



Canberra Times

05/03/2011

Page: 15

By: AAP

Section: General News

Region: Canberra Circulation: 32116

Type: Capital City Daily

Size: 68.00 sq.cms

Frequency: MTWTFS-

Flood debris a danger to sea turtles

There are grave concerns for sea turtles living off the south-east Queensland coast as pollution from the Brisbane floods washes out into the ocean.

Marine biologist Kathy Townsend is heading a "Turtles in Trouble" research project with the Earthwatch Institute and the University of Queensland.

Sea turtles frequently die after choking on plastic bags and rubbish, Dr Townsend said.

She said the pollution and rubbish that washed down the Brisbane River and out to sea during the January floods would cause problems for sea turtles in coming months.

"The additional amount of flood debris that has been washed into Moreton Bay and surrounds . . . means the turtles are high-risk," Dr Townsend said.

"The turtles are under a lot of pressure as it is - including from boat strike, encroachment on nesting beaches and feral animals eating their eggs.

"This is just adding another straw to the camel's back."

Dr Townsend urged people to lend a hand picking up rubbish along waterways on Clean up Australia Day tomorrow.

"Take the opportunity to go out there, clean up around water shore areas," she said. **AAP**