

MARINE ANIMALS



Who will inherit the oceans?

Industrial fishing and rising ocean temperatures have led oceanographers to predict *The Rise of Slime* as the frequency of jellyfish and other slimy creatures increases. Fishing and climate change are killing the ocean as we know it.

Background

The numbers of fish caught each year are staggering: one estimate suggests that between **0.97 and 2.7 trillion wild fish** are caught by humans annually, even more than the **60 billion land animals we slaughter each year**. In addition, between **37 and 120 billion farmed fish** are killed for food. The UN's **Food and Agriculture Organisation estimated** in 2014 that demand for seafood production is annually increasing at a rate of 3.2%, twice the world population growth rate. The rise in demand is despite the **health risks of seafood**: traces of mercury and other heavy metals are found in animal-based "seafood".

Many fish are also consumed indirectly – ground up and fed to factory-farmed animals or other fish. A typical salmon farm, for example, churns through 3-4 kilograms of wild fish for every kilogram of salmon that it produces.

Legislation

In most of the world, it is accepted that if animals are to be killed for food, they should be killed without suffering. Regulations for slaughter generally require that animals be rendered instantly unconscious before they are killed, and killed as close to instantaneously as possible. However, there is no humane slaughter requirement for wild fish caught and killed at sea, nor, in most places, for farmed fish. They are truly the **forgotten victims**.

Without legal protections, these intelligent, complex animals experience injury from nets and other fishing gears and are impaled, crushed, suffocated or cut open and gutted, all while fully conscious. Hundreds of billions of **"nontarget" marine animals** - including sharks, sea turtles, birds, seals and whales – are also regularly caught by the commercial fishing industry. In addition, many fish raised on **aquafarms** spend their entire lives in crowded, filthy enclosures, and suffer from parasitic infections, diseases and debilitating injuries.

The slow progress of fish welfare regulation is partly related to an historical lack of scientific agreement on whether fish suffer or have cognitive abilities which would

warrant moral consideration. There has been some remarkable recent work demonstrating that **fish not only feel pain** but clearly have **cognition and emotions**. As a result there have been some minimal developments in providing welfare protections – the **voluntary fish welfare guidelines** in the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) for example. The Abbott coalition stopped AAWS operational funding in 2013, but the strategy did help establish the overarching, if weak, principle that the aim should be to minimise suffering within the constraint of practices inherent to the aquatic sector.

Also, marine sanctuaries are being created to maintain pristine ocean ecosystems and isolated efforts to restore estuaries and bays have met with some success. However, we are a long way from seeing strong legal regulation of oceans and marine animal welfare.

Environmental issues

Environmentalists have been ringing alarm bells for decades over the sustainability of industrialised wild fish capture, with mounting evidence of dramatic **over-exploitation of fish populations**. In Australia, **"super trawlers"** have been making **headlines**, as have the dwindling fish populations in the **Great Barrier Reef**.

Pollution is the introduction of harmful contaminants in a given ecosystem. Common human-made pollutants that reach the ocean include pesticides, herbicides, chemical fertilizers, detergents, oil, sewage, plastics, and other solids. Many of these pollutants are mistakenly eaten by marine animals, or collect at the ocean's depths, where they are consumed by small marine organisms and introduced into the global food chain. Degradation, particularly of shoreline and other waters, has accelerated dramatically in the past three centuries as industrial discharge and runoff from farms and coastal cities has increased. The **State of the Marine Environment Report for Australia** found that pollution from the land contributes up to 80 percent of all marine pollution and is a major threat to the long-term health of marine systems, affecting ecological processes, public health and social and commercial use of marine resources. Harvesting **oil and gas** can also seriously damage sensitive marine areas and species. The



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Authorised by: Geoff Russell, 6 Fifth Ave, St Morris SA 5068

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industry is not properly regulated and has a track record of carelessness.

Despite anti-dumping laws, in certain regions ocean currents corral trillions of decomposing plastic items and other trash into gigantic, swirling garbage patches. One in the North Pacific, known as the Pacific Trash Vortex, is estimated to be the size of Texas and a new, massive patch was discovered in the Atlantic Ocean in early 2010. Plastics and fish got joint headlines in 2016 when it was reported that [up to a third of UK fish contained plastic](#) including cod, haddock, mackerel and shellfish. [A report for the Ellen MacArthur Foundation](#) estimated that, by 2050, there will be [more plastics than fish in the sea](#). Pollution is not always physical either. In large bodies of water, sound waves from ships, sonar devices and oil rigs can disrupt the migration, communication, hunting, and reproduction patterns of many marine animals, particularly aquatic mammals like whales and dolphins.

Climate change

By far the biggest threat to our marine environment however, is [climate change](#). The increase in global temperature of [1.2°C since pre-industrial times](#) is disrupting life in the oceans, from the tropics to the poles. Coastal habitats have already been flooded by rising sea levels, with other impacts including ocean acidification, coral bleaching, extreme weather events and reduced oxygen in the waters. Climate change is massively disrupting sealife's normal behaviour, life cycle and food chain. As animal agriculture plays a major role in causing climate change, the Animal Justice Party (AJP) advocates for people switching to a plant based diet.

Some experts predict the [collapse](#) of all economically important seafood populations by 2048. For the health of our oceans, we need to reduce our dependence on marine animals and prevent further climate change.

Food labelling

A German supermarket chain has introduced a wide-ranging supply-chain [policy on animal welfare](#) that may be the most progressive in the world. Sea creatures caught in less cruel ways that avoid by-catch and protected animals are preferred, and Aldi Süd expects improved living conditions and reduced use of chemicals and antibiotics for farmed fish. In addition, the policy encourages suppliers to engage more broadly and proactively with animal welfare concerns.

In Australia, supermarket chains don't go much beyond compliance with industry and regulatory standards, although all express a commitment to sustainable fishing. As well as consumers taking matters into their own hands, supermarkets need to be forced to properly label all seafood

to show details of production methods and environmental costs. The Government and other bodies should also have their dietary advice independently audited to ensure it is evidence based and shows the impact of seafood production. They must also be clear that seafood is not required for our good health and that industrial seafood production is cruel and unsustainable.

Policy

Many marine animals, including fish, feel joy, suffering and pain just as land animals do. The Animal Justice Party believes their current treatment is inconsistent with these basic scientific facts and must change.

Some marine animals, like dugongs and turtles, are killed as part of indigenous tradition. Others are caught as part of an elaborate sport fishing culture; including marlin, swordfish and sharks. The AJP doesn't believe that a culture or tradition of any age or extent is a justification for killing; let alone killing using painful or drawn out methods.

Eating fish, whether farmed or wild, is incompatible with AJP's advocacy of a plant based diet.

Key Objectives

1. To protect all marine animals and their environment as a matter of urgency from adverse commercial industries including, but not limited to, fishing (wild and farmed), gas exploration, land based agricultural run off and harmful dredging.
2. To invest in further development of biodegradable products and work toward the banning of harmful plastics.
3. To invest in research and development to clean up our oceans. As interim measures, some changes are required urgently.
4. To conduct an audit of nutrition advice from Government and other bodies to ensure it is evidenced based. The background to all seafood advice should first make it clear that seafood isn't required for good health.
5. To ensure that nutritional advice from Government agencies doesn't exclude environmental and welfare implications of the way marine animals are farmed or fished.
6. To ensure fish are included in all animal welfare legislation.
7. To implement better labelling of all seafood to include details of production methods and, where appropriate, bycatch levels and that any bycatch estimates be verified by independent observers.
8. To fund research via an industry levy into less painful fishing methods.



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