

BEACH NEWS

NEATH PORT TALBOT BEACH NEWS / SPRING SUMMER 2009

Huge Rise in Beach Litter!

Small pieces of plastic littering Britain's beaches are posing a threat to marine wildlife, a conservation group has warned.

A survey by the Marine Conservation Society has found beaches are generally getting cleaner, but the amount of plastic rubbish is causing particular concern.

Nearly 1,400 volunteers collected rubbish from 150 beaches around the UK for this latest snapshot of the state of our seashores, called Beachwatch 2000.

The total volume of litter has fallen for two years running, but the society says the amount of plastic deposited on beaches is a major concern.

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Nearly 10,000 small plastic items were found, many of them industrial pellets which fish and seabirds can mistake for food, putting themselves at risk of being poisoned by chemicals which attach themselves to the plastic.



Be A Litter Hitter!

We're bigger litter bugs than ever before - even though the overall volume of litter has decreased, the amount of rubbish has nearly doubled in the last 12 years, according to a survey.

On average, two pieces of litter were found for every metre of beach that was studied in 358 areas around the UK. And the rubbish is down to individuals either dropping litter or wrongly flushing items down the toilet,

such as cotton buds. Crisp packets and sweet wrappers were the fourth worst beach litter.

The Marine Conservation Society's spokeswoman, Emma Snowden said "This should be such an easy environmental issue to resolve and yet the message is still not getting across - everyone must take responsibility to bag it and bin it and never flush it.!

continued on page 2



SURFERS AGAINST SEWAGE campaigners step up their 'anti-litter' message. They say that the 'Return to Offender' campaign is "...our chance to show that we do not accept the ocean and beach as a dumping ground."



THE NUMBER ONE item found in MCS Beachwatch surveys were small plastic pieces. Plastics account for over 50% of all litter recorded. They stay in our environment and never fully disappear.



THE NUMBER OF CIGARETTE stubs found on our beaches has shown a marked increase. The ban on smoking in public space could lead to yet a greater increase in the quantity of cigarette litter.

CARELESS HABITS

by **Urna Semper**
and **Trenz Pruca**

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Beach visitors are the largest source of rubbish, but the litter also comes from fishing boats, cargo ships and items such as cotton buds flushed down the toilet.

The director of conservation at the Marine Conservation Society, Sam Pollard, said: "We are pleased to see that the levels of litter have decreased for a second consecutive year and we hope that this trend continues.

"But we as individuals must safeguard the environment and wildlife by taking care with our litter."

Among the litter picked up in this survey were a fridge door, a number 49 lottery ball, and a shampoo sachet dating from before the introduction of decimal coinage 30 years ago.

Campaigners say the amount of litter found on the UK's beaches in 2001 was slightly down on the two previous years.

But they say even the reduced levels are unacceptable, aesthetically offensive and dangerous to wildlife.

Marine litter is on the agenda of the North Sea Ministerial Conference, which opens in Norway on 20 March.

It is expected to agree an urgent need to reduce the damage litter causes.

PERILOUS ENCOUNTER

The average density of litter was lower than in 1999 and 2000. But MCS said the levels found were unacceptable, and threatened marine creatures as well as spoiling the natural beauty of the coasts.

Karen Riley of MCS said: "The amount of litter collected in Beachwatch 2001 shows an 11.5% decrease on the last year's figures.

"Although encouraging news, this level is still higher than that recorded in 1994. There is still a long way to go to ensure our beaches are clean and safe places for people and wildlife to be."



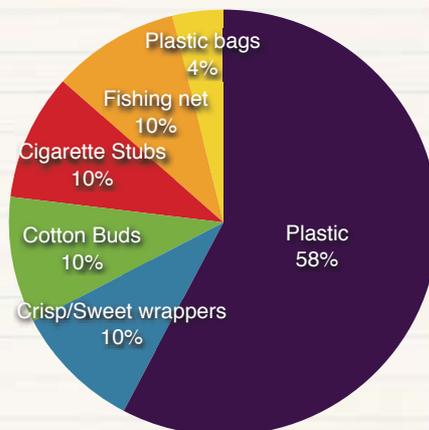
ELLEN MACARTHUR

The yachtswoman Ellen MacArthur has written a foreword to the Beachwatch report.

During last year's Vendee Globe race her boat Kingfisher struck an underwater object, possibly a container, which severely damaged its hull.

She said afterwards: "At best the collision put paid to my chances of winning the race, but at worst it could have crippled my boat or even sunk her.

"I was lucky. But it made me all too aware of the amount of litter in our oceans and on our beaches."



Top Litter Items found during MCS Beachwatch 2001 Survey

FALSE TEETH AND UNDERPANTS

Karen Riley told BBC News Online: "A lot of our awareness-raising is aimed at tourists, trying to get them to clear up after themselves.

"Most in the shipping and fishing industries do do their best, though some still don't realise the implications of their actions.

"Litter can trap sea creatures - discarded nets, for instance - and it can kill them in other ways.

"Turtles and cetaceans sometimes mistake plastic bags and balloons for jellyfish, and can starve when they swallow them.

"I hope the North Sea conference will help to make it easier to impose the penalties

that already exist on people who drop litter that spoils our beaches."

Other items the Beachwatch teams found included a set of false teeth, a pair of underpants, numerous bags of dog mess, and a boomerang - which did not come back.

