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Plastic Pollution Has Increased A Hundredfold In The South Atlantic

Thirty years ago, the ocean waters surrounding British islands in the South Atlantic were near-pristine*. But plastic waste has increased a hundredfold since then, and is ten times greater than it was a decade ago. These islands — part of the British Overseas Territories, which includes established or proposed Marine Protection Areas — are among the most remote on the planet. Yet they no longer are immune to the kind of pollution fouling industrialized North Atlantic coasts, a fact that portends dire consequences, according to new research.

“Plastic in the ocean is not merely unsightly and threatening to marine life. It is entering the marine food chain, which most humans on the planet depend on,” said David Barnes, a marine ecologist with the British Antarctic Survey(BAS) who has been studying the region. “The longer and later we leave the problem of plastics, the more difficult and expensive it will be to deal with. We need to do something quickly, as plastics at sea can spread some quite nasty toxic chemicals, reduce the ability of environments to sustain our food, and become part of the food we want to eat. Clearly we would not ignore poison being spread on our vegetables or fed to livestock on farms, yet that is what’s happening in our seas.”

The plastic is of many types and from many sources, including debris blown in from landfills, trash tossed out by thoughtless beachgoers, detritus from the shipping and fishing industries, and other bits and bobs carried off by severe storms or other accidents.

By Marlene Cimon, adapted from *huffingtonpost.com*, October 17th, 2018

* near-pristine = crystal-clear