

Being Turtley Cool this Earth Day with Wallace J. Nichols, Chris Pincetich, Congresswoman Jackie Speier and more

Most San Francisco Bay area residents may be surprised to learn that our local waters are also home to earth's largest living reptile, the endangered Pacific leatherback sea turtle. To celebrate and spread awareness of this incredible reptile, the Pacifica Beach Coalition and the coastal city of Pacifica, are dedicating this year's Earth Day celebrations to sea turtles on Saturday, April 21, 2012. Thousands of bay area residents will be taking part in environmental actions followed by a celebration at the beach including Huffington Post blogger and Research Associate at the California Academy of Sciences Wallace J. Nichols, Chris Pincetich of Seaturtles.org and Congresswoman Jackie Speier.

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Leatherback sea turtles have been around since the time of dinosaurs and migrate thousands of miles from nesting beaches to come to the waters of the Bay area to feed on their favorite food, the jellyfish. Unfortunately, due to the actions of humans the population of leatherback sea turtles has plummeted by 95% in the past 25 years. Unless we take action, pollution and overfishing in the waters off the coast of California will contribute to the disappearance of these ancient creatures.

Locally, the number one item that pollutes the Bay is plastic fragments. Plastics, in particular plastic bags, are especially detrimental to sea turtle populations as they are mistaken for jellyfish and ingested by turtles. To address this threat, the Marin-based, Sea Turtle Restoration Project (<http://www.seaturtles.org>), is empowering the public to reduce the use of plastic bags through the Bag the Plastics Campaign.

"The focus of the Bag the Plastics Campaign is really on the individual", states marine biologist Dr. Chris Pincetich. Each of us can make the choice to use reusable bags instead of plastic bags. Regarding plastic bag-bans in California, "we are pleased that there has been such a movement [in California]," but "the biggest issue that society faces is the amount of plastics manufacturers use for shipping and packaging". The Sea Turtle Restoration Project encourages individuals to write letters to companies, support local stores that don't use plastic, and fill out suggestion cards to help spread the word and support the decreased use of plastics.

Cleanups of local beaches and streets also contribute to the health of local waters. Through organized cleanup efforts, the Pacifica Beach Coalition removed over 26,000 pounds of debris from surrounding coastal areas in 2011. This Earth Day, the Pacifica Beach Coalition is encouraging residents to take action and help with beach and area cleanups. Following the cleanups, the organization will host a celebration at Pacifica State Beach, Linda Mar beach with keynote speaker, world renowned sea turtle specialist Wallace J. Nichols, PhD.

Dr. Pincetich, being no stranger to Pacifica having surfed with the Pedro Point Surf Club, will also be speaking at the city's Earth Day Celebration. "Sea turtles connect the continents with their amazing migrations and serve as the innocent ambassador of the oceans." The little changes we make can have profound effects on ocean life. What can you do to be turtley cool this Earth Day? Get involved and celebrate! Cleanup a beach, use that cloth bag, and learn about sea turtles. What happens to sea turtles, impacts us all.

For more information about the Pacifica Beach Coalition's Earth Day Action and Celebration, being held on Saturday, April 21, 2012, featuring live music by Haunted by Heros, Ian Butler and the Humpbacks, and Jim Ocean and a turtley cool array of booths and activities, visit: <http://www.pacificabeachcoalition.org>.

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