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The coast is not clear: tyre and table among trash found

By **Shobana Kesava**

IT TOOK six men to hoist the unwieldy plastic road barrier out of the muddy mangroves, another three to weigh it and one more to record their find.

Jotting down the figure,



OFF-RAODER: Volunteers from the Singapore American School heaving a plastic road barrier out of the mangroves at Sungei Buloh Wetlands Reserve on Saturday. -- ST PHOTO: MUGILAN RAJASEGERAN

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teacher-volunteer Steve Early said: 'This one weighs in at 19kg.'

Hauled out in the next 10 minutes were a 46kg tyre and a wooden table that could seat eight which needed dismantling before it could be weighed.

They were duly recorded under 'dumping activities' on the International Coastal Cleanup Singapore's (ICCS) data card of human-made debris, trash and litter.

The 150 teacher and student volunteers from the Singapore American School were at the Kranji mangroves cleaning up a short 400-metre stretch of shoreline over the weekend.

They were part of a larger group of 2,856 volunteers who covered about 15km of Singapore's coast.

BIG PILE OF LITTER

ONLY those who visit the beaches at daybreak know its dirty secret. Singapore's sandy shores are

Said first-time volunteer Shazwani Mustafa, 16, of St Andrew's Junior College: 'It's very dirty. I don't know how all this ends up here.'

'I found plastic, styrofoam, glass bottles and mattresses.'

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covered in litter, while garbage bins nearby remain half-empty.

Cleaners took a break on Saturday for the International Coastal Cleanup Singapore held annually on the third weekend of September.

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The National Environment Agency's Environmental Health Department head of operations, Mr Tai Ji Choong, said flotsam which comes in with the tide is particularly bad during the south-west monsoon from May to October.

'We had our cleaners throw away a toilet bowl washed ashore,' he added.

On beaches across Singapore where the public has access, the NEA has about 40 cleaners removing rubbish before most beach-goers arrive.

On the popular 11-km stretch of East Coast Park, about 15 of them sweep, pick up and toss out trash on any given day, starting from 7am.

The volunteers took over their job on Saturday and collected 16,819 items weighing 2,600kg at East Coast Park alone - the highest amount of trash collected on any beach open to the public.

In an indication that beach-goers were making a significant impact, cigarette butts made it to the list of top three items collected on all beaches open to the public.

Canadian Sandra Johnson, in her 30s, who takes weekend walks along East Coast Park, said: 'I find the most trash near barbecue pits, close to rubbish bins.

'Guests from overseas often comment on how clean Singapore is. If they saw the East Coast Park on a weekend morning, I don't think they'd feel the same way.'

A DUMPING GROUND

'It's very dirty. I don't know how all this ends up here. I found plastic, styrofoam, glass bottles and mattresses.'

SHAZWANI MUSTAFFA, St Andrew's Junior College student and a first-time volunteer

THE DIRTY TRUTH

'Guests from overseas often comment on how clean Singapore is. If they saw the East Coast Park on a weekend morning, I don't think they'd feel the same way.'

CANADIAN SANDRA JOHNSON, who takes weekend walks along East Coast Park

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