



Balloonews

www.balloonartists.com.au

Official Newsletter of the Balloon Artists and Suppliers Association of Australasia Ltd
ACN 080 636 282

Natural Latex balloons lots of colours, and they are all "green"

In This issue

- P.1** Natural Latex Balloons
- P.2** Editorial
- P.3** Balloons as Litter...The Myth
- P.4** Plastic not Latex
- P.5-7** The Real Polluting Culprits
- P.8** BASA A's Accreditation Program
- P.9-10** A Life Members Report
- P.11-12** Summary

Natural rubber, also called India Rubber or Caoutchouc, is a mixture of organic compounds and water. It is derived from latex, a milky colloid produced by some plants.

One of the main commercial sources of natural rubber latex is the Para rubber tree.

The Para rubber tree initially grew in South America.

In 1770, in England, a Joseph Priestly noted that a piece of that material was extremely good for rubbing off pencil marks on paper, to which he gave it the name *rubber*.

Rubber trees are tapped every couple of days, that is, an incision is made into the bark of the tree and the sticky, milk coloured latex sap is collected and refined into a usable rubber. The process involves attaching a small bowl to the tree. Then a small diagonal cut is made on one side of the tree to just above the bowl.

The farmed latex drips down the cut and is collected in the bowl. After a few hours the latex is collected and eventually poured into tubs and delivered to a factory where the latex is centrifuged and concentrated and is then ready to manufacture balloons. These vast forests of rubber trees around the world consume carbon dioxide (CO₂) which helps counter the effects of global warming.

- **Latex Balloons are made from a natural product**
- **Rubber tree farming creates employment for people and a valuable export commodity in many third world countries**
- **The vast tree plantations take in CO₂, and capture the carbon to counter global warming**
- **Thousands of people around the world derive their living from either, the production, wholesaling, retailing of, or decorating or entertaining using balloons.**



Editorial

Welcome to this special edition of Balloonews.

This issue is a little different to our normal publication and has been brought about by the members of our association needing to redress the balance with the emotive environmental issues we have occasionally been facing. We have divided this issue into two parts; The Environmental Section and a Member's Supplement. Members are encouraged to send out and use the Environmental Section at every opportunity to support our (your) industry

BASA was established over 20 years ago and has grown to become the Australian balloon industries recognised leading self regulating body. Over the past several years our industry has occasionally suffered attack by individuals with laudable objectives but who we would argue have not considered all the facts and the very positive and large environmental support and action that our industry provides. These attacks centre on two main issues; either balloon releases becoming litter or balloons (clips and their type of ribbon) causing the death of marine animals.

This edition of Balloonews intention is to show the broader details of the issues and to ask everyone to understand them and not to target our industry. Our industry in Australia does not engage in large scale balloon releases. Accredited members of our Association are fully aware not to use balloon clips and non bio-degradable ribbon in any balloon that may inadvertently be released. BASA-A requests Governments, Councils, individual groups and people generally around Australia, to use only BASA-A Accredited Balloon Artists who are aware of their environmental responsibility and who act accordingly.

Bill Gray
Operations Manager
Balloon Artists and Suppliers Association of Australasia Ltd



*When finished
"Pin it & Bin It"*



Balloon Artists and Suppliers Association of Australasia Ltd

BASA-A President
Maureen Egan
Mob: 0415 977650

BASA-A Operations Manager
Bill Gray
Mob: 0408 000 872



Balloons as Litter...The Myth

In recent emails with Sunshine Coast Council particularly, and just generally over the years, with comments by various groups or even individuals that insisted that balloons are litter, BASA A decided to test those beliefs and try to understand the evidence.

Instead of relying on hearsay, BASA A investigated the two prominent authorities on litter in Australia; **Clean Up Australia** and **Keep Australia Beautiful**. The results support our insistence that balloons are not a major or even minor litter problem.

Clean Up Australia

This organisation has produced a Rubbish Report each year since 1991, which is a snapshot of waste collected on "Clean Up" Australia Day. The Rubbish Report has proven to be an invaluable resource in identifying trends in the types and spread of rubbish throughout Australia.

In 2014 Rubbish Report, there were 6,357 registered collecting sites 705 were analysed. The Top Ten Rubbish Items by % were;

Item Description % Raw Data

- 1 Cigarette butts 20
- 2 Glass alcoholic beverage bottles 5
- 3 Plastic chips and confectionery wrappers 5
- 4 PET drink containers 4
- 5 Plastic bottle caps and lids 4
- 6 Small pieces of paper 4
- 7 Metal soft drink bottle 3
- 8 Metal alcoholic beverage 3
- 9 Polystyrene pieces 3
- 10 Metal foil/confectionery wrappers 3

Beach/Coastal. sites had the most rubbish items (a staggering 38,095 items) from 94 sites surveyed with an average of 405 items per site. Outdoor transport had the largest increase with 8,751 items which was an 8,217 item increase from 2013 survey. Beach/ Coastal sites and River /Creeks all had a decrease in their items.

Note rubber has its own category, and at beaches/coastal total rubber was 1%.

Rubber, in 2014 rubber was the smallest category of waste at just 1% which was consistent with 2010 and 2011 results. The most common significant rubber item found was rubber gloves, which account for 46% of all rubber followed by thongs 25% and tyres 22%.....**Balloons not even listed!** (Miscellaneous items include cigarette butts (92%), clothing, food scraps, ceramics, car parts and batteries).....**No Balloons!**

Keep Australia Beautiful

KAB has produced a report each year for 10 years called the National Litter Index. It is funded by every Australian State or Territory Government. The 2013/ 2014 Report was again compiled by McGregor Tan Research in South Australia and is a 194 page in depth analytical report on litter in each State.

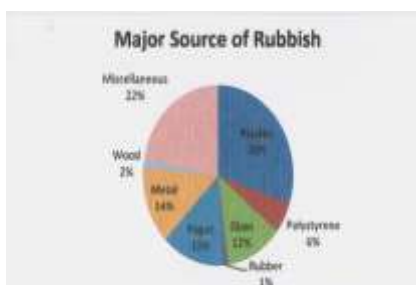
Summary: The filthy five are cigarette butts, paper/cardboard, plastic objects, plastic food containers and utensils & metal **No Rubber**. The results here are expressed two ways, items per 1000m2 and by volume per 1000m2.

Total sites surveyed were 983 nationally, including Beach, Car Park, Highway, Industrial, Recreational Park, Residential, Retail and Shopping Centre.

Total area surveyed 1,499,791 sq mtrs

The Facts: The major categories are further divided into items which are very extensive in detail. The only reference to Rubber appears in Miscellaneous.....Rubber pieces (not tyres) averaged is listed as 0.0001 litres per 1,000sq metres. Miscellaneous includes items such as syringes, ice cream sticks, condoms, disposable nappies, clothing and materials, tyres and pieces.....**No Balloons category**

"So, in summary, balloons as litter is a myth...it is not supported by the facts".



Plastic Not Latex

Who are the real polluting culprits?

I heard a brief interview with Chris Bowler on ABC radio, who along with his team aboard the schooner “Tara” netted flotsam from the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. He is a micro biologist and stated that the flotsam of plastic is starting to photosynthesize and is leaching its chemicals into the ocean this in turn is absorbed by plankton which in turn is eaten by fish which are then caught and eaten by us. In other words we are slowly poisoning ourselves.



This floating garbage (non biodegradable plastic) is also killing millions of fish and birds, in particular Albatross who eat food along with pieces of plastic and regurgitate this to their chicks thus killing them.

(No mention of biodegradable balloons).

Captain Charles Moore of the Algalita Marine Research Foundation first discovered the Great Pacific Patch. Captain Charles Moore on the seas of plastic – u tube is very interesting.

The world’s biggest garbage dump – u tube...synthetic sea narrated by Capt. Charles Moore.

A swirling sea of plastic bags, bottles and other debris is growing in the North Pacific, and now another one has been found in the Atlantic.

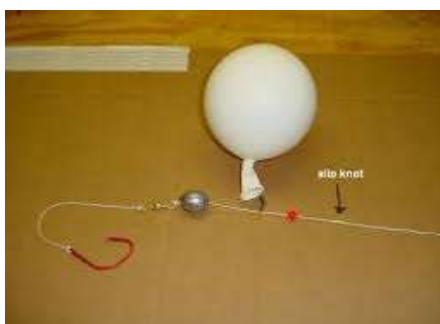
Thank goodness our industry is based on natural biodegradable latex. Not the man made concoction of plastics and leaching chemicals. Where is the environmental lobby that are so quick to attack our industry?

***“Don’t Rubbish our industry
Latex Balloons are
Biodegradable”***

Balloon Fishing is the Real Culprit

Below readers will find some basic information on Balloon Fishing. Our Association does not condone this use of balloons. Further, our opinion is that this practise is the main the cause of balloons entering waterways.

The main method is attaching a balloon on a slip knot so that when a fish bites the balloon comes off the line and floats away...anglers say that this allows the fish to swim away from the then loose line and swallow the bait further....ensuring a catch



Real Culprit Continued



HOW TO USE

JUST CLIP, INFLATE, BAIT, AND FISH!

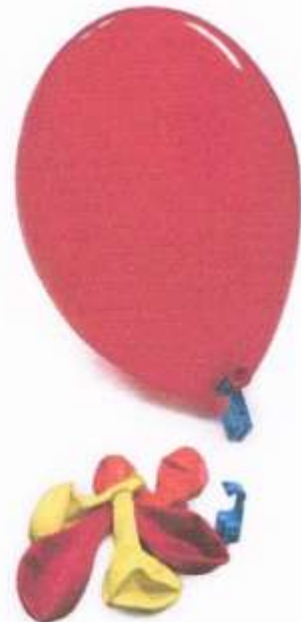
Balloon Fisher King is quick and easy to use. The patented balloon clip allows for balloon attachment and removal to fishing line in just seconds and provides adjustable bait depth control!

Here are simple step instructions on how to use Balloon Fisher King:



01:20

HD



Step 1: Attach the balloon clip to the fishing line depending on your desired bait depth setting. Push the button firmly on the side of the balloon clip. Insert the fishing line into the line cavity. Release the button to lock the fishing line into place.

Step 2: Blow up the latex balloon and tie a knot at the neck. (**NOTE: For Night Fisher, activate glow stick by bending, then insert glow stick inside of balloon - or tape to outside of balloon using waterproof tape - inflate balloon and tie knot at the neck.**)

Step 3: Insert the balloon knot **BEHIND** the notch on the side of the balloon clip. Stretch the balloon neck and insert all the way into the cavity at the top of the balloon clip.

Step 4: Add bait and fish!

Step 5: When landing fish, press button to remove balloon clip and balloon from line. If balloon pops or tears due to a fish strike, remove the balloon from the balloon clip, inflate a new balloon and repeat!

Above is the clip method...BASA-A would suggest anglers just discard broken balloons

Real Culprit Continued

How To Tie a Balloon Onto Fishing Line

▶ 1:59



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZRziw-DgSI>

Feb 12, 2013 - Uploaded by Shimano Australia

Shimano Australia. ... Paul Burt teaches one way to tie a **balloon** onto your monofilament line when you want to live bait.

- Some user comment

[Brian Donovan 3 weeks ago](#)

How xxxx irresponsible to the environment to be littering waterways with balloons. Dead balloons that resemble jellyfish then eaten by sea turtles. I cannot believe an organization like Shimano would be sponsoring this. As someone who has been fishing for over 40 years I am completely disgusted and will never again buy one of your products

- Another comment off the web

Ballooning is an effective way to get your baits away from a boat or shore using livies or dead baits. There are several different methods of fastening the balloon to the line, but one of the easiest and quickest ways we have found is illustrated below. It requires nothing other than a single balloon. We buy the party balloons from any supermarket, they cost no more than a couple of dollars for a pack of 100

***This is how Balloons enter waterways....
not through accidental balloon escape**

BASA A's Accreditation Program

BASA A has been working over a number of years to bring together industry expertise from around the world and particularly from our experienced local members. BASA A's aim has been to produce training modules and use these modules to be the basis of our Accreditation Program and to allow us to acknowledge members who BASA considers to be proficient to a professional standard in all aspects of our industry

Currently there are two (2) modules, they are

- Module 1- Introduction to Products, Equipment and Standards
- Module 2- Basics of Balloon Decorating Incorporating
 - (a) Elements and Principles of Design
 - (b) Basic Practical Work

Module 1

Covers a diverse range of topics, from background information, to basic technical data.

Importantly, module 1 also has a Code of Conduct in relation to Balloon Releases as BASA -A and its members are aware and sensitive to our environmental obligations. This Code of Conduct has six (6) main points and firmly states

"It is extremely important that everyone adheres to this code in the interests of safeguarding the environment and our industry".

Currently, our members are recognised as Accredited Balloon Artists.....ABA



This award includes a signed certificate, a BASA ABA badge a special presentation and **permission to use ABA after their name**. Further, it is BASA A's intention to add further Modules and to eventually bring a Master Balloon Artist award as the pinnacle achievement of the accreditation program in our industry



Sample of BASA A's ABA Badge

To add to BASA-A's commitment to environmental concerns, for some years now, each month we promote to our members for the education of their customers that after the fun use of their balloons please remember "When finished Pin it and Bin it" campaign message.



"When finished Pin It and Bin It"

Report from a Life Member

The following is reprinted with permission from Gunter Blum, Immediate BASA-A Past President, current Director of BASA-A and recently awarded Life Membership of BASA-A

Members of the Balloon Artists and Suppliers Association are aware and supportive of our environment. We do not allow balloons to be released with any non biodegradable attachment, nor in adverse weather such as rain. Let us put a balloon into context in our environment.

Clean Up Australia campaign launched by Ian Kiernan and in their diagnosis of litter found that in 2011 only 1% of litter was rubber based. So of 10,000's of items of litter only 100 were of rubber origin and of that rubber gloves attributed 46%, thongs 25% tires 22% which leaves 7 % or 7 items which could be a hair band, rubber band, washer, eraser, elastic band, condom or a balloon. (www.cleanup.org.au this site has some invaluable information.)

It takes one day to collect enough latex sap to manufacture 2 balloons, the trees are on plantations of tropical areas of mostly third world countries, which creates employment for thousands of people and a valued export commodity for these countries. A rubber tree's latex is not harvested until it is mature enough usually after 4 years and is not cut down but remains active for its life time, thus also contributing to our carbon capture.

Sea Life

Studies by Kathy Townsend a marine biologist on North Stradbroke Island Research Station has found **that the cause of turtle deaths was mainly due to the intake of plastic and of the entanglement in netting.** Though it was stated that some latex particles were found in some of the turtles stomach the cause of death could not be attributed solely to a piece of balloon. A piece of latex/balloon would usually pass through the digestive system of a turtle or fish .

Far more turtles and Dugong were found to have been caught up in netting or ghost nets and being fatally injured through boat propellers as they come to the surface to

breath and cannot escape a fast approaching vessel.

* There are numerous articles when connecting to her site including 60 minutes seas of shame.

www.biologist.uq.edu.au/staff/kathy-townsend

These ghost nets are also responsible for the deaths of thousands of fish from Dolphins to Whales and Sharks which find themselves trapped. Turtles and Dugong are also severely injured causing death by boat propeller blades.

Fish and other sea creatures are also dying in their millions due to environmental damage such as pollution from river flow of toxic chemicals and oil spills.

The only turtle that eats jellyfish (ie mistaking balloon fragments for a jellyfish) is the leatherback Turtle found only in northern tropical waters. These Turtles grow to the size of 2 meters.

Funerals

The release of balloons at funerals has become a more common event. Religions other than Christian make sacrificial offerings to their dear departed. This usually takes the form of the departed's personal effects and of food to take in the afterlife. When such offerings such as toys are placed on a grave site it is frowned upon by councils who are the cemetery custodies. In our western Christian Society we simply lower a coffin into the ground .When a cremation takes place the coffin disappears behind a curtain and then all that is left is the deceased ashes. This can have a philological affect upon the grieving family, in particular when the deceased has meet with foul play or a body may not be found or only partially recovered years latter (as with Daniel Morcombe of Queensland).

BASA Qld supports the Daniel Morecombe remembrance walk

Report from a Life Member Continued

It has been explained to us many, many times that the release of helium balloons represents the spirit rising to heaven and thus brings comfort to the family, relatives and friends. This is of immense importance to the closure and healing process to those associated. These events are usually organized by the Funeral Directors who see their significance. These balloons are never released with any non biodegradable attachment

Numerous organizations use balloons as a way of creating attention such as the prevention of child abuse which are emphasized through a White Balloon Day awareness campaign.

Over the past years due to some of the environmental concerns, balloon releases have gradually diminished in numbers and quantities from the late 80's and 90's where releases of 10,000 – 20,000 balloons for various sporting finals and public openings of infrastructure were common. In 2012 only 500 were released in September for a football final on the Gold Coast. This reduction is partially due to action taken by BASA members advising clients that although balloons are biodegradable the perceived environmental impact may culminate in adverse publicity for the organizations concerned. The cost of balloon releases has also escalated making them far less attractive. This along with a CASA permit authorization of \$ 180 per release has also discouraged any further activity of balloon releases.

Helium balloons are still used as celebrations on events but are handed out to the public such as the recent opening of the Airport Link Tunnel in Queensland. On these occasions each person receiving a balloon is informed that the balloon must be tethered and not deliberately released.

A recent call for the total ban of helium balloons by a previous Queensland parliamentary member for Ashgrove, has sparked this comment from (the now Minister for Health The right Honorable Lawrence Springborg) as “ the fun police. BASA Qld in conjunction with BASA A is preparing to monitor and recording any releases or balloon hand outs of its members so a clearer picture and data can be obtained for any future evaluation”. BASA A is the main industry body in Australasia and provides benchmark and guidelines for the industry.

Perhaps a better solution to saving sea life, waterways and oceans would be to curb untreated waste entering the system and **irresponsible fishing** as well as ensuring that events requiring balloons are ordered from an accredited member of BASA who conforms to our strict code of conduct.

Summary

The Balloon Artists and Suppliers Association of Australasia Ltd would like to make the following points.

- Latex Balloons are a Natural product.
- Latex harvesting provides employment and income for third world countries.
- “Rubber” trees take in CO2 and capture carbon to the benefit of the environment.
- The Balloon Artists and Suppliers Association of Australasia has an Accreditation program that all members are required to complete which has rules regarding balloons and safeguarding the environment.
- In NSW balloon releases are limited by law to 19 balloons.
- We ask that only **Accredited Balloon Artist** professionals be used as they conform to their BASA-A accreditation training and use the initials **ABA** after their names.

- Our argument is that the real culprits of balloons ending up in waterways are **fishermen who use balloons** to float out bait. These balloons are instantly discarded into the water by the slip knot they use whenever they hook a fish.
- We ask that latex balloons are not dumped into categories as plastics. This is unfair to the statistics and our industry.
- Our investigations show that derelict nets and discarded fishing line as well as crab pots form a far greater endanger to marine life than balloons.



Derelict nets at a Clean Up Australia site 2014

END