

Conservation Corner

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On June 14, the Pocahontas Garden Club traveled to the Reiman Gardens at ISU. They graciously invited Jill and I to join them on their summer outing. Perhaps you've also visited the gardens located at the south end of Jack Trice Stadium. In addition to Buck roses, prairie plantings, and butterflies, the gardens are also known for their traveling exhibits. In 2017, Reiman Gardens celebrates its water theme with the Washed Ashore™ Sculpture Exhibit that highlights the importance of clean water. Water is Life!

Washed Ashore™ is a non-profit community art project founded in 2010 by artist educator Angela Haseltine Pozzi. Community members, tourists, and park rangers drop off beach debris at their processing facility in Bandon, Oregon, and the work begins: collect, dump, rinse, sort, design, rinse, soak, wash, scrub, rinse, dry, design, sort, test, sort, cut, drill, stitch, twist, string, weave, design, attach, test, secure, and done!

Here are a few interesting Washed Ashore™ facts: 95% of all debris collected, 90% of which is petroleum based, is used in the artwork. To date over 38,000 pounds of debris have been collected along 300 miles of beaches from which 10,000 volunteers have created 60 sculptures. This week I'll share the story and moral of the first four sculptures on our tour.

A polar bear sitting atop a melting iceberg greeted us at the front gate. This sculpture symbolizes the struggle of polar bears adapting to a changing climate and habitat loss currently happening in the arctic. The choices we make each day affect wildlife around the world.

After signing in, we walked under Sea Jelly Bloom, a collection of 15 plastic bottle and lid jellies hanging from the hallway ceiling. Sea jellies flourish in oceans going through transition due to climate change, agricultural runoff, and overfishing. The next time you travel to the beach, river or any wilderness, leave only footprints and take only photographs, memories, and your trash home.

We entered the Hughes Conservatory where an impressive Sea Jelly created out of plastic bags and bottles floated high above the tropical jungle. Sea jellies have survived more than 500 million years. They spend the majority of their lives as hydroids attached to the seafloor before budding off and floating through the water. In today's oceans, plastic bags strongly resemble floating sea jellies and hungry turtles often cannot tell the difference. Yes, plastic bags are now one of the biggest threats to sea turtles worldwide. The next time you go to the store, plan ahead and bring your own reusable bag.

Venturing outside, we came upon Flash the Marlin. Marlins are some of the fastest swimmers in the world, migrating hundreds of miles through ocean waters inundated with plastic pollution. The best way of keeping plastic out of the ocean is reducing the amount of plastic we produce on land. Reduce your use of single use plastics and carry a reusable water bottle.

We'll pick up the tour next week at the Whale Tail in the Campanile Garden. Enjoy the 1st day of summer!

