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of environmental collapse

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Thu, Jan 7, 2010

from Santa Monica Daily Press:

Researchers set sail to study plastic

Cummins and Eriksen will be skimming the ocean's surface with a plankton net to collect plastic and fish that surface at night to forage for food. Past expeditions have found fish with plastic in their stomachs. Plastics act as magnets for toxic chemicals like PCB. Smaller fish consume plastics. Larger fish like tuna and mahi-mahi then eat those smaller fish, ingesting the toxins, which could ultimately harm humans. "We want to see if there are large concentrations of these chemicals in our food chain, ending up on our dinner plates," she said. Their journey will involve several voyages. The first will launch from St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, and take them across the Sargasso Sea -- an elongated region in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean roughly 700 miles by 2,000 miles -- to the Azores.... "It will be a honeymoon of sorts," Cummins said. **"We got married recently in the middle of a garbage patch so it seemed fitting to make this our honeymoon."** ...

If only our



honeymoon [with plastic] were over.

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Wed, Dec 23, 2009

from Newsweek:

The Great Pacific Cleanup

Since the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, the world's biggest communal garbage dump, was discovered swirling about 1,000 miles north of Hawaii in 1997, scientists and environmentalists have dared to dream if a cleanup might be possible. Consisting of an estimated 3.5 million tons of trash and scattered over an area roughly the size of the continental United States, the garbage comes from countries all over the world, most of it flushed through waterways leading to the ocean.... Now an unlikely partnership between ocean scientists and the waste-management industry is working on

As a species we have pissed in the wind, and shat where we sleep.



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ways to clean up the mess... **There's no perfect way to fish it all out of the ocean, especially not without harming ocean creatures in the process. ...**

Mon, Dec 14, 2009

from Sydney Morning Herald:

Pacific swimmer to be message in a bottle

AS IF swimming 9000 kilometres from Japan to the US is not enough of a challenge, **Richard Pain is also planning to plough through the middle of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a floating mass of plastic junk almost the size of the Northern Territory.** "I realise it's completely mad," said the filmmaker, 45, who is selling his Randwick home to raise some of the money needed for the project. "But I'm aware there is a lot of green fatigue in the broader population. This is a way to try and raise awareness by doing something more compelling. It's like trying to do an environmental version of Super Size Me." Mr Pain, a keen ocean swimmer and environmentalist, said he was unfazed by the fact no one had ever managed to swim across the Pacific. ...

Man, this guy is sure living up to his name.



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Tue, Nov 10, 2009

from New York Times:

Afloat in the Ocean, Expanding Islands of Trash

Light bulbs, bottle caps, toothbrushes, Popsicle sticks and tiny pieces of plastic, each the size of a grain of rice, inhabit the Pacific garbage patch, an area of widely dispersed trash that doubles in size every decade and is now believed to be roughly twice the size of Texas. But **one research organization estimates that the garbage now actually pervades the Pacific, though most of it is caught in what oceanographers call a gyre like this one** -- an area of heavy currents and slack winds that keep the trash swirling in a giant whirlpool.... PCBs, DDT and other toxic chemicals cannot dissolve in water, but the plastic absorbs them like a sponge. Fish that feed on plankton ingest the tiny plastic particles. Scientists from the Algalita Marine Research Foundation say that **fish tissues contain some of the same chemicals as the plastic.** The scientists speculate that toxic chemicals are leaching into fish tissue from the plastic they eat. ...

What's that? You want to turn back time?



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Mon, Nov 9, 2009

from McClatchy Newspapers:

As oceans fall ill, Washington bureaucrats squabble

...Every summer a dead zone of oxygen-depleted water the size of Massachusetts forms in the Gulf of Mexico; others have been found off Oregon and in the Chesapeake Bay, Lake Erie and the Baltic and Black seas. Some studies indicate that North Pole seawater could turn caustic in 10 years, and

In more ways than one.



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that the Southern Ocean already may be saturated with carbon dioxide....As the grim news mounts, a storm is brewing in Washington, D.C., over who should oversee oceans policies...**However, NOAA, the nation's primary ocean agency, which includes the National Ocean Service, the nation's premier science agency for oceans and coasts... is missing from the task force's list...."NOAA is the nation's primary ocean agency," NOAA administrator Lubchenco told the subcommittee. "Our name says it all." ...**

Tue, Sep 29, 2009

from London Times:

Third World population controls won't save climate, study claims

The population explosion in poor countries will contribute little to climate change and is a dangerous distraction from the main problem of over-consumption in rich nations, a study has found. It challenges claims by leading environmentalists, including Sir David Attenborough and Jonathon Porritt, that strict birth control is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The study concludes that spending billions of pounds of aid on contraception in the developing world will not benefit the climate because poor countries have such low emissions. It says that **Britain and other Western countries should instead focus on reducing consumption of goods, services and energy among their own populations.** ...

Door #3: Rich nations should have population controls!



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Tue, Sep 29, 2009

from DC Bureau:

Fish and Paint Chips Part II: The Politics of Ocean Trash

When it comes to reducing garbage in the world's oceans, the political angle is just as important as the scientific, to judge by industry's behavior. On Aug. 18, Seattle voters passed by a 53-47 margin a referendum to overturn a 20-cent fee approved last year by the city council for using plastic bags at supermarkets, pharmacies and convenience stores. According to the Seattle Post-Intelligencer and other public information, **the referendum was backed primarily by the American Chemistry Council (ACC), the plastics industry trade association, and the 7-11 chain of convenience stores.** The ACC made local headlines with its all-out summer media blitz to promote the referendum, ultimately spending \$1.4 million before the vote was held. In comparison, the Seattle Green Bag Campaign to support the fee raised less than \$100,000. **In a press release trumpeting its victory, the ACC argued that whatever its environmental implications, plastic is good for the economy.** ...

Sometimes... I just don't think we deserve the earth.



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Thu, Sep 24, 2009

from DC Bureau:

Fish and Paint Chips Part I: The Science of Trash

Recent research has the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) concerned that the huge quantities of **metal, plastic, paint chips and other man-made debris floating at sea, hundreds and even thousands of miles from land, may be working their way into the American diet**. NOAA, a part of the Commerce Department, largely exists to track weather patterns and hurricanes, and its entry into the public health sphere serves as an indication of how severe the problem has become. It is not too much to suggest that millions of seafood lovers might be ingesting the very chemicals that land-based health and safety regulations are designed to keep out of reach. ...

What goes



around... comes around.

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Sun, Sep 13, 2009

from Minneapolis Star Tribune, Karen Youso:

Plastic elastic and other confessions of a plastic sinner who tried, for a few days, to go without.

In the middle of the Pacific Ocean floats **a mass of plastic waste twice the size of Texas**. Acres of bobbing bottles, bags and Barbie shoes, it's where plastic trash comes to rest in the ocean. Actually, it doesn't rest. Despite what we've heard -- that plastic lasts a thousand years -- it doesn't. **A recent study reveals that plastic breaks down a lot faster than that, but into toxic elements. To what end, nobody yet knows.** Long before it's trash, however, plastic leaches toxins into our bodies (a premise strongly objected to by the FDA and the plastics industry), and nobody knows the long-term consequences of that, either.... I think I hate plastic. **I'm going to forgo plastic for six days, a plastic mini-Lent, it might be called, and learn a new way of living.** Split with plastic, and worries about the health effects, recycling and pollution all go away. ...

Six days without plastic is like a month without sunshine.



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Wed, Sep 2, 2009

from San Jose Mercury News:

'Pacific Garbage Patch' expedition finds plastic, plastic everywhere

Scientists who returned to the Bay Area this week after an expedition to the "Great Pacific Garbage Patch" brought piles of plastic debris they pulled out of the ocean -- soda bottles, cracked patio chairs, Styrofoam chunks, old toys, discarded fishing floats and tangled nets. But what alarmed them most, they said Tuesday, was the nearly inconceivable amount of tiny, confettilike pieces of broken plastic. **They took hundreds of water samples between the Farallon Islands near San Francisco and the notorious garbage patch 1,000 miles west of California, and every one had tiny bits of plastic floating in it.** And the closer they sailed to the garbage patch, which

Planet Plastic



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some researchers have estimated to be twice the size of Texas, the more plastic pieces per gallon they found... **crews on the three-week voyage discovered tiny jellyfish eating bits of the plastic debris. The jellyfish are, in turn, eaten by fish like salmon or tuna, which people eat.**

...

Sat, Aug 29, 2009

from American Chemical Society, via EurekAlert:

Plastics in oceans decompose, release hazardous chemicals, surprising new study says

In the first study to look at what happens over the years to the billions of pounds of plastic waste floating in the world's oceans, scientists are reporting that **plastics -- reputed to be virtually indestructible -- decompose with surprising speed and release potentially toxic substances into the water....** "We found that plastic in the ocean actually decomposes as it is exposed to the rain and sun and other environmental conditions, giving rise to yet another source of global contamination that will continue into the future." He said that **polystyrene begins to decompose within one year**, releasing components that are detectable in the parts-per-million range.... his team found that **when plastic decomposes it releases potentially toxic bisphenol A (BPA) and PS oligomer into the water**, causing additional pollution. Plastics usually do not break down in an animal's body after being eaten. However, the substances released from decomposing plastic are absorbed and could have adverse effects. **BPA and PS oligomer are sources of concern because they can disrupt the functioning of hormones in animals and can seriously affect reproductive systems.** ...

At least we'll



eventually be rid of that *unsightly Pacific Garbage Patch!*

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Fri, Aug 28, 2009

from NSF, via EurekAlert:

Scientists explore 'great Pacific Ocean garbage patch'

Scientists have just completed an unprecedented journey into the vast and little-explored "Great Pacific Ocean Garbage Patch." On the Scripps Environmental Accumulation of Plastic Expedition (SEAPLEX), researchers got **the first detailed view of plastic debris floating in a remote ocean region....** Team members began 24-hour sampling periods using a variety of tow nets to collect debris at several ocean depths. "We targeted the highest plastic-containing areas so we could begin to understand the scope of the problem," said Miriam Goldstein of SIO, chief scientist of the expedition. "We also studied everything from phytoplankton to zooplankton to small midwater fish."... "Finding so much plastic there was shocking," said Goldstein. **"How could there be this much plastic floating in a random patch of ocean--a thousand miles from land?"**

Plastic, plastic,



everywhere, and not a drop to recycle.

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...

Fri, Aug 21, 2009

from Mongabay:

Plastic Vortexes Leaching Chemicals into World's Oceans

While scientists have acknowledged the existence of billions of pounds of plastic containers, Styrofoam, and similar waste have created massive oceanic trash vortexes (floating islands of garbage), little is known of the effects of the dissolution of these materials into the water. Recent studies have found that under certain climate conditions, **ocean plastic can decompose in under a year, leaching potentially toxic chemicals into the water....**

"Most people in the world believe that this plastic is indestructible for a very long time. **We are now concerned that plastic pollution is caused by invisible materials. This will have a great effect on marine life.**" ...



"Invisible materials" like endocrine disruptors, phthalates, methylmercury, or the other heavy metals? Or PCBs? C'mon, what?

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Sat, Aug 1, 2009

from National Geographic News:

Giant Ocean-Trash Vortex Attracts Explorers

It may lack the allure of the North Pole or Mount Everest, but **a Pacific Ocean trash dump twice the size of Texas is this summer's hot destination for explorers.** The Eastern Pacific Garbage Patch, situated in remote waters between California and Hawaii, is created by ocean currents that pick up millions of tons of the world's discarded plastic... **This summer, two separate expeditions will set sail for the patch to document the scope of the problem and call global attention to disastrous ocean pollution...** Follow the Kaisei expedition's progress with an interactive voyage tracker:
<http://www.projectkaisei.org/> ...

You had me @ "hot"!



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Fri, Jun 19, 2009

from Christian Science Monitor:

The Pacific isn't the only ocean collecting plastic trash

...while the Pacific Ocean has garnered much attention for what some call the "Great Pacific Garbage Patch" -- a vast expanse of floating plastic deposited in the middle of the ocean by circulating currents -- the problem doesn't stop there. **New research shows that plastic has collected in a region of the Atlantic as well, held hostage by converging currents, called gyres, to form a swirling "plastic soup."** And those fragments of plastic could also be present at the other three large gyres in the world's oceans, says Kara Lavender Law, a member of the oceanography faculty at the Sea Education Association (SEA) in Woods Hole, Mass., which conducted the study. ...



Keeping up w/ the plastic garbage Joneses.

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Sun, Jun 7, 2009

from CNN:

Search for downed plane highlights ocean trash problem

The massive amount of garbage in the ocean likely complicates the search for the remains of an Air France flight that went missing Monday near Brazil, oceanographers who spoke with CNN said. Earlier this week, investigators said they had located pieces of the plane in the southern Atlantic Ocean, which might have given them clues to the origin of Air France Flight 447's crash. But on Thursday, Brazilian officials said what they had found was nothing more than run-of-the-mill ocean trash.... Much of the ocean trash is plastic, which means it won't go away for hundreds of years, if ever. **And the problem has gotten so bad that soupy "garbage patches" have developed in several locations, called gyres, where ocean currents swirl. One of them is estimated to be the size of Texas. There are about five or six major trash-collecting gyres in the world's oceans**, with the most famous located in the Pacific Ocean about midway between North America and Asia... ..

At least the trash is trying to be tidy.



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Sun, May 3, 2009

from Times Online (UK):

Mission to break up Pacific island of rubbish twice the size of Texas

A high-seas mission departs from San Francisco next month to map and explore a sinister and shifting 21st-century continent: one twice the size of Texas and created from six million tonnes of discarded plastic. Scientists and conservationists on the expedition will begin attempts to retrieve and recycle a monument to throwaway living in the middle of the North Pacific.... Because of their tiny size and the scale of the problem, he believes that nothing can be solved at sea. "Trying to clean up the Pacific gyre would bankrupt any country and kill wildlife in the nets as it went." In June the 151 ft brigantine Kaisei (Japanese for Planet Ocean) will unfurl its sails in San Francisco to try to prove Mr Moore wrong. Project Kaisei's flagship will be joined by a decommissioned fishing trawler armed with specialised nets.... The UN's environmental programme estimates that **18,000 pieces of plastic have ended up in every square kilometre of the sea**, totalling more than 100 million tonnes. ...

Perhaps we can just DNA-design a superbug that eats plastic. Surely *that* wouldn't have any unintended consequences.



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Sat, Apr 25, 2009

from London Daily Telegraph:

Drowning in plastic: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is twice the size of France

...The Great Pacific Garbage Patch has now been tentatively mapped into an east and west section and the combined weight of plastic there is estimated at three million tons and increasing

Well that'll balance things out at least.



steadily. It appears to be the big daddy of them all, but we do not know for sure. **Dr Pearn Niiler of the Scripps Oceanographic Institute in San Diego, the world's leading authority on ocean currents, thinks that there is an even bigger garbage patch in the South Pacific, in the vicinity of Easter Island, but no scientists have yet gone to look.** ...

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Wed, Apr 22, 2009

from Mother Jones:

Plastic? Fantastic

...Inexpensive to make and easy to discard, plastic morphed from an engineering triumph into a global scourge. In 1960, Americans sent 390,000 tons of plastics to the landfill; **today we annually trash more than 28.5 million tons**—around 11 percent of all municipal waste. **Plastic doesn't biodegrade, and the very characteristic that makes it so versatile—its protean ability to be resilient or stiff, soft or hard, opaque or transparent—makes it extremely difficult to recycle efficiently.** Even the most common recyclable categories of plastic (No. 1 water bottles, for instance) consist of incompatible polymers with different melting points. In 2007, less than 7 percent of Americans' plastic waste was recycled (mostly milk jugs and water and soda bottles), as opposed to 55 percent of paper. A 2000 survey by the American Chemistry Council (ACC) found that fewer than half of Americans had a positive opinion of the miracle material; 25 percent "strongly believed" that plastic's environmental negatives outweighed its benefits. ...

To top it off, my toy GI Joe shot me yesterday!



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Sun, Apr 12, 2009

from London Guardian:

Eco-warrior sets sail to save oceans from 'plastic death'

In a few weeks, the heir to one of the world's greatest fortunes, David de Rothschild, will set sail across the Pacific - in a boat, the Plastiki, made from plastic bottles and recycled waste. The aim of this extraordinary venture is simple: to focus attention on one of the world's strangest and most unpleasant environmental phenomena: the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a rubbish-covered region of ocean, several hundred miles in diameter.... The plastic - most of it swept from coastal cities in Asia and California - is trapped indefinitely in the region by the North Pacific Gyre, a vortex of currents that circulate clockwise around the ocean. Scientists estimate that there is six times more plastic than plankton by weight in the patch and that this is having disastrous ecological consequences. **Fish and seabirds mistake plastic for food and choke to death. At the same time, plastics absorb pollutants including PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) and pesticides, bringing poisons into the food chain.** ...

David is going up against the Goliath of pollution.



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Thu, Apr 9, 2009

from Telegraph.co.uk:

Litter on beaches in UK doubles in 14 years

The 2008 annual survey recorded and removed some 385,659 items of rubbish including plastic bags, sanitary items, fishing nets, cigarette butts and cotton bud sticks from beaches across the UK. The average amount of rubbish found was 2,195 items per kilometre (0.6 miles) -- more than two pieces for every metre (3.3ft) of beach, and **more than double the 1,045 items per kilometre picked up during the first annual survey in 1994....** More than a third of the rubbish was generated by the public followed by fishing litter, sewage-related rubbish and debris from shipping. **The worse problem was plastic, which accounted for more than half of the litter found. It never breaks down and is a threat to wildlife. ...**

It's clear the Great Plastic



Continent is not doing its job effectively.

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Sun, Mar 22, 2009

from The Japan Times:

Oceans awash in toxic seas of plastic

Go down to the beach today and you'll find plenty of garbage among the sand — but that's nothing compared with the continent-sized whirlpools of lethal waste out there beyond the horizon... Umbrella handles. Pens. Popsicle sticks. Lots and lots of toothbrushes. These are just a few of the items that make up the approximately 13 million sq. km Eastern Garbage Patch, an immense plastic soup in the Pacific Ocean that starts about 800 km off the coast of California and extends westward. Sucked from the coasts of Asia and America by ocean currents, or discarded at sea, **plastic debris accumulates there in an ever-growing mass that does not biodegrade and is said to be already larger than the United States.** Scientists have long known that plastic in the garbage patch and elsewhere is **stuffing the stomachs of seabirds and causing them to starve, suffocating fish and choking marine turtles.** But what is now becoming clear is that when pieces of plastic meet other pollutants in the ocean, the results can be even more toxic. That's because, as a growing number of studies are showing, the plastic debris absorbs harmful chemicals from the seawater it floats in, acting like a "pollution sponge" that concentrates those chemicals and poses a different, more insidious threat to marine and other life. ...



Perhaps we're just building a plastic Pangea!

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Sat, Mar 7, 2009

from Yale Environment 360:

The Pacific Garbage Patch

Speaking at the recent TED Conference in California, oceanographer Charles Moore -- who discovered and publicized the huge oceanic gyre of plastic waste known as the "Great Pacific

New for



Garbage Patch" -- outlined the toll taken on marine life by plastic bottles and caps. Moore, founder of the Algalita Marine Research Foundation, said that the massive use of plastic bottles -- Americans purchase 2 million plastic bottles every 5 minutes -- is leading to floating swaths of trash that are killing large numbers of seabirds and contaminating fish. Hundreds of thousands of albatross chicks die in the Pacific every year when their parents pluck bottle caps out of the sea -- thinking they are food -- and feed them to their offspring, Moore said. As the bottles and caps break down, they turn into plastic pellets that are ubiquitous in the Pacific "garbage patch," which is twice as large as Texas. One-third of the fish sampled by Moore's foundation contained plastic pellets in their stomachs, he said, adding that the pellets accumulate extremely high levels of so-called persistent organic pollutants. The solution, he said, is to change the world's "throwaway culture" and contain plastic waste on land. ...

Sat, Mar 7, 2009

from Montreal Gazette:

The Styrofoam dilemma

It's in your plastic cutlery, it's under your meat, it's the lid on your latte. And it's in your world -- for at least 200 years longer than you will be -- clogging up storm drains and landfills. So why is this tenacious product, better known by its trademark, Styrofoam, still being used to wrap everything from green peppers to sirloin steaks?...Some numbers: - According to the French ministry of ecology and sustainable development, more than 14 million tons of polystyrene are produced every year around the world. Given its light weight -- Styrofoam is 95-per-cent air -- the volume it represents is huge. - Americans throw away an estimated 25 billion Styrofoam cups every year -- or about 82 cups per person. - **The U.S.**

Environmental Protection Agency says of the 3 million tons of polystyrene produced in the U.S., 2.3 million tons end up in landfills, with much of the remainder finding its way into waterways. - Indeed, so-called "white pollution" is the most common form of marine debris and costs local governments millions in storm-drain cleanup costs. ...

Fri, Feb 27, 2009

from Scientific American:

The Great Garbage Patch

In 1997 Captain Charles Moore, founder of the Algalita Marine Research Foundation, set sail from Hawaii and discovered, in a remote part of the North Pacific, an island -- made of plastic. **Moore measured about 300,000 tiny pieces of plastic per square kilometer back then, but a decade later there are approximately 2.3 million pieces of plastic per square kilometer.** What is known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is now the



Christmas '09: The Pacific Garbage Patch Dolls -- *made from garbage!*

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What's the



dilemma? *Just stop using it!*

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That's no patch - that's a



continent!

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size of the United States, according to Moore.... The plastic never degrades, but sunlight and wave friction break it into tiny particles, smaller than five millimeters, that remain suspended in the water. Holly Bamford, of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, says it's likely that **filter feeders like clams or jellyfish are eating the plastic, which may prove dangerous all the way up the food chain.** Ongoing studies will try to determine the patch's impact. ...

Fri, Jan 30, 2009

from MauiTime Weekly (HI):

The great garbage swirl

This dry, windless area is dominated by the Northern Pacific Gyre, a wind current that encircles an area twice the size of the continental United States. This ribbon of wind traps floating debris, mostly plastic, in a perpetual clockwise swirl. Part of this massive patch sits between Hawaii and the Mainland. Rich Owen of the Environmental Cleanup Coalition, a Maui-based organization that is launching the beginnings of a cleanup effort for the area, said he first heard of the gyre from a friend. "Literally my stomach just started getting in knots," the scuba instructor says. "I felt ill."... **"I actually saw a fish shit a piece of plastic when I was in Bali,"** he says.... Yet **you can't see it in satellite photos**, according to Algalita.com, the Web site of the organization for which Moore conducts research, **because the debris is more "soup" than continent.** Instead of forming a trash island, a literal wasteland on the surface, plastic fragments permeate the sea to great depths. And **researchers say it doubles in size every time they go out there, which is on average every two years.** ...

This



"tragedy of the commons" has become an "embarrassment of the commons" for humanity.

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Sun, Jan 25, 2009

from Calgary Herald (Canada):

More plastic than plankton in Pacific Ocean

At least 80 per cent of the plastic in the ocean originated from the land. Thousands of cargo containers fall overboard in stormy seas each year. In 2002, 33,000 blue-and-white Nike basketball shoes were spilled off the coast of Washington. Plastic in the ocean acts like sponges attracting neuro-toxins like mercury and pyrethroids, insecticides, carcinogens such as PCBs, DDT and PBDE (the backbone of flame retardants), and man-made hormones like progesterone and estrogen that at high levels induce both male and female reproductive parts on a single animal. Japanese scientists found [plastic nuggets] with concentrations of poisons listed above as high as one million times their concentrations in the water as free-floating substances. Each year, a million sea birds and 100,000 sharks, turtles, dolphins and whales die from eating plastic.... **Currently, there is six times more plastic than plankton floating**

Twice as much I could handle, even three times, but gosh, six times as much plastic as plankton? Maybe I should start getting worried?



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in the middle of the Pacific. ...

Tue, Dec 16, 2008

from Forbes, via CBC:

Inside the world's superdumps

The largest garbage dump in the world is roughly twice the size of the continental U.S. The **Great Pacific Garbage Patch is a continent-sized constellation of discarded shoes, bottles, bags, pacifiers, plastic wrappers, toothbrushes and every other type of trash imaginable, floating in the Pacific Ocean about halfway between Hawaii and San Francisco....** Truckloads of printers, fax machines, hard drives and all kinds of defunct electronics arrive daily in Guiyu from warehouses in the port of Nanhai, **where the imported waste comes ashore in sea-going containers. Roughly half these computers and electronic components are recycled; the rest are dumped.** Nobody knows for sure, but evidence suggests most of the discarded components are dumped locally, despite the substantial risk that the waste, laden with toxic **lead, mercury and cadmium, will contaminate local soil and water supplies....** **Old ships are, more often than not, chock full of toxic chemicals, like insulation with asbestos and polychlorinated biphenyls in hoses, foam insulation and paint. In addition, most ships contain huge quantities of heavy metals like lead, mercury and cadmium. If ships are not properly dismantled, they contaminate the area where they are broken down. ...**



Garbage? It's out of sight, out of mind, for me. Just toss it and forget it!

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Tue, Nov 18, 2008

from Canwest News:

Continents of garbage adrift in oceans

Scientists are growing alarmed about massive floating dumps that are believed to be building up in centres of nearly all of the world's oceans. The best-known patch, known by some as the Great Pacific Ocean Garbage Patch, consists of an estimated 100 million tonnes of plastic debris that has accumulated inside a circular vortex of currents known as the North Pacific gyre.

Environmentalists call it the Pacific Trash

Vortex....An estimated 100,000 marine mammals die each year from eating or being entangled in debris -- mostly plastic -- in the North Pacific alone. **Hence the vortex's other nickname: the Plastic Killing Fields. ...**



Maybe we should spend less time making up nicknames *and more time finding solutions!*

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Thu, Nov 6, 2008

from Times Online (UK):

Recycling waste piles up as prices collapse

Thousands of tonnes of rubbish collected from household recycling bins may have to be stored in warehouses and former military bases to save them from being dumped after a collapse in prices.



Supply and

demand may require

Collection companies and councils are running out of space to store paper, plastic bottles and steel cans because prices are so low that the materials cannot be shifted. **Collections of mixed plastics, mixed paper and steel reached record levels in the summer but the "bottom fell out of the market" and they are now worthless.** The plunge in prices was caused by a sudden fall in demand for recycled materials, especially from China, as manufacturers reduced their output in line with the global economic downturn. ...

demand may require that we *demand* that we recycle.

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Tue, Oct 28, 2008

from Honolulu KHNL:

Researcher warns: "Great Pacific Garbage Patch" is out of control

An environmental warning tonight from the man who discovered a vortex of plastic trash floating in the Pacific Ocean. It's twice the size of Texas, and still growing... **Moore discovered the Great Pacific Garbage Patch in 1997 while sailing in the Trans Pacific Yacht Race to Hawaii. Since then, the sea captain says the plastic pollution pit has more than quadrupled...** Moore says the plastic problem has become so severe, there's 46 times more plastic as there is plankton. ...

Once sea levels obliterate our land, *we can go live on the Garbage Patch!*


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Sun, Sep 21, 2008

from National Academy of Sciences via ScienceDaily:

Marine Debris Will Likely Worsen In The 21st Century

Current measures to prevent and reduce marine debris are inadequate, and the problem will likely worsen, says a new congressionally mandated report from the National Research Council... Marine debris, man-made materials that intentionally or accidentally enter and pollute the ocean, can cause significant harm. For instance, birds, fish, and marine mammals ingest debris, especially plastics, which can lead to digestive problems and uptake of toxic compounds. ...

That's life here on Planet Toilet. 

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Sat, Aug 23, 2008

from WiredPRnews:

Where no cruise ship will ever go: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch

In the North Pacific Ocean, **in a remote area known as the North Pacific Gyre, are two giant floating "islands," each the size of Texas.** They are not made of organic materials. They are made of plastic. The "Great Pacific Garbage Patch" or "Trash Vortex" **is at least 20 years of accumulated junk cast off by humans, 90 percent of it plastics.** Only 20 percent comes from ships and oil platforms at sea; 80 percent comes from land. Ocean currents carry debris from the east coast of Asia to the center of the gyre in a year or less, and debris from the west coast of North America in about five years. ...

Who knows, this could work out: *We may end up with a "garbage bridge" between California and Asia!*

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Tue, Jun 3, 2008

from Daily Galaxy:

Is There a Solution to the "Continent of Plastic" that Pollutes the Pacific?

Are there really 'continents', or massive floating garbage patches residing in the Pacific? [T]hese unsightly patches are reportedly killing marine life and releasing poisons that enter the human food chain, as well. [T]hese plastic patches certainly aren't solid surfaced islands that you could build a house on... Ocean currents have collected massive amounts of garbage into a sort of plastic "soup" where countless bits of discarded plastic float intertwined just beneath the surface.... **The enormous Texas-sized plastic patch is estimated to weigh over 3 million tons.** ...

I wonder where Crawford is, in this Texas-sized gyre? "Heh-hehn. Time to clear me some brush."

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Mon, May 19, 2008

from Toronto Globe and Mail:

A sea of synthetic trash

"...The United Nations estimates that each square kilometre of ocean carries 13,000 pieces of debris, but this area in the north Pacific has something like 330,000 pieces per square kilometre. Now, armed with proof that the plastic is making its way into the human food chain, experts warn the existence of the garbage patch and its far-reaching implications could be just as imminent as the worldwide food shortage and the effects of global warming." ...

Perhaps refugees from regions devastated by global warming could live here.

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Thu, Mar 27, 2008

from BBC (UK):

Plastic and toxic magnetism

Studies suggest billions of microscopic plastic fragments drifting underwater are concentrating pollutants like DDT.... "We know that plastics in the marine environment will accumulate and concentrate toxic chemicals from the surrounding seawater and you can get concentrations several thousand times greater than in the surrounding water on the surface of the plastic."... According to Dr Thompson, **the plastic particles "act as magnets for poisons in the ocean"**.... In a typical sample of sand, one-quarter of the total weight may be composed of plastic particles.... "The thing that's most worrisome about the plastic is its tenaciousness, its durability. It's not going to go away in my lifetime or my children's lifetimes." ...

How can *plastic* be a *magnet* for toxins? We've heard of "animal magnetism," but "synthetic magnetism"?



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Sun, Feb 17, 2008

from SeaReport, via Youtube:

Plastic in the Ocean video, from 2001

The researchers found 6 pounds of

plastic fragments, for each 1 pound of zooplankton. In 2001! That's a lot of empty calories... and pthalates, and endocrine disrupters..



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