

news

Cleaning Canada's Ocean Dumpground

by Erin Moser

Each spring and fall thousands of volunteers from all over Nova Scotia get involved in beach clean-ups organized by the Clean Nova Scotia Foundation, sponsored by Moosehead Breweries Ltd. The need for such clean-ups seems to get worse every year. In the fall 1992 beach sweep campaign alone, over 1,065 bags of trash were collected from 84 beaches throughout Nova Scotia.

The volunteers kept track of what types of debris they found along the shoreline, providing the Clean Nova Scotia Foundation with an estimate of how much trash they found and what made up the waste. Non-

biodegradables, such as plastic and polystyrene, make up 60% of beach debris. The remainder of the trash was made up of glass, metal, rubber, paper, wood, as well as some miscellaneous objects like clothing.

marine waste is having on the birds and animals who live in our waters. Close to a dozen dead birds and animals were found this fall, which is probably only a small percentage of the animals who are killed by marine

Metro Halifax has little or no sewage treatment so be careful of what you flush down the toilet

Not only is beach debris a turn-off to the thousands of tourists who visit Nova Scotia annually, it is also dangerous to marine life. This fall the beach clean-up program revealed some shocking results about the toll

debris each year.

Beach debris comes from a number of sources, both land and water-based. The abundance of trash comes from careless beach users and ship galleys. Even on beaches with regular clean-

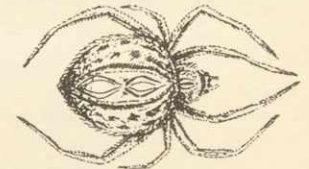
ups, items like cigarette filters, plastic straws, popsicle sticks, and food wrappers are found in abundance. Regular dump-offs add to the problem. Many people feel it is okay to dump their trash at beaches, believing the sea will wash it away and take care of it.

Another contributing source of marine debris is the fishing industry. Although in past years this type of debris has been decreasing, items like plastic rope, plastic oil containers, and nets continue to appear onshore.

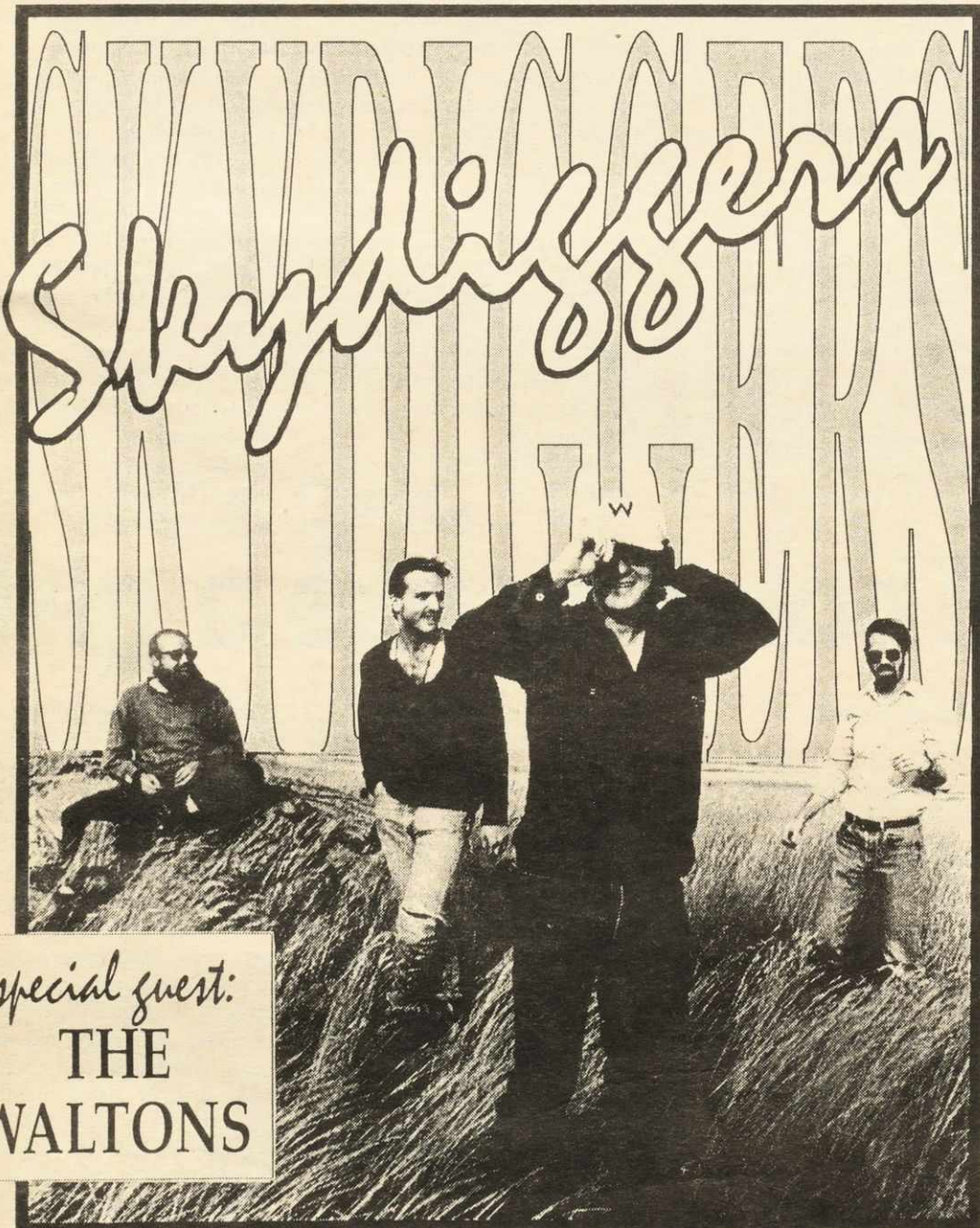
Even sewage systems not properly upgraded also create large amounts of beach debris. Especially in areas like Metro Halifax where there is little or no sewage treatment, resi-

dents must be careful of what they flush down the toilet. Sanitary waste makes up a large portion of marine debris and could easily be reduced if people became aware of the effects these items have on our beaches.

All in all, people who contribute to beach debris, whether intentionally or accidentally, must be made aware of the damage they are causing, since Nova Scotia waters are a valuable income source as well as a place to enjoy summer activities.



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