

Let's help protect our dolphins

By BESS HILLYARD
TFL Membership Officer

In March this year Trees For Life hosted a Port River Dolphin Cruise, on the Dolphin Explorer. During this member event not only were we lucky to see several dolphins, but we also got to learn about the plight of dolphins and other aquatic animals from guest speaker and president of the Australian Marine Wildlife Research and Rescue Organisation (AMWRRRO), Aaron Machado.

AMWRRRO was launched in February this year after running as Project Dolphin Safe. Project Dolphin Safe was established in 1998 as a result of the senseless killing of six bottlenose dolphins in the Port River. The organisation focused on protecting the Port River dolphin population and habitat by patrolling the river, attending to animal emergencies, cleaning up their environment, revegetating and educating the community. Project Dolphin Safe later aligned with SA Seabird Rescue and together they worked to protect a wide range of animals including birds, turtles, dolphins, seals and sea lions.

As Aaron spoke about the dangers facing animals not only in the Port River, but other SA waters also, it became clear that humans are responsible for many injuries (and even deaths) that could be avoided. One of the main threats to wildlife is contact with materials such as fishing equipment and discarded plastics. Not only does wildlife ingest plastic bags, fishing line and deadly sharp hooks, but they often become entangled. Can you believe that the organisation has rescued one particular pelican from entanglements seven times!

Another threat is feeding wildlife. This is a problem because it creates an unnatural



diet, and can actually make an animal sick. Feeding bread to ducks, for example, can actually cause fatty tumours to develop as ducks are naturally herbivorous. The organisation also came across a member of the public feeding beef and pork to a 'rescued' penguin (I have never heard of a penguin naturally eating cows and pigs, have you?).

We are lucky in Adelaide to live so close to dolphins, seabirds and other aquatic animals. Ways that we can help protect them is to make sure that we dispose of our litter responsibly, to never leave fishing equipment unattended, and to admire wildlife from a safe distance – allowing them to remain 'wild'.

For more information please visit www.amwrrro.org.au

If you'd like to draw some pictures of dolphins or other wildlife, please send them in to us at Kids Branch!



A giant tree, by Abel, 5.



Budding environmentalists Ben Copus and Solomon Bedi join TFL's Fringe group.



Also being green with TFL are Ava Elder-Steele and Cody Dodd.

Did you know?

Did you know that approximately one trillion plastic bags are used and discarded around the world every year?

It is estimated that the average plastic bag is used for only 12 minutes, however it can last for up to 1000 years!

In Australia 50 million plastic bags enter the litter stream each year. Due to their light weight and ability to float in water, they can travel long distances and cause considerable damage.

As well as being unsightly in our environment, thousands of seabirds and marine animals around the world are killed by plastic each year, through entanglements and ingestion. Once an animal is killed by a plastic bag, the animal decomposes, yet the plastic remains intact – potentially

damaging more animals, becoming a 'serial killer'.

The good news is that last year South Australia became the first state/territory in Australia to ban the sale of HDPE (High Density Polyethylene) bags – these are the thin bags used by over 80% of retailers. This means that each year there will be almost 400 million fewer plastic bags in our state, with shoppers instead bringing their own reusable bags.

Quiz: True or False

1. Plastic bags cannot be recycled?
2. Over the last 20 years, plastic has been the most common category of rubbish collected on Clean Up Australia Day?
3. Plastic bags have been around for over 100 years?
4. Greenhouse gases are emitted during the production of plastic bags?

Answers: 1. False Plastic bags can be returned to your supermarket for recycling. 2. True. 3. False. They've existed for just over 30 years. 4. True