan of average plastic bag

'Great Pacific garbage patch' far bigger than imagined, aerial survey shows

Giant collection of fishing nets, plastic containers and other discarded items called a ‘ticking time bomb’ as large items crumble into micro plastics



‘We opened the door and we saw the debris everywhere. Every half-second you see something.’ Photograph: Ocean Cleanup

Oliver Milman

[@olliemilman](#)

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The vast patch of garbage floating in the Pacific Ocean is far worse than previously thought, with an aerial survey finding a much larger mass of fishing nets, plastic containers and other discarded items than imagined.

A reconnaissance flight taken in a modified C-130 Hercules aircraft found a vast clump of mainly plastic waste at the northern edge of what is known as the “[great Pacific garbage patch](#)”, located between Hawaii and California.

The density of rubbish was several times higher than the [Ocean Cleanup](#), a foundation [part-funded by the Dutch government](#) to rid the oceans of plastics, expected to find even at the heart of the patch, where most of the waste is concentrated.

“Normally when you do an aerial survey of dolphins or whales, you make a sighting

and record it,” said Boyan Slat, the founder of the Ocean Cleanup.

“That was the plan for this survey. But then we opened the door and we saw the debris everywhere. Every half second you see something. So we had to take snapshots – it was impossible to record everything. It was bizarre to see that much garbage in what should be pristine ocean.”



Boyan Slat, founder of the Ocean Cleanup. Photograph: The Ocean Cleanup

The heart of the garbage patch is thought to be around 1m sq km (386,000 sq miles), with the periphery spanning a further 3.5m sq km (1,351,000 sq miles). The dimensions of this morass of waste are continually morphing, caught in one of the ocean’s huge rotating currents. The north Pacific gyre has accumulated a soup of plastic waste, including large items and smaller broken-down micro plastics that can be eaten by fish and enter the food chain.

According to the UN environmental programme, the great Pacific garbage patch is growing so fast that it, like the Great Wall of China, is becoming visible from space.

Last year, the Ocean Cleanup sent 30 vessels to cross the patch to scoop up micro plastics in fine nets to estimate the extent of the problem. However, the new reconnaissance flights from California have found that large items of more than half a meter in size have been “heavily underestimated”.

Slat said: “Most of the debris was large stuff. It’s a ticking time bomb because the big stuff will crumble down to micro plastics over the next few decades if we don’t act.”

Following a further aerial survey through the heart of the patch on Sunday, [the Ocean Cleanup aims to tackle the problem through a gigantic V-shaped boom](#), which would use sea currents to funnel floating rubbish into a cone. A prototype of the vulcanized rubber barrier will be tested next year, with a full-sized 100km (62-mile)

barrier deployed by 2020 if trials go well.

The boom will not be able to suck up all of the strewn rubbish, however, with Slat warning that plastic is “quite persistent. We need to clean it up, but we also need to prevent so much entering the oceans. Better recycling, better product design and some legislation is all part of that. We need a combination of things.”

The full scale of plastic pollution [was revealed in 2014](#), when a study found there were more than 5tn pieces of plastic floating in our oceans. In 2014, 311m tonnes of plastic were produced around the world, a 20-fold increase since 1964. It is expected to quadruple again by mid-century.

A report by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation earlier this year predicted there would be [more plastic than fish in the oceans](#) by 2050 unless urgent action was taken.