



REEF CHECK AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

February 28, 2012

Volunteers fighting marine debris on our Townsville coasts

Rowes Bay Sustainability Centre was a hive of activity on Sunday 19th February, with more than 35 representatives from local government, non-profit organisations, James Cook University students and staff, community volunteers and industry groups who participated in a workshop on marine debris, its impacts on the local marine environment and ways to contribute to a national program focused on mitigating marine debris from our oceans.

The morning began with a presentation by Dr Mark Hamann, renowned turtle expert from James Cook University who explained the impacts of marine debris on turtle populations along Queensland's coastline.

This was followed by a workshop by Heidi Taylor, co-founder of Tangaroa Blue who run a national marine debris program. The workshop covered the impacts of marine debris, the extent of marine debris around Australia and internationally, data collection techniques and the use of the National Marine Debris Database and specific marine debris items that are currently being targeted by the program to find practical solutions to stop them from ending up in the ocean in the first place.

Participants also enjoyed a wetland tour around wetlands at the Sustainability Centre and a visit to the City of Townsville's Sustainable House which provided an introduction to other environmental issues in the region.

Then, armed with new knowledge and inspiration, participants put their new found skills to the test with a marine debris monitoring clean up along Rowes Bay Beach! In just 600m, participants collected 723 items, weighing 9kg!

The top 5 items found were:

317 cigarette butts

101 hard bits of broken plastic

87 pieces of polystyrene foam

37 lids and bottle tops

20 pieces of broken glass

This is the first dataset to be included into the National Marine Debris Database from Townsville, and trained volunteers are now able to submit vital data on what is impacting Townsville's beaches into this national fight against marine debris!



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We would like to thank all the participants for attending, as well as Dr. Mark Hamann for helping to relate the importance of this issue for marine turtles and Heidi Taylor for her engaging and informational workshop session. This event was made possible by a Caring for Our Country grant through Townsville City Council's Creek to Coral program and coordination by Reef Check Australia.

For anyone interesting in getting involved in the Townsville Marine Debris Program please contact Heidi Taylor on heidi@oceancare.org.au and for more information on Reef Check Australia contact Jenn Loder on jenn@reefcheckaustralia.org.

EVENT IMAGES



Workshop session with Heidi Taylor



Clean Up crew at Rowes Bay



Reef Check participant recording data



Trained and ready to go for the next clean up!