

## How litter affects marine animals

**Source: <http://www.marineparks.wa.gov.au/marine-park-protectors/marine-litter-facts.html>**

Many marine animals confuse plastic bags, balloons, bait packets, lolly wrappers and rubber with prey and eat them.

Plastic bags and balloons floating in the water look like jellyfish. Turtles often eat them and choke or starve to death because they have so much plastic in their stomachs.

Seabirds eat polystyrene balls and plastic buoys, after confusing them with fish eggs and crustaceans. This makes them very sick!

Baleen whales such as blue whales, humpbacks and southern right whales take big gulps of water to feed on krill that they filter through their baleen, and may accidentally swallow plastic rubbish when feeding. The plastic stays in their gut and stops them digesting their food, leading to a slow death!

Remember Lovelace in the movie Happy Feet? If animals become entangled in lines, nets, ropes or plastic it can restrict their movement and lead to starvation, infection, amputation and drowning. Turtles, whales, sealions, seabirds and dolphins may be severely injured and even die if they become entangled.

Marine park rangers from the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) help to educate boat users and other marine park users about disposing of plastic bags and other rubbish thoughtfully. Next time you are visiting Western Australia's marine parks or any of the State's many other beautiful marine areas, make sure to put your rubbish in the bin.

### **Don't rubbish our marine wildlife!**

#### Useful/Interesting Links

- [Death of a Bryde's whale in Cairns Inlet](#)
- ["Plastic bags turtles biggest killer"](#)