

Clean up your act

Shocked into action by a filthy, rubbish-strewn beach, writer and surfer Martin Dorey organised a beach clean-up. Now he wants to start a national network of volunteers to tidy up all our beaches

Words: **Martin Dorey** Photos: **Nico Chapman**

When I'm not surfing, swimming or shrimping I walk along my local beach. Mostly I take the same route, but one day last week I decided to head off the beaten track. What I saw affected me profoundly: I found more foams and jetsam than I had ever seen on any beach. In places it was knee-deep.

I decided that, as a surfer and ocean lover, I couldn't just walk away. I set up a Facebook group, contacted my kids' school and everyone I could think of who might care to care. And so the Ten Thousand Bottles Recycling Project was born.

I arranged for the Coast and Countryside Service and a community artist to visit Parkham School in the days before the clean-up so, by the time the day came around, the kids were raring to go. Local surfers and keen volunteers also turned up to help. The Coast and Countryside rangers treated the kids to rock pool rambles, a geologist showed them how to make paint from local rocks and our community artist built a 'rubbish rainbow' with the best of what they found. Every scrap of rubbish – which filled about fifty black bags – was noted for the Marine Conservation Society's Adopt-a-Beach scheme. Our local council donated recycled pens and pencils to say thanks to the kids on our behalf. Once the beach was pristine we lit the barbecue and set up a bar on the beach courtesy of a keg donated by Sharp's Brewery. It was a brilliant day.

But that's not the end of it – now's the time for the Ten Thousand Bottles Recycling Project to go national. It's a great format and the problem of marine litter is universal – and if you surf it's a problem that's right on your doorstep. You can't ignore it – not if you want to surf with soul.

Despite plenty of people being willing to help with clean-ups there is no network to support it. There's nowhere for organisers to post their planned clean-up dates so that volunteers from far and wide can turn up to help. SAS have their tour but, however great it is, it has limited reach.

So let's do it – help bring the Beach Clean Network to life. You can start by joining the Facebook group then, when we build our own home, register for clean-ups in your area. Or start your own. Whatever you do, don't do nothing. The only way we can get this rubbish sorted is by getting off our backsides and picking it up, piece by piece, side by side. Together we can do it. www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=7347388277 martincopymonkey.biz



01
Martin's team of parents like yours, taking with a cold beer and a bottle

02
And this is how much litter they collected in just three hours