



Ruddy Turnstone and plastic pollution by Greens and Blues/Shutterstock

PLASTIC POLLUTION

Plastic pollution is pervasive. 90% of seabirds have ingested at least some form of plastic. Ingesting plastic can cause digestive blockages, especially in chicks that receive regurgitated food from adults. Additionally, discarded fishing gear can entangle seabirds, leading to drowning, injury, and death.

Of further concern is plasticosis, a plastic-induced fibrotic disease first identified in seabirds. Over time chronic inflammation and excessive scar tissue can impede organ function in birds. Recent research has also shown that plastic exposure can cause neurodegeneration in birds.

American Bird Conservancy is working to protect birds from plastic pollution by advocating for policy change, tracking the latest science, and leading on-the-ground plastic clean-up projects and public education.



Black-crowned Night Heron and plastic pollution by Wildpix 645/Shutterstock

Policy change is needed to reduce the amount of plastics that end up in the environment, polluting habitats and harming wildlife. ABC is working at the federal and state levels to support policy solutions.

Examples of Policy Solutions:

Banning certain single-use plastics, such as plastic bags or polystyrene foam containers, can mitigate pollution that lasts lifetimes in the environment.

Limiting pre-production plastic pellet discharges can ensure this type of microplastic stays out of waterways.

Improving waste management infrastructure can reduce the amount of waste entering the environment and boost beneficial practices, such as composting and certain types of recycling.

Increasing funding for programs that further pollution research, clean-ups, and public outreach, such as NOAA's Marine Debris Program and the EPA's Marine Pollution Program, benefit wildlife conservation and the public.

