



Let's talk about *the sea*

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A story to understand, love and preserve the sea



With the collaboration of:



Regional Activity Centre  
for Cleaner Production



Generalitat de Catalunya  
Government of Catalonia  
**Department of the Environment  
and Housing**

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To know is to love;  
we only protect the things that we truly love.



This story can help us discover something as important as our vital dependence on the sea.

Our future depends undoubtedly on its conservation and its infinite discovery.



Once upon a time, there were two brothers who spent their summers in Maret, a beautiful little village on the north-west Mediterranean coast. Marc, the older brother, was clever and curious about things; Miquelet, the little brother, was a little more playful and astute.

Both boys were very lively and they loved to go down to the beach and play in the sand and search for the precious treasures that the sea carried there each day.

Late in the afternoon, when they returned home they took the coastal path back to Maret and took the opportunity to visit their good friend Joan, a humble but wise fisherman, who knew the world of the sea and its people very well.

Joan was an old fisherman who lived in cala Blanca, on the most inaccessible part of the coastline from the little village of Maret. Shy and solitary, he had a great weakness that often caused him to worry: he loved the sea more than anyone

and he was especially affected by all the aggressions made against nature by man.

Joan was such a good man that when he would catch a small fish, he would say sorry to it and then return it to the sea, which he called "the great blue carpet". That was why all the people in Maret called him "Kind Joan"

When Joan went out to fish and earn his living, he always gave his gratitude for being able to live on the immense sea of changing blues that supplied him with food, beauty and knowledge.

He always said that to be happy in this world you only have to see how the sun marries to the sea at the first light of day, enjoy all the treasures that the sea gives to you to live with respect and devotion and listen to the crashing of the waves in the evening when you go to sleep.

"There's nothing like the sea" he often exclaimed.



In their adventurous escapes to the beach, Marc and Miquelet always learned something new, especially when Joan talked to them from his comfortable old fisherman's cottage. The children gave him lively company.

Those days, unforgettable for the two boys, forged their memories. They didn't realise, but those days would gently mould their way of seeing and interpreting the world.

Joan waited for the boys in his cottage almost every evening, with bread and chocolate ready for them, and sitting on his tireless broken-down rocking chair, he told them wonderful stories of when he had been a sailor all around the Mediterranean.

Time stood still when the three of them spent those entertaining, gentle, exciting moments together in the cottage. Marc and Miquelet never stopped asking Joan the most unusual questions, which he answered with kindness and patience. These moments were engraved in Joan's memories

and they filled him with affection for these two boys who were just discovering life.

On one of those days of sea breezes, Marc and Miquelet arrived at the cottage to find Joan with sadness in his eyes.

"What's the matter, Joan?" asked Marc suddenly.

Joan, in silence, kept looking out at the horizon, there were signs of deep stormy seas.

Miquelet, a little afraid and standing behind his brother, didn't want to say anything in case he was being indiscreet, but his curiosity got the better of him.

"What's the matter, Kind Joan, can we help you?"

Gazing into the distance, Joan answered,

"The sea is now living the time of man,  
and it will never again be what it was...  
we're losing our immense perfect blue carpet".



Marc and Miquelet came closer to Joan and he told them to sit down on the stone bench. Looking at him with a worried face, Marc said,

“Kind Joan, you have always been happy and hopeful about the future of the sea. We remember you always told us “there’s nothing like the sea”, so what’ve happened? Why have you changed?”

Kind Joan looked at the two little boys with devotion and he said to them calmly,

“Today I’ll tell you a story that will help you understand why I’m sad.”

Joan took a deep breath and began his exciting tale...

“I’ve seen the sea becoming ill since a long time ago. It’s getting dirtier and poorer all the time; it doesn’t reflect the sun with the same joy, nor the moonlight when the moon is full. As you know, these things have always made me sad,

the sea is my life, I love the sea and I am nothing without it.

One fine day I was sailing through the zone of the Ses Negres and I came across a group of young people who were with Florian, the fisherman. He told me that he was studying the coast to propose the creation of a small marine reserve, a protected zone where people could get to know the sea and learn to love it.

At the time I was a little surprised by the initiative of those intrepid youngsters, who were decided to go down below the blue carpet to collect samples and get to know the area for themselves. They said to me “We want to show the people of the village, and everyone, that the sea can live again if we help it. We need you to help too!”

At that moment I couldn’t say anything because I was feeling shy, but in my heart I knew that it was a great idea and that I should defend it, so I just said “Good luck, see you soon”.



During the following night, my mind went over and over the idea of protecting that marine area which was so damaged by man and I doubted that one day it would recover its lost splendour and if, above all, man with his amazing arrogance would allow it.

Time passed and the people continued with their project of recovering a little part of the coast. Ses Negres became a seed for growth and an example for the future.

That little marine space became stronger every day: the fish began to appear again, the coral too and even the sea horns began to reproduce. The people began to accept that the whole operation was good for everyone, and that if it continued, it would be good for all and for future generations too”.

“Keep going! keep going!”, shouted Marc and Miquelet who, totally intrigued, wouldn't let Joan rest for a single minute.

Joan continued with his story.

“I gradually began to be hopeful again, and my sadness slowly disappeared. I thought that the experience of Ses Negres could be extended to other places where the sea was also suffering.





When I went fishing and returned I always tried to stop for a little while in the protected marine area. My little boat anchored in clear waters and I was captivated by the shoals of fish that were feeding on the corals, or by the lightning fast dives of the feathery cormorants catching small, confused fish. There was no better place than Ses Negres to enjoy the marine life and environment”.

At that moment, Marc interrupted Joan with a question that had been going through his head for some time.

“Why didn’t man understand that the sea was ill and that it has to be cared for? If my turtle was ill I’d look after it until it would be much better. And after that I’d treat it really well so that it didn’t get ill again. Isn’t that right Miquelet?”

“Yes, yes” said Miquelet, “I’d do the same for my budgies and with all the sea animals”.

Joan, quite moved, continued with his story.

“Man is arrogant and irrational because of ignorance and lack of knowledge. The intelligence of man has made him powerful against the sea and nature. As he now doesn’t depend directly on the sea, his heart doesn’t feel things in the same way, and ignorance takes the relationship over, causing him to stop loving the things that give him life”.

Silence took over the moment. In the background, they could hear the gentle breaking of the waves in the cove and the cry of the seagulls that took off in scared flight. But Kind Joan’s story had still not finished.

“Man doesn’t know”, he continued, “that he vitally needs to be in contact with the elements of nature: the air, the water, the sun, the beach, the sounds, the smells... All these form part of man and his nature.”



Marc and Miquelet stared at each other with the look on their faces that show that they hadn't understood anything of what Kind Joan was trying to say.

"What I want to explain to you is that man cannot exist without the sea, because we come from the sea and to continue living, we need it just as it is; clean, healthy and full of life.

Few people go to the sea thinking that they should give something back to the sea, or simply be thankful for what it gives to us. They only think of enjoying it, without thinking, without being conscious or respectful about what we do.

The fisherman fishes without giving anything back to the sea, the great ships and sailboats cross the back of the sea without thinking of what they leave behind and with the hope that the sea will take them safely to port, people go to the beach and treat it as if it was part of their back garden, there are a thousand more situations. How much ingratitude for the sea!

Today I'm sad because I've known that nobody is going to take care of Ses Negres anymore. Now anyone can do what they like, nobody defends it and the authorities look the other way. I've lost hope again with man, and what he does with the sea. And now I don't know if it will ever recover".

The two little boys were left completely disconcerted and didn't know how to respond.



They thought, "Poor Joan... and poor us too".

The evening was drawing in and the red sky told Marc and Miquelet that they should be going. Their mother would be very worried if they arrived late. Not wanting to leave and aware of their friend's state of mind, Marc said to him:

"Kind Joan, we have to leave. Mother must be worried. Just say what we have to do and Miquelet and I will do what we can to give hope back to the coast of Maret and we'll talk to father to see if he can find a solution".

The three of them hugged and said an emotional farewell, as if they didn't know if they would see each other again.

The boys knew that their holidays were coming to an end. The summer was ending and they had to go back to the city with their parents.

For many, various reasons, Marc and Miquelet didn't return to Maret for the next summer.

It wasn't until many years later that the two boys went back to Maret. On arriving at the village, the first thing they did, impetuous and excitedly, was to go down to cala Blanca to look for Kind Joan, the fisherman.

Unfortunately, he was no longer there; the sea had taken him one beautiful autumn evening some years ago. Since then, in the village of Maret, there was a legend that said when you passed cala Blanca in the evening you could see the figure of Kind Joan sailing out to the sea on his old boat.

Marc and Miquel, full of nostalgia for those entertaining summer afternoons they had spent at their friend Joan's side, walked towards the old fisherman's cottage. They both talked about Joan's innate wisdom and how everything they had learned from him helped them love the sea.

"How right Kind Joan was when he said to know is to love, and we only protect the things we love" said Marc as they neared the cottage.



Joan's cottage was still there, solitary, with peeling paintwork and full of weeds. The doors, padlocked, protected the little treasures that the old sea dog had collected during his lifetime.

They both stood in silence observing the cottage and wishing they could go inside again. Suddenly Miquel remembered that Joan hid the key beneath a plant pot of marine fennel and he shot over it like lightning. Surprised, he found the key was still beneath that fragile piece of pottery after so many years.

"Oh Dear Lord! I can't believe it, Marc. I've got the key" shouted Miquel euphorically.

A little nervously, they both walked towards the seaward door of the cottage and put the key into the lock. Two turns to the right and the old, half-painted little door creaked slowly opening to show the forgotten treasures of Kind Joan.

Marc and Miquel were open-mouthed as they contemplated the fisherman's humble home. The same cottage and all the objects inside now seemed much smaller. The smell of old soot and penetrating damp was intense.

A tatty table with thin legs, a small white pine wooden bed, an ancient wood and butane stove, a discoloured image of Mahatma Ghandi, a broken mirror, two great horn shells over the thin, blackened fireplace, a complete nacre shell hanging on the wall and a small bookcase with some dog-eared copies of National Geographic, coverless books on fish, algae and other marine animals, a leather bible and some leaflets on fishing boats and cruises to North Cape and The Balearic Isles.

Everything, absolutely everything, seemed smaller. Even when they imagined Kind Joan, he seemed to have shrunk. The two brothers remained in silence, the scene reminding them of their moments with their good friend who was no longer with them.

Suddenly, Marc noticed a piece of paper on the table that moved in the breeze. He went closer and was able to read "To my dear friends Marc and Miquel".

"Miquel, Miquel, a letter for us! Before he went away Joan left something written for us!", explained Marc moving closer to his brother.

Without doubting for an instant, the two brothers went out of the cottage and sat on a tree trunk that the sea brought one day, and opened the letter that Joan had left for them.

*Dear Friends,*

*I don't know when you will open this letter, but when you do I will not be here. I don't want you to be sad, because I've gone back to where I have always wanted to be, below the blue carpet with my friends the dolphins, the fish and all those sea creatures that have always made me happy.*

*Now you are no longer children, you have become good people, responsible and consequent with all those things that we learned together. Your characters of brave young men make me feel happy.*

*I will always remember with tenderness the time when Miquelet got angry at being so small and said "I'm small but I'm brave", and when you, Marc, with your serenity, gave me your hand and gave me hope. That is why I'm leaving you my last will, which I know you will comply with devotedly, with valour and hope.*

*Under my bed you'll find a bag with my personal things, which have formed part of me and that I would now like to be part of your lives, just a few things but with great sentimental value for me, things I loved and allowed me to be where you are now.*

*Among them you'll find a handwritten text which I have been writing during my long times of immense and gratifying solitude with my friend the sea and which was possible for me thanks to your inspiration.*

*The text is, essentially, a Decalogue for the conservation of the sea which I created, with the idea of it becoming a solid base to encourage new and bigger human initiatives to improve and conserve the sea.*

*I would be grateful if you could, according to your own criteria and your new way of understanding the world, teach people how to understand and love the sea, just like I have done.*

*With this, you will be one more seed that can grow and lead the way to a more hopeful future for the Big Blue, and the love that I have always had for it.*

*There is nothing like the sea!*

*I have always held you in my thoughts and in my heart.*

*Signed, Joan, the fisherman*

*One sunny spring day.*



Marc and Miquel, with tears in their eyes, looked at each other without knowing what to say. After a long silence, Marc said,

“Well, Miquel, you know what we have to do”.

“Yes Marc, I think we have to do everything possible to spread Jon’s message and, as he said, it will serve as a seed for men to reflect on, to take another heading and make peace with nature.”

Today, Marc and Miquel are men who are committed to the challenge of changing a globalised, changing world.

Marc is a marine biologist and works for a Foundation for the improvement and conservation of the marine environment and also for the diffusion of the contents of the manuscript that Joan left them.

Miquel is a bioclimatic architect and works around the world on projects for the construction of decent, sustainable houses for people with few resources.

Both Marc and Miquel are sea lovers, expert sailors and always carry with them the memory of the knowledge that Joan the fisherman gave them.

Today, Joan’s manuscript has been translated into more than 50 languages and is a foundation for collective reflection for the people who live with the sea, to help preserve this singular treasure for future generations.

From the original manuscript, we highlight two essential pieces, which are the Decalogue for the Conservation of the Marine Environment and the guide of good practice, addressed to sailors, and users and lovers of the sea.



## Decalogue for the Conservation of the Marine Environment, extracted from the manuscript of Joan the fisherman

The points that form this decalogue for the conservation of the marine environment are the result of a clear, simple and wise vision of a man who lived from and for the sea. It is also a manifest of his will to conserve the most valued treasure of his life, the sea, and to share it always with us.

The decalogue is essentially the necessary knowledge, from which personal and collective actions are encouraged for the conservation of this natural legacy of infinite value.

## 1. VALUE

It is essential to give value to the sea, to its assets, resources and production based on the profit its natural capital generates for the whole of the living system of the planet and for humanity.

## 2. EDUCATION

It is vital to promote the culture of the sea to all the societies, and especially to the new generations, so that they are educated in ecological and ethical values with a vision of individual and collective social co-responsibility.

## 3. INVESTIGATION

It is necessary to promote the study of the sea to nourish human knowledge and wisdom of improving the management and conservation of this legacy.

## 4. COMPANY

The marine environment is the most important asset that the companies which directly or indirectly use the sea as the final stage of their products or services possess. Investing in its improvement and conservation is to enter the field of excellence, which consolidates the company of the future and improves the well-being of future generations.

## 5. TECHNOLOGY

The incorporation of new technologies into companies is necessary to achieve an optimum technical and industrial development that integrate the efficient use of consumption of resources and the management of waste, within the framework of environmental sustainability and respect for the sea.

To favour the transmission of resources and information to developing countries in order to improve the conservation of the sea and a sustainable use of the sea is basic, from a global and ecosystem point of view.

## SOLIDARITY 6.

It is necessary to establish actions for the recuperation and improvement of fishing resources from the point of view of the ecosystem, and to promote traditional fishing in order to guarantee its permanence in a market that values the quality of the product and more efficient and sustainable systems of extraction of the natural resources.

## MANAGEMENT 7.

To promote political debate at local, regional and international level to put in place efficient legislation that allows us to, in a responsible, democratic and equalitarian manner, regulate the management of the sea and guarantee its conservation.

## LEGISLATION 8.

Give support to local entities and NGOs of the coastal and marine areas to promote their collaboration networks and to contribute information and resources for the improvement and conservation of the sea at local and regional scale.

## COOPERATION 9.

Activate the principle of personal and collective responsibility in the use and management of the marine environment to reduce the environmental impact of our presence or attitudes.

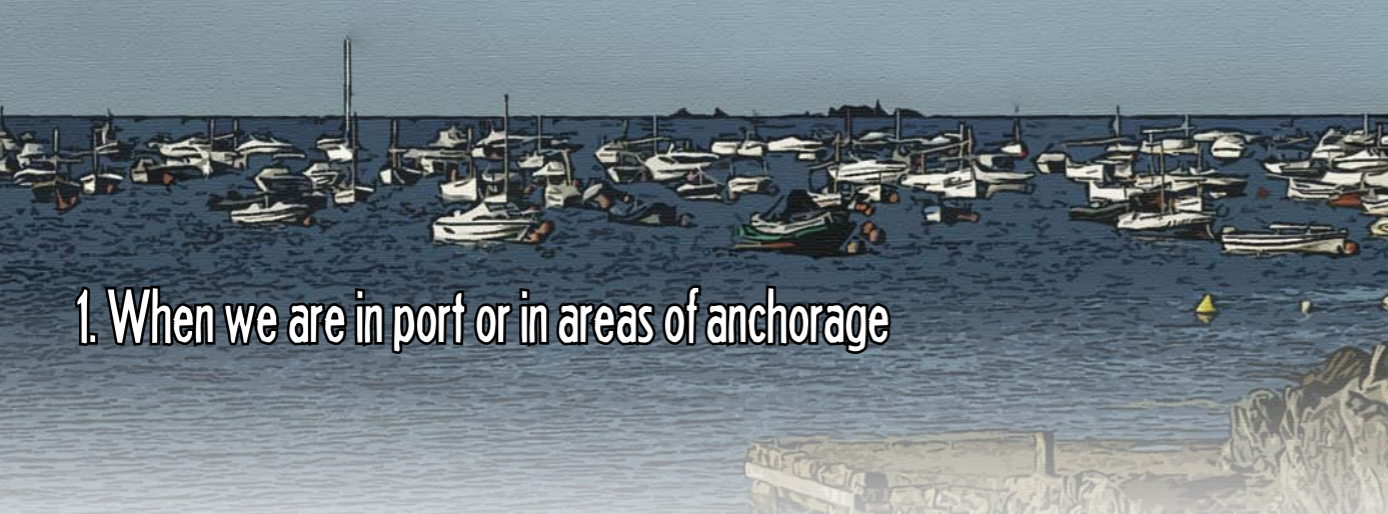
## RESPONSABILITY 10.





## Guide to good environmental practices for sailors and users of the sea

In Joan the fisherman's manuscript there was a part dedicated to the good use and management of the sea. Due to its content in good environmental practices, we dedicate to all sailors and users of the sea, this compendium of advice and directives that will help us to be more respectful with the sea, and promote its improvement and conservation.



## 1. When we are in port or in areas of anchorage

Our **boats** are normally tied **in port** or **anchored to buoys**. Even though we don't want to, the simple fact that our boats are floating on the sea generates an **impact**, due to the fact, in a passive way, the boat slowly and permanently gives out chemical substances to the sea; the remains of dissolved paint, small drops of oil and fuel, noise, erosion of the seabed due to chains etc.

The **port** is a necessary installation for nautical or professional activity, but as an installation it has to be managed in a correct and sustainable manner. Therefore, as users and clients of the port we have to demand that the port has a minimum of environmental quality in its services and that it complies with the applicable environmental regulations.

The same thing happens with **anchorage areas** off bays and beaches. If we want a clean, healthy sea to enjoy, we have to demand that the anchorage of the buoys is **ecological** with **minimum environmental impact** on the communities of the sea bed where they are situated. We should also ask for the necessary nautical services, with adequate safety measures and with the minimum risk of accidents to people or the environment.

### I. Control of bilge waters

Whether done accidentally or on purpose, the discharging of bilge waters into the port or anchorage area has a very serious environmental impact on the contamination of the sea water, due to oil derivatives, chemical products and disagreeable smells. One litre of hydrocarbons can contaminate 10,000 litres of water and affect the food chain, of which we are a part.

### II. Management of the residues generated on board

Life on a boat generates waste of all sorts: paper, plastics oils, batteries, organic materials etc. The bad management of these residues contaminates the environment, dirties and damages natural resources of great value. Recycling is essential in order to be more sustainable, our contribution is basic.

### III. Anchoring on buoys

Many coastal towns and villages do not have ports and install temporary anchorage areas with buoys in bays and off beaches, to serve as ties. Historically, this activity has not been undertaken coherently or ecologically, and as such the majority of coasts rich in marine habitats and fragile or protected species are receding or have even disappeared.

## WHAT TO DO

1. Avoid the generation of bilge waters. To do this, it is fundamental to maintain the boat well and/or trust nautical workshops that are professional and have a recognised system of quality management such as dQb or ISO 14001.

2. Check that the bilge water discharge system works correctly through efficient sealed systems that guarantee good management of the contaminated waters.

3. NEVER discharge the contaminated bilge water on the open seas

1. Guarantee good management of waste by taking it to the selective collection points in the port or the nearest recycling point of the town or city or, if necessary, take them home.

2. Make intelligent and green purchases before going on board. To generate fewer residues, the best thing to do is avoid them by minimising wrapping, packaging, paper and cardboard.

3. Take reusable recipients that are adequate for their function, plastic water bottles, hermetic plastic boxes for foodstuffs, resistant textile bags for fruit and foodstuffs, and have bags or boxes for basic residues (paper, plastic, packaging...).

4. NEVER throw residues of any kind on the open sea

1. Demand that the anchorage is ecological and well planned with low impact systems that do not surpass the capacity of the environment and are never situated over protected areas such as marine seed plant beds or highly fragile habitats or species.

2. It should be required that all the services derived from nautical activity in the anchorage area are sustainable and respectful with the environment.

## 2. When we sail



**Sailing** is one of the greatest pleasures the sea can offer, above all in a sailboat with the wind taking you in the desired direction. There are many ways of sailing and some are more ecological than others, but it always represents a positive experience to remember in our lives.

**The sailors**, above all, have to be respectful and responsible towards the marine environment that welcomes them. Their presence, attitude or behaviour in the marine environment and the use of the vessel is important to the activity being sustainable and environmentally long-lasting. When sailing there is physical and chemical contamination of the sea water and visiting ecologically sensitive areas can produce harmful effects on the most sensitive marine species and habitats.

### I. When we sail and anchor

Apart from the ecological management and control of bilge waters and the residues generated on board, Kind Joan's manuscript brings us other specific actions to evaluate and learn.

## WHAT TO DO

1. Sail with respect for the marine life. An excess of speed increases consumption, generates more noise both in and out of the sea and contaminates more.

2. Have an efficient, well designed boat to avoid these impacts and use it responsibly.

3. Substitute the old motors of our vessels with more efficient and ecological ones, which have low levels of decibels and fumes.

4. Sail using the sails the longest time as possible during our voyage: we'll enjoy more the sea, we'll be more sustainable and our time on board will be unforgettable.

5. NEVER throw food into the sea, because it contributes to transfer an environment which should be kept as natural as possible. The effect of seeing food floating is not pleasant; it damages the landscape and changes the behaviour of animals.

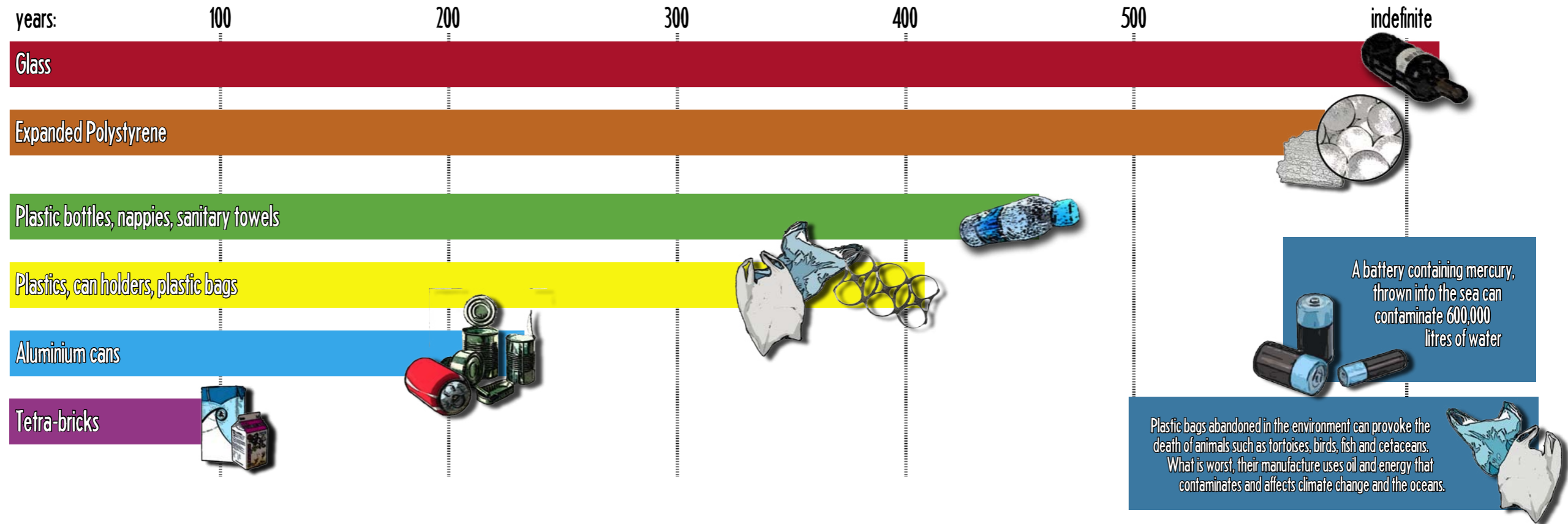
6. Avoid sailing in ecologically sensitive areas, and to this end we should be informed about where we are sailing or if the zone has been declared an area for the passage of cetaceans, turtles or other surface feeders.

7. Anchor with respect for the life in the environment in which we find ourselves. Normally the lover of the sea, when sailing, looks for the most virgin, tranquil places, which are normally the most beautiful and fragile areas. You should evaluate the environmental impact derived from your presence and attitude.

8. If we are going to anchor in sensitive areas and they are full of people, we have to be responsible and go off to another area with less pressure.

9. Fish responsibly, only in permitted areas and never in protected zones, or areas that support great fishing activity. In order to fish, first we have to sow.

chronological table of the time that residues thrown into the sea take to degrade



## ▼ Resources

United Nations  
[www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

International Union for Conservation of Nature  
[www.uicn.org](http://www.uicn.org)

Association Nereo (Nereo Association)  
[www.nereo.org](http://www.nereo.org)

SILMAR: Xarxa de Seguiment Ibèric del Litoral Marí  
(Iberian Marine Coast Monitoring Network)  
[www.silmar.org](http://www.silmar.org)

Fundació Mar (Mar Foundation)  
[www.fundaciomar.org](http://www.fundaciomar.org)

Regional Activity Centre for Cleaner Production  
[www.cprac.org](http://www.cprac.org)

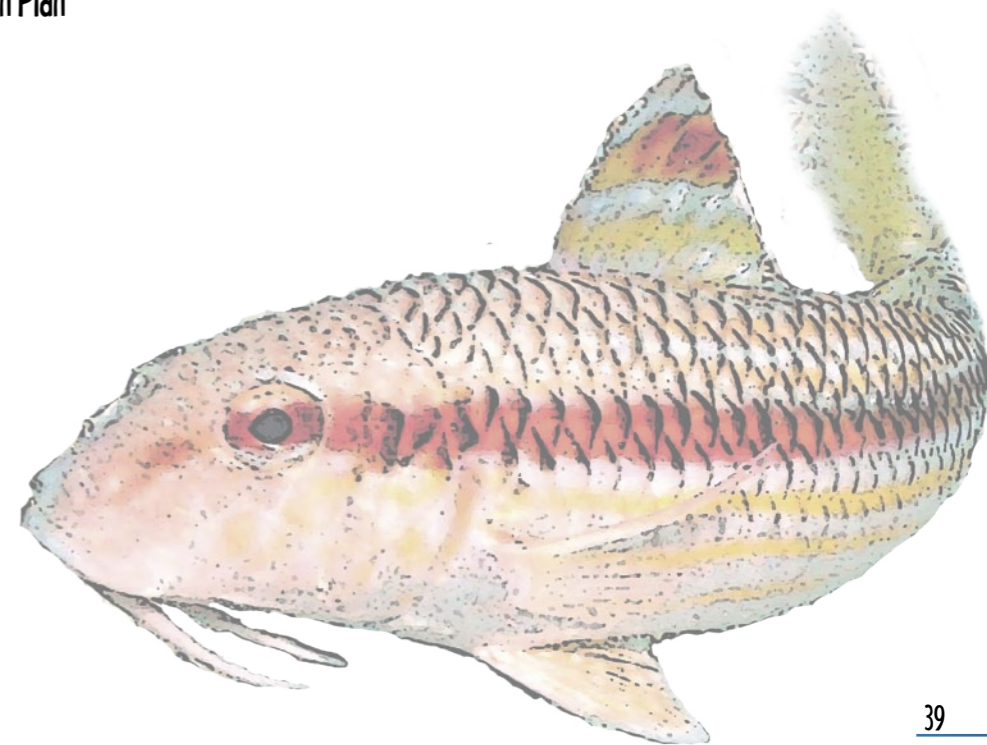
Grup de Treball de Custòdia Marina  
(Marine Custody Working Group)  
[www.custodiamarinaxct.org](http://www.custodiamarinaxct.org)

Ministeri de Medi Ambient i Medi Rural i Marí  
(Ministry of Environment, Rural and Marine Affairs, Spain)  
[www.marm.es](http://www.marm.es)

Departament de Medi Ambient i Habitatge  
(Department of Environment and Housing, Catalonia)  
[mediambient.gencat.net](http://mediambient.gencat.net)

MAB Programme (Man And Biosphere)  
[www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

Mediterranean Action Plan  
[www.unepmap.org](http://www.unepmap.org)





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