

What are Nurdles?

Nurdles are small plastic pellets. They are the raw material which nearly all our plastic goods are made from.



How do they end up at sea?

- Nurdles can be lost at sea from ships or at port when they are handled.
- Nurdles spilt on land at industrial facilities can float off down drains and ultimately, out to sea.

Currents and wind disperse them and they are now washing up on beaches across the globe. Beaches along the Firth of Forth are accumulating them in worryingly large numbers.

Why are nurdles harmful?

Like other plastics in our sea nurdles...

- attract and concentrate environmental pollutants like DDT and PCBs to highly toxic levels
- are mistaken for prey by many marine animals and seabirds and the toxins coating them can enter the food chain
- do not go away - they just fragment into smaller and smaller plastic particles



© whisky golf

In the North Sea 95% of fulmars studied contained plastic - astonishingly 273 nurdles

were recovered from one bird's stomach.

The Firth of Forth



Designated an 'Internationally important' area for several seabird populations, the Firth of Forth boasts a rich assortment of wildlife. The Isle of May is home to thousands of puffins and other seabirds and the Bass Rock is the largest single island gannetry in the world. However this unique and inspirational landscape is surrounded by industry using, producing and distributing nurdles, making it particularly vulnerable to this type of plastic pollution.

Analysis of nurdles found in the Forth show they had absorbed significant amounts of toxic chemicals including PCBs and DDTs.



© Steve Garvie

Many of the animals that make the Forth their home have been shown to ingest plastic, and post mortems of gulls, fulmars, terns and puffins have found nurdles in their stomachs.



Fidra is an environmental charity based in East Lothian. It seeks to address a wide range of specific environmental issues by promoting genuinely sustainable practices.

Working with



FIRTH OF FORTH



Help end nurdle pollution right now!

There is currently no practical way of removing nurdles from the sea but we can stop the problem from getting worse.

New nurdles are washing up on the shores of the Firth of Forth but we don't have detailed evidence of where they are coming from or how widespread the problem is.

By looking for nurdles on your local beach you can have fun and help show the local plastics industry their impact on our estuary. Your findings will help us persuade industry to take up the challenge of making the Firth of Forth the first zero nurdle loss estuary in the UK.

If you think the plastic industry should do their bit to keep our seas clean and plastic free, join the

Great Nurdle Hunt!



TIPS TO HELP YOU HUNT

It is a tricky business hunting for nurdles. Coastal geography, tides, currents, and wind mean floating plastic nurdles get washed up on different beaches at different times. Being small and lightweight they are blown around and once on land eventually get caught in sheltered nooks and crannies.

WHERE TO LOOK

Amongst other plastic:

The best place to start your hunt is amongst accumulations of small pieces of plastic above the tide line.

Paths:

Look on sheltered tracks and paths at the edge of the beach.

Vegetation:

Blown on shore from the sea they get caught in the base of the grasses at the top of the beach.

Strand line:

The sea washes them up to the high tide mark where they get trapped in the strand line debris.

Sandy Beach:

It is easier to hunt on sandy rather than stony or pebbly beaches.

Headlands:

Beach litter often accumulates near the headlands of bays.

Un-cleaned beaches:

In the summer some popular beaches are mechanically cleaned. Avoid these areas.

KNOW YOUR NURDLES

Nurdles are hard to spot! They are very small and their colour often blends in with the sand, so on your hunt slow down and get close to the ground.



Colour:

Most are clear or white but they become yellow over time. You do get coloured pellets too.

Size and Shape:

Between 3-5mm in diameter, often shaped like a lentil.

COLLECTING NURDLES

An old jam jar is ideal for collecting nurdles and showing them off to your friends.

Please remember that nurdles absorb toxic pollutants from the ocean. If you want to collect them, we recommend you wear gloves or use tweezers and always wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.

SHARE YOUR FINDINGS ONLINE AT...

www.nurdlehunt.org.uk

It's really simple to report your sightings. We want to know where you were nurdle hunting, how many you found and how long you were hunting for. Pictures of your finds are also really helpful and you can upload them on line too.

