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Take a Virtual Research Cruise through Sea Education Association's Fall Lecture Series

The season's final talk focuses on the community of tiny organisms that live on plastics in the ocean

WOODS HOLE, MASS. — The public is invited to take a virtual sailing research voyage—and learn more about lesser-known aspects of the world's oceans from our well-traveled SEA Semester faculty—in the final installment of Sea Education Association's fall lecture series.

- **Sunday, November 15 at 1 p.m.** | *Plastic Pollution & The Ocean Environment* by Dr. Erik Zettler
All lectures are free, open to the public, and held at:
Sea Education Association, James L. Madden Center Lecture Hall
171 Woods Hole Road, Falmouth, Massachusetts

About the November Lecture

Plastic is now the most common form of ocean debris, with concentrations of more than 1 million pieces per square kilometer in certain areas. You've probably heard about the problems that arise when fish, turtles, birds, and marine mammals ingest or get entangled in this litter. But recent research reveals lesser-known aspect of this story: An entire community of tiny microbes is living on these plastics.

In this lecture, Dr. Erik Zettler will discuss recent findings about the "Plastisphere," the name for the miniature ecosystem in the layer of slimy film that plastics develop after immersion in sea water. Using SEA Semester sailing vessels and incorporating student research projects, a joint research team from Sea Education Association, Marine Biological Laboratory, and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution has been exploring the diversity and functions of the Plastisphere community through a variety of cutting-edge research methods.

There's still much more to understand about the Plastisphere, but scientists have observed millions of tiny organisms that play different roles. Some of these plastic hitchhikers are passive and harmless travelers, but others have the potential to break down plastic, pose threats as invasive species, or may cause diseases in marine animals and even humans. Join us for an illustrated look at what local scientists are uncovering about these fascinating creatures.

About the Lecturer

[Dr. Erik Zettler](#) is a Professor of Oceanography and Associate Dean for Institutional Relations at Sea Education Association. He has been a member of the Woods Hole scientific community since 1985 and joined SEA in 1994. Whenever possible, he escapes his desk for the field, including more than 50 research cruises aboard SEA and UNOLS vessels in the Atlantic, Pacific, Mediterranean, and Caribbean.

About Sea Education Association/SEA Semester®

Sea Education Association (SEA) is an internationally recognized leader in undergraduate ocean education. For nearly 45 years and more than one million nautical miles sailed, SEA has educated students about the world's oceans through its Boston University accredited study abroad program, SEA Semester. SEA/SEA Semester is based on Cape Cod in the oceanographic research community of Woods Hole, Massachusetts and has two research vessels: the SSV *Corwith Cramer*, operating in the Atlantic Ocean, and the SSV *Robert C. Seamans*, operating in the Pacific.