

Trashing our beaches, way too much

March 24 2009, By Sandy Bauers

Everybody knows there's trash on the world's beaches. But just how much?

[Ocean Conservancy](#) has a pretty good idea. Last year, during the group's international coastal cleanup, nearly 400,000 volunteers removed seven million pounds of [trash](#) from the planet's oceans, lakes, rivers and waterways.

The most ubiquitous item: cigarette butts, to the tune of 3,216,991, or 28 percent of the items they found.

Next in line were [plastic bags](#): 1,377,141, or 12 percent.

The rest in the top ten: [food wrappers](#)/containers, caps and lids, [plastic beverage bottles](#), paper bags, straws, utensils, glass beverage bottles and [beverage cans](#). Another oft-found item: diapers. Used.

The conservancy just released a report about the findings: A Rising Tide of Ocean Debris and What We Can Do About It. The document makes for grim reading. Find it at www.oceanconservancy.org/.

The report focuses a lot on the effects to wildlife, which can become entangled in plastic or eat it and choke or suffer other harm, the conservancy said. During last year's clean-up, volunteers found 443 animals entangled or trapped; of those, 268 were still alive and were released.

Another thing: The conservancy emphasized that trash is a problem caused by humans, and one that can be stopped by humans. "Trash doesn't fall from the sky; it falls from our hands," said Vikki Spruill, the group's president and CEO, in a prepared statement.

The report lists statistics by country and, in the United States, by state.

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