

Recreational Anglers Lend a Hand to Clean Up our Coastline

Recreational boaters, fishers and other community volunteers from coastal NSW have been, and will be, working side by side to clean up marine debris in iconic places under the lead of OceanWatch Australia and the five NSW Coastal Catchment Management Authorities.



An initial clean-up was conducted in Ballina last March, where 30 anglers turned up for the day collecting half a tonne of rubbish and enjoying a delicious BBQ. An additional four clean-ups are scheduled between July and September, which will take place in Sydney Harbour (28th July), Pittwater (8th September), the Hunter region (TBA) and Kiama (29th September).

Marine debris doesn't just pollute our environment, spoiling a day on the water, it has been identified as one of the top threats to marine biodiversity, entangling and killing wildlife. One of the main components of marine debris is plastics. These are usually released into the environment in the form of bottles, straws, cups, and containers, amongst many other items. As they drift along our waterways, they break down into smaller pieces that float to the surface and can be taken by coastal currents as far as the South Pacific Ocean. These small plastic pieces represent perhaps the biggest threat, as they can be mistakenly swallowed by many animals, sometimes resulting in injuries and death.



OceanWatch Australia and Australian Seabird Rescue partnered up last March to conduct a marine debris clean-up followed by a turtle release in Ballina. The idea was to send a clear message to the broader community- "what we are putting down our drains is making our most iconic wildlife sick". These five turtles had been rescued and found to have ingested plastic.

A first step to try to solve this issue is to conduct clean-ups in our waterways, which helps us determine the types of materials and where they might be coming from. This in turn helps us to determine how the problem can be tackled at the source. Our aim through these activities is to clean up multiple sites along the NSW coast, report on what we find and take the message

out to the general public through media exposure showing the environmental stewardship of recreational boaters, fishers and members of the community. The message to everyone is *“Watch your litter wherever you are!”*

Executive Chairman of OceanWatch Australia, Brad Warren, says, *“We would like to invite the boating and angling community along the NSW coast to stay tuned and join in the clean-up nearest you. It will be a fantastic opportunity to tidy up some great boating and fishing spots, take the message out to the broader community about marine debris and enjoy a day in the outdoors lending a hand for the environment”.*

For further information to join in your local clean-up contact Ed Gallo on 02 9660 2262 or email ocean@oceanwatch.org.au



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