



Soft plastic hurting marine turtles, research finds

NEW research from the Earthwatch program Turtles in Trouble shows that 36 per cent of marine turtles are affected by marine rubbish, with soft plastic being the major villain.

Marine scientist Dr Kathy Townsend, of the University of Queensland, says the results

of the project show the impact marine rubbish has on the death of turtles is more than 17 times higher than the two per cent previously suggested.

“Turtles have been found to have eaten most plastic items, but the most common items eaten are soft plastics, such as plastic bags and lolly wrappers, and pieces of hard

broken-down plastic,” Dr Townsend said.

“The ratio of soft plastics – plastic bags, bait bags and cling film – to hard plastics found in turtle gut contents compared to the ratio found in the environment was significantly higher.”

She said this indicated that

turtles select soft plastics as food, as has been suggested anecdotally.

The executive director of Earthwatch Australia, Richard Gilmore, said the research highlighted the need for the community to be more aware of the impact of marine rubbish.