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New cleanup site: Pandan Mangrove



Among the peculiar items found at Pandan Mangrove off the West Coast was a muddy toilet cistern, probably washed up by the tides. -- PHOTO COURTESY OF KENNETH PINTO

SITUATED off the West Coast, Pandan Mangrove has become the latest addition to the coastline being cleaned up by International Coastal Cleanup Singapore.

Fresh pickings could be the main reason for the unusually high number of bulky items found on just 350m of shoreline. More than the average number of tyres and building materials were found stuck in the mud.

In all, 3,448 pieces of trash were collected by corporate volunteers from Oil Spill Response and East Asia Response Limited (OSRL/EARL) and Wildlife Reserves Singapore - both new to coastal cleanups - and veterans from the Raffles Museum Toddycats of the National University of Singapore, a non-governmental organisation headed by zoologist N. Sivasothi, who coordinates the annual event.

'We wanted to give them this fresh site, even though they have never done this work before, because they had a great 'can-do' spirit and were serious about wanting to do a good job,' he said.

'We wanted to cover only a small site because we wanted to minimise the damage to the site,' said site captain Kelly Ong, 27, a marine biologist.

The volunteers found almost 1,300 plastic bags, 820 food wrappers and more than 440 glass bottles.

'The most peculiar items found included traffic barrier lights, half of a vacuum cleaner, a rice cooker, a wooden statue of a smiling Buddha, a golf bag and a lot of plastic pipes,' she said.

A human chain was formed to remove 39 tyres, which easily weighed about 740kg.

Ms Ong hopes this will reduce the places where rainwater can collect, as these can serve as breeding grounds for mosquitos.

Mr Wilson Tan, 28, who headed the OSRL/EARL team, said he had been searching for a way to help his company reduce its carbon footprint.

'I went online to check if anyone was cleaning the beaches because the footprint is worse if trash is left in the open. It affects the mangroves and the marine life,' he said.

SHOBANA KESAVA

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