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School of Marine Sciences presents...

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Plastics in the Ocean: Trash, Tracer and Environmental Threat



Friday, February 15, 2019

Room 354 Aubert Hall

11:00 AM

Polycom availability with Darling Marine Center, Gulf of Maine Research Institute, and Bigelow Laboratories

Microplastics have become a focus of attention in the scientific community because of their documented prevalence in the environment (primarily marine and freshwater, but also terrestrial and as airborne particles). This apparent ubiquity, especially of plastic fibers, drives concern about the risks of microplastics to animals that encounter them through ingestion and/or inhalation or gill uptake. This contaminant may also be used as a tracer to understand physical processes in the upper ocean. However – fictitious islands of floating trash aside – larger plastic items are also of concern, not least because they are the origin of most microplastics, which are generated through chemical and physical degradation upon environmental exposure. A framework is proposed to consider the global budget of plastic marine debris, including its sources, distribution, and fate, that may be used to evaluate current scientific understanding and identify important knowledge gaps, and to link process studies into a broader context.

Host: Nishad Jayasundara