

BALLOON ALERT

Balloons are perceived as a celebration of life: The birth of a child, grand openings, birthdays, and well wishes. But for marine animals, balloons may mean **death**, as do other forms of plastic.

Balloons are ingested by whales, dolphins, turtles, seals, fish and water-fowl, who believe they are food such as jellyfish or squid.

A young sperm whale died when it stranded on a New Jersey beach. A balloon had lodged in its stomach, preventing the passage of food.



Sperm whales found washed up on Gibraltar Point beach, their stomachs full of plastic. Photo by Lee Swift

An endangered leatherback sea turtle starved to death because a latex balloon blocked passage of food to its stomach. The only thing found in its intestines during a post mortem were three feet of nylon string attached to a balloon.



A juvenile Kemp's ridley sea turtle ingests balloon debris. Photo courtesy of NOAA's Marine Debris Program



A young sea turtle eating plastic. Photo courtesy of Yamamoto Biology/Creative Commons

These are just two examples of the **thousands** of animals killed every year by balloons. Balloons can travel hundreds of miles and end up in the ocean where they can kill marine life.

WHAT GOES UP... MUST COME DOWN.



Popped balloons resemble jellyfish. Photo by Queensland Turtle Conservation Volunteer Sally R. Murphy

Balloons can be launched indoors in a variety of imaginative ways. Schools can have alternative celebrations to balloon launches. If your school plans a launch, tell them you don't want to endanger animal lives and suggest alternatives.

NEVER LET BALLOONS LOOSE OUTSIDE!

SAFE ALTERNATIVES

- Stores and fairs can use reusable windsocks for eye appeal. This would be especially meaningful in a waterfront community.
- Give new parents a potted plant or a tree in the baby's name.
- Flowering plants and bulbs can be planted to spell out a message.
- Schools can have kite-making classes. Kites are a reusable alternative to balloons!
- If you **do** use balloons, **dispose of them properly**.

SPREAD THE WORD! HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND SAVE OCEAN LIFE!

