

Explorer to trace flow of plastics down 10 rivers into seas

April 4 2019, by Colleen Barry



In this Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008 file photo, Italian solo rower Alex Bellini arrives at the Opera House in Sydney, Australia. Italian explorer Alex Bellini plans to travel down the world's 10 most polluted rivers on make-shift rafts, tracing the routes of plastics that pollute the world's oceans. Bellini said Thursday April 4, 2019 that he was inspired by a 2018 study by a German scientist that found 80% of plastic in the oceans arrives from just 10 rivers. (AP Photo/Rob Griffith, File)

Italian explorer Alex Bellini plans to travel down the world's 10 most

polluted rivers on makeshift rafts, tracing the routes of plastics that pollute the world's oceans.

Bellini said Thursday that he was inspired by a 2018 study by a German scientist that found 80% of plastic in the world's oceans arrives from just 10 rivers.

He began with a voyage down the Ganges River in India on a raft built from garbage last month and intends to complete journeys on all 10 on similarly constructed rafts by 2021, including the Yangtze, the Niger and the Mekong. His final stop will be the Great Pacific Ocean garbage patch.

The 40-year-old spoke to The Associated Press on the sidelines of a One Oceans forum.

Bellini, who has rowed solo across two oceans for more than 35,000 kilometers (nearly 22,000 miles), said he became aware of pollution in the ocean while rowing from Peru to Australia in 2008. But he said he was surprised to learn that most plastics in the seas arrive by rivers and not from coastal areas.

His new journeys are aimed at raising awareness about the source of ocean plastic, which according to the U.N. environment assembly is accumulating in oceans at a rate of 8 million tons a year.



This photo taken on Saturday March 30, 2019 provided by SEAME Sardinia Onlus, shows plastic recovered from the belly of a whale, in Porto Cervo, Sardinia island, Italy. The World Wildlife Foundation is sounding the alarm over plastics in the Mediterranean Sea after an 8-meter-long sperm whale was found dead off Sardinia with 22 kilograms (48.5 pounds) of plastic found in its belly. The environmental organization said Monday that the garbage recovered in the sperm whale's stomach included a corrugated tube for electrical works, plastic plates, shopping bags, tangled fishing lines and a washing detergent package with the brand and bar code still legible. The female whale beached off the northern coast of Sardinia last week. (SEAME Sardinia Onlus via AP)

The damage to wildlife of ocean plastic was made clear with the death last month of a whale that beached on the northern coast of Sardinia in Italy with 22 kilograms (48.5 pounds) of plastic in its belly.

"The ocean is a no-man's land, meaning what is found in the ocean belongs to no one, therefore it is no one's responsibility to go take away that stuff," Bellini said. "But research brings the problem closer to us, in the rivers. So everyone needs to take his own responsibility."

Bellini is supported by the One Ocean Foundation, founded by the Yacht Club Costa Smeralda in Sardinia, with a mission to safeguard the seas.

Closer to home, the foundation has issued a call to clean plastics and other trash that a recent drought has revealed in the Po River, Italy's longest, which empties into the Adriatic Sea.



In this photo taken on Thursday, March 28, 2019 and provided by SEAME Sardinia Onlus, a dead whale lies in the water in Porto Cervo, Sardinia island, Italy. The World Wildlife Foundation is sounding the alarm over plastics in the Mediterranean Sea after an 8-meter-long sperm whale was found dead off Sardinia with 22 kilograms (48.5 pounds) of plastic found in its belly. The environmental organization said Monday that the garbage recovered in the sperm

whale's stomach included a corrugated tube for electrical works, plastic plates, shopping bags, tangled fishing lines and a washing detergent package with the brand and bar code still legible. The female whale beached off the northern coast of Sardinia last week. (SEAME Sardinia Onlus via AP)



In this photo taken on Friday, March 29, 2019 and provided by SEAME Sardinia Onlus, a whale is lifted up onto a truck after being recovered off Sardinia island, Italy. The World Wildlife Foundation is sounding the alarm over plastics in the Mediterranean Sea after an 8-meter-long sperm whale was found dead off Sardinia with 22 kilograms (48.5 pounds) of plastic found in its belly. The environmental organization said Monday that the garbage recovered in the sperm whale's stomach included a corrugated tube for electrical works, plastic plates, shopping bags, tangled fishing lines and a washing detergent package with the brand and bar code still legible. The female whale beached off the northern coast of Sardinia last week. (SEAME Sardinia Onlus via AP)



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