

Additional material

Text (related to step 2)

At the beach

Matty is happy that he can go for a walk on the beach with his big sister Sophie while Mum and Dad lie lazily in the sun. Excited, he dashes a little way ahead. "Hey, you're supposed to stay with me," Sophie calls.

But the fact that Matty suddenly stops is not due to his sister's shouts. "Look Sophie, the poor bird!"

Matty is quite excited. A seagull is lying helplessly on the beach.

Its wing is caught in an old fishing net. "Oh no, we have to help her somehow."

Sophie looks around and waves excitedly to a young woman she has spotted in the dunes.

"Hello, we need help, quick!" "What's happened? – Oh, I see, the herring gull is entangled." Matty and Sophie watch in relief as the young woman deftly frees the gull's wing out of the net. "That's done. By the way, I'm Sarah and I work for coastal and nature conservation." "Oh, so that's why you know so much," Sophie says as she watches the seagull make its escape.

"I'm Sophie and this is my little brother, Matty." "Yes, it's just good that you were here", Matty notes. "Why is there plastic rubbish lying around? That's dangerous for the birds, isn't it?"

"You'd be amazed by how much plastic washes up on the beach here", Sarah answers him. "There's so much plastic floating in the oceans, you can't imagine."

"Yes, because people leave their plastic bottles on the beach," Sophie knows. "Well, that too, but most of the rubbish doesn't come from tourists on the beaches. The rubbish here for example, is due to shipping and fishing in the North Sea", Sarah explains. "In addition, the river Ems is very close to our island and it also flows into the North Sea. The rivers that flow into the sea, bring rubbish that comes from cities far away from the sea." "But we had to travel a very long way by train and ship until we got here," Matty recalls of the journey. "I'm sure the rubbish from our city doesn't make it that far." "Unfortunately, it does," Sarah explains, "because even the tiniest pieces of plastic get into the sea via rivers. And the worst thing is that plastic can stay in the sea for many hundreds of years until it decomposes. A small balloon, for example, takes half a year."

Does Sarah also know how long a plastic bag floats in the sea?

Sophie wants to know, because she saw one floating in the surf yesterday. "Yes, it can float in the sea for up to 20 years. Unfortunately, plastic bags are also sometimes eaten by turtles because they look like jellyfish." "Ewww, you can't eat plastic!" Matty wrinkles his nose at the idea and wants to know what he and his sister can do to reduce the amount of plastic that ends up in the sea. "The most important thing," Sarah explains to the siblings, "is that less plastic waste is produced. You could, for example, take a cloth bag from home to do grocery shopping or tell your parents not to buy food that is wrapped in plastic. Yoghurt doesn't have to be in a plastic cup either. It also comes in a glass."

"And separating rubbish is important too," Sophie knows. The siblings already do that. "Exactly. And if you ever see plastic things lying on the street, just pick them up

and put them in the nearest bin. If you want, you can take part in the big rubbish collection campaign on the beach tomorrow with your parents. Many island residents will come to clean up their island. And you also want to have a clean beach on your holiday." Matty and Sophie say goodbye to Sarah and make their way back. "Hopefully the seagull doesn't get caught again," Sophie concludes on the way back and tries to follow her brother, who is already darting away on the beach.

