

Volunteers Working for Litter-Free Beaches

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Plastic bag leads to death for whale, nursing calf

By Bo Petersen
The Post and Courier
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SULLIVAN'S ISLAND — A mother and nursing calf pygmy sperm whale were found rolling in the late-night breakers near Fort Moultrie earlier this week. Litter killed them.

A necropsy found a large black plastic garbage bag in the mother's stomach, said Wayne McFee, of the National Ocean Service's marine mammal stranding program. She couldn't eat and was in severe pain. The calf couldn't survive without her and wouldn't leave her. When found, they were still alive but too sick to survive.

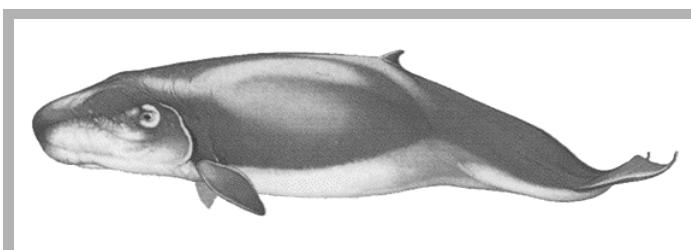
Marine animals can mistake plastic in the water for food. Pygmy sperm whales eat squid.

Beachgoers who found the pair struggled for two hours late Monday pushing the 900-pound female and the calf farther into the water twice; both times they simply floated back in.

"The animals were totally exhausted and the calf was cut up by something. The female just wasn't going to be able to make it. The baby was about gone," said veterinarian Johnny Ohlandt, who worked with McFee on the stranding. The whales were euthanized with an injection.

"It's just another case of dumping trash overboard off the boat," McFee said. "Now you've got two females out of the population, which is not good."

Not a lot is known about pygmy sperm whales. They're not considered endangered, but they're rarely seen at sea. Strandings of the small whales are not uncommon, with as many as four or five per year in South Carolina. A pygmy sperm whale stranded on Sullivan's in 2007. They die when brought into aquariums to be rehabilitated. It's dangerous to try pushing them back out to sea.



Pygmy Sperm Whales

- Look somewhat like big sharks and often are mistaken for them.
- Grow no bigger than 14 feet and 900 pounds.
- Eat mostly octopus and squid; also eat crab, fish and shrimp.
- Found in tropical, subtropical and temperate waters, not known to migrate.
- Rarely seen at sea; strandings are common along the Southeast coast.
- Not considered endangered but numbers worldwide are not known.

(PYGMY CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

Ocean Acidification and Carbon Dioxide (CO₂)

By: Peter Driver

As part of the Blue Ocean Film Festival, Felton Jenkins and I attended joint presentations dealing with the increasing acidity of the world's oceans, and its effects on corals (and other marine life). Increasing water temperatures, melting of polar ice caps and rising sea levels are already affecting the oceans – as we know, due to global warming. We also know that most of the current greenhouse gas overload has been caused by CO₂ production as a result of human activity. What is not commonly known is that the oceans have also been absorbing some of the extra CO₂. If they hadn't, atmospheric CO₂ levels would have risen 55% more than they have.

CO₂ absorption to a certain level has always been a part of the ocean ecosystem, and was in equilibrium for millions of years. Without getting into all the chemistry, when CO₂ is absorbed it combines with water molecules to form Carbonic Acid which makes the water somewhat acidic. All existing marine life had evolved to exist at this chemistry and acidity. However, because of the increased CO₂ absorption, the oceans are now 30% more acidic than they were at the start of the industrial revolution. Since Corals and hard-shelled marine organisms make their shells/skeletons from Calcium Carbonate (which dissolves in acid), increasing acidity is bad news.

Corals in particular, when stressed by above-normal water temperatures and/or increased acidity, suffer "bleaching" events that can result in reef death. Tests have also shown that high acidity will dissolve the reef structures. Reef declines are already in process. Since coral reefs provide 25% of the ocean's biodiversity in a minute fraction of the ocean's area, their loss would be catastrophic, and that's where we are headed. Acidity levels are on a steep slope up – another 30% increase by 2050 if we make no changes.

There are also indications that increasing acidity is capable of adversely affecting the sensory systems and many other life-functions of fish and other marine life.

See a full Oceana report and their press release from 11/11/08 at <http://www.oceana.org/> (Right side of page, under Reports)

Also one of the 2009 festival films, "A Sea Change" deals with acidification <http://www.aseachange.net/>

Since the dawn of civilization, people have burned carbon-based materials to provide heat and power. The industrial revolution, the discovery of "cheap" petroleum, and our high-impact lifestyles (enabled by technology and cheap resources) have resulted in an exponential growth in the use of carbon-based fuels and today's CO₂ overload.

I do not think most of us are happy to leave this legacy to our children. What can you and I do about it? Phone/write/email your congress and senate representatives and the president and tell them you want CO₂ emissions cut ASAP by:

- Urgent fostering of economical non-carbon energy technologies, for example solar, wind, tidal, geothermal, hydro, fuel cell and sustainable nuclear. Of particular concern are the power technologies for mobile equipment – note that biofuels and ethanol are carbon-based.
- Urgent fostering of economical technologies to remove CO₂ from the exhaust streams of existing carbon-fueled factories, power plants and equipment.
- Protection & expansion of nature's beneficial biological systems that absorb CO₂, such as the rain forest.
- Development of practices and cultures that conserve energy and resources; for example international standard food and beverage containers that are designed for sanitization and re-use instead of being melted down (recycling), disposed of (landfills), or worst of all (marine debris) breaking down to plankton-size particles and becoming part of the ocean's food chain.
- Reduction of practices and cultures that waste energy and resources; for example the production of disposable or "junk" consumer items with short life-spans, and excessive packaging. Promoting the adoption of these technologies and practices/cultures worldwide through the UN.

Phone/write/email newspapers, newsmagazines, radio and TV networks and tell them this needs to be brought to the public's attention.

There are more ideas on the web sites noted above.

(PYGMY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

"These people (trying to push the whale back out) put themselves in grave danger. They've got a 900-pound animal in the surf at night. There's that sign at Fort Moultrie warning of dangerous currents. One whack of that tail and they can knock you out, then you've got a search and rescue on your hands," he said.

Marine debris is one of those gnawing concerns for conservationists and biologists. Animals eat it and get tangled up in it. Debris can damage ships and transport invasive species. And human health concerns have begun to be raised. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has launched a multi-agency task force trying to educate people.

"Stow your waste on board the boat and if you see things floating in the water, pick them up and dispose of them on the dock," McFee said.

Visit the website www.cleancoast.org to see color photos of recent cleanups!

Hayner's Creek Cleanup

By Philip Grainey

Hayners Creek is always a fun event for trash officionados 'cos there's so much of it!

It's proximity to the city guarantees a good haul and this year we were not disappointed!

Twenty volunteers in canoes and kayaks spent a fine morning in glorious hot weather collecting approximately 1200lbs of debris and left this quiet corner of Southside Savannah a little better looking and a little environmentally healthier.

Our thanks to Bill Lawler, who shuttled full bags from paddlers to the ramp in his trusty jon-boat, to Craig Harrison who drove his truck and trailer from Tybee to carry our haul to the Bacon Park Transfer Station, and to Betty Murphy for inviting us into her beautiful garden for our lunch.

**The Hayner's Creek cleanup made the 11 o'clock news.
You can see the video at**

http://www.wsav.com/sav/news/local/article/cleaning_our_coast/12191/

A Raccoon Key Adventure

By Charlotte Dixon

We set off Saturday under cloudy skies for Raccoon Key, but were lucky when we got there that the weather held during the clean up and the wonderful lunch prepared by Karen Jenkins. There was a fair amount of trash, including a large torpedo shaped buoy that the gentlemen in the group rolled down to the skiff. The other item of interest was a huge number of horse-shoe crabs all up and down the beach. We had a good bunch of young people on this clean up including Gerald Russell's 20 year old niece Katie Headd visiting from New York. It's nice to see the next generation coming along.

After eating lunch and loading up the skiff with stacks of trash, we embarked on the second voyage. This is when things got interesting. The boat I was on made a wrong turn and ended up in the mud! We of course tried to push it off, but the tide was receding more rapidly than we could push and soon we were high and dry. About this time the rescue boat arrived (our beloved skiff) and hovered just on the other side of the mud in waist deep water. So a few of us abandoned the boat and slithered through hip deep mud and were hauled aboard the skiff. Our undaunted skipper and his wife and one other passenger waited for the tide to roll in. As we headed back to the Landings I reflected that this is the sort of thing one can expect if you live your life, rather than sitting at home safe. We felt very fortunate that nobody got hurt and the boat and motor survived the experience. Some of the women who were in the mud together joked that the spa treatment of mud baths was a lot more costly than our little adventure!

The good ending to the day was getting to return to Hogan's Marina on the boat, instead of driving from the Landings. We passed several osprey nests with parents and chicks in residence.

Welcome New Members:

Doug Andrews
Don & Judy Bender
Jim Bulluck
Scott Corbin
Suzette & Peter Driver
John Eddington
Nancy Evans
Capt Don Funderburk
Robert M. Aikon Jr
Tammy Porter
Michael Portman
JB Thornton
Joseph & Barbara Warren
Meredith Welch
Jan & Richard Wright

Thanks for Joining at the Sustaining Level \$100.00:

Meredith Welch

Thanks to the following for renewing at the \$100.00 level:

Stuart & Diane MacGuire
Sally & Peter Parsonson
Joseph Powers
Brad Swope
Barbour River Club (John & Bunny Underwood)

Special Thanks To our Raccoon Key boat captains:

Tom & Carol Barnard
Bill Fogarty
Rob Littman
Ron Lynch
Wilson Morris & Linda Fisk



Loading the skiff at Raccoon Key.



Learning how to row at Raccoon Key.

Photos by Joe Bonds.

Editor's Note

By Karen Grainey

Patsy Bucky, who has admirably served triple duty as Clean Coast's Treasurer, Membership Chair, and Newsletter Editor for five years is handing over the reins of the *Trash Bag* to a new editor. We have been very fortunate to have such a capable person in our organization willing to take on so many responsibilities. But the time has come for someone else to shoulder part of this burden, and I am glad to take on the job of editing the *Trash Bag*.

Patsy has done a great job of producing a monthly newsletter, but for the sake of making the job a little easier and saving mailing costs, we will be switching to a bi-monthly schedule. The June/July issue is a little late due to the time it took to make the transition, but the plan is to stick to six issues a year starting with the March/April edition. Each issue will be four pages long instead of two to accommodate more articles by Clean Coast members and reprints of interesting articles about marine debris from newspapers and magazines. All members are invited to submit articles written by themselves or ones they spot in other publications about marine debris or the marine environment. For example, I am very pleased to be including

an article about ocean acidification by a new member, Peter Driver and trip reports from Clean Coast veterans, Charlotte Dixon and Philip Grainey. More voices make a more interesting newsletter, so please keep the articles coming.

Also, replacing the regular President's Message column will this little note from the editor. I hope you will continue to enjoy reading the *Trash Bag*.

Have you signed the petition for county-wide curbside recycling?
Go to www.recyclechatham.org.

TRIP SCHEDULE

- June 1, Business Meeting, 7 p.m. at JEA
- June 6, **World Ocean's Day Clean-up**, Raccoon Key
- July 6, Business Meeting, 7 p.m. at JEA
- July 11, **Ossabaw Island Clean-up**
- August 3, Business Meeting, 7 p.m. at JEA
- August 16, **Wassaw Island Clean-up**
- Sept 7, Business Meeting, 7 p.m. at JEA
- Sept 19, **International Coastal Clean-up**, Wassaw Island

To enroll for a trip call the Clean Coast answering service at (912) 239-9663 and leave your name, phone number, and number in your party. Registration closes the Wednesday before the trip. Directions will be on the recording. There is no need to sign-up for the monthly business meetings which are held at 7 p.m. on the first Monday (unless otherwise indicated) at the Jewish Educational Alliance (JEA), 5111 Abercorn St.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Use this form to become a member or to renew your membership. Please indicate which category of membership you are applying for:

Student or Senior Citizen (\$15) _____

Individual (\$25) _____ Family (\$35) _____

Special Categories:

Sustaining (\$100) _____ Patron (\$500) _____

Life (\$1000) _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

TELEPHONE

Home: _____ Work: _____

Fax: _____ Cell or Pager: _____

Email: _____

BEST TIME TO CONTACT: _____ a.m. _____ p.m.

DO YOU OWN A BOAT SUITABLE FOR OUR TRIPS?

IF YES, HOW MANY CAN IT CARRY? _____

HOW MANY LIFEJACKETS ARE ABOARD? _____

Dues and contributions to Clean Coast are tax-deductible. Make checks payable to Clean Coast, Inc., add our IRS No. 58-1984908 to the check, and mail it to Membership Chairman, 216 E 58th St. Savannah Ga 31405-3436. ≈ CC

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