

Seaweeek 1995

Celebrate the sea - Restore the Balance

Brian Mackness

Understanding the theme

Everybody is touched by the sea in one way or another and we, in turn, all touch the sea. With a theme such as - Restore the Balance, you are inspired to acknowledge the pre-eminent role of the sea in the well-being of our planet. You don't have to be a marine biologist to get involved in celebrating the sea and recognising our role in its care. This theme gives educators and others the opportunity to look at the wonders of the sea and the way it touches our daily lives. Even if you are in the middle of the Australian outback you cannot escape this marine connection. The food on your table, the products you use, the fertiliser you place on your gardens are all of ocean origin, as are the air we breathe, our weather patterns and the planet itself.

But humans also touch the sea in a negative way. The sea has been and continues to be, used paradoxically as a rubbish dump and at the same time as an unlimited provider of food and other resources. Declining fish stocks, coral bleaching and widespread pollution have all shown that the sea is hurting. It is time to restore the balance. Our very survival and indeed that of all living things, depends on it!

While you consider restoring the balance many issues will arise:

- Values and importance of the sea in everyone's daily life
- Current health of the marine ecosystems
- Natural change and accelerated changes caused by humans
- Threats to and management of, the marine environment

Exploring the theme - event ideas

Women and the ocean - The theme for the Australian Bureau of Statistics International Women's Day event.

What

A lunch with art, dance, street theatre, songs and speakers to celebrate the sea and International Women's Day.

Where

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Conference Centre, Belconnen, Canberra.



Torres Strait Islander Dance Group



ABS Environmental Section Staff

How

The ABS Social Club organised a range of entertainment. The ACT Seaweeek Coordinator, a marine biologist, presented slides and spoke about the importance of oceans for our lives, women working in the field of marine biology and ocean issues.

There was a performance by the Torres Strait Islander Dance Group and the ABS choir sang ocean songs. On display were a number of ocean inspired art works created with quilting, papier-mache, etchings, linocuts, ceramics, silk painting, photography and pencil. The Seaweeek educational materials were also on display and outside the main room, a mermaid performed street theatre.

Why

The oceans have always been an inspiration for song, dance and art. Through a variety of mediums this event created interest and awareness about the oceans. A gathering of women provided a wonderful opportunity to focus understanding, acknowledge achievements and celebrate women and the oceans.

Extending the theme - classroom activities

Activity 1: Explorer Logs

Background

Many of the early sea explorers that came to Australia's coast left diaries of their voyages. These are readily available in libraries.

Aim

- to consider changes in the ocean and coastal environments over time.

What to do

- Research explorers logs and journeys.
- Ask the students to detect any change between what the explorers were describing then and what is there now.
- Discuss the implications of these changes.

Activity 2: Jingle Swells

Aim

- to get people interested in caring for the oceans.

What to do

- Tell the students that they have their own advertising agency and they have just landed the exclusive account from the Australian government to sell the idea that humans need to look after the sea.
- Divide the students into advertising account teams and challenge them to write a jingle, magazine, TV or Radio advertisement to get people concerned about the sea, as well as giving them ideas on what they can do to help.
- Teams perform or present the advertising to the whole class.

Activity 3: Ocean Intrigue

Background

There is always a lot of drama happening on the seashore. Wildlife death, mystery pollution, strange acts of nature and so on.

Aim

- to investigate the marine environments with intrigue and imagination.

What to do

- Challenge students to write a short story about the seashore, using animals as their lead characters. Will it be a love story about a gull and tern? Will it be a detective tale investigating the cause of a hole in a mollusc shell. Will it be a murder mystery solving where the sea stars have gone? Will it be a science fiction looking at life in 2050?

Activity 4: Littery messenger

Background

Most people don't realise that when they drop litter in the street there is a very real chance of that same rubbish ending up in the ocean or being washed up on the beach after it has taken a quick tour of the stormwater system.

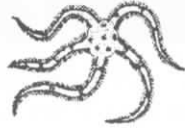


Photo courtesy Marine Discovery Centre

Aim

- to alert others to the land and sea links through rubbish.

Activity

- Prepare students for the dangers of this activity, work in gloves and work safely.
- Take your students on a rubbish collecting trip in the school yard or neighbourhood streets.
- Locate the drains and stormwater system. Determine where that rubbish would have ended up.
- Use some cardboard tubes or boxes from your recycled art supplies to construct a base for a monster.
- With the safe and handable rubbish cloth a litter monster.
- Paint or collage the head and other features to complete a monstrous visage.
- Display the monsters with a message to bring attention to the effect littering can have on the ocean environment and its inhabitants.

Activity 5: Sea Star Tug-o-War

Background

Sea stars are very strong for their size and mass, in fact twenty times that of a comparable human. They apply steady pressure to the shells of molluscs such as oysters and mussels to open them slightly before turning their stomachs inside out and down into the opening to begin feeding.



Photo courtesy Marine Discovery Centre

Aim

- to include a marine focus in physical education.

Activity and pictures courtesy of the Marine Discovery Centre, Queenscliff.

Activity

- Try a tug-o-war between two teams of sea stars.

Personal Actions

Marine environments are vital to our survival, together we can help restore the balance:

- Remember the link of sea and sink, dispose of wastes properly.
- Plant, don't pave, landscaping allows water to soak into the ground slowing water runoff to the sea.
- Plastic kills marine wildlife, don't allow any rubbish to enter the sea.