

Giving Back to Mother Nature



Figure 1: The beach cleaning volunteers

The ocean has done us great favours by providing basic elements of life. Besides producing half of the world's oxygen content, it also absorbing approximately one-third of carbon dioxide emission caused by human. Unfortunately, the ocean is greatly polluted with debris including plastics, paper, wood, metal and other manufactured materials which become a significant topic of concern over the last few decades.

On 26th July 2017, a beach cleaning exercise was held at Melawi Beach coastline. This noble activity was conducted by a group of internship students and the staffs of IOES Bachok Marine Research Station who share the same thoughts of devoting some of our time in order to give something in return to the nature. Through the activity, we collaborated in cleaning the beach from debris and materials that can be harmful to the aquatic life as well as the natural environment. The hand-picked trash was separated into different categories which were recyclable and non-recyclable materials. Some non-recyclable materials retrieved from the beach compound including worn out footwear, plastic caps, polystyrene pieces and fishing nets while the recyclable materials such as aluminium cans, plastic and glass bottles were mostly found.



Figure 2: Removing foreign objects from the beach compound

Marine pollution is a worldwide environmental problem that threatening wildlife as well as resulting in a loss of the aesthetic quality of the coastline. Beach pollution affects its aesthetic value to the beachgoers and loss of this attraction may lead to economic loss. Marine debris also impact marine animals through ingestion and entanglement. Animals ingested the debris as they mistake it for food or accidentally consume it along with their meal. This leads to dangerous blockage in digestive system of the animals. Furthermore, marine animals also can get entangled in fishing nets, rubber bands and plastic bags making them unable to free themselves. Severe infection from the abrasion can occur or the animals may die because of restricted movements.

Controlling marine debris is one of the great conservation efforts. At the very first place, we need the knowledge on how to manage our own daily wastes so that it will not end up in the ocean. The 3 R's (reduce, reuse and recycle) concept for example, is the best waste management practice. Besides, environmental awareness will also help in controlling marine debris. Many simple acts can be practiced in our life such as saying no to single used product (white coffin), picking up trash whenever we see it and bring our own cups, plates, bottles and bags wherever we go. Moreover, government and private organizations should collaborate in order to reduce the impact of marine debris towards environment for example by organizing a beach cleanup program. As a community, we should participate in this kind of program to show our support to their effort and thank the nature.