

READING AND VOCABULARY



1 In pairs, look at the photo and answer the questions.

- Do you often buy water/soft drinks in plastic bottles? Why are they popular?
- In what ways do you think the fashion for water in plastic bottles could be harmful to the environment?

2 **CD2.9** Quickly read the article. Tick two predictions the author clearly makes about the future. Which information in the article do you find most surprising/worrying?

- Bottled drinks are likely to fall out of fashion.
- The amount of plastic rubbish in the oceans will increase.
- Many species of sea bird will probably become extinct.
- People may start eating food that has been contaminated with plastic.

3 Read the article again. Are the statements true (T) or false (F)?

- One million people in Britain buy a bottled drink every day.
- Most of our plastic rubbish finishes up in recycling bins.
- Scientists already knew about the floating rubbish five years ago.
- Ten percent of the rubbish in the sea comes from rivers and sewers.
- The author discovered that adult albatross birds were feeding plastic to their young.
- The ecologists on Midway Island were only interested in birds.
- The author believes we are already producing more plastic rubbish than the ocean can deal with.

4 **Vocabulary** Complete the sentences with the missing words or phrases from the box.

contaminated destroys
disposable environment
recycled rubbish waste

- You can make road signs, garden furniture, carpets and even T-shirts from _____ plastic.
- Scientists warned that the city's tap water had become _____ after an accident.
- _____ dumps can cause a lot of problems for local residents.
- It's a _____ camera – you can only use it once.
- Greenhouse gases are harmful to the _____.
- Toxic _____ from the factory killed hundreds of fish.
- Acid rain _____ trees.

5 **Phrasal verbs** Match the highlighted phrasal verbs in the article with meanings 1–6.

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1 find; discover | _____ |
| 2 examine; study | _____ |
| 3 use; consume | _____ |
| 4 form; comprise | _____ |
| 5 discard; get rid of | _____ |
| 6 finally be in a particular place/situation | _____ |

6 **Phrasal verbs** Complete the sentences with the correct form of the phrasal verbs from the article.

- You could reuse that container – don't _____ it _____!
- The average shopper _____ 500 plastic bags every year.
- It's hard to imagine that a lot of this rubbish will probably _____ in the middle of the ocean.
- At the moment they _____ the cause of the explosion on the oil platform.
- Biologists _____ the rare bird by accident while they were studying elephants.
- Water _____ about 70% of the Earth's surface.

7 **Work in pairs. Which of the things below do you often do to help the environment? Which ones do you think make the most difference? Why?**

- Using linen bags, not plastic carrier bags.
- Riding a bike/Walking to school/work.
- Sorting rubbish for recycling.
- Using low-energy light bulbs.
- Turning off lights when leaving a room.
- Turning off your electrical appliances (not leaving them on standby).
- Turning off the tap when brushing your teeth.

NOT SO PLASTIC FANTASTIC



by Jake Twomey



1 Bottled drinks are big business nowadays. Americans **get through** two million plastic bottles of drink every five minutes, while here in the UK we spend one million pounds on them every day. Perhaps you are sipping mineral water from a bottle as you read this article. But what do you usually do with the empty bottle? Although many of us try our best to recycle our plastic rubbish, the sad fact is that only one plastic bottle in five gets recycled. The rest **end up** on rubbish dumps. And because plastic takes at least 400 years to decompose, our 'disposable' plastic bottles are likely to remain with us for a very long time.

2 But it's not only on land that plastic is causing problems. Over the past decade we have discovered that there are huge areas of 'plastic soup' in our oceans. Of the billions of pieces of floating plastic rubbish which **make up** this 'soup', much of it is bits of plastic bottles and bottle tops. Of course, some of this rubbish comes from boats or oil and gas platforms. But most of it comes from the land and enters the sea from rivers and sewers. We now believe that ten percent of the plastic rubbish we **throw away** on land ends up in the sea. Globally, that's about ten million tonnes of plastic each year. This problem will definitely get worse, because plastic takes hundreds of years to break down in sea water and people are unlikely to stop using plastic

bottles. One area of floating rubbish in the north Pacific is already more than twice the size of France. 25

3 This plastic soup is already destroying the environment. Action Ecology recently spent a week on Midway Island in the Pacific Ocean, where we were **looking into** how plastic is harming the wildlife and slowly poisoning the environment. All over the island, we **came across** dead albatross chicks, whose parents had fed them bottle tops, cigarette lighters and other pieces of rubbish from the sea. I found it a truly heartbreaking sight. My team found plastic not only in the bodies of nearly half the seabirds we examined but also in dozens of other species such as fish, turtles, whales and dolphins. As more and more seafood becomes contaminated with plastic, it seems people might soon end up consuming their own rubbish. Isn't it crazy? 30 35

4 For thousands of years, the ocean was a symbol of the eternal power of nature. When we looked at it, we felt small and our problems seemed trivial. But now it looks as if even something as huge as the ocean cannot cope with the amount of plastic waste that our civilisation produces. 40

The author is a marine biologist who is currently working for the charity Action Ecology.