



KYMA

sea conservation
& research

The destruction of marine habitats

The consequences of industrial fishing: destroyed seabeds, dwindling coral reefs and deadly ghost nets.

Industrial fishing destroys coral reefs

Industrial fishing and fish farming change and destroy marine habitats to an extreme extent. This is done inter alia with bottom trawls, which are used to catch fishes and crustaceans living near the bottom. With these bottom trawls seabeds are ploughed and levelled every year on a global area that is estimated to be 150 times larger than the cleared forest area on land.¹ Entire marine biotic communities and structures are destroyed- including coral reefs. In the North Pacific alone, 40 tons of cold water corals have been destroyed annually; off Australia and Norway, bottom trawling has already eliminated 90% and 30-50% respectively.²

Protected areas are ignored

Trawling does not stop at protected areas either. According to a study, 59% of protected areas in Europe are not only regularly fished, but also more intensively than unprotected areas. Estimates suggest that sharks and rays are declining by almost 70% in these heavily fished areas, particularly due to by-catch of these species.³ The deeper the bottom trawls are fishing, the more by-catch results. They account for nearly 50% of the world's by-catch.⁴ For this reason scientists recommend a depth limit of 600 meters.⁵

Ghost nets drift around for decades


An estimated 640,000 tonnes of fishing nets, lines and pots are accidentally or deliberately discarded into the sea every year. Most fishing gear is mainly made of plastic, is correspondingly robust and non-degradable and therefore poses a threat to marine life for decades because they get caught in it. It is estimated that over 136,000 seals and whales and tens of thousands of other marine animals are affected every year.⁶ Discarded fishing gear accounts for an estimated 10% of global marine plastic pollution.⁷

Without mangrove forests nurseries die

The farming of crustaceans, especially shrimps, is booming in certain regions, especially in Asia.⁸ Huge mangrove areas were cleared for this purpose, among others in Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. This meant that important „nurseries“ for fishes and other marine life were lost, on which the local population was also dependent. At the same time, the coasts have lost their protection against erosion and the coastal waters are over-fertilized and polluted by the breeding formula, the excrements of the farmed animals and added chemicals.^{9,10,11}

At some point coral reefs, protected areas and mangrove forests disappear completely and make way for the harmful industry. But do we really want that?





¹ Pauly 2006

² https://wwf.panda.org/our_work/oceans/problems/bycatch222/bycatch_victims/

³ Dureuil et al. 2018

⁴ Roda et al. 2019

⁵ Clarke et al. 2015

⁶ <https://www.worldanimalprotection.us/our-work/animals-wild/sea-change-campaign-tackling-ghost-fishing-gear>

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/nov/06/dumped-fishing-gear-is-biggest-plastic-polluter-in-ocean-finds-report>

⁸ FAO 2018

⁹ Naylor et al. 2000

¹⁰ Hossain & Hasan 2017

¹¹ <https://blogs.umass.edu/natsci397a-eross/environmental-impacts-of-shrimp-aquaculture-and-integrated-multi-trophic-aquaculture-imta-as-a-solution/>

Tip

[Video: Global Ghost Gear Initiative](#)

Let's give the seas a break.

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www.kyma-sea.org/break

