COASTAL MONITORING

Unusual pollution suspects*Sci. Total Environ.* <http://doi.org/c4rg> (2019); *Sci.**Total Environ.* **673**, 511–521 (2019)

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Public awareness about ocean plastic pollution has surged in recent years. Less well known about is pollution from chemical substances categorized as emergent, including food additives, pesticides and personal care products. They tend to be ubiquitous in high-consumption societies and make their way seamlessly into ocean habitats via river discharge. Even at small concentrations, some of these substances can be detrimental to human and natural health. As with microplastic pollution, wastewater treatments are unable to capture many emergent pollutants and their detection requires laborious monitoring.

Sarah Letsinger from the University of Leeds, UK, and colleagues analysed pharmaceutical concentrations in 12 estuaries in the UK. The most abundant were ibuprofen and paracetamol, particularly in the Humber Estuary, northeast England, where the authors recorded some of the highest concentrations ever measured in estuaries. They also found seasonal variations. In the same European continental shelf, Alyssa Azaroff and colleagues from Institut des Sciences Analytiques et de Physicochimie pour l'Environnement et les Matériaux, France, analysed mercury compounds in sediments of a submarine canyon just off the southwest coast of France. They detected high concentrations, which increase with depth and coastal distance. Such compounds can transform into a neurotoxin and accumulate along the trophic chain in this important fish habitat.

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