

The Unknowns of Microplastics: We cannot understand what we cannot measure

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Introduction

The issue of microplastics was first reported in the 1970s when researchers found small pieces of plastic floating in the middle of the North Atlantic¹. Decades later, Richard Thompson coined the term “microplastics” to refer to pieces of plastic debris <5 mm in size, which sparked research into this area by oceanographers, marine ecologists, and marine biologists. However, we know now that microplastics are not limited to our oceans but contaminate marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems and travel from one ecosystem compartment to another via air, water, and biota.

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