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Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA) and Hurtigruten partnership to bring light to the gaps in plastic marine litter knowledge.

Verena Meraldi¹, Tudor Morgan², and Bert Van Bavel³

¹Hurtigruten AS, Expedition, Villard sur Chamby, Switzerland (verena.meraldi@hurtigruten.com)

²Hurtigruten AS, Expedition, Tromsø, Norway (tudor.morgan@hurtigruten.com)

³Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA), Oslo, Norway (bert.vanbavel@niva.no)

Plastic pollution has become one of today's biggest environmental problems. Yearly worldwide production of plastic was 360 million tonnes in 2018, of which approximately 10 million reached the oceans. But there is very little data from remote regions of the world

Several studies have pointed to the tourism and fishing industries as the main sources of plastic marine litter. Hurtigruten as an operator of expedition cruise vessels, believes that it is our responsibility to invest in the understanding and conservation of the areas we visit, this is reflected on our sustainability efforts: Single Use Plastics were banned from all our ships and Hotels in 2018, we have built the first electric/fuel hybrid ships and are transforming other ships in the fleet to the same technology or to run on Liquid biogas.

Scientific data collection in the polar regions is challenging due to remoteness, the harsh environment and high operational costs. For the last couple of years, we have supported the scientific community by transporting researchers and their equipment to and from their study areas in polar regions, we have established collaborations with numerous scientific institutions, such as University Centre in Svalbard, Norwegian Polar Institute, Institute for Marine Research, and Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA) and we have been actively participating in clean-up projects, and are contributing to the SALT and MALINOR projects.

Plastic pollution is having a significant impact on wildlife, and recent studies show that the concentration of microplastics is also greater than estimated. The understanding of the status and impacts of marine litter has many gaps, further studies are needed to improve our knowledge of its distribution and interaction with the marine biota. In partnership with NIVA we have installed a FerryBox on MS Roald Amundsen. Amongst other sensors it has a microplastic collector and preliminary data from the first collection between Tromsø and Longyearbyen agree with published results from the same area. MS Roald Amundsen will sail to both polar areas, where data on microplastic litter is required, making it the perfect ship of opportunity and platform for data collection. Lastly, the large advantage of using cruise ships as sampling and research platforms is the long-term presence in the polar regions, allowing for continued measurements over longer

time periods.