

WHEN BALLOONS FLY, SEA BIRDS DIE

Every day balloons are released or accidentally escape at outdoor events. Most people are simply not aware that balloons and their attachments can be dangerous for wildlife.

In 2017 Zoos Victoria and Phillip Island Nature Parks are placing a spotlight on this issue and encouraging Australians to make their outdoor events wildlife-friendly by choosing bubbles instead of balloons. Dolphin Research Institute is proud to support this fantastic initiative and promote it to all our schools across the region

The CSIRO recently (2016) outlined balloons to be in the top three most harmful pollutants threatening marine wildlife - along with plastic bags and bottles. Of these three items, balloons and their attachments are the least serviced in the way of community campaigns, initiatives and regulation.

Shearwaters are the currently the most affected seabird when it comes to plastic ingestion.

The decline of flesh-footed shearwaters on Lord Howe Island has been directly linked to the ingestion of foreign debris, with balloons and their plastic attachments one of the most prevalent and readily identifiable items found.

Balloons used outside risk accidental escape. Intentional balloon releases happen regularly across Australia and New Zealand. Both currently pose a very real risk to wildlife. **Think Bubbles - Not Balloons!**

For more information check out www.zoo.org.au

Thanks to Rebecca Levy at Zoos Victoria for providing the information in this article. Photos: Ian Hutton (top photo shows balloon clips being removed from a flesh-footed shearwater, Lord Howe Island, 2016).



AMBASSADORS IN ACTION

Now in it's second year, the Dandenong *'i sea, i care'* program welcomes two new schools, Carwatha P-12 College and Chandler Park Primary.

We again headed to Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary for an awesome introduction to our wonderful marine environment. The weather was warm and sunny with light winds, and the tide was really low for our explorations.

The students spent a session learning to snorkel for the first time with their amazing instructors, Will and Hayley from Merricks Lodge.

Then they immersed themselves in the invertebrate world of the sanctuary, exploring the rocks pools with Kristin and investigating the micro world of sea grass with Russell.

It was an incredible day and one the students will never forget.

Many thanks to Jon Lazarus at Uniting Church Camping for their generous support and Margaret Hewitt for the organisation of the venue.

Next term's workshop at Silvertown Primary School for peer teaching!

