



Latex Balloon Project

a major cause of death in marine turtles, birds, dolphins, seals, and sea lions as well as other wildlife.

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The project: Latex balloons are a major cause of death in marine turtles, birds, dolphins, seals, and sea lions as well as other wildlife. Despite claims to the contrary, there has been very little work to quantify the degradation time of latex in the environment. This data gap is continuously exploited by pro-latex lobbying groups to claim that latex balloons and balloon releases are safe and even environmentally friendly. This proposed project will 1) scientifically document the degradation process under different environmental treatments and publish the results and 2) create a series of professional and creative public outreach videos 30 seconds to 5 minutes in length utilizing time lapse video footage of the degradation process that can be used as part of a campaign to raise awareness about latex balloons.

The proposal: This project is well suited for a senior thesis project for 1 biology undergrad and 1 digital artist. From a scientific perspective, we are always trying to improve our ability to communicate effectively with the general public about science and this project would represent a great opportunity to facilitate such communication with the expertise of a digital arts and media advisor and student. This would certainly represent an excellent and unique learning opportunity for all involved.

Timeline:

Late September: Identification of two students

October: Planning

January 1 – experimental start date

Jan. 1-April 1 experiment in progress

April – writing of paper/senior thesis and production of videos

Late May – publish

Other info: Once we have the video and paper in hand we plan to expand out the public service campaign through several partner institutions and through a social media campaign using latex balloons to highlight the issue of marine debris.



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