

Beach Wrack Life



The Dunlin's Journey A Mega-marathon Fueled by Snacks from the Wrack

Dunlin sandpipers (below) often migrate over 6000 miles each year between their feeding and breeding areas. On their journey, the birds depend on pit stops where wrack and other food sources provide refueling energy. Without these options, the birds can starve to death.



The Wrack COMMUNITY

The wrack is stuff cast ashore by the sea. Much of this once grew in the sea, like seaweeds and seagrasses. These marine castaways foster protective dunes and allow assembly of a unique natural community that brings life to the beach.

Base of the Wrack Community

Most energy for the wrack community comes from a variety of marine plants. In their death, these plants form the base of a widely influential food web.



Manatee and shoal grass



Turtle grass



Brown algae



Red algae



Marsh grasses



Woody materials

What's in the Wrack?

Hidden in the wrack are many items that take part in the wrack community and that have their own interesting stories to tell. Sea beans drift from the tropics, dune plant seeds give rise to future beach plants, and sea shells along with other invertebrate skeletons reveal former lives lived at sea. Human influence is also seen in the form of seaglass shards polished by the sea, and in bits of plastic from marine litter.



Sea beans



Dune plant seeds



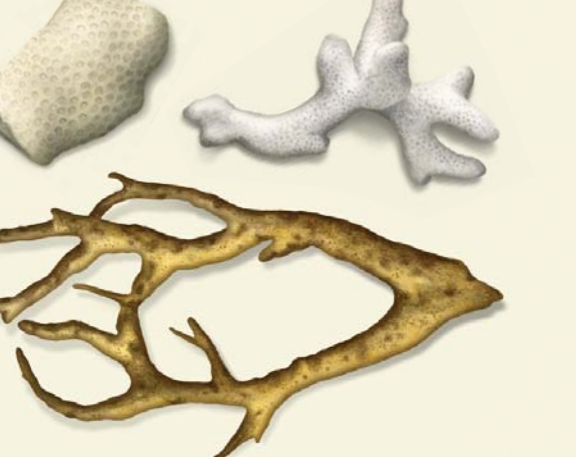
Mollusk shells



Marine invertebrates



Soft corals



Hard coral and sponge fragments



Seaglass



Plastic bits and shards



Threats to the Wrack Community

Some of our efforts to "clean" the beach include the mechanized removal of wrack from the beach. Unfortunately, the barren shores left by beach cleaning and grooming machines are not hospitable to beach life. Without wrack, some of the most interesting attributes of a beach are also absent.



You Can Help

Mechanized removal of beach wrack is often aimed at removing the human litter we leave behind. Most of this could be picked up by hand. Freeing beaches of plastic debris reduces threats to wildlife from mistaken ingestion and entanglement, and abates the temptation to tidy the beach by more heavy-handed means. When you visit the beach, bring a re-used shopping bag to fill with the litter you find.

Did You Know?

Picking up trash almost doubles the calories you burn walking down the beach. As you stoop, you'll discover treasures; common in wrack are more than 300 kinds of sea shells and 60 kinds of sea beans. Other gleaners of wrack include rare piping plovers, which are currently threatened with extinction.



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