

Recent Study Highlights the Issue of Waste Plastics in Our Oceans

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NUI Galway study on microplastics ingested by deepwater fish in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean reports one of the highest frequencies of microplastic in fish worldwide.

A study which has been carried out by marine scientists at NUI Galway has found that 73% out of 233 deep water fish from the Northwest Atlantic Ocean had ingested plastic particles.

The research was conducted during a transatlantic crossing by the Marine Institute's Celtic Explorer research vessel. During this cruise, researchers took a selection of dead deep-sea fish from a depth of up to 600 metres using large fishing nets. Among the species they caught were three types of

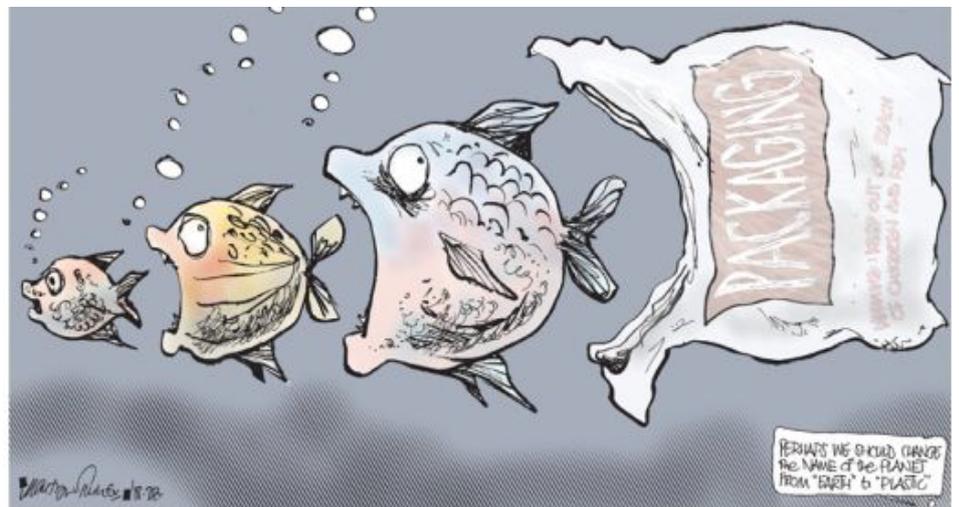


Lanternfish, Rakery Beaconlamp, Stout Sawpalate and Scaly Dragonfish. The fish ranged in size from the smallest species measuring at 3.5 centimetres to the largest species at 59 centimetres.

Upon return to Galway the fish were then inspected at the University's Ryan Institute for microplastics in their stomach contents. Microplastics are small plastic fragments which can come from clothing and microbeads from personal care products. Due to their low density, most of these microplastics float at the sea surface.

The scientists acknowledge that the sample of fish may have come from a particularly polluted area of the ocean where plastics accumulate due to certain tides and currents. Nevertheless, researchers say their findings are worrying, not only because it is further evidence fish are ingesting microplastics, but also because it shows deep water fish far from our shores are also at risk.

The research was carried out within the PLASTOX project, a European collaborative effort to investigate impacts of microplastics in the marine environment under the JPI Oceans framework and supported by the iCrag (Irish Centre for Research in Applied Geoscience) project, funded by Science Foundation Ireland.



Large varieties of marine species are at risk of ingesting such plastics and these substances can cause significant internal damage to them. Many varieties of plastics are extremely toxic because of additives added to them during the manufacturing process. The danger is not only confined to the creature that eats the plastic but can also transfer up the food chain as they are preyed upon.

This research highlights the need for us to reduce our dependence on plastic and the importance of responsibly recycling our plastics so that less waste escapes our collection systems and ends up in our seas.

To read the study in *Frontiers in Marine Science*, visit:
<http://bit.ly/2EEmMHI>



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