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Balloons deadliest plastic for seabirds – 24th March, 2019

Level 4

Scientists found what plastic is most harmful to seabirds. Marine and Antarctic studies researchers discovered that balloons were deadliest. They said balloons were 32 times likelier to kill seabirds than hard plastics. Balloons and soft plastics accounted for 5 per cent of plastics ingested, but were responsible for over 40 per cent of seabird deaths. Researchers said hard plastic can pass quickly through the bird, but balloons can get blocked and kill birds.

The study looked at 1,733 dead seabirds. Over a quarter of them died because of the growing threat of plastic. A researcher said: "Marine debris ingestion is now a globally recognized threat....We suggest that [fewer] balloons and balloon fragments in the ocean would directly reduce seabird mortalities." There is 280,000 tons of marine debris worldwide. About half of seabirds eat plastic daily. Seabirds think balloons look like squid.

Level 5

Scientists made an alarming discovery about what plastic is most harmful to seabirds. Australia's Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies discovered that balloons were deadliest. The research team said balloons were 32 times likelier to kill seabirds than hard plastics. They said that while balloons and soft plastics accounted for 5 per cent of plastics ingested, they were responsible for more than 40 per cent of seabird deaths. A researcher said: "Hard plastic fragments may pass quickly through the gut, but soft plastics are more likely to become compacted and cause fatal obstructions."

The study examined 1,733 dead seabirds. Researchers found that over a quarter of the deaths were because of plastic, which is becoming an increasing threat to seabirds. A researcher said: "Marine debris ingestion is now a globally recognized threat....We suggest that reducing the presence of balloons and balloon fragments in the ocean would directly reduce seabird mortalities." There is 280,000 tons of marine debris worldwide. The researcher said about half of seabirds eat plastic daily. Seabirds will swallow balloons because they think they look like squid.

Level 6

Scientists have made an alarming discovery about what kinds of pollution are most harmful to seabirds. A study led by Australia's Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies discovered that balloons were the deadliest kind plastic for seabirds. The research team said balloons were 32 times more likely to kill seabirds than hard plastics. They found that while balloons and other soft plastics accounted for only 5 per cent of plastics ingested, they were responsible for more than 40 per cent of deaths among seabirds. Lead researcher Lauren Roman said: "Hard plastic fragments may pass quickly through the gut, but soft plastics are more likely to become compacted and cause fatal obstructions."

The study examined 1,733 dead seabirds and found that more than a quarter of the deaths were attributed to eating plastic. Ms Roman explained that plastic is becoming an increasing threat to seabirds. She said: "Marine debris ingestion is now a globally recognized threat....We suggest that reducing the presence of balloons and balloon fragments in the ocean would directly reduce seabird mortalities." LiveScience.com said: "With an estimated 280,000 tons of floating marine debris worldwide, about half of all seabird species are thought to ingest plastic on a daily basis. Birds are especially likely to swallow dangerous balloons because they closely resemble squid, according to the study."