

VIDEO INCLUDED

Single-use Face Masks Are a Threat to Marine Life

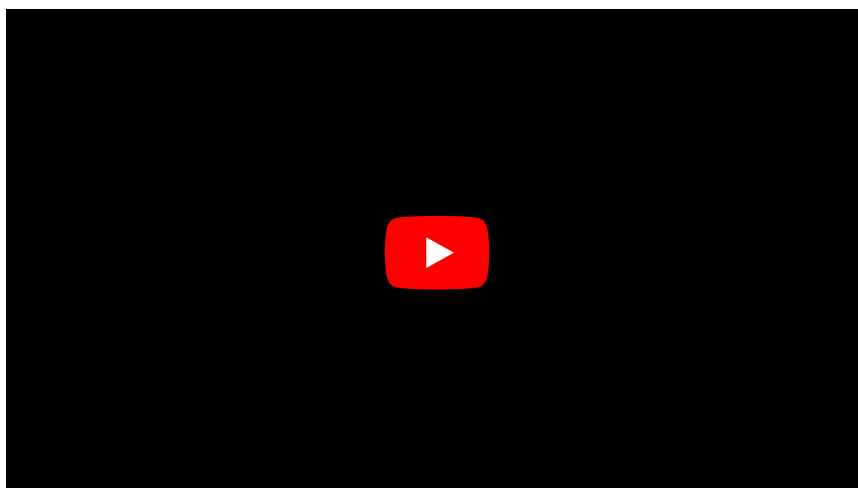


Many people around the world thought that the outbreak of COVID-19 and people quarantined in their homes would help reduce pollution in China. However, it seems to be causing an entirely different pollution concern, as some people who wear single-use face masks are dropping them on the ground in public places. This is posing a pollution threat to public places, especially beaches, gardens and streets, [Republic World](#) reports.

In Hong Kong's beaches, gardens and other public places, discarded face masks are accumulating on a large scale. This has led to an increase in plastic pollution and is especially posing a threat to marine life, the news agency says. As many environmentalists feared, the litter generated by the coronavirus pandemic has added to the growth of marine pollution and ocean acidity.

Threat to Marine Life

Environmental groups have warned that the waste is posing a huge threat to marine life and wildlife habitats. For weeks, most of Hong Kong's 7.4 million people have been putting on single-use face masks every day in the hope of warding off the coronavirus. But huge numbers of the masks are not disposed of properly, and have instead ended up dumped in the countryside or the sea, where marine life can mistake them for food, or where they wash up on beaches along with the usual plastic bags and other trash, the UK-based [Daily Mail](#) reports.



The face masks are made of polypropylene, a type of plastic, and are not going to break down quickly, said Tracey Read, founder of the group [Plastic Free Seas](#) in Hong Kong. Plastic Free Seas is led by a small team of passionate and focused individuals committed to reducing the scourge of plastic pollution in Hong Kong.

"We only have had masks for the last six to eight weeks, in a massive volume ... we are now seeing the effect on the environment," Gary Stokes, founder of the environmental group Oceans Asia, told [Reuters](#), the American news agency. Stokes cited the example of Hong Kong's isolated and uninhabited Soko islands, south of its international airport. He said he initially found 70 discarded masks on a 100 metre stretch of beach, and when he came back a week later there were more than 30 new ones.