

Plastic Bottles Litter the Solar System

Ahhh, the Easter break was here. This year there were five days of vacation in a row. The weather was beautiful, a late Indian summer it seemed. We could take respite from the normal business of work days and enjoy some daily walks along the Esplanade from Port Melbourne down to Elwood. There is always something different to see along the Esplanade, be it people we know out walking, jogging, or biking, different boats in the water to watch or the crowded kiosks with tempting selling fresh food to visit. It was going to be a wonderful break.



Getting warmth from the Sun

The first day, we started walking and as usual picked up some plastic drink bottles that had been left as litter along the way. We expected this as there seems to be bottles there every day. We are not the only ones who pick them up either as others can be seen down at the water's edge, where the waves wash them in, picking up litter too. The day took a turn for the worse however when we came across a Port Melbourne storm water drain that dumps out on to the sandy beach. It had recently rained in the days before. The water from the drain had carried a large collection of plastic bottles and other plastic trash out and on to the sand. We picked this up, thankful it had not made its way to the ocean yet.

On the third day, Easter Sunday, we were on an exploring mission to locate all the planets of the solar system that are set up on a 1 billionth scale model along the foreshore. Both the planets relative size and relative scale apart are set up in this display. Pluto is on Sandridge Beach end and the Sun is way down at Elwood about 8 km away. It is a great model with information plaques at each of the planets' location. The discovery walk took us down to the St Kilda beaches between Saturn and Jupiter, where a dark surprise like an off course asteroid awaited us. On the little narrow sandy beach about 50 m long, nestled between a pier and a rocky point, the plastic trash was horrific! A storm water drain was near one end of the beach and it had released a slew of plastic bottles and other debris. On the other side of the pier is the St Kilda newly renovated foreshore which is quite attractive and has beach side cafes, wooden boardwalks and golden sand. The contrast between these two locations directly next to each other was striking. How could one



Saturn with its mysterious rings

be so ugly and the other be so picturesque? The storm water drain and the plastic bottles were the answer. The bottles float on the water and go where ever the water takes them. What were the tourists thinking of this as they walked by? Not able to just leave it, we went down the stairs onto the beach and picked up the accessible bottles and some of the larger pieces of plastic trash. We placed them on the Bluestone wall of the Esplanade above the beach to later take a picture of the collection. Passersby would stop and stare at this growing collection. By the time we were finished, the casual passerby could not see the pollution on the beach. It was still a beautiful sunny day as we turned and continued on our quest for the Sun.



Partial collection along wall



Bottles in the seaweed



Bottles in the seaweed



Stormwater Outlet with bottles

See following page for plastic bottle summary over the full holiday weekend.

Summary of the Bottle Pick Up

Day	Containers picked up	Others containers seen further away	Distance walked one way along Pt Melb to St Kilda Esplanade	Comments on bottle type
Good Friday	25	10s more	5 km	Mostly plastic bottles. 50% from a storm drain outlet on to beach Pt Melbourne
Saturday	15	10s more	5 km	Mostly plastic bottles
Easter Sunday	50+	Many 10s more	8 km	Mostly plastic bottles 70% from a storm drain outlet on to beach St Kilda West
Anzac Day, Monday	8	Few	3km to ANZAC at parade end of Bay St	Mostly beer cans and bottles
Tuesday holiday	17	10s more	7 km	Mostly plastic bottles
Total	117			Walking nearly the same path every day