

## 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](http://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

For all the schools in this region, this is such a great way to start their year as Ambassadors.

We only saw dolphins on the afternoon trip but we couldn't get in the water with them as they were busy feeding and it looked like there might be a calf too.

As always though, the Australian fur seals out at Chinamans Hat are a favourite with the students as they are so playful and fun to be in the water with. This year there are more seals than ever as there are fewer hangouts for them to rest. They are all males and they spend a lot of time sunbathing and arguing for the best spot!

**DID YOU KNOW?** The fur seals originally from the Cape in South Africa about 12000 years ago when the sea levels were much lower at the end of the ice age. They can definitely call Australia home now.

Thank you to Torie and Troy, and all the fabulous crew at Moonraker. You do an amazing job, every time.

Workshops next term at Benton Junior College and Somerville Rise for peer teaching.

