

You Are What You Eat

Do different forms of plastic affect animals feeding in different parts of the ocean? Here is some information that will help you answer this question and fill out your Marine Animal Feeding Habits and Plastic Risk chart.

The Three Marine Zones

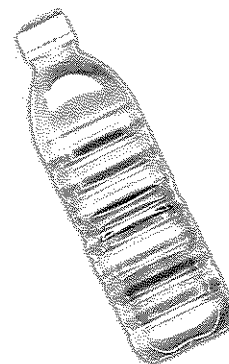
Scientists divide bodies of water into three basic areas:

1. **The surface zone:** the very surface of the water where it meets the air and things float where you can see them.
2. **The pelagic zone:** the open water below the surface where neutrally buoyant fish swim and plankton float.
3. **The benthic zone:** what lies beneath the bottom of the of water; consists of mud, sand, or rock.

Where Marine Life Eats

Different forms of marine life gather their food in different zones. For example, some birds are surface feeders. They skim along just above the ocean's surface, and scoop up small bits of floating fish. Many fish are pelagic feeders. They swim about, eating smaller animals, plankton, and other food that share the water with them. Many whales, turtles, seals, and diving birds are pelagic feeders. Other kinds of fish, turtles, whales, and sea otters swim along the bottom to scoop up food from the ocean floor. They are called benthic feeders.

Animals that feed in different areas of the ocean often interact with different forms of plastic. For example, a bird skimming the ocean surface might accidentally scoop up bits of floating plastic pellets thinking they were food, but wouldn't scoop up a large, floating, angular object such as a Styrofoam ice chest, or a hollow object such as a plastic bottle.



Activity Directions

1. Arrange each card in your packet on the chart so that the animals are:
 - located under the form of plastic they will have trouble with and,
 - next to the zone where they feed
2. Then, take the card off of the square and write the animal's name in the square. One animal may be affected by more than one type of plastic, and may feed in more than one habitat, so there will likely be more than one animal name in a square.
3. You will compare charts with other students. Be sure to be able to explain your rationale for placement.

