

## Aquarium's whale of a tale has happy ending

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Last Thanksgiving, Inky, a young pygmy sperm whale, was stranded on the coast of New Jersey. She was airlifted by Coast Guard helicopter to the National Aquarium in Baltimore and listed in critical condition.

Doctors treated her for dehydration and several infections, but it wasn't until they found and removed from the whale's stomach a mylar balloon, a plastic bag and other pieces of trash that she began to recover.

There's a happy ending to this story: Eleven days ago, after five months of intensive care, Inky - who had gained 116 pounds and weighed in at a healthy 323 pounds - was taken to Port Canaveral, Fla., and set loose 30 miles out in the Gulf Stream.

"This species of whale is often found in the Gulf Stream at this time of year," says aquarium spokeswoman Elizabeth Malis.

National Aquarium officials say plastic trash like that found inside Inky can get into the ocean via storm sewers, fishing boats or cruise ships or balloon releases. It poses a threat to sea birds, fish and marine mammals, who mistake the bits for food. Officials say:

-- Humans generate 133 million tons of plastic trash each year.

-- One survey showed that 86% of trash floating in the North Pacific is plastic. International beach cleanups report 60%-90% of beach trash is plastic.

-- Just one abandoned gill net found off Alaska had hundreds of salmon and 350 dead sea birds caught in it.

A big chill from the past

Sometimes old-fashioned ways turn out to be best. The University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science has begun cooling most of its buildings with an air conditioning system that uses ammonia-chilled ice. It's a method used early in the century, but it was displaced by the more sophisticated chlorofluorocarbons - ozone-eating CFCs, now banned from new air conditioning systems.

Ammonia neither destroys the ozone layer nor contributes to global warming, say school officials. It's efficient and cheap - 27 cents a pound compared with \$6-\$7 a pound for CFC replacements - and will enable the university to recoup the cost of the \$1.7 million system in five years.

Green on your screen

A new software program from MicroBase Inc. is aimed at eco-conscious computer buffs. The Green Explorer (\$59.95) is an interactive Windows-compatible program that contains more than 150 graphic and text windows full of tips, information and projects. It offers practical advice, ranging from disposing of household hazardous waste to setting up a "green" office in your home, to games and quizzes, including a "What's your Eco-IQ" test.

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