

You can help!

Mechanized removal of beach wrack is often aimed at removing manmade litter that has found its way into our seas or has sadly been dropped on the beach. Most of this could be picked up by hand. Freeing beaches of litter reduces threats to wildlife from mistaken ingestion and entanglement, and abates the temptation to tidy-up the beach by more heavy-handed means.

When you visit the beach, bring a re-usable container to fill with the litter you find. Only remove manmade items (trash, plastics, fishing line, beach toys, etc.), so that unproblematic amounts of clean beach wrack can be left on the beach where it belongs.



Discover more:

www.beachwrack-contra.eu

 [@beachwrack.CONTRA](https://www.facebook.com/beachwrack.CONTRA)

BEACH WRACK OF THE BALTIC SEA



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CONTRA
BALTIC BEACH WRACK



Interreg
Baltic Sea Region



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What is beach wrack?

Beach wrack is any marine generated organic material that is washed up onto the beach by waves and currents. It can generally be found in the swash zone, in lines along the foreshore and sometimes at the back of the beach especially after storms. The beach wrack that is found on your local beach is a result of what is growing in the near-shore waters and the weather conditions. It usually consists of drifting and decomposing marine life debris – which for the Baltic Sea region mostly includes torn off sea grass, macroalgae (brown and red species) and shells.



Important natural role

Flood protection:

Beach wrack is a beach's natural coastal defence mechanism. It reduces the energy of waves by acting as a barrier in the swash zone. This helps to reduce erosion and provides a degree of protection for the foreshore.

Sand capture:

As beach wrack piles up on the beach, it traps drifting sand allowing it to accumulate instead of being blown away by the wind. This natural process helps form coastal dunes. Beach wrack is also a primary source of nutrients for dune stabilizing plants.

Biodiversity and habitats:

Beach wrack is an important part of the beach eco-system. It is a species-rich habitat for beach shrimp, insect larvae and various other animal species. In turn, beach wrack is an important feeding ground and source of nutrients for shorebirds. Even decomposing beach wrack plays a role as it supplies the beach eco-system with essential nutrients.



Threats to the wrack community

It is preferable that beach wrack is left in place within the coastal environment. However, in places where local economies rely on beach tourism, authorities are under great pressure to remove it. If left on the beach, it can become polluted with wind-blown litter and even start rotting and smelling. As part of costly beach cleaning operations, wrack is often removed in the tourist season (approx' 5 months of the year) on a daily basis via mechanical means. Unfortunately, the barren shores left by intensive beach cleaning and grooming machines are not hospitable for beach life - many animals simultaneously lose their food, living space and even their nursery.

The challenge for local communities

Local authorities and beach management organisations are trapped within a network of conflicting interests. It is a challenge for them to find a balance between nature protection and the demands placed on beaches as recreational spaces.