# Fish ingesting fibers from people’s clothing

**By Mary Catherine O’Connor, Outdoors**

Humanity dumps 8 million tons of plastic into the oceans each year, according to a study published early this year in *Science*. That’s a mind-blowingly large figure, but it still doesn’t account for the untold billions of tiny plastic fibers from synthetic apparel that leave your washing machine and enter rivers, lakes, and oceans through wastewater treatment plants.

These fibers, as well as tiny bits of degraded trash and microbeads from personal care products, have generated a long list of questions and concerns among environmental scientists. In a new study in Nature, Chelsea Rochman, a marine ecotoxicologist from UC Davis, addressed one of the chief concerns: Are those fibers and other microplastics getting into our food system? The answer: Yes.

To reach this conclusion, Rochman and her colleagues purchased and dissected fish and bivalves from markets near Half Moon Bay and compared their contents to those of fish and bivalves purchased from a market in Makassar, Indonesia. In both locations, more than half of the species and roughly a third of the individual fish and shellfish contained foreign objects—most of which were microplastics—that the fish and shellfish filtered from the water or mistook for food.

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