

Local diver goes back to Miramar Wharf to clean up filth

Sick of the lack of action to deal with pollution at Miramar Wharf, Wellington diver Pete Humphris took to the waters yesterday to clean up the car batteries, shopping trolleys, bicycles and other heavy or toxic materials dumped there.

The clean-up was a collective effort between Mr Humphris, local dive groups The Dive Guys and Wellington Underwater Club, Forest & Bird's Blue Wellington group plus divers from Victoria University's Marine and Coastal Lab. The City Council's operations team also assisted. The move follows an article in the Dominion Post (15 September this year) calling for action to clean up the polluted wharf.

"It was a pretty good first effort at cleaning up the big nasty stuff" said Mr Humphris. "It was great that the Council guys could come and lend a hand as the crane was essential to remove the heavy and sharp objects we've simply had to swim amongst in the past."

The team, comprising four technical divers and a surface support crew collected several shopping trolley's, bicycles, three corroded car batteries, unidentifiable metal objects, a fishing rod, fishing hooks, lines and lures plus an assortment of food and drink related trash. "The most unusual find was an opened safe" said Mr Humphris. "There was also a cooker down there but that'll have to wait until next time when we have more lifting gear."

Forest & Bird Blue Wellington spokesperson Kirstie Knowles says "It's pretty depressing to witness all the trash that people have simply thrown into the harbour so it's out of sight. If people could only see beneath the waves and witness first-hand the filth littering our seafloor, they'd be disgusted."

Tucked in below the airport's "ALL BLACKS" sign and in clear view of visitors arriving at Wellington airport, the trash was carefully removed from the water and any marine life found safely returned to the sea.

"While there's a definite feel good to see some of the trash removed, the stormwater outflow at Miramar Wharf is still spilling out oily, polluted water on a regular basis" says Mr Humphris. "The Council needs to step up and do more to address this."

"Wellingtonians love their beautiful harbour and the last thing we want is to see it used as a rubbish dump" Kirstie Knowles says. "We're pleased the Council's operation team came and helped but it would be good if the city's marine pollution problems were taken more seriously by Council managers and councillors, with appropriate action taken. For the Council to say that people should avoid swimming near the wharf is not good enough. More should be done to prevent pollution entering our marine environment, either via deliberate dumping or via polluted stormwater outflows, and immediate action taken to clean up pollution hot spots like the Wharf and the wider Evans Bay area."



WHAT HARM DOES RUBBISH CAUSE TO MARINE LIFE?

Entanglement. Many marine creatures are killed after becoming entangled in rubbish. More than 140 species of marine animals, including seals, whales, dolphins and seabirds, have been reported entangled in marine litter.

Ingestion. Swallowing plastic can lead to dehydration, choking, starvation, poisoning, internal damage and deaths of a variety of marine animals – from sea turtles to seabirds – which mistake pieces of plastic for food.

Smothering. When litter settles on the sea floor it can smother animals that live there by blocking out light and nutrients.

HOW LONG DOES RUBBISH REMAIN IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT?

Cigarette butts – 1-5 years

Plastic bags – 20-50 years

Tin cans – 50 years

Aluminium cans – 80-100 years

Glass – 1 million years

Plastic bottles – 250 years

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For larger image files please contact [Kirstie](#).