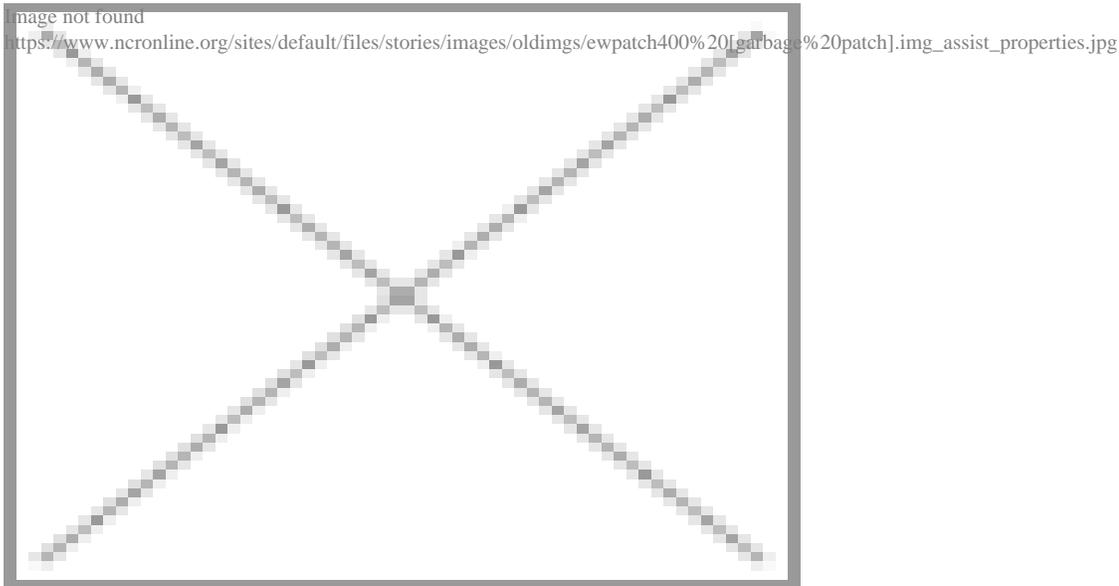


Great Pacific Garbage Patch keeps growing ... and growing ... and ...

Brian Roewe | May. 9, 2012 Eco Catholic



A [story in the UK's Telegraph](#) [1] today reports that the Great Pacific Garbage Patch -- a swirling mass of marine litter -- has grown to "roughly the size of Texas."

According to the Telegraph:

"The abundance of small human-produced plastic particles in the NPSG has increased by 100 times over the last four decades," said a statement on the findings of researchers from the University of California.

Located in the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre, the garbage patch isn't what immediately comes to mind. While bottles, fishing nets and other litter can be found in the gyre, much of the patch is made of small floating plastic debris, mostly hidden to the naked eye, according to the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) [2].

Instead, the particles are the result of a degradation of plastics, resulting in the microscopic particles that commonly float just below the ocean's surface.

The massive amounts of microplastics in the gyre endanger the ocean life, as it places toxic chemicals in the water and attracts uncommon species that can negatively alter the ecosystem.

More from the Telegraph:

The plastic particles are being vacuumed up by marine life and birds, and the mix is heavy with toxic chemicals.

The study said the NPSG is providing a new habitat for ocean insects called "sea-skaters" which prey on

plankton and fish eggs and are in turn fed on by seabirds, turtles and fish.

The insect, which spends its entire life at sea, needs a hard surface on which to lay its eggs ? previously limited to relatively rare items like floating wood, pumice and sea shells.

If microplastic density continued to grow, insect numbers would increase as well, the scientists warned, "potentially at the expense of prey such as zooplankton or fish eggs."

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Links:

[1] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/environment/9253665/Great-Pacific-Garbage-Patch-has-increased-100-fold-since-the-1970s.html>

[2] <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/info/patch.html>