



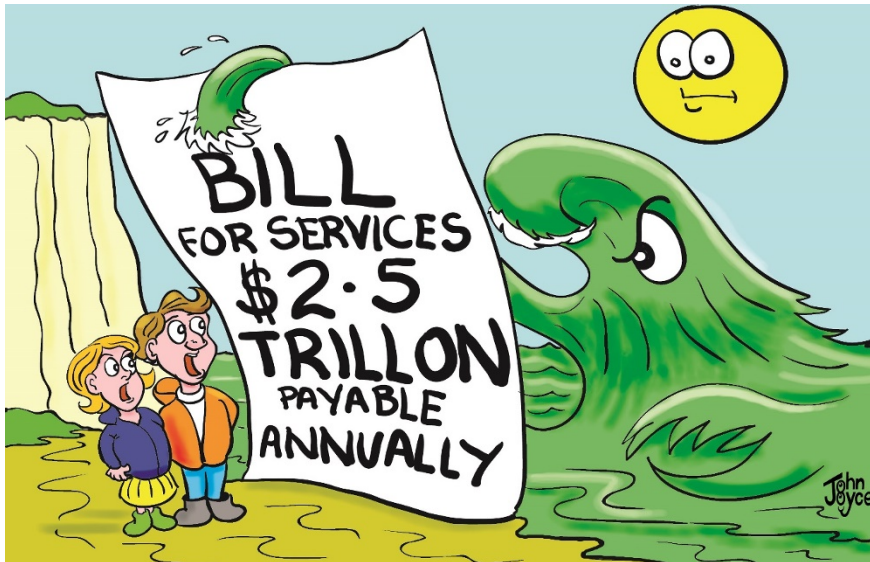
Black John - the Bogus Pirate



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By John Joyce

The REAL Value of the Ocean



Images & text © John Joyce

As a pirate I know all about treasure. However, the REAL value of the Ocean lies not in buried treasure, but in the many vital services it provides for each and every one of us . . . for FREE! Everyone who has ever eaten fish and chips, or taken a holiday by the Sea knows some of the benefits that the Ocean provides.

But did you know that microscopic marine plants in the open oceans and the common seaweeds around our shores convert carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into oxygen, accounting for half of all the oxygen we breathe? The massive size of the Ocean allows it to absorb enough of the Sun's radiated heat to make life possible on Earth. Ocean currents then carry this heat north and south towards the poles, holding back the polar ice caps and making life possible across the planet. The Ocean is also the primary source of protein for more than a billion people, while the coastline is home of a staggering 60% of the World's population.

In 2010 a report published in the United Kingdom listed all the activities taking place in UK waters and attempted to put a value on them. They included oil and gas, maritime transport, telecommunications cables, leisure and recreation activities, military defence, fisheries, aquaculture, water abstraction, mineral extraction, renewable energy, coastal defence, waste disposal, education, power transmission and storage of gases.

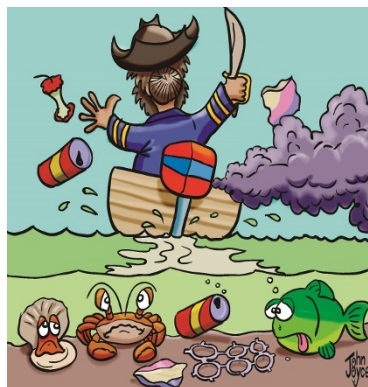
Then, in 2015, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) calculated that the world's oceans were worth around \$24 TRILLION dollars, and generated goods and services worth around \$2.5 trillion EACH YEAR. The report also suggested that, if the oceans were a nation, they would be the world's seventh largest economy – ranking just below the UK but ahead of Brazil, Russia and India.

You can learn more (and watch a cool video) at: <http://seachangeproject.eu/our-ocean-our-health> or by reading the United Nations Expert Report on 'The Overall Value of the Oceans to Humans' at http://www.un.org/depts/los/global_reporting/WOA_RPROC/Chapter_55.pdf.

The Problem of 'Marine Litter'

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), about 80% of marine litter comes from the land. It gets into the Ocean from poorly managed or poorly resourced landfill sites, through ineffective sewage treatment, people using beaches, illegal dumping of domestic or industrial material or street litter that has been washed into the sea.

Some of it also comes from careless and irresponsible dumping of litter at sea from ships and boats – but I won't name any names!



One of the major elements of marine litter is plastic. According to the organisation 'Surfers Against Sewage', a staggering 8 MILLION pieces of plastic enter the oceans of the world EVERY DAY and some 5000 items of plastic can be found PER MILE of beach in the UK.

The challenge posed by plastic litter in the Ocean is that it NEVER goes away. It simply breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces until it forms plastic 'microbeads' that are almost invisible to the naked eye. Not only that, but modern bathroom products actually contain microbeads to scour the human skin and keep it clean. This means that, when a person uses a products containing them, they can release an estimated 100,000 microbeads into the Ocean via the waste water that goes down the drain. In the UK, a ban is to be introduced on microbeads in 'rinse-off' products like shower gels and personal care products like toothpaste.

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