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Photo contest theme: Summer, sun - plastic rubbish?

Federal Environment Agency launches campaign against plastic rubbish in the oceans and in the landscape

The motto of this summer's photo contest, *Sommer, Sonne - Plastikmüll? [Summer, Sun - Plastic rubbish?]*, is a campaign by the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) to encourage amateur photographers to submit works that depict the holiday natural paradise from a completely different perspective. White sandy beaches and crystal-clear water are far from being the standard everywhere. Plastic bottles bobbing in the swell or plastic bags floating in the water often disrupt a panoramic holiday view. Many a mountain summit is not only home to animals but to the discarded packaging of ready meals as well. The matter is more than simply a problem of aesthetics-- it is also long-term. It takes some 450 years for a plastic bottle to degrade in the environment.

Whether it be plastic waste found in the forest, a sculpture of collected waste objects, or the documentation of a thorough beach clean-up campaign-- there are no limits to the imagination in the UBA photo contest. The submitted photos have a way of depicting the problem of waste in a surprising, impressive or even tragic way. The best entries will be shown on the www.fuer-mensch-und-umwelt.de website and the UBA Facebook profile <http://on.fb.me/ix55v0> and can expect to win great prizes.

Scientific research has proven that plastic rubbish is a special problem faced by the oceans that is graver than it seems at first glance. Some 70 percent of the waste that lands in the oceans "disappears" on the ocean floor. There is already an estimated 600,000 cubic metres of it on the floor of the North Sea alone.

The waste poses the greatest risk to marine life: seals, whales, seabirds or ocean turtles often get caught in old fishing equipment and perish. These animals often mistake bits of plastic for food, swallow it and suffer physical harm. It is common for animals to starve because the plastic contents of their stomachs give them a constant feeling of being satiated.

Plastic in the oceans is also a problem for us humans as the sun, wind and waves break down the plastic into microscopically small particles. Harmful chemicals can adhere to particle surface and land in the food chain after being absorbed by fish or shellfish.

A large share of the waste is introduced to the ocean through merchant shipping and the fishing industry. Freight packaging and "normal" household waste is unfortunately still dumped overboard by some seafaring vessels, despite the International Convention for the Prevention of

Pollution From Ships (MARPOL Convention), which prohibits the dumping of rubbish (excluding food waste) into the North and Baltic Seas.

For more information on the *Sommer, Sonne - Plastikmüll?* photo contest go to <http://fuer-mensch-und-umwelt.de/> and the UBA Facebook profile at <http://on.fb.me/ix55v0>

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