



## Science From Bath Toys

*The story as pieced together by Curtis Ebbesmeyer, Oceanographer and beachcomber, adapted from the Alaska Seas and Rivers Curriculum, Alaska Sea Grant.*

On January 10, 1992, a cargo ship was traveling from Asia to North America. It hit a storm in the North Pacific Ocean near where the 45th parallel intersects the International Date Line. (44.7°N, 178.1°E). Twelve containers were lost overboard.

One of the containers spilled 28,800 floating bathtub toys into the ocean. The yellow ducks, blue turtles, red beavers, and green frogs were packed in sets of four but the packaging dissolved at sea.

The first of the floatees showed up in Sitka, Alaska. Beachcombers around Sitka, Alaska started to find hundreds of the toys washed up on the beaches in August and September of 1992. From 1993-2004 beachcombers Dean Orbison and his 22-year-old son Tyler Orbison from Sitka found 111 toys. At a fair in Sitka, they showed a basket of the toys they found. It held 18% turtles, 35% ducks, 26% beavers, and 21% frogs. Many of the toys were faded, bitten by animals, and ruptured from being smashed against rocks by the surf.

Hundreds of toys were found near Shemya at the end of the Aleutian Islands, 3,500 miles from the spill, in 1995.

Karen Berger and Verne Krause found a turtle and a duck near Tacoma, Washington in 1996.

That same year, on the coast of British Columbia, Canada Guthrie Schweers found two turtles and a frog .

Also in 1996 a turtle was found on Kure Island, Hawaii, and in 1997 a beaver and a frog were found on Hawaii's Lanai Island.

Beachcombers on the shores of Australia and Chile found beavers, and ducks in 2000.

In 2001, some of the floatees reached the location where the Titanic sank, in the Atlantic near Nova Scotia and Maine.

In July 2003, a duck was found in Maine.

In August of 2003, a frog was found as far as Scotland.