

THE BEST STORIES

I LIVE BY THE SEA

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH PHOTO AND FILM CONTEST 2021

www.todaywehave.com/CONTEST.html



Alicja Karwowska, 11

Sing of sea lions

Poland



The picture was taken close to Piedras Blancas Elephant Seal Rookery, California, West Coast of North America. We found beach full of California Sea Lion. They laid in the sun, some took a nap, covered with sand, accosted each other and... sang. Sea lions are particularly intelligent animals. It was an unforgettable experience to see this animals in their natural environment and I will remember their singing for a long time. This picture was taken from a distance in order not to disturb the animals. It's very important to respect marine nature and it's limited resources and to protect such amazing places for future generations. We all have impact on the environment. Climate changes, elevated water temperatures, El Nino and unsustainable catches make big changes in the oceans. Thanks to marine resources, we have food, workplaces and locations to relax. We should all try to make our planet a better place to live.

Ardeleanu Crina, 12

I live by the Sea

Romania



Our oceans and seas are starting to be the planet's trash can. Unfortunately, in the same situation is a beach from Năvodari city.

The pollution that people made is the main threat and it brings a lot of damage to the Black Sea's marine environment.

The beaches are full of plastic, metal, wood, rubber, glass or paper rubbish. From all of them, the plastic is the most dangerous and frequently found. You can see it on the beach, but also in the water.

An important appearance of plastic rubbish is that its degradation is very slow, which means they stay on the beaches and in the water around ten to a hundred years.

A lot of marine species swallow the microparticles from the plastic, thinking it's food, which cause them intern injuries or even worse, death. For example, there were found plastic scraps in a dolphin's stomach.

Because the studies show that 80% of the marine rubbish comes from the land, it's important for people to know that this is dangerous for the environment we live in. In this context, our school, "Grigore Moisil" Năvodari developed an ample campaign to collect the rubbish, so it can be recycled then it's not going to be a polluting factor anymore.

Blanka Ustjanycz, 13

The secret of the Gdansk Bay

Poland



That one sunny day, sunlight was irradiating the bluish sea. It was like myriads of blue gems were shining, and it made the colour more gorgeous. It was so quiet that I could only hear the wind that was gently collapsing into the sea. The birds and waves were performing a symphony, and I was one of the audiences. When I closed my eyes, I could feel the peace and the wind waving my hair.

I could not forget the sea view that I saw in Gdynia. It was so beautiful and calming. I wanted to get close to it and discover the sea, so I decided to go swimming. I could smell the salty and fishy seawater. The water was so clear as I could see plenty of fish with goggles.

Far away from the beach, I could see the Torpedo Station. It's quite an old monument, which is currently available for exploration only in Oksywie. The structure protruding from the water is interesting, and at the same time – threatening. It allows you to read another sad story in the history of World War II.

That was my first time I saw such a charming sea view, and I fell in love with the sea from that moment. I love the wind that makes the whole land so peaceful, the Torpedo Station, which brings a lot of nostalgia. That's what makes the sea so extraordinary for me.

David Constantin Toma, 11

The sea is everyone's!

Romania



I am an 11-year-old boy who wants to live in a world of peace, love and a world without waste!

I choose # without pollution!

A sunny summer day on the shores of the Black Sea. On the shore I see a lot of waste (PET, bags, plastic, boxes). Desolate! I stop and imagine what happens to these wastes where they end up ... some of them decompose over time due to the temperature, reach the bottom of the sea and become food for marine life and seagulls.

Suddenly I was awakened to reality by a deafening noise: the siren of a ship approaching the Port of Constanta. How did the poor sea creatures feel? For a few moments I imagined how they lose their ability to orient themselves and can no longer distinguish the sea from the shore.

Sad! Due to these waste problems, global warming, noise pollution, excessive poaching many species of fish are becoming increasingly rare or endangered.

I set out to become much more responsible and to get involved in volunteering: cleaning beaches, recycling waste. But do I succeed on my own? Of course not! We all need to be aware that we need to take care of the planet so that we can live in a clean world!

Georgiana Laura Aragea, 12

No title

Romania



My name is Georgiana. I live by the sea. The Black Sea. The city I live in is Constanta, Romania's largest seaport. The city has a long and rich history. Founded by the Greek colonists in the 7th century BC, called Tomis, the city fell under the Romans in 71 BC. It was here that they exiled the great poet Ovid, who inspired by the sea, wrote his *Epistulae ex Ponto*. Two centuries later came the Turkish rule. The emperor Constantine renamed the town Constantiana.

Would the region have such a rich history if it weren't for the sea? If it weren't for the sea how could those courageous seamen reach the shore and leave so many traces of their presence here: the Roman edifice, architectural elements, statue groups such as Fortuna with Pontos.

I grew up in this city and I went to the sea shore every so often. Sitting on the slippery rocks I have always wondered what the sea hides on its bottom. Scientists say that there is a solitary creature the only species of shark about 1.8 m. I think I would be petrified if I were to see it. I would definitely not be frightened by other creatures: sturgeons, herrings, gobies. There are other fish swimming to and fro: the stone crab, the sea swallow. Unfortunately some of them are in danger of extinction.

The sea does not only feed its people. It unites us: Romanians, Bulgarians, Russians, Greeks, Roma people leave peacefully together.

Godbe Egwuatu, 12

My beloved Baltic Sea

Poland



The Baltic Sea is so close to my heart. I live in GDYNIA –" in the City of the sea and dream ." I would like it to remain the same , so that the dreams of a clean and safe Baltic Sea will never disappear. The Baltic is very polluted, and it is all because of people. They throw a lot of plastic into it without thinking that it poisons water, makes irreversible changes in the marine ecosystem and poses a death threat to marine animals. 18% of the Baltic bottom area are called "dead zones" where there is no oxygen, where most of the marine animals are unable to survive.

Another big problem are dangerous wrecks lying on the bottom of the Baltic Sea. These are ticking bombs that can cause ecological disaster.

If we do not do anything about it, we will not take such beautiful photos of the sea anymore. My Polish seaside town, which I love so much , will become a sad memory- a memory of the City from the sea and dream. There is still a chance to stop destructive forces that poison the Baltic Sea. Together we can do it. I have a strong faith in humans. I believe that they will not allow nobody or nothing to do more harm to my sea.

Irina Gherfi, 11

I live by the Sea

Romania



My name is Irina and I live in Mangalia, near the sea.

I like living here, the relaxing sound of the sea is wonderful. The single thing I do not like are the jellyfish, but the sea is their home so I respect them.

Some years ago I saw a dead dolphin on the sand, at the beach. I was really sad for the little dolphin, it was a baby. The dead dolphin made me think that he ran away from its home because its house was polluted. It just tried to save its life.

I remember that when Coronavirus didn't exist, my school invited us to an activity in which we collected garbage and then threw it at the right place, the trash bin. I participated in this activity because I knew it helped the sea and the earth.

I have never thought that the sea is home for so many animals and plants. I am so sad that people keep destroying their home knowing what they are doing. I would like people to treat animals as they treat humans, by the way, they deserve respect, we are eating their family.

I love, and I will always do, the sea near my home!

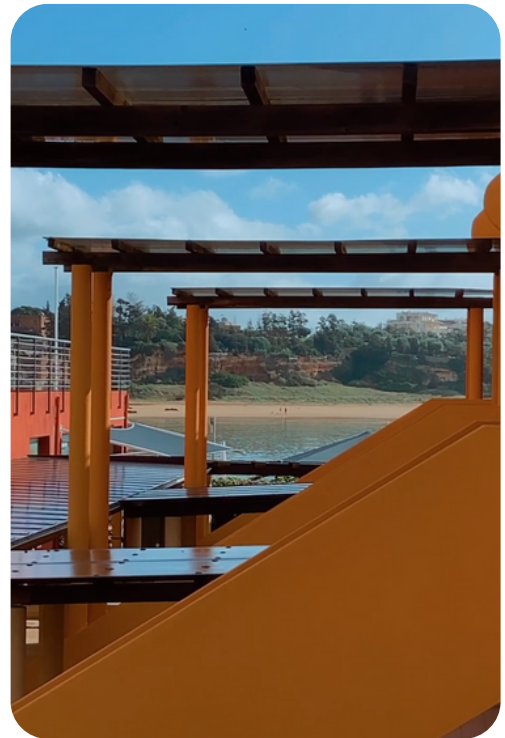
Carolina Batista, 14

My world view

Portugal

What is the ocean? The ocean is a body of saltwater that covers 70% of the Earth's surface. Well, although this is the correct form to describe it the ocean is so much more. The ocean provides more than half of the world's oxygen. The ocean transports heat from the equator to the poles regulating ,this way, our climate. The ocean is responsible for most of our transportation,food and medicine. The ocean gives us the possibility to do water activities and have jobs from it.

The ocean created life, the ocean created us! But are we humans selfish enough to ignore all of this and just look at ourselves ? We need to change. And quick. By saving the ocean we are saving our own lives! So clean the beach, save water , have short showers, eat sustainably,use eco-friendly products and reduce plastic. We must put our rubbish in the right bin so we can reduce the possibility of our rubbish turning into a fish food.



Emily Cioczek, 14 **I live by the Sea** **USA**



The image shown, shows a bird on a rock looking out into the ocean. Behind the rock, there is a boat with three people in it. Every living thing is doing its own thing. The bird is looking out into the ocean, while the people are talking and controlling the boat. The sea is a place for all creatures to go to, where living things can rest, find food, or simply enjoy themselves. In this picture, the humans are not bothering the bird and the bird is not bothering the humans. It is a picture that shows the peace that the ocean brings. The endless horizon of the sea shows the endless possibilities within the sea. There are so many things happening in the ocean that no one knows about. So many hidden things happening at once. The ocean is very large and much of it has not been explored fully. This image shows that living things are connected by the ocean. They both observe the beauty of each other. The ocean also gives the bird and the human food. The sea connects our similarities to other animals.

Laura Garcia, 14 **My Childhood Sea** **Portugal**



This is not any random beach, this is my childhood sea. In it, besides beautiful sea creatures and all kinds of living beings, there are incredible memories, memorable laughs and reflections of millions of smiles. When I'm in it I feel safe. I feel comfort, just like if the waves were hugging my soul while throwing me closer to the shore. It makes me really sad to see that loads of other childhood seas with loads of different happy memories are being destroyed because of us. Our reckless actions on our day-to-day routines are directly and indirectly destroying the most beautiful thing created by nature. We're filling shores and seas with an insane amount of plastic and we all need to stick together to revert what was already accumulated. We need to help each other and save thousands of other childhood seas.

Marta Fraga, 13

Summer Portugal

The summer. A season I would die to be in right now. Why? Well most of my friends would probably answer this question with being on vacation and don't have school, but me, in the other hand, wants summer to come so I can spend more time near my favourite place in the whole world, the beach, smelling the breeze and looking at one of the prettiest things ever, the sea.

I just love the sea... It's a whole other world. The amount of animals and precious things we can find there are unbelievable. Well those animals are lucky. Living there must be amazing! Well, it would be amazing if us, humans, stopped being selfish and stopped harming all those animals and creatures. What have they done to us? A question I can't find the answer to until this day.

Let's think together. Don't tell me that going to the beach in the summer to watch the sunset isn't one of the best feelings in the world. At least for me, it's one of my favourite things to do during that time of the year. But now imagine. A sea full of plastic would totally ruin the vibe, don't you think? Let's preserve it. Let's preserve those little moments that will stay in our minds forever. And it's so easy! Just make an effort to reduce the use of plastic, and if we all try, we will be able to save this whole different world, the sea, and all the little animals that live in it.



Sofia Duarte, 13

The smallest things Portugal



In the times that we are going through, something that I have spent some time thinking about is what is really important in life, which for me are the smallest things, and I think the sea is an excellent representation of that. The sea is something so big, but even so it manages to realise that all its living beings are of enormous importance, and that, without one of them it is not possible to achieve balance, something we all seek in life. Just like the sea, in life we should care more about the little things, like having those we love the most around us, because those are the most beautiful things and even if we don't realize, those are the ones that make us happier. And that's why I chose this photo, because in the middle of such a big ecosystem, I think it's important to value the smallest things.

Vera Pinto, 13

If a little girl can...

Portugal



If a little girl can...

Back in 2017, my family and I went to Thailand and one day we decided to go by boat to the Angthong Marine park. It was an outstanding place of pure beauty and untouched nature. It made me see earth in a different way and I will never forget how well I felt that day.

We went to an island where we decided to climb a very long stairway that led to the top of the mountain. It was a hard climb that even adults found very difficult to endure. Although I was still a little girl I didn't hesitate and went for it. Once we arrived at the middle of the path the view was already breathtaking. At that point I saw many people taking photos and not appreciating the beauty that mother nature has given us, but what can I say, that's what most people do! They seem unable to stop and enjoy a moment with nature.

Our world has long been suffering dramatic changes. The Oceans are full of plastic, animals are going extinct and glaciers are melting. And this is all our fault! We need to fight right now in order to have any chance to MAKE A DIFFERENCE because there's no planet B.

That day I didn't give up. I knew that if I climbed more I would see more than everybody else. Although I was extremely tired, I finally made it all the way to the top. A little girl did what many were not able to do.

Camelia Mihalcioiu, 16

We are all responsible for the seas

Romania



The truth is that people always tend to take anything for granted, especially the things that deserve their gratitude the most. In my point of view, what we should be most grateful for are the things that have been offered by the planet we live on.

About 70 percent of the Earth's surface is water-covered and over 97 percent of the Earth's water is found in the oceans, which we fill with chemicals and litter. Let's face the truth – pollution in our oceans is a serious and growing problem in today's world. It is believed that at this rate, there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans by 2025.

Just close your eyes and imagine the sight of the beautiful sea, the flash of blue in the amber light, the playful waves crashing down onto the shore, the silky sand and the noisy seagulls. Think about all the sea creatures. Now take a moment to think about how ruthlessly we are ruining this beautiful thing, the way we are treating this planet, how the sea is extremely polluted because of our irresponsibility and how the marine life is paying for it. What do you think?

The world around us is so beautiful and precious and it is time for us to realize how grateful we should be for it. We should start taking care of nature as much as nature takes care of us.

Hanna Dmochowska, 16
No title
Poland



The photo captures the serenity of the sea even though it was taken underneath the Sopot pier located very close to the city of Sopot. The intention was to emphasize the tranquility of the sea in contrast to the everlasting tumult of the city. The idea behind the photograph was to illustrate the way the sea provides calmness and peace in the fast-paced everyday life. Long exposure was used intentionally in order to intensify the eternal serenity of the sea. It shows how crucial it is for us to value and cherish marine nature and wildlife and not let the industrial world take over nature. It is crucial to act upon polluting water by releasing trash, chemicals, plastic, oil and sewage into the seas. Actions like those affect not only the marine fauna and flora, but also all the people living by the sea as well as in any other part of the world. Polluting seas and oceans affects the life of marine animals and contributes to increasing the number of endangered species. It also contributes to increasing the risk of developing serious health problems and disease in people that have been exposed to contaminated fish or seafood. The intention behind this picture was to reflect on the way we, as a society, treat nature and how we could change our actions towards the environment in order to live with it in harmony, respecting each other's presence.

Maria Jaroń, 17
Different faces of nature
Poland



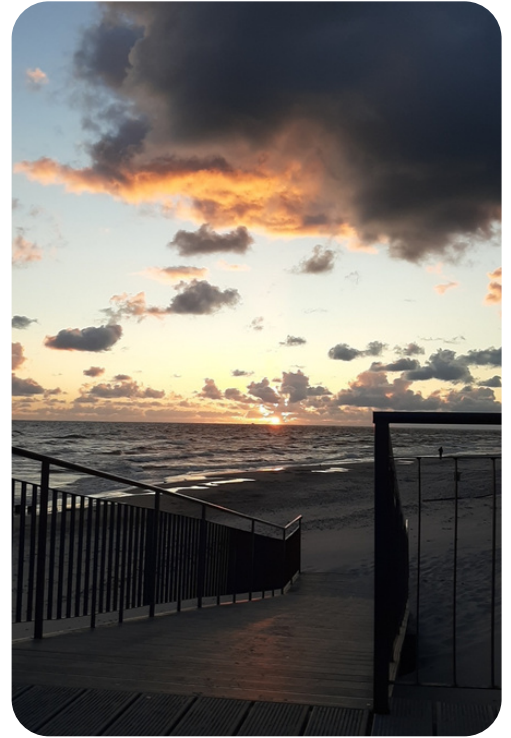
The size and boundlessness of the sea seem to dominate in this photographic shot. The lack of visible horizon clearly shows that the sea is the element that gives the rhythm to everyday life, the rhythm that is friendly and united with the rest of nature. The two, or even three worlds shown in the photograph seem to co-create a kind of harmony of nature. The horses, a mother and her cubs, visible in the picture, are a symbol of nascent life, brought into existence by nature. It is nature that seems to set the rhythm of the presented shot. The cub obediently follows its mother into the waves. This peculiar union of animals with the calm waves of the sea seems to speak for the truth that the world of nature exactly defines itself, and that its two different parts, though different, constitute an integral whole. The harmony with nature is further enhanced by the presence of man, who is absolutely a part of it by riding a horse bareback and thus fitting into the harmonious picture of the whole. All elements of animated nature enter together into the sea waves revealing the message that the world can and if it wants to is a kind of wholeness. This truth is further defined by the colors of the sky, which turns from gray to a friendly shade, seeming to say that nature, and only nature, is the power of the world.

Wiktorja Gołębiowska, 16

Human-friendly power

Poland

This image shows the human-friendly power of the sea, which is why dark clouds are seen in the photograph, which are torn apart by bright stretches of sky that illuminate the calm surface of the sea. The sun "dives" into the sea and shines on a person moving away along the beach. The two elements show the symbolic moment of the ending day and the human path that seems to be heading towards the sun. The size of the human figure seems to convey the truth that man is fragile in the face of the sea, yet the force of nature is kind. This is strengthened by the foreground shot, showing a product of human activity - a railing and a slide for the disabled leading directly to the beach. Putting these elements in the foreground makes us realise that man has an influence on the forces of nature, making them friendly to each other. The railing can be leaned on while going to the beach, and the slope makes the place human-friendly. The beach seems to invite everyone at all times, making the viewer aware that nature is not a space for the chosen, but a reality for everyone. The shot of the driveway in the foreground of the photograph shows the truth that social exclusion can only be achieved by another person, nature invites everyone, becoming an element that includes every human being, allowing them to pursue themselves and return to their original union with nature.



Karina Ionescu, 14

Oh, the sea!

Film

Romania

Oh, the sea!

A suicidal land

The unknown where the monsters hide

Giant whales and scary jellyfish stay in the shadow to attack the little ones.

These monsters are not far from being different than us, the humans

Just like them we hide in the shadows so we can attack when somebody isn't expecting.

In this story the monsters are we, the humans

We throw our garbage on their land

The land that used to be sacred, that used to be the main attraction of the earth

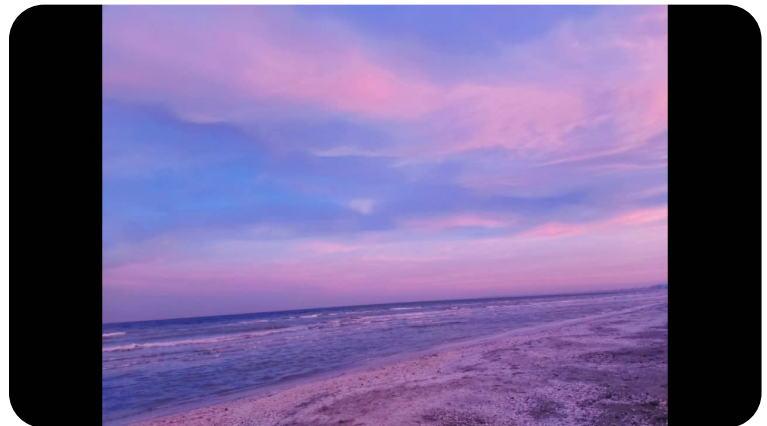
They have no voice

We are the enemies! We are their enemies!

Where will the innocent child play? Where will he build his sand castle and have fantasy of mermaids and imaginary creatures if the only thing that he sees is the pollution?

The beautiful blue sparkly water full of fish and other living creatures is now the hell

The hell for animals, where dangerous and poison potion is having its way straight to the water



Mikołaj Miłostan, 20

Intertwined with nature

Poland



The photo shows a clash of two separate but not mutually exclusive worlds. The calm, "tamed sea" illuminated by the orange glow of the setting sun seems to tell the viewer that the day is drawing nearer. This is reinforced by the fact that it is in the sea that the visible hills seem to submerge. Additionally, the image of nature is emphasized by the trees and bushes visible in the picture. One of them, directly illuminated by the sun, seems to show that it is the world of marine nature that dominates over human existence. This truth is permeated by the presence of man, who co-creates a harmonious whole with nature. The calmness of human behaviour, soothed by the rays of the setting sun, seems to convey the truth that human rest, fishing and walking are forms of friendly harmony between man and nature. This truth is disturbed by two elements. Close examination of the photograph reveals that there is rubbish on the beach, which is a symbol of man's destructive influence on the environment and an appeal for wise actions taking care of nature. Additionally, a device for measuring wind strength was placed in the sea. It seems to show the truth that man, as a weak person, in the face of the power of the sea, tries to counteract its force, but it is nature that decides the fate of mankind.

Joana Da Rosa, 21

Circle of Life

Portugal



Il took this picture 3 years ago, in Terceira Island, Azores. With it, I traveled back in time, to my childhood, when I lived for the sea and thought it would always remain the same, intact, and beautiful and filled with life.

Sadly, it was not the case. Many things have changed since I used my mask and snorkel for the first time. We have all been contemplating a major biodiversity loss, my happy place is losing its colors. We can now find marine litter everywhere, when, before, the litter I collected from the sea was considered a rare treasure. We, humans, are becoming a threat to our own race. But it is not too late.

We are living in a Blue Planet, the Ocean is our home. It is the air we breathe, the food we eat and the place we rest. We are all responsible for it. This picture gives me hope. Hope that one day my kids will feel the ocean breeze when riding their bikes, wandering around and discovering all the sea's true colors and beauty beneath. It gives me hope that one day, I will be holding hands with a loved one and feeling all the peace and love from contemplating these calm waters, while my grandchildren feel them too.

I see this picture as a Circle of Life, that will never end if we gather all together to protect our home, our idyllic haven, our Ocean!