

Alphonse team effort collects 423kg of marine debris in two hours

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The Island Conservation Society Alphonse team have lately been witnessing strong southeast winds bringing marine debris to the shores. They decided that a joint effort was needed to collect as much marine litter off the Alphonse beaches as possible.

On June 24, a group of 21 enthusiastic members of Island Conservation Society (ICS), Islands Development Company (IDC), Alphonse Island Lodge and the Seychelles People's Defence Forces (SPDF) cleaned the Alphonse beaches by removing all litter encountered. Rubbish was separated into four categories – *plastic bottles*, *footwear*, *glass* and *miscellanea* – in order to be firstly recycled on Alphonse and later on Mahé. Seychelles' landfills are running out of space with rubbish generated from our daily activities, while our precious oceans are becoming the dump site of humanity.

A total of 423kg of marine debris were removed in just two hours! It included 106kg of plastic bottles either PET or others, 39kg of footwear such as flip-flops and shoes, 32kg of waste glass and 246kg of miscellanea, which included toothbrushes, cigarette butts, lighters, polystyrene foam, toys, car tyres, barrels and a large miscellany of man-made materials.

It is well known that man-made waste dumped into our oceans has devastating consequences for marine wildlife. It is also known that zooplankton, the foundation of the marine food system in our oceans that usually dine on algae, is now feeding on small particles of plastic mistaking micro plastics or degraded plastics scraps for food.

Alarmingly, it has been recently discovered by scientists that these micro plastics or beads absorb toxic chemicals, making them poisonous to any creature that mistakes them for food or eats another that has ingested the plastic. The impact is all the way up to the food chain. It is not just animals that are harmed by man-made plastics but also humans that eat fish and other marine animals. Hence, these toxins can end up in our bodies, where they can alter hormones and cause other health problems.

Deafblind Hellen Keller said: “*Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.*” Perhaps, it is too late or perhaps is not but in any case we/ICS strongly believe that the beginning has to be to come together, progress is keeping together and success is working together.

Alphonse Island along with St François and Bijoutier is an important nesting and feeding ground for sea turtles, seabirds, marine mammals and other unique and stunning creatures. Despite their remoteness, these atolls are strongly impacted by marine debris which reinforces the above-mentioned quote, especially in such remote and almost unpopulated environment.

Alphonse ICS collected over 2.2 tons of rubbish off the beaches during 2015 and the amount has increased so far this year. We need to *reduce, re-use* and *recycle* – turning our day to day actions into creating a more sustainable living on Earth.

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