



Bennetts Beach Blitz

For our last quarter Environment event we are going to do a “Beach Blitz” along the seafront at Bournemouth/Boscombe.

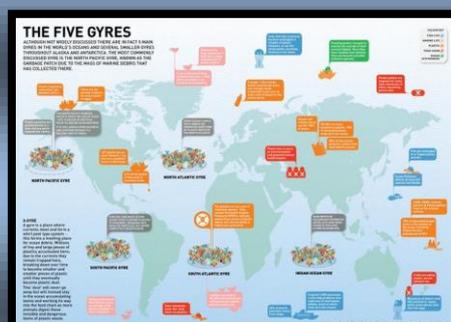
Why a Beach Blitz? I have been working with Peter Ryan from a voluntary group in Dorset called “The Dorset Devils” and after watching a presentation that he did to a community group in Bournemouth I was staggered at the effect dropping rubbish on beaches has on our wildlife and eco system.



What is Marine Litter? Marine Litter is a term used for solid particles of “waste” found in our seas. It includes a wide range of items such as plastic bags, bottles, cigarette butts, abandoned fishing gear, metal pieces, wood & glass. 10 million tonnes of litter ends up in the earth’s oceans & seas each year. 80% of this is plastic, which equates to around 8.8 million metric tons. According to one estimate there are more than 5 trillion pieces of plastic floating in the world’s oceans.



What happens to this marine litter? The oceans currents together with the earth’s rotation gather these pieces where they create large patches in areas called “gyres”. Depending on the size of these pieces they can appear as a transparent plastic “soup”. The largest of these gyres is in the North Pacific and contains an estimated 3.5 million tons of rubbish, affecting an area TWICE the size of the USA.



What effect does this have on us? There is growing research that micro plastics will eventually enter the human food chain when they are ingested by fish or shellfish which then can be eaten by us. Researchers are currently looking into this emerging potential health risk.

What effect does this have on wildlife? Many marine species can get entangled in larger pieces of marine litter and as a result will get injured by it and eventually die from those injuries. They can also mistake it for food and swallow it. Many sea birds & mammals as well as other animals are found with plastic in their stomachs, preventing them from digesting normal food or even slowing suffocating them. Plastic pollution harms an estimated 100,000 sea turtles and 1 million sea creatures each year.



What is "Ghost Fishing"? Fishing nets left or lost at sea & fishing lines left or lost in rivers by fishermen can entangle fish, dolphins, seaturtles, sharks, seabirds to name a few. These nets & lines restrict movement and cause starvation, laceration, infection, suffocation and loss of life. 43% of aquatic marine mammals, all marine turtles, approximately 36% of the world's seabird species as well as many species of fish have been reported to have ingested marine litter.



But surely litter dropped in the UK can't affect marine species not found in the UK, can it? In January 1992, 15 years later, a ship travelling from Hong Kong to the USA lost some of its cargo overboard in a storm. One of these containers contained 28,800 rubber ducks. Some of these landed in Australia & the east coast of the USA. Others crossed the Bering Strait & the Arctic Ocean to end up in Greenland, the UK & Nova Scotia. In 2007 the last reported ones washed up in northern France.

