

# Washed Ashore brings new life to marine debris

By CARA MICO  
For Seaside Signal

The world is drowning in plastic debris and Washed Ashore wants to do something about it.

To give you an idea of the scope of the issue, a plastic bag was recently found at the bottom of one of the deepest ocean trenches on Earth and microplastics from polyester and acrylic clothing is now inside almost every living organism sampled.

Microplastics are in our salt, our food, and in us. The Pacific Ocean garbage patch is over twice the size of Texas and eight million metric tons of plastics enter our ocean daily.

Washed Ashore can't solve the problem on its own. In the short time of its existence the arts group has transformed over 40,000 pounds, or 18 metric tons, of marine debris into works of art shown locally, nationally and globally. For context, it's estimated that there is 150 million metric tons of plastic in our oceans so the organization has taken 0.000012% of the total plastic out of the environment, which is part of why they are focused on changing people's behaviors through education, the problem is too big for one small nonprofit to solve.

"It's not just coming from L.A., it's flowing down our rivers from inland cities as well. Even if we stop all new plastic from entering the ocean we'll have enough materials to work with for many years," said Washed Ashore's newest Executive Director John Tannous.

Tannous met with Seaside residents, city councilors, environmental and Visitor's Association representatives on May 7 at the Seaside Brewing Company to showcase the work they're doing and see if Seaside could be home to a future sculpture. The average cost of a single sculpture can run upwards of \$75,000 and Washed Ashore has funding to bring several new sculptures to communities in Oregon.

Creating the sculptures are process intensive. Debris is collected, sifted, sorted, and soaked in vinegar to sanitize the plastic before it's cut into small enough pieces for the artists to work with. Sculptures



John Tannous

Art from marine debris, presented by John Tannous of "Washed Ashore: Art to Save the Sea."

are constructed with minimal new materials, no paint, glue or other adhesives.

The creation of the sculpture is designed and created collaboratively with the featured artist-in-residence doing most of the detail work, and three full time artists and volunteers puzzle piecing bits of plastic together to make components of the larger work such as individual feathers.

The final sculptures are massive with bases often over 100 square feet and steel frames 11 feet tall. Earlier pieces were initially constructed on found objects such as buoys but degradation and weathering lead to collapse so Washed Ashore shifted to a more permanent steel frame for durability. From a distance, the sculptures resemble beautiful, traditional depictions of local sea life

such as puffins, polar bears, and sharks but upon closer inspection it's easy to see the flip flops, plastic tubing, and rubber ties that comprise the larger image.

"Visibility is important, we're using great art to educate people about plastic in the ocean," Tannous said. "We want to inspire oth-

## 'WE WANT TO INSPIRE OTHERS FIRST AND FOREMOST!'

John Tannous

ers first and foremost."

But the art still needs to look like the material that it is to meet their mission of reducing plastic consumption. They don't want the work to look "like a hunk of junk" but still be visually attractive



John Tannous

Artwork from "Washed Ashore."



Cara Mico

Arica Sears of the Oregon Coast Visitors Association and John Tannous of Washed Ashore.



John Tannous

Art by John Tannous.

so that the communities where the sculptures are installed are proud to have them on display.

"If we just did abstract art people wouldn't know what the materials are," Tannous said during the Seaside presentation. They can see recognizable pieces of plastic they use in their lives."

Washed Ashore is aware that the concept of marine debris art isn't new and they don't hold any proprietary rights over the beach plastic model.

The nonprofit started in Coos Bay after Oregon artist Angela Haseltine Pozzi unexpectedly lost her husband to a brain tumor. As part of her grieving process she would walk the local beaches looking for solace in the steady rhythm of the crashing waves.

Instead, she found what many have come to think of as common-

place, endless bits of beach plastic.

Haseltine Pozzi started collecting the bits of crumbled bottles, baby toys, machinery, and amassed a pile so large that she was inspired to create art. Shortly thereafter the nonprofit Washed Ashore was founded to generate a larger public interest in solving what has become one of our time's most pressing issues.

Seaside might be the latest location for one of these sculptures. The location of the new sculptures is dependent on a few factors including community support and visibility. After all the purpose of the organization is to increase awareness regarding the extent of the problem of marine debris with the goal of eventually changing behaviors.

"We want to spark change," he said. It happened one piece of plastic at a time, eventually the tide will turn."

# Protecting the western snowy plover on local beaches

Seaside Signal

The threatened western snowy plover lays her eggs in a shallow scrape in the sand along the west coast. These camouflaged nests are barely visible, making the young very vulnerable to disturbance.

Visitors and residents on the Oregon Coast are playing a huge role in the recovery of western snowy plovers by respecting beach use restrictions during the March 15-Sept. 15 nesting season.

Signs or ropes alert beachgoers to sensitive plover nesting areas and list specific restrictions for the area.

In most cases, there are beaches without restrictions available to the public directly to the north or south of these managed areas.

With the strong comeback of plovers in Oregon, the birds are moving beyond specifically designated nesting areas managed by Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and federal land managers.

This is especially true on the central Oregon coast, where nesting plovers can again be found in areas such as South Beach State Park in Newport.

As a result, there may be unmarked nests in need of protection and the continued cooperation of beachgoers is needed to give plovers the space they need to successfully nest and raise their young.

Because plovers nest in dune areas and dry sand, the easiest way to help them is to stay on the wet sand area of the beach. Should beachgoers come across an unmarked nest, keep a respectful distance of 50 feet and report the nest's location to the Parks and Recreation Department.

To ensure the eggs and future chicks have the best



Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

Oregon's beaches are protected nesting grounds for a small shorebird called the western snowy plover.



possible chance of survival, beach visitors can help by following a few simple guidelines:

Respect all areas posted or roped-off for the protection of wildlife.

When walking on the beach, stay on the wet hard-packed sand. Do not approach birds or nests.

Follow all rules for responsible camping and campfires.

If dogs are permitted, don't allow your dog to play in the dry sand areas where birds are more prone to nest. Never allow your dog to chase birds.

Do not leave or bury trash or food scraps on the beach. Garbage attracts predators such as gulls, crows, ravens and skunks. Please dispose of all trash properly and do not inadvertently or intentionally feed wildlife.



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