

a game about creatures
of the oceans and their journeys
by judith and christian vogt

DEEP WASTE

DEEP WASTE

by Judith and Christian Vogt

We don't exactly know how much waste is drifting around in the oceans. 2025, it might be roughly one ton of waste in correlation to every two tons of finfish in the sea. If humanity goes on like this, the relation between finfish and waste might be 1:1 in 2050.

In this game, you are a creature of the ocean en route through deep waters. You are in search for food, but whether it's food or waste you devour is a matter of luck. The waste makes you feel different, it pulls you down and makes you think strange thoughts. You're afraid it might eventually kill you. But death is not the end of this game.

PLAYERS AND DURATION

You can play this game alone or with up to 4 players. It takes about 20 minutes.

PREPARATION



You will design an ocean map and therefore, you need natural material and small parts of (clean) waste. You can take stones, shells, flowers, leaves, nuts as natural tokens, crown caps, parts of packages, crumpled wrappings and so on as waste tokens. The number of the tokens depends on the scale of your map and the scale of your tokens. You can adjust or throw twice, if you're unsure.

You can play the scenario "2025" with one third waste tokens and two third natural tokens, or you can play the scenario "2050" with as many waste tokens as natural tokens.

Set aside one natural token for the safety mechanism. Put it somewhere everyone can easily reach it.

SAFETY

Ocean waste is nothing to feel comfortable about. Keep one of the natural tokens aside and out of the game. Have a look at it. It symbolizes something that makes you feel good about the ocean, maybe the elation of a sunset on the horizon, maybe the seagulls' cries, maybe a fish you like to watch, maybe sand underneath your feet. It can be something different for each player. When you feel uncomfortable in this game, tap the token and indicate whether you want the subject or the tone to be changed.

You also need a poker deck, but only the cards 7, 8, 9, 10, Jack, Queen, King, Ace. Shuffle it and place it face-down beside the map.

Take a sheet of paper (the size depends on the size of your tokens – feel free to experiment!) and two pens in two colors. Or choose a place outside where you can use crayons of two colors on the ground. (Your tokens should be bigger, then.)

THE MAP

Now, take the tokens into your hands. Share them among the players if you're not playing alone. You are determining the fate of some special sea creatures, so don't throw the tokens lightly (think: an old crone with chicken bones!). Then, pour your tokens onto the ground or onto the sheet of paper.

One of the two pens or crayons is the "waste color" (for example: red), the other one the "natural color" (for example: blue). Go on and draw outlines or circles around your tokens, before taking them out of the game and setting them aside or in a jar bit by bit. The natural things in the water stay isolated, as fish usually don't gob together. The waste clumps, though – when you finished drawing the circles around the waste, connect the

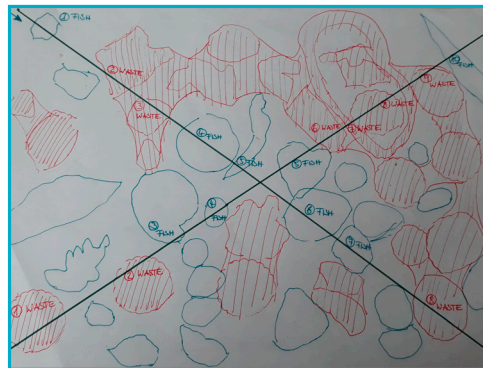
ones that are close to each other. They now create eerie waste blobs out in your sea. Look at your map: is it filled enough or do you have to throw the tokens again? If you feel like you should throw again, go ahead!



THE GAME

You are a creature of the sea. Decide on one. It's carnivorous and on the hunt for finfish and jellyfish. Describe the creature. It can be a dolphin, a turtle, a seal, a tuna or any other sea animal that appeals to you. It has to be a real animal, though. Take one turn describing a detail about it (an interesting pattern of skin, fur or scale, their favorite fish, their age, their kids) and then take one turn asking a question about your left neighbor's. When you play alone, leave that step out or ask yourself a question.

You will cross this part of the ocean in a straight line, maybe diagonal from corner to corner. Draw it on your map, maybe with the help of a ruler (the color doesn't matter as long as you can discern it from the drawings on the map). It should cross the position of at least one waste blob, but it is very likely that it will cross more than one! In this game, it's not about "winning" by travelling through. Whether your creatures encounter fish or waste is most likely not equally distributed. Thus, it's entirely possible that you will have several



encounters with waste while your neighbor only has one or two. It will not diminish the essence of this game.

Now your journey begins. Choose a natural token to use as your sea creature. Now, all players: travel to the first mark. Is it a fish? Good appetite! Is it waste? You will transform. The players who encounter waste, draw one of the shuffled playing cards and look at the prompts below. Play out what happened to you in a very short sequence. (Remember: Players can tap onto the safety token, when they are not feeling comfortable anymore.)

PROMPTS AND TRANSFORMATION

Every player is able to travel through up to five stages of transformation. But it depends on the cards you draw whether your journey will be long or short. Players, each draw 5 empty boxes to tick (maybe on your map, a second sheet, or on the ground).

1. The color of the card you drew first determines your starting point on your transformative journey. Later, the symbols above the boxes are not relevant anymore: They are only your place to start.

♦	♥	♠	♣	□	□
□	□	□	□	weird	DOWN

2. The cards you draw also determine in which way you are affected:

♦	body, outside (skin, scales, fur, feathers...)
♥	heart & feelings (toxic waste affects your feelings or your memories...)
♠	body, inside (stomach, muscles, blood, lungs, brain...)
♣	weird: use the chart for weird! (something weird happens. Make it unnatural, supernatural or a bit creepy...)

The word "weird" underneath the fifth box indicates that, when you reach the fifth box, you describe something weird no matter the color of your card (use the chart for "weird"). When you reach "DOWN" you sink to the bottom of the ocean. Your creature is gone and will return for an epilogue.

3. After determining the color of your drawn card, have a look at the table of adjectives. Now describe the way your creature is affected by the waste they swallowed by using the prompts the colors and the adjectives give you!

Table of Adjectives (for Diamonds, Hearts and Spades cards only)

7	tiny
8	annoying
9	unsettling
10	painful
J	chronical (tick the next box to the right)
Q	irrevocable (tick the next box to the right)
K	monstrous (tick the next box to the right)
A	catastrophic (tick the next TWO boxes on the right)

Weird Chart (for Clubs cards or when you reach the box “weird”)

- 7 **Clairvoyant.** One of your senses is afflicted, you can see, hear, smell, feel things you never were able to sense before. What is it?
- 8 **Prophet.** You see a vision of the future. Share it!
- 9 **Breather.** If you are branchiate, you are able to breathe air now. If you have lungs, you can breathe underwater now. Describe what you do with this power!
- 10 **Hivemind.** You can see through the eyes of another creature and warn them. Choose a spot of waste on the map that would be reached next by one of the other players. Mark it as fish with the “natural” color.
- J **Amalgamation.** One of your limbs merges with a piece of waste. Describe what it makes you do!

Q **Dissolution.** You start to get transparent and watery. Your conscious mind flows. When you sleep, you dream of being the ocean. Describe one of your dreams.

K **Infection.** You are a spreading disease. Other creatures of your kind are drawn towards you and you mark them. Describe how.

A **Chosen One.** You are the destined child of the ocean. You feed on waste and you grow. Describe how your body changes. Then, you immediately sink to the bottom of the ocean. (Say: “I sink to the bottom of the ocean.” The other players, if there are any, repeat: “You sink to the bottom of the ocean.” Take your creature token out of the game. Listen to the stories of the others.)

Example: You arrive at your first bank of waste. Your creature devours a piece of it. You draw a card and it’s the Queen of Hearts. Tick the second box [for Hearts] AND the first box [Diamonds]. There is no turning back to Diamonds now. (Yes, when you drew Clubs, you have to tick the first four boxes! Your transformation is way faster, then. The Ace of Clubs takes you down at once. You are the Chosen One of the Ocean, then...)

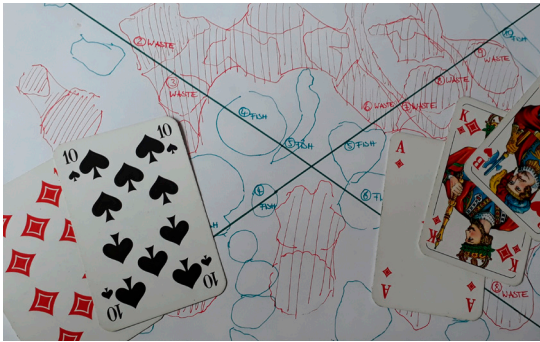
After that, have a look at the meaning of Hearts – the card suggests that something happened to you that affected your heart, your feelings. Maybe you ate something that made you feel all dizzy and aggressive. Maybe you forgot about your younglings in your nest. Now, have a look into the table of adjectives. Queen is pretty severe: “irrevocable”. Describe something that changes the way you feel irrevocably. After that, tick another box, because the cards Jack, Queen and King demand it.

GOING ON

When everybody finished describing what they encountered and everyone ticked their boxes, move on. Your creature swims or flies to the next spot on the map. What is it? If it’s waste, draw a card and tick the next

empty box to the right of your ticked boxes, no matter the color of the card. The color is important for step 2, though, as long as you didn't reach the box "weird" yet. Proceed with the steps 2 and 3. When you reach the box "weird", treat the card like a Clubs card and describe something weird. When you reach the box "DOWN", don't describe anything. Say: "I sink to the bottom of the ocean." The other players, if there are any, repeat: "You sink to the bottom of the ocean." Take your creature token out of the game. Listen to the stories of the others.

THE ENDING



Maybe you are able to travel through the map without being severely hurt. You made it – congratulations! May all your ocean travels be as safe as this one!

It's far more likely that your voyage changed you. Maybe you escaped; altered, but not wholly transformed. May you'll recover from the pain human beings put you into!

If things got really dark, you drowned in waste. You swallowed it and it became the fabric of your being. You sank to the bottom of the ocean, and there you lay, forgotten, disposed of, not part of the living ocean anymore. But waste endures. You transformed on your journey, and now you lie waiting, to arise in a few years... or decades... or centuries.

Tell your story: Everyone now tells a short epilogue about their animal's destiny. Will they live to see cleaner oceans? Will their life be endangered again? Will their species endure?

Players of drowned creatures: tell an epilogue as well. Your creatures will arise as a transformed lifeform. What stirs in the deep? What do they look like? What are they up to? How have they changed? Can they survive, can they even thrive? Will their kind try to make the world a better place or will they seek revenge? Or is that one and the same?

TAKE ACTION!

At the time being, there might be one ton of waste for every two to four tons of finfish in the ocean. Invisible microplastic still is uncountable. Anything you throw away today can end up in the sea.

Take action by reducing waste, here are a few ideas. Take one step at a time. (You can throw a D6 to decide, if you like!)

- (1) Do you use disposable bags for your groceries? Switch to canvas!
- (2) Is it possible for you to buy fruits, vegetables, or bread without packaging? You can take small sacks with you to the grocery store or to the market!
- (3) Bring your own coffee cup with you when you grab a coffee-to-go!
- (4) Try using soap instead of shower gel every now and again!
- (5) Try growing one sort of fruit, vegetable or herb in a pot or in your garden!
- (6) Look through your washing lotions and peelings. Educate yourself whether there's microplastic in it. Try to switch to products without or find out how to make your own peelings, for example with... sea salt!

More RPG-stuff by Judith and Christian Vogt:

- *Shardland* (2017) and • *Aces in Space* (~2020)
- www.jcvogt.de • www.patreon.com/dievoegte

