

We all like to be beside the seaside. . . but...

People & the Sea

There are many threats to the marine environment such as pollution, development, fishing and industry, all of which are associated with human use, or misuse, of the sea.

Pollution Problems

Marine pollution occurs in many forms and from many different sources. Some pollutants, such as oil, litter and sewage are very visible. Others, such as toxic chemicals or radioactive materials are invisible. Direct pollution occurs through deliberate disposal or accidental loss at sea, whilst indirect pollution results from land-based activities such as agricultural run-off. Either way, all pollution will effect marine life and needs to be prevented.

Litter: Litter is a visible and easily preventable type of pollution. It comes from a number of sources but the two main culprits are recreational users who leave their litter behind on the shore, and fishing boats.

The most common items of litter found on beaches are plastic pieces, rope and fishing net, polystyrene, crisp and sweet wrappers, and pieces of glass. These can be dangerous to wildlife, humans and the environment. Some plastics are estimated to take over a million years to degrade and break down! Turtles mistake plastic bags for jellyfish and choke to death. Plastic beer binders choke thousands of birds and seals every year, and discarded or lost fishing gear entangles dolphins and other marine wildlife.

This table shows how long it takes for everyday items of litter take to decompose and break down in the sea – scary isn't it?

Item of rubbish	Time taken to break down
Orange peel / banana skin	Up to 2 years
Cigarette filters	1 to 5 years
Wool socks	1 to 5 years
Plastic coated paper	5 years
Plastic bag	10 to 20 years
Plastic film container	20 to 30 years
Nylon fabric	30 to 40 years
Leather	Up to 50 years
Tin cans	50 years
Aluminium cans	1 million years
Plastic bottles	More than 1 million years

Pollution Solutions. . .

Many of the problems affecting the marine environment and its wildlife can only be fully resolved through international agreements to regulate certain activities. But local action is just as important and we can all do our bit to help improve the health of the oceans.

What can you and your business do to help?

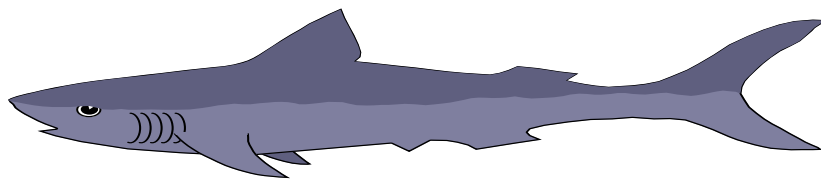
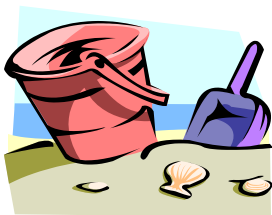
- 1.** Make sure you dispose of litter responsibly and encourage clients to do likewise. Tip: Offer tins for them to take to the beach to use as mobile ash trays!
- 2.** Take part in or organise a beach clean event.
- 3.** Reduce, re-use and recycle as much as you can.
- 4.** Cut any plastic rings or strapping before disposal.
- 5.** Make sure no oil or paint etc. gets poured down your drains. Dispose of it properly and recycle it if possible.
- 6.** Report any pollution incidents to the Environment Agency on 0800 807060.
- 7.** Make sure no cotton buds, sanitary items, plastic wrappers etc are flushed down the toilet, provide and use bins.
- 8.** Buy and use 'environmentally friendly' detergents and cleaning products, and biodegradable plastics.
- 9.** Use energy wisely and efficiently to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels.
- 10.** Walk or cycle when you can. It's better for you and helps reduce global warming.
- 11.** Buy locally caught fish from sustainable fisheries like hand lined mackerel and bass.
- 12.** Record and report what you see, particularly anything unusual like dolphins, basking sharks or turtles. All information can then be used to help conserve them.
- 13.** Learn about sea life and tell people about it! The more people that know about the marine environment and the problems it faces, the more likely it is they will help to do something about it.
- 14.** Put your views to your local MP's and ask them to help fight to protect marine life.

This handy Seashore code is a great way to encourage guests to the county to help us look after our beautiful coast line.

SEASHORE CODE

When on the shore, remember to always follow the seashore code to stay safe and help protect Cornwall's beaches.

- Please leave live animals and seaweeds where you find them, only take photos home.
- Always put overturned rocks back carefully as you found them.
- Make sure a shell is empty before taking it home.
- Take your litter home with you or put it in a bin.
- Be careful on the shore at all times; check the tides and keep away from the cliffs.
- Report anything unusual washed up on the beach or spotted offshore.



Information supplied by Cornwall Wildlife Trust. For more information please contact Ruth Williams, Marine Conservation Officer at Cornwall Wildlife Trust on 01872 240777 or visit our website www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk