

LITTER AND TRASH AT THE BEACH

Most of us love to go to the ocean and its beaches. We love to wade and swim in the ocean and to run on the sand along the water's edge. We enjoy being in the sun and relaxing and picnicking on beach towels on the sandy beaches.

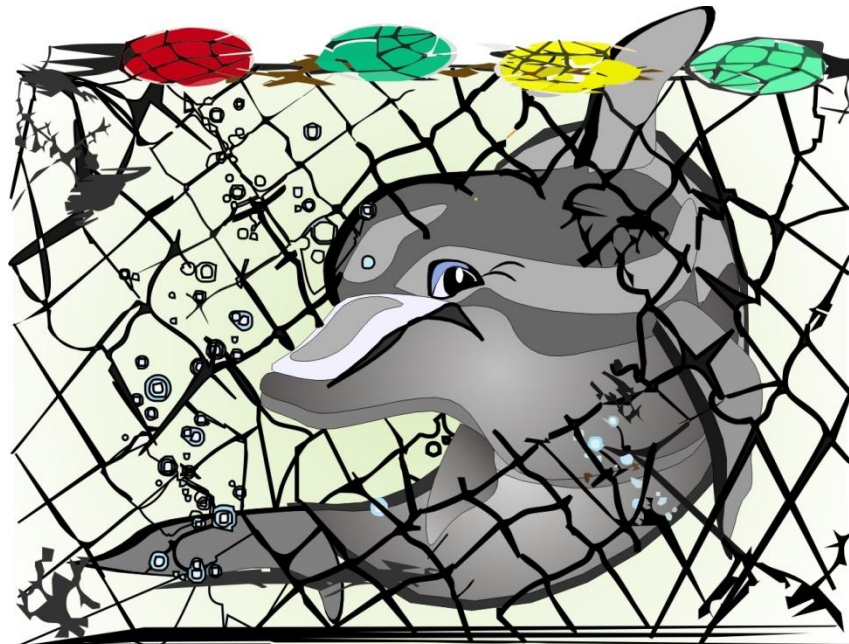
We also enjoy exploring and beachcombing and seeing the marine life that lives along the beach. If we are lucky we may see crabs sidling across the sand, seabirds flying overhead and even a dolphin or a whale swimming in the ocean.

Unfortunately like many other places the ocean and beaches are both complex and yet fragile ecosystems where the animals and plants that live there are greatly impacted by human litter and trash.

Often after a warm weekend the beaches are covered with litter and trash that people have left behind. People do not stop to think about the damage that litter does to the environment and its inhabitants.

Entanglement:

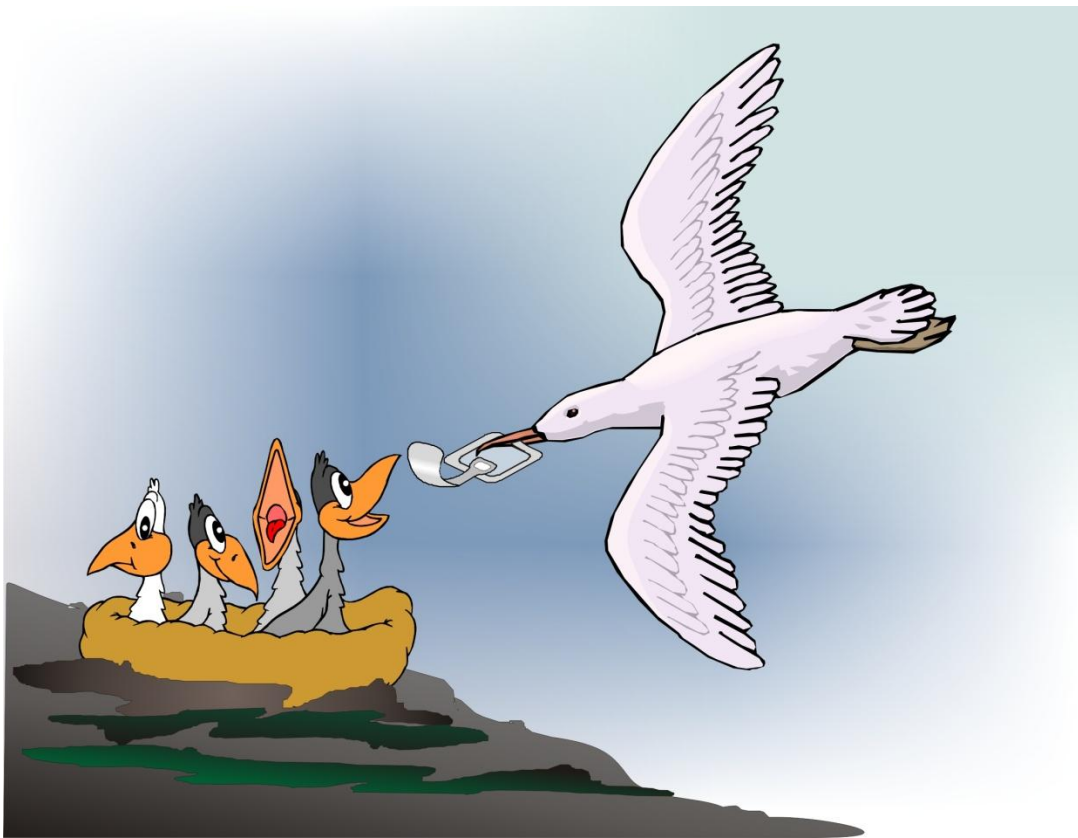
Did you know that hundreds of marine animals and seabirds are hurt or killed each year when they get entangled in discarded nets, plastic wrapping and other trash left on or along our beaches each year? Sea turtles, dolphins, porpoises, manatees and even whales are injured and or die to do entanglement issues each year.



Ingestion:

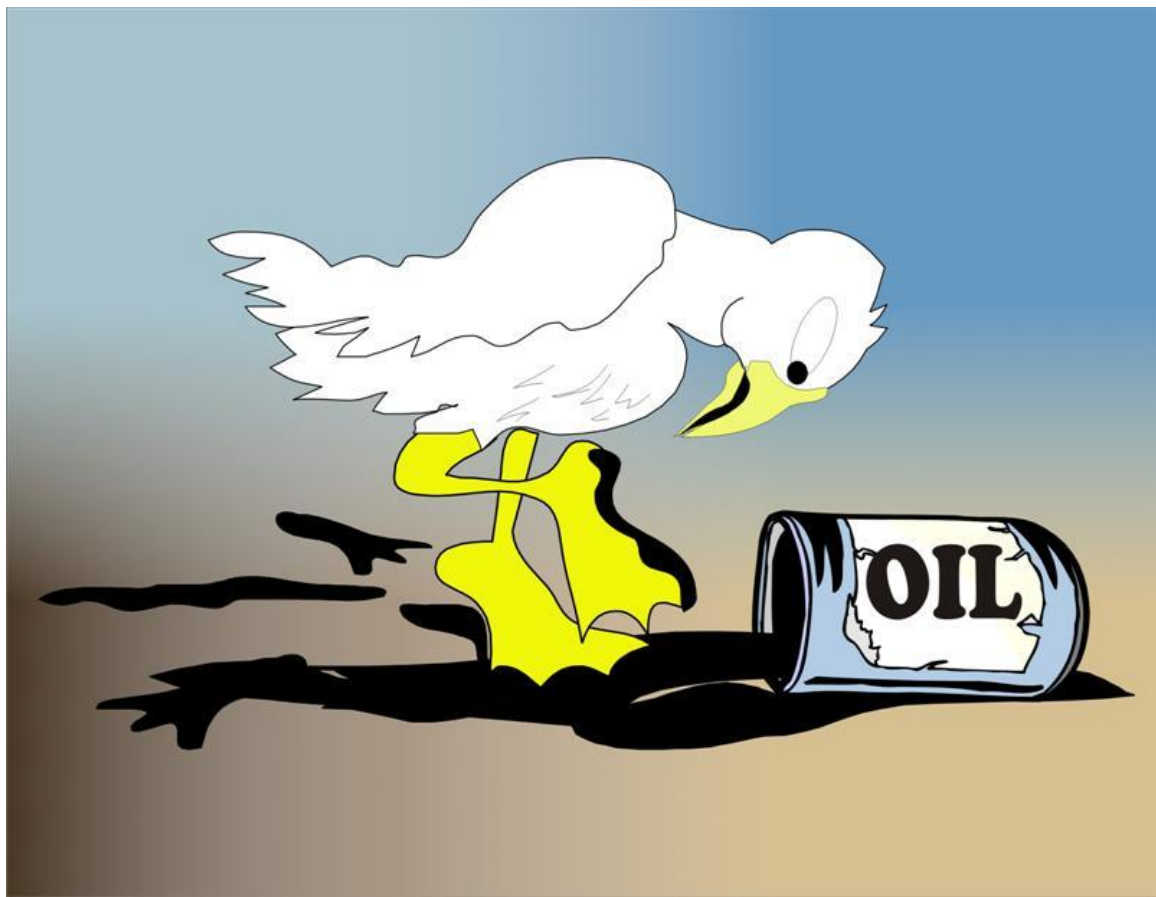
Hundreds if not thousands of marine animals and seabirds are hurt or killed by eating or ingesting litter and trash left behind on our beaches or in the ocean's waters. A plastic bag as an example, floating on the water looks like a jelly fish to many marine animals including fish, porpoises, dolphins and sea turtles. If the plastic bag is eaten it often leads to a long painful death.

Additionally seabirds often pick up and eat bits of plastic, bottle caps and metal can tabs and they also take them back to their nests for their babies to eat and play with. If eaten these objects often kill both the adult and baby birds.



Poisoning and toxic materials:

Too often we also see containers of oil and lubricants used by boaters, off road bikers and all terrain vehicle riders left on the beach. These containers contain materials that are highly toxic or poisonous to the marine environment and everything that lives there. Seabirds and marine mammals are brought into rescue centers by the hundreds each year for clean up and ingestion problems due to oil, gas and other toxic waste spills created by recreational vehicle users.



The Accumulated Effects of Smothering Trash and Litter:

In some areas there is so much litter and trash left on the beaches that it tears the surface of the beach apart. We have seen crabs, sea cucumbers, clams and other marine life killed or injured by the accumulated or smothering effects of large amounts of litter on the beach. These marine animals need a clean environment to breathe, to search for food and to safely live in.



Litter and trash at the beach can also be dangerous to your pet:

Maybe not surprisingly, there are a large number of incidents reported each year where dogs (as an example) have been injured or hurt at the beach due to litter. Ingestion of plastic and paper wrappers and containers is common. Paw injuries (i.e. cuts, punctures) due to broken glass, boards with nails and other sharp objects are not uncommon either. Even cases where a dog has gotten his head stuck in a plastic jar or bottle while exploring the beach is not that rare. Litter can hurt and cause even death to our pets if we are not aware of the dangers and are watchful while at the beach.



So what can we do to help?

The first thing we all can do is make sure we pick up our own trash and litter, and don't leave anything behind at the beach. Secondly we can take extra bags with us when we go to the beach and pick up litter and debris we see on the beach. Hopefully there are garbage cans or trash receptacles at the beach where we can place the litter in. If not, we can always take it with us and place it in a garbage receptacle on our way home or put it in our own trash can when we get home.

Lastly you might want to consider organizing a beach cleanup day or event. The event could only involve your family, or family and friends....OR it could even be a community event....most importantly **REMEMBER**....



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