Researcher Learning Activities

Investigate the coral reefs of Belize in more depth

20. How is plastic waste (etc.) affecting us all? (part 2)

Requirements:
Research team: in pairs or as a team of 3-5 researchers, and as a class
Curriculum: Science, Citizenship
Time: 20 minutes

Look around you for any items made of plastic. Name them.

Discuss some suggestions to solve the problem of plastic waste. Share your suggestions with the class.

Researcher Learning Activities

Investigate the coral reefs of Belize in more depth

Teacher Notes

Plastic is lightweight, hardwearing, easy to clean and has many uses. It is used for packaging food and medicines, in building homes, and in electronic and electrical items.

Since the 1950s, over 8 billion tonnes of plastic have been produced worldwide, of which only 9% has been recycled. A lot of plastic is not recyclable and most of it does not biodegrade. Unfortunately, plastic products often break down into very small fragments called microplastics that can pollute ecosystems and harm organisms. When microplastics are eaten by animals such as plankton, they enter the food chain and can even reach us. Plastic kills over 1.1 million seabirds and animals each year.

'The Great Pacific Garbage Patch' is a collection of marine debris in the North Pacific Ocean. Marine debris is litter that ends up in oceans, seas, and other large bodies of water. The microplastics of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch can simply make the water look cloudy, like a 'plastic soup'. It is the size of 1.6 million square kilometres, which is about the size of Iran or twice the size of Turkey.

Rainwater and wind carry litter into streams and rivers, and down drains…drains lead to the ocean! Irresponsible dumping of waste also adds to the plastic in our seas. If you live near the coast, you will probably see plastic washed up on the beach.