

A YEAR OF SPECIAL DAYS

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2016: The International Year of Pulses (see page 2)



Duplo



In support of the UNESCO Global Action Programme (GAP) on Sustainable Development (ESD)

The overall goal of the GAP is to generate and scale up action in all levels and areas of education and learning to accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

The **Year of Special Days 2016** has been developed through WESSA (The Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa). The booklet supports educators and community leaders to make links between environmental days in the 2016 calendar and **environmental learning in the school curriculum**.

The first **Year of Special Days** was compiled in 1995 by Kate Davies from the Diocese of Umzimvubu, as an assignment for an accredited course through WESSA,

Since then, the booklet has been annually updated and expanded with contributions from people around South Africa. The resource has also been adapted for several other countries in southern Africa.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

The **Year of Special Days 2016** is designed to help educators **plan school assemblies and learning activities**. Each page provides just enough information to launch learners and educators on a quest to find out more! Possible activities for each Special Day include inviting a **guest speaker** to assembly, planning **active learning** in line with the **curriculum**, or whole class/school **activities around a chosen theme**.

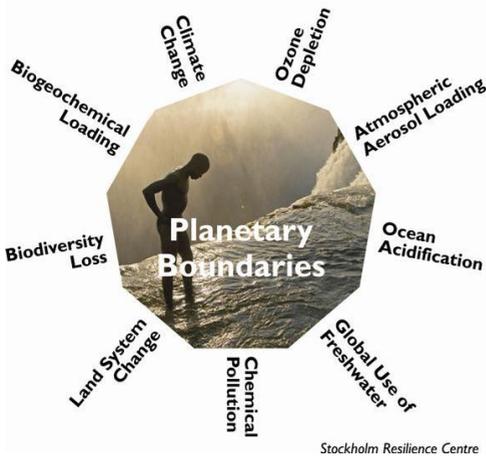
For planning the school calendar, the centre page is a **2016 calendar** showing the commemorative days outlined in this booklet. A single page is allocated to each Special Day and includes:

- Interesting background **information** on the day
- ? A **guiding question** to stimulate further enquiry
-  **Contact details** to obtain more information
-  References to WESSA publications and other **materials** that can support learning
- WWW** Useful **website** addresses

On the back cover, titles of other WESSA Share-Net learning support materials that are available for downloading from www.sharenet.org.za, are listed.

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STEPPING UP TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING – WHAT CAN WE DO?



Human activities are placing increasing pressure on the Earth's resources. To continue to live and operate safely, humanity has to stay within critical boundaries in the Earth's environment, and respect the nature of the planet's climatic, geophysical, atmospheric and ecological processes, says Johan Rockström, Director of the Stockholm Resilience Centre. He warns that exceeding planetary boundaries (see figure to the left) may be devastating for humanity. If we

respect them, however, we could have a bright future for centuries ahead.

Scientists have attempted to quantify the safe biophysical boundaries within which the Earth, and everything on it, will flourish. Outside these parameters, they believe, the Earth cannot function in a stable state. The scientists first identified the Earth System processes and potential biophysical thresholds, which, if crossed, could generate unacceptable environmental change for humanity. They have then proposed the boundaries that should be respected in order to reduce the risk of crossing these thresholds.

The nine boundaries, four of which have already been crossed (those in bold) are identified as **climate change**, stratospheric ozone, **land system change**, freshwater use, **biological diversity**, ocean acidification, **nitrogen and phosphorus inputs to the biosphere and oceans**, aerosol loading and chemical pollution. Boundaries are interconnected — crossing one boundary may seriously threaten the ability to stay within safe levels of the others.

So today, as never before, we need to consider the impact of our daily actions. We need to seriously think about our lifestyles and the choices we make when engaging in activities that could impact on our planet's life support systems.

2016 UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF:

~ Pulses

2016 ~ International Year of Pulses (IYP). The United Nations International Year of Pulses raises awareness about the role of beans, chickpeas, lentils and other pulses in feeding the world.

The IYP aims to heighten public awareness of the nutritional benefits of pulses as part of sustainable food security and nutrition. The Year will create a unique opportunity to encourage connections, throughout the food chain so that people would better utilize pulse-based proteins.

Pulse crops such as lentils, beans, peas and chickpeas are a critical part of the human diet. Pulses are a vital source of plant-based proteins and amino acids for people around the globe and should be eaten as part of a healthy diet to address obesity, as well as to prevent and help manage chronic diseases such as diabetes, coronary conditions and cancer; they are also an important source of plant-based protein for animals.

In addition, pulses are leguminous plants that have nitrogen-fixing properties which can contribute to increasing soil fertility and have a positive impact on the environment.

For more information about this International Year, take a look at www.fao.org/pulses-2016/en

WORLD WETLANDS DAY ~ 2 FEBRUARY

Wetlands are often thought of only in terms of their hydrological importance, but they also hold great cultural significance. Many cultures have developed traditional practices and belief systems for regulating the use of wetlands so as to protect these valuable ecosystems.

Wetlands are also known as vleis, bogs, swamps, marshes or sponges. They are regarded as some of the most productive ecosystems in the world because they serve as sponges that regulate river flow, they provide habitats for a variety of plant and animal species and they help to absorb silt and cleanse water of pollutants.

Wetlands are at risk due to practices of draining the land for alternative use. Construction of dams, removal of plants, waste water pumped into the wetland by industries, seepage of agricultural fertilisers and mining are all threats to these sensitive ecosystems.

The 2nd of February is the anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Convention in 1971. The Convention took place in the Iranian city of Ramsar and is an inter-governmental treaty to promote national action and international co-operation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. There are presently 168 Contracting Parties to the Convention with 2208 wetland sites covering over 210 million hectares.

? **How is a wetland deemed a wetland? Have you found your neighbourhood wetland?**



Judie COMBRINK ,MEA Administrative Focal Point
globalengagements@environment.gov.za; 012 399 85 11



*Wetlands Pack; Vlei and Marsh Wetlands; Wetlands and People;
How Wet is a Wetland?; SWAP Starter Kit; miniSASS sheets.
Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW www.ramsar.org

WORLD CANCER DAY ~ 4 FEBRUARY

On 4 February, World Cancer Day (WCD) is observed to raise awareness of cancer and to encourage its prevention, detection, and treatment. This health awareness day is led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), a global consortium of more than 470 cancer-fighting organizations in over 120 countries.

The World Health Organization (WHO), which is the United Nations' (UN) directing and coordinating health authority, works with organizations such as the UICC on this day to promote ways to ease the global burden of cancer. Recurring themes over the years focus on preventing cancer and raising the quality of life for cancer patients.

Cancer is a large group of different diseases, all involving unregulated cell growth. In cancer, cells divide and grow uncontrollably, forming malignant tumors, and invade nearby parts of the body. The cancer may also spread to more distant parts of the body through the lymphatic system or bloodstream. Not all tumors are cancerous.

Significantly, the number of cancer cases and related deaths worldwide is estimated to double over the next 20 to 40 years. With the greatest increase in low and middle income countries, those least equipped to cope with both the social and economic impact of the disease.

? Find out the link between the increase in cancer and the modern lifestyle.



Toll Free Call Centre: 0800 22 66 22



<http://www.worldcancerday.org/resources/external-links-and-resources>

WWW www.cansa.org.za

WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE ~ 20 FEBRUARY

The United Nations' (UN) World Day of Social Justice is annually observed on February 20 to encourage people to look at how social justice affects poverty eradication. It also focuses on the goal of achieving full employment and support for social integration.

The World Summit for Social Development was held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1995 and resulted in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. At this summit, more than 100 political leaders pledged to make the conquest of poverty and full employment, as well as stable, safe and just societies, their overriding objectives. They also agreed on the need to put people at the center of development plans.

Social justice is an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. We uphold the principles of social justice when we promote gender equality or the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants. We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability. It stands to reason that social justice is an integral part of any negotiation and is necessary to bring about an understanding of national and international issues, including environmental matters.

? **Environmentalists face issues that cross boundaries and borders. Can this day of social justice be beneficial for earth matters?**



Ms. Daniela Bas- Director, Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) e-mail: social@un.org



<http://unsdn.org/united-nations/newsletters/>

WWW <http://www.un.org/en/events/socialjusticeday/>

LEAP DAY FOR FROGS (SA) ~ 29 FEBRUARY

Amphibians, which are the oldest land vertebrates, having lived in Greenland 362 million years ago, are currently the most threatened class of vertebrate on Earth. 32% of species are Red Listed as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable. South Africa's most endangered frogs are the Amathole Toad, Pickersgill's Reed Frog and Western Leopard Toad.

In South Africa, the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) aims to address a growing need for the involvement of the non-governmental sector in frog conservation. This will be done by implementing specific conservation actions to address direct threats to amphibian species and protect critical amphibian habitats; supporting relevant research projects focused on critical knowledge gaps in amphibian conservation; and by raising awareness regarding amphibians in a South African context.

Although small and seldom seen, frogs are important in many ways:

- amphibians are crucial in the food-chain through their role as both predator and prey;
- they consume vast numbers of insects (including pests and disease vectors such as mosquitoes) and provide food to a wide range of animals;
- as tadpoles, they have an important function in keeping waterways clean by feeding on algae.

They are good bio-indicators, due to their biphasic life cycles and sensitive skins - the fact that one third of all species are threatened should be an important warning to humans that our global environment is in jeopardy. Some species provide important human medicines from skin secretions.

? **What is the size of the smallest South African frog?**



Jeanne Tarrant, EWT, jeannet@ewt.org.za or 031 7655471



Enviro Facts 40 (Frogs); Guidebook to Lesotho's Fauna: Amphibians. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW www.leapdayforfrogs.org.za/index.html

WORLD WILDLIFE DAY ~ 3 MARCH

On this World Wildlife Day, I urge all consumers, suppliers and governments to treat crimes against wildlife as a threat to our sustainable future. It's time to get serious about wildlife crime.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 3 March – the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) – as World Wildlife Day. On this third observance of the Day, the UN system, its Member States and a wide range of partners from around the world are highlighting the simple yet firm message that “It’s time to get serious about wildlife crime”.

Illegal wildlife trade undermines the rule of law and threatens national security; it degrades ecosystems and is a major obstacle to the efforts of rural communities and indigenous peoples striving to sustainably manage their natural resources. Combatting this crime is not only essential for conservation efforts and sustainable development, it will contribute to achieving peace and security in troubled regions where conflicts are fuelled by these illegal activities.

Businesses and the general public in all countries can play a major role by, for example, refusing to buy or auction illegal ivory and rhinoceros horn, and insisting that products from the world’s oceans and tropical forests have been legally obtained and sustainably sourced.

? Which body do you need to contact if you become aware of illegal trade?

 CITES Secretariat, Geneva: wildlifeday@cites.org or Department of Environmental Affairs (SA)+27 86 111 2468

 <http://www.wildlifeday.org/media>

WWW <http://www.wildlifeday.org/> or <https://www.environment.gov.za/event/international/worldwildlifeday>

WORLD MEATOUT DAY ~ 20 MARCH

In order to save animals, protect the planet and improve health, the Farm Animal Rights Movement (FARM), a non-profit public interest organization, encourages people to use a wholesome, non-violent diet of fruits, vegetables and whole grains (vegan diet). Meatout Day started in the United States in 1985 and has now become an annual campaign.

Vegan diets (sometimes called strict or pure vegetarian diets) are a subset of vegetarian diets, which are credited with lowering the risk of colon cancer, heart attacks, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, prostate cancer, and strokes. Properly planned vegan diets are healthy and have been found to satisfy nutritional needs. However, poorly planned vegan diets can be low in levels of calcium, iodine, vitamin B₁₂ and vitamin D. Vegans are therefore encouraged to plan their diet and take dietary supplements, as appropriate.

How can a day – or a lifetime – without meat help the planet? In order to raise awareness of the health, environmental and ethical benefits of living without meat and cruelty to farm animals, the organizers of the movement encourage people to live without meat. Complete elimination of animal products from the diet of only one person saves 200 animals, 1,3 million gallons of water and 53,000 square feet of rain forests annually. Nearly half of the world's grains and soybeans are fed to animals, which puts a huge strain on land resources, as more and more space is required to grow food to feed the animals, that are in turn eaten by humans.

? Investigate: Globally and gram for gram, animal agriculture produces more greenhouse gas emissions than cars.

 *Eating for the Earth; My Carbon Footprint. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW www.meatout.org; and www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.HTM (Livestock's Long Shadow. United Nations FAO Report)

WORLD WATER DAY ~ 22 MARCH

"Water and jobs"

World Water Day was declared an international day in 1992 by the United Nations General Assembly and was first celebrated in 1993.

Each year, World Water Day highlights a specific aspect of freshwater. Under the theme 'Water and Jobs', the year 2016 provides an important opportunity to consolidate and build upon the previous World Water Days to highlight the two-way relationship between water and the decent work agenda in the quest for sustainable development.

What could a global water goal lead to? Healthy people, increased prosperity, equitable societies, protected ecosystems and resilient communities through:

1. universal access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, improving water quality and raising service standards;
2. the sustainable use and development of water resources, increasing and sharing the available benefits;
3. robust and effective governance with more effective institutions and administrative systems;
4. improved water quality and wastewater management taking account of environmental limits; and
5. reduced risk of water-related disasters to protect vulnerable groups and minimize risks.

? Think of three actions you could take to reduce your water consumption, then work out how much water could be saved in a day.

 Department: Water and Sanitation. Private Bag X313, Pretoria, 0001. Toll free number (enquiries) 0800 200 200.

 *Hands-On: Stream and Pond Life; Wetlands and People; SWAP Starter Kit; Water is life! A teacher's handbook; Enviro Facts; My Carbon Footprint; and Water Lesson Plans for Grades R-12.*
Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW www.dwa.gov.za and www.unwater.org

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL DAY ~ 23 MARCH

“Hotter, drier, wetter. Face the Future.”

In 1960, it was decided by the World Meteorological Organisation that 23 March should be celebrated as World Meteorological Day as, on this day in 1950, the first World Meteorological Convention was held. The day is celebrated by focusing on an annual theme that is of current interest and is related to weather, climate and water issues.

The purpose of the day is to bring attention to the important role that meteorology and meteorological services play in the general welfare of humankind. As a result of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, land and sea surface temperatures are rising. The acidity of rain and river water is altered by sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxides which pass through the atmosphere and cause changes in the soil chemistry. The frequency and intensity of extreme events like heatwaves and heavy rainfall is thus increasing. Without urgent action to cut carbon dioxide emissions, this trend will accelerate.

We are reminded of our dependency on water, air and weather patterns and for the need to consider the environmental impact we have on these natural resources.

? **As more and more people are displaced due to catastrophic weather-related events, what effect is this having on settlements and a ‘new’ nomadic lifestyle?**



For more information about the weather, contact the South African Weather Service: 012 367 6000



Enviro Facts; The Greenhouse Effect: a teacher's manual; Equipment for Measuring Weather Conditions; Puzzling Climate ChangeGame. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW <http://www.wmo.int> and www.weathersa.co.za

EARTH HOUR ~ 26 MARCH

The very first Earth Hour occurred when, in 2007, as a response to an initiative of the Sydney Morning Herald and WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature), 2.2 million residents of Sydney, Australia, turned off their lights for one hour to raise awareness regarding the need to take action against climate change. 2016 marks the 10th anniversary of this now global, symbolic mass participation.

In 2015, countless cities and about 1200 landmarks and 40 UNESCO sites, in 170 countries, took part! Find out how you can support this initiative to bring about meaningful action against climate change by website www.earthhour.org

Just two of the many things you can do after Earth Hour, to show your continuing care of the planet are:

1. **Reduce electricity use:** Switch to LED light bulbs in your home and/or use solar energy.
2. **Reduce carbon emissions from transportation:** Make greener transportation choices. Many of the small trips folks make by car could be accomplished on foot or by bike. If you live in a city, take public transportation more often. If public transportation is not an option, consider switching to a hybrid or electric vehicle.

? **Do you agree with Bjørn Lomborg, author of *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, who says: "...fossil fuels literally gave us an enlightenment, by lighting our world and giving us protection from the fury of the elements. It is ironic that today's pure symbolism should hark back to a darker age."?**



WWF South Africa. 1st Floor, Bridge House, Boundary Terraces, Mariendahl Lane, Newlands, Cape Town, 7700.
Website: www.wwf.org.za



Enviro Facts; The Greenhouse Effect: a teacher's manual; Puzzling Climate Change: A start-up pack of pictures; My Carbon Footprint (auditing our electricity, travel, water use, waste and food). Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW www.earthhour.org; and www.wwf.org.za

FAMILY DAY (SA) ~ 28 MARCH

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES ~ 15 MAY

Family Day falls on the Monday after Easter Sunday and is a time to celebrate or relax with family and friends. Another day to celebrate the importance of the family unit is International Day of Families which occurs on 15 May each year. The first annual observance of this day took place in 1994 and this was the same year the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed as the International Year of the Family.

A family's role is to educate, protect, nourish and support its members, enabling them to function both dependently and independently of each other and in social situations.

Children learn values, morals and social behaviour within their family units and these will guide them through life. The basis of all relationships is also formed within a family and it is here where children learn to communicate and interact with one another as well as with the world around them.

At present, society is affected by instability, economic hardship and violence. All of these hinder the family's ability to fulfill the most basic needs for its members and it is this breakdown of family life that fuels insecurity and uncertainty within society.

"If tolerance, respect and equity permeate family life, they will translate into values that shape societies, nations and the world."

Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations.

? Does belonging to a family indicate bloodties?



Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA). PO Box 2800, Kempton Park, 1620. Tel: (011) 975 7106/7.
E-mail: national@famsa.org.za; Website: www.famsa.org.za



Household Environmental Management. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW www.un.org/en/events/familyday/

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MINE AWARENESS ~ 4 APRIL

'Mine deaths and injuries over the past decades now total in the hundreds of thousands.'

Excerpt from the Landmine Monitor Report 2008

On 8 December 2005, the General Assembly declared that 4 April of each year shall be observed as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. This day is an opportunity to recognize that action is needed to reduce or eradicate the environmental problems caused by these devices.

It is vital and necessary to foster the establishment and development of national mine-action capacities in countries where mines and explosive remnants of war constitute a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of the civilian population, or an impediment to social and economic development.

Landmines are not the only explosive hazards that pose a danger to civilians living in conflict and post-conflict settings; unexploded bombs, grenades, unsecured weapons and ammunition and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) also kill, injure and block access to healthcare, education and development. These devices also have a devastating effect on the environment, as plants and animals are maimed or killed. The presence of landmines hinders their route to drinking water and degrades the soil, causing the growth of inferior food. Unfortunately, too, dead animals and plants can pollute the water in the area where they were killed.

? Some of South Africa's neighbours are riddled with unexploded mines. Find out which initiatives are in place to deal with this.



<http://www.un.org/en/events/mineawarenessday/resources>

WWW <http://www.un.org/en/events/mineawarenessday/>

WORLD HEALTH DAY ~ 7 APRIL

In 1945 diplomats from a range of countries formed the United Nations. One of the organisations formed was the United Nations Economic and Social Council, which first met in 1946. During this meeting, there were calls for the establishment of an organisation in the United Nations, which would be dedicated to health issues.

The new organisation would carry on the work of the Office International d'Hygiène Publique (the International Office for Public Hygiene) and the health units of the League of Nations. These organisations were established in the early years of the 20th century, but were overburdened by the huge health consequences of the aftermath of World War I and were unable to function effectively when World War II started. It would also carry on the work of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, which provided medical aid to millions of people in the aftermath of the devastating military action in Europe during the last part of World War II.

The World Health Organisation was founded on 7 April 1948. Since then, the organisation has carried out a huge amount of valuable work, including the global eradication of smallpox and the implementation of a wide range of public health strategies. Now, 192 countries are members and the organisation is still working to improve many aspects of health around the world.

At the First World Health Assembly in 1948, delegates called for a World Health Day to mark the anniversary of the founding of the World Health Organisation. This has been held on 7 April every year since 1950. The day is used to draw attention to particular priorities in global health.

? **Which South African organizations were first to help at catastrophic events of 2015 and how are they funded?**



Department: Health. Website: www.health.gov.za



Learning Support Materials for Rural Health and Sanitation; Hands-On: Common Household Life Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW <http://www.who.int/campaigns/en/>

WORLD DAYS OF ACTIONS ~ 20-26 APRIL

World Days of Action (WDA) is an initiative of the Foundation for Environmental Education's (FEE) Eco-Schools programme and designed to empower students to be the change our sustainable world needs by engaging them in fun, action-oriented learning.

The idea behind *World Days of Action* is to show that students are leading the way. It also enables students to work more actively together in all parts of the world.

World Days of Action is held in the southern hemisphere in April and includes Earth Day.

Since the first WDA, on 7 November 2012, 774 252 students from 27 countries have participated.

Every year, schools are encouraged to engage in the annual campaign and come up with inspiring actions.

All schools who join the WDA receive a participation certificate.

? What inspiring actions has your class or school come up with this year?

 WESSA Eco-Schools, PO Box 394, Howick, 3290. Tel (033) 3303931 ext 2145. E-mail: thobile@wessa.co.za
Website: www.wessa.org.za

WWW <http://eco-schools-projects.org/wda/>

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER EARTH DAY ~ 22 APRIL

The 46th anniversary of Earth Day will be celebrated in 2016. This day marks an opportunity for volunteers to initiate actions towards a sustainable future. For over four years, A Billion Acts of Green® has been building commitments by individuals, organisations, businesses and governments to protect the planet, inspiring and rewarding both simple individual acts and larger organisational initiatives that reduce carbon emissions and support sustainability. Taken together, these small actions add up. A Billion Acts of Green® has become. Volunteers may join the *Green Generation* and register on the website www.earthday.org/takeaction.

On 22 April 1970, approximately 20 million Americans supported and celebrated the first Earth Day and today it is celebrated worldwide, forming a global network that works towards environmental protection in communities, regions and around the world. More than 22 000 organisations in 192 countries around the world participate in Earth Day activities. In 1990 Earth Day had an enormous effect on recycling efforts worldwide and assisted in leading the way to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

Earth Day is a global attempt for international co-operation to address issues such as global warming, toxic waste, destruction of rainforests, expanding deserts and ocean pollution. Individuals and organisations are encouraged to use Earth Day to take environmental action in their area.

? **Think of three things that you can do to reduce your environmental footprint. Then do them!**

 Earthlife Africa. PO Box 32131, Braamfontein, 2107. Tel (011) 339 3662.

 *Environment and Methods: Investigating more varied ways of doing EE; Picture Building games and puzzles; My Carbon Footprint (auditing our electricity, travel, water use, waste and food). Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW www.earthday.org

WORKERS' DAY ~ 1 MAY

'Working together to create jobs and fight poverty'

In Medieval Europe, the first day in May was celebrated as a general holiday to herald the coming of Spring. With the onset of the Industrial Age, workers had to struggle against terrible working conditions, until they were able to form trade unions.

During the 1880s, workers under the influence of the Socialists, used the existing holiday as a day to celebrate workers' solidarity. In 1890, Workers' Day was recognised internationally for the first time in industrialised countries but it has only been observed in South Africa since 1904. It became an official public holiday in South Africa after the first democratic elections in 1994.

The international trade union movement has supported the struggles of workers worldwide to organise their own unions to fight against exploitation and a better life for workers. Now there is a day which reaffirms workers' rights to join together to promote their own welfare in a world which is often dominated by the rich and the powerful. Trade unions are an important feature of any democracy.

Workers' Day reminds us that all people who work deserve a fair wage and decent working conditions. It also reminds us of the importance of establishing justice and a sense of responsibility and caring in the workplace.

? Are your purchases ethical? Who attached those beads to your jumper? Has the coffee bean picker of the coffee you just drank been paid a fair wage?

 Department: Labour. Private Bag X117, Pretoria, 0001.
Tel: (012) 309 4000. Fax: (012) 320 2059.
E-mail webmaster@labour.gov.za

 *Eco-Office Kit Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW www.labour.gov.za. For specific information relating to Workers Day in South Africa, browse <http://blog.sa-venues.com/events/workers-day/>

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY ~ 18 MAY

“Museums and cultural landscapes”

Every year, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) chooses a theme for International Museum Day (IMD) concerning an issue that affects the international museum community. In 2016, the event will celebrate the theme: *Museums and cultural landscapes*.

The Siena Charter, which presents the Italian perspective on the responsibilities of museums towards heritage and surrounding landscapes, was adopted as the guide for the 2016 theme. Landscapes are part of the cultural and natural heritage to be preserved, interpreted and looked after, in their tangible and intangible aspects. The four main aspects of the charter are a) the understanding of the term 'landscape', b) the social and territorial functions of museums, c) the opportunities to form new partnerships and networks and d) how museums can help planners and politicians promote sustainable development and preserve landscapes while improving tourism, without endangering cultural and natural heritage.

The ICOM established International Museum Day in 1977 to increase public awareness of the role of museums in the development of society. Momentum has been rising ever since. In recent years, International Museum Day has been experiencing its highest involvement with almost 35 000 museums that organise activities in more than 143 countries.

? Visit your nearest museum and consider how your life today is connected to the future.

 South African Museums Association (SAMA). 3 Davann Court, 50 Bellair Road, Vredehoek, Cape Town, 8001. Tel: (021) 461 2315. E-mail: SAMuseums@gmail.com or admin@heritageportal.co.za

 *Indigenous Knowledge Series, available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW <http://imd.icom.museum>

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY~ 22 MAY

The term biological diversity, or biodiversity, is given to the variety of plant and animal life, and micro-organisms, on Earth and the different ecosystems in which they live. The biodiversity we see today is the result of the natural process, such as weathering and adaptation of the landscape and its inhabitants, that has taken place over many years and which has caused changes. The rate at which this natural process takes place is increased by human activities and it is this unnatural increase that can have harmful effects on our biophysical environment.

There are more than 1.8 million discovered and named species and scientists think that there are millions more we don't know about. Over time, many species of plants and animals have evolved to depend on one another. For example, some plants can only be pollinated by a certain kind of bird or insect. In relationships like these, if one species becomes extinct, the other species could too. The complex relationships between species are often disturbed when organisms are transported to new places or a new element is introduced (for example, chemicals from pesticides).

The following are tips regarding biodiversity:

- Never introduce an invasive plant species into an area it does not naturally exist and plant only indigenous species.
- Never release your exotic pets into the wild.
- Avoid using pesticides or chemicals in your garden. Use natural methods of pest control instead.

? The plight of the disappearing bee is much talked about. Find out how you can ensure the continuation of this vital species.

 Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
E-mail: secretariat@cbd.int; Website: www.cbd.int

 *Hands-On Series and Enviro Facts available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW <http://www.cbd.int/> and www.gbif.org

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY ~ 5 JUNE

“Join the race to make the world a better place”

World Environment Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 to mark the opening of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. This conference resulted in the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

People have the most impact on our environment. The nature and extent of this impact depends on factors such as type of economic activity, distribution of wealth and resources, cultural values and lifestyles.

World Environment Day aims to encourage people to become active supporters of sustainable and equitable living, to promote awareness and an understanding that communities play a central role in changing attitudes towards environmental issues, and to develop partnerships that will ensure all nations and people enjoy a safer and more fulfilling future.

In many countries, activities on this day include the signing of petitions that can lead to the establishment of permanent political action taken by governments to commit themselves to caring for the environment.

Celebrate World Environment Day by appreciating this unique planet and make a conscious effort to practice energy-saving techniques - walk or cycle to work, recycle, re-use, support fresh produce markets, avoid environmentally hazardous goods or wasteful packaging and ensure a healthy and well-balanced lifestyle.

? How have you made the world a better place?

 Department of Environmental Affairs. Private Bag X447, Pretoria, 0001. Tel: (012) 399 9000. Website: www.environment.gov.za
Hotline for environmental crimes and incidents: 0800 205 005

 *Environment and Methods; Enviro Picture Building games and puzzles; Eco Puzzles; My Carbon Footprint (auditing our electricity, travel, water use, waste and food). Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW www.unep.org

WORLD OCEANS DAY ~ 8 JUNE

"We have to ensure that oceans continue to meet our needs without compromising those of future generations. They regulate the planet's climate and are a significant source of nutrition. Their surface provides essential passage for global trade, while their depths hold current and future solutions to humanity's energy needs."

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

The concept for a "World Oceans Day" was first proposed in 1992 by the Government of Canada at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. As a result of a United Nations General Assembly resolution passed in December 2008, World Oceans Day is now officially recognised by the United Nations as 8 June each year.

Everyone can help protect the world's oceans. Small changes we make in our everyday lives can add up and have a big positive impact on the health of the seas. By taking *The 7 Cs Pledge* and committing to make a real difference we can protect the ocean, its incredible inhabitants, and even our own community. There are many challenges facing our oceans right now including climate change, pollution, and overfishing, but these challenges are not insurmountable. The term "Seven Seas" has been used for centuries as a general description for all the oceans of the world. *The 7 Cs Pledge* uses this play on words to help us all remember how each of us can make decisions in our daily lives for the benefit of our planet's future.

I promise to Commit to making a real difference; Conserve in my home; Consume consciously; Communicate my interests and concerns; Challenge myself daily; Connect in my community; and, Celebrate our oceans.

Source: *The Ocean Project* – see website details below.

? **What are some of the land-based activities that can cause coastal and marine pollution?**



The Treasure Chest; Science on Sea Grades 7-12; Enviro Facts; Hands-On Coastal Series; Beginners Guide to Marine Reptile Life of southern Africa. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW <http://theoceanproject.org>

YOUTH DAY (SA) ~ 16 JUNE

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY ~ 12 AUGUST

In 1975, protests began in African schools when the previous Bantu Education Department stated that Afrikaans had to be used on an equal basis with English as a language of instruction in secondary schools. This, however, was symptomatic of the broader problem of the unjust Bantu education system, characterised by separate schools, universities, inadequate classroom facilities and poorly trained teachers.

On 16 June 1976, more than 20 000 learners from Soweto, outside Johannesburg, began a protest march. With the intervention of the police, violence broke out and on this day and during the following few weeks, approximately 700 people, many of whom were youths, were killed and property was destroyed. It took another 14 years of struggle before the system of apartheid was finally abolished but the youth of South Africa had played an important role in the struggle for this costly freedom.

Youth Day, previously known as Soweto Day, commemorates the contribution the youth has made to the democracy of South Africa and to reaffirm the rights of children and youth to education, food, health and a safe and secure home and school environment.

On 17 December 1999, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the recommendation made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, that 12 August be declared International Youth Day.

? **Society needs people of all ages to function holistically. How can 'Youth' (18-34) help create a positive and vibrant society?**

 Scouts South Africa National Office. PO Box 374, Newlands, 7725. Tel: 086 072 6887. E-mail: info@scouts.org.za

 *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.*

WWW <http://social.un.org/index/Youth.aspx> and www.scouts.org.za

WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT ~ 17 JUNE

Approximately 1.5 billion people globally depend on degrading areas for their livelihoods, and 1.3 billion people live in degraded areas, making them some of the most insecure places in the world.

While these regions may seem far away to those of us who live in cities or developed countries, the effects of their suffering ripple across the globe. It is estimated that by 2020 some 60 million people will migrate from desertified areas in sub-Saharan Africa towards Northern Africa and Europe.

In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly declared 17 June the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought to promote public awareness of the issue, and the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa.

The World Day to Combat Desertification is a unique occasion to remind everybody that desertification can be effectively tackled, that solutions are possible, and that key tools to this aim lay in strengthened community participation and co-operation at all levels.

? **What plants can be used as pioneer species to rehabilitate degraded land?**

 Food & Trees for Africa. 94 Bessemer Street, Wendywood, 2144. Tel: (011) 656 9802. Fax: 086 547 1258. E-mail: info@trees.org.za; Website: www.trees.co.za

 *Enviro Facts; Greening SA schools (teachers support pack for indigenous gardening); Indigenous Knowledge Series: Soil Conservation through Indigenous Knowledge Practices in Swaziland. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW www.undp.org/drylands/ and www.unccd.int

WORLD POPULATION DAY ~ 11 JULY

The world population is the total number of living humans on Earth. It is estimated that the world population reached one billion for the first time in 1804. It was another 123 years before it reached two billion in 1927, but it took only 33 years to reach three billion in 1960. Thereafter, the global population reached four billion in 1974, five billion in 1987, six billion in 1999 and, seven billion in October 2011. As of 2013, it is estimated at 7.178 billion by the United States Census Bureau (USCB).

Approximately 26.3% of the global population is aged under 15, while 65.9% is aged 15–64 and 7.9% is aged 65 or over. The global median age was 30.4 years in 2012, and is expected to rise to 37.9 years by 2050.

The global average life expectancy is 67.07 years, with women living an average of 69 years and men approximately 65 years. In 2010, the global fertility rate was estimated at 2.52 children per woman.

There is a need for a new industrial revolution where economic wealth goes hand-in-hand with environmental and social sustainability. And fast. We are reaching critical tipping points beyond which it will be too late to reverse negative trends.

In 1989, in its decision 89/46, the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme recommended that, in order to focus attention on the urgency and importance of population issues in the context of overall development plans and programmes and the need to find solutions for these issues, 11 July should be observed by the international community as World Population Day.

? **Reflect on this fact: Today's population is about two hundred thousand more than yesterday.**

 United Nations Population. Website: www.unfpa.org

 *Enviro Facts*. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW http://www.theworldcounts.com/counters/shocking_environmental_facts_and_statistics/world_population_clock_live23

NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY (SA) ~ 9 AUGUST

"If you strike a woman, you strike a rock"

Inaugurated in 1994, along with a free, democratic South Africa, the public holiday commemorates a 1956 protest lead by Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Albertina Sisulu and Sophia Williams-De Bruyn. To rise up against the legislation that required black South Africans to carry the "pass" (a special identification documents which infringed on their freedom of movement during the Apartheid era) approximately 20 000 women from all over the country took to the streets of Pretoria – many carrying the children of their white bosses on their backs – to stage a peaceful march to the Union Buildings.

To commemorate and affirm those of the past - their courage, sacrifices, aspirations and achievements and to remind South Africans that there's still plenty to be done in the realm of women's rights at present - a range of events are arranged at various venues throughout the country.

On National Women's Day 2000, the Women's Monument at the Union Buildings was unveiled to recognise women's contribution towards gender equity and human rights for all. In many parts of South Africa, women still bear the brunt of extreme poverty, abuse, over-exploitation, oppression and great suffering, yet they are still the "rock" upon which family life and our society depends.

? Are womens' rights addressed in the South African constitution?

☎ Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) at (031) 305 2105
Report gender inequality at 0800 007 709

WWW www.cge.org.za and www.wlce.co.za

WORLD LION DAY ~ 10 AUGUST

The lion (*Panthera leo*) is one of the four big cats in the genus *Panthera* and a member of the family *Felidae*. Wild lions currently exist in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia (where an endangered remnant population resides in Gir Forest National Park in India) while other types of lions disappeared from North Africa and Southwest Asia in historic times.

Until the late Pleistocene, about 10 000 years ago, the lion was the most widespread large land mammal after humans. They were found in most of Africa, across Eurasia from western Europe to India, and in the Americas from the Yukon to Peru.

Once ranging far and wide across the African continent, the lion has since been lost from over 80% of its possible range, in just 50 years. Lion populations are untenable outside designated reserves and national parks, as they are threatened with habitat loss, prey loss, human-wildlife conflict, unsustainable trophy hunting practices, poaching, disease and inbreeding.

World Lion Day aims to raise awareness of the lion population of the world. This celebration of the animal kingdom's most beautiful and fearsome creature was founded by Big Cat Rescue, the world's largest accredited sanctuary dedicated to big cats. 10 August is a day for people to come together from across the world to pay tribute to the mighty lion in as many ways as possible. The lion is an enduring symbol across nations and has fascinated people throughout the millennia. To lose such a species would be to lose a significant part of our global heritage.

? How closely related is your domestic cat to *Panthera leo*, the lion?



An introduction to the Larger Mammals of Namibia; Hands-On: Life around a Waterhole. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW <http://worldlionday.com/african-lion/>; [twitter@BigCatRescue](https://twitter.com/BigCatRescue)

WORLD ELEPHANT DAY ~ 12 AUGUST

"We admire elephants in part because they demonstrate what we consider the finest human traits: empathy, self-awareness, and social intelligence. But the way we treat them puts on display the very worst of human behaviour."

Graydon Carter, Editor of Vanity Fair

On 12 August 2012, the inaugural World Elephant Day was launched to bring attention to the urgent plight of Asian and African elephants. The elephant is loved, revered and respected by people and cultures around the world, yet we balance on the brink of seeing the last of this magnificent creature.

The escalation of poaching, habitat loss, human-elephant conflict and mistreatment in captivity are just some of the threats to both African and Asian elephants.

The African elephant (Forest and Savannah) is threatened with 470 000 to 690 000 remaining worldwide. Working towards better protection for wild elephants, improving enforcement policies to prevent the illegal poaching and trade of ivory, conserving elephant habitats, better treatment for captive elephants, and when appropriate, reintroducing captive elephants into natural, protected sanctuaries are the goals that numerous elephant conservation organisations are focusing on around the world.

World Elephant Day asks you to experience elephants in non-exploitive and sustainable environments where elephants can thrive under care and protection.

? The two species of elephants - African and Asian- are similar in physiology, but they are too biologically different to interbreed.



An Introduction to the Larger Mammals of Namibia; Enviro Facts: Elephants. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW <http://worlddelephantday.org>

WORLD MOSQUITO DAY ~ 20 AUGUST

World Mosquito Day was first established in 1897, when the link between mosquitoes and malaria transmission was discovered by Sir Ronald Ross. It aims to raise awareness about the causes of malaria and how it can be prevented, as well as fundraising for research into the cure of malaria.

The malaria parasite is spread from person to person by mosquitoes. These insects feed on blood and the malaria parasite is passed on when the mosquito takes a meal. Vector-borne diseases, such as malaria and dengue, account for 17% of the estimated global burden of all infectious diseases. According to the latest estimates, released in December 2014, there were about 198 million cases of malaria in 2013 and an estimated 584 000 deaths. Most deaths occur among children living in Africa where a child dies every minute from malaria. However, malaria is a treatable disease when treated quickly and correctly. When people die of malaria, it is usually because of delayed or inadequate treatment.

As all species are necessary – including the mosquito - it is essential to take precautions to prevent the spread of malaria. One way to do this is to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Measures, such as reducing outdoor exposure between dusk and dawn (when the female anopheles mosquito bites), wearing long sleeves and other protective, light-coloured clothing, using mosquito netting at windows, doors and around beds and using a repellent containing DEET, can all help to prevent the spread of the disease. One can also use citronella and soybean oil to deter mosquitoes.

World Mosquito Day is an opportunity to celebrate the strides made in the prevention and treatment of the diseases caused by vectors.

? **What are perfect breeding conditions for mosquitoes?**

 Malaria hotline on 083 900 8424 or contact Sanparks 012 428 9111

www <http://www.who.int> and <http://www.altiusdirectory.com/Society/world-mosquito-day.html>

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST NUCLEAR TESTING ~ 29 AUGUST

The history of nuclear testing began on 16 July 1945, when an atomic bomb was used at a desert test site in Alamogordo, New Mexico, in the United States. Since then, more than 2000 nuclear tests have been carried out worldwide. Nuclear weapons tests are generally broken into three different categories – atmospheric, underwater and underground - reflecting the test's medium or location.

The United Nations' (UN) International Day against Nuclear Tests brings public awareness and education about the effects of global nuclear weapon tests and the need to prevent nuclear catastrophes to avert devastating effects on humankind, the environment and the planet. The day aims to end nuclear testing and to promote peace and security. Over the years, there have been calls to ban nuclear testing, to ensure the protection of people's lives and the environment around them.

The day's first official observance was marked on August 29, 2010, after being established on December 2, 2009 at the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Resolution 64/35, initiated by Kazakhstan to commemorate the closure of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site on 29 August 1991, calls for increasing awareness "about the effects of nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions and the need for their cessation as one of the means of achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world". To date, 183 countries have signed the treaty.

Nothing can play as crucial a role in avoiding a nuclear war or nuclear terrorist threat as the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Bringing an irreversible end to nuclear explosions will prevent the further development of nuclear weapons.

Many people use the day as an opportunity to share their perspective on the issue of nuclear weapons and testing. Different organizations may host educational and public activities to bring awareness of the use of nuclear weapons and the dangers involved with nuclear weapons testing and usage.

? **What are the benefits of radioactive and/or nuclear power?**

 CTBTO Tel: +43 1 26030 ext. 6200 Fax +43 1 26030 5823

 <http://www.un.org/en/events/againstnucleartestsday/docs.shtml>

WWW <http://www.un.org/en/events/againstnucleartestsday/info.shtml>

NATIONAL ARBOR WEEK ~ 1-7 SEPTEMBER

National Arbor Week is a special week that has been set aside for the planting and caring of trees. Arbor Day originated in Switzerland during the 15th century to raise awareness amongst people about the importance of trees. In South Africa, Arbor Day started in 1983 and in 1997 it was extended to a National Arbor Week. In South Africa, National Arbor Week falls in the first week of September.

Every South African Arbor Week celebration highlights at least two specific trees. In 2016, the trees are as follows: one common (*Ficus thonningii* or Common Wild Fig) and two rare species (*Maerua cafra* or Common Bush-Cherry and *Maerua angolensis* or Bead- Bean Tree).

People have depended on trees through the ages. Besides being essential for replenishing our oxygen supply and taking in the atmosphere's carbon dioxide (a contributor to the greenhouse effect), they offer shelter and shade, are a source of food, fuel, medicine, timber. They prevent soil erosion by binding the soil with their roots and add nutrients to the soil with their leaf litter.

Arbor Week celebrations intend to promote a better understanding of trees, in particular indigenous trees; encourage the planting of trees and greening activities within communities; highlight the importance of trees for a sustainable future and the role trees play in the livelihoods of people and their environment; and raise awareness amongst South Africans about greening initiatives.

? What greening initiatives are taking place in your area?

 Food & Trees for Africa. 94 Bessemer Street, Wendywood, 2144. Tel: (011) 656 9802. Fax: 086 547 1258. E-mail: info@trees.org.za; Website: www.trees.co.za

 *Hands-On: A Forest Community, Trees of Umgeni Valley; Teachers Guides : Arbor Day, Forest Fun; A Tale of our Tree World; Enviro Facts; Hand Print booklets: Planting Mother-tree Seedlings. . Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW www.plantzafrica.com; www.daff.gov.za and www.greenworks.co.za

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY ~ 8 SEPTEMBER

'A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development.'

UNESCO's General Conference adopted definition of functional literacy, 1978

Literacy has been described as the ability to read for knowledge, write coherently and think critically about the written word.

Since its foundation in 1946, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has been at the forefront of global literacy efforts and is dedicated to keeping literacy high on national, regional and international agendas. However, with some 785 million adults (which equates to one-fifth of the world's population) lacking minimum literacy skills, literacy for all remains an elusive target. The highest percentage of these are on the African continent.

Globally, amongst youth (ages 18-24), 92% of males and 87% of females have basic literacy skills, but that still leaves a staggering 133 million youths illiterate.

It is our role to remind authorities at international and national levels to strengthen local capacity and support community initiatives.

The goal of this observance is to reinforce the importance of the written word to everyone for every subject. It also provides the opportunity to encourage those whose illiteracy currently excludes them from full participation in society.

? Do you think that 'reading' the environment, understanding ecosystems and following sustainable practices can be a form of literacy?



READ Educational Trust. PO Box 30994, Braamfontein, 2017.
Tel: (011) 496 3322. E-mail: info@read.co.za



Indigenous Knowledge Series; Enviro Facts; A Tale of our Tree World. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW www.reading.org and www.read.org.za

NATIONAL CLEAN-UP WEEK ~ 10 -17 SEPTEMBER

RECYCLING DAY SOUTH AFRICA ~ 18 SEPTEMBER

'Zero Plastics to Landfill by 2030'

South Africa's first National Clean-Up Week was launched in 1999 by the Plastics Federation of South Africa (the Plastics Industries Enviromark) and Pick 'n Pay. It is held every year in the week preceding the International Coastal Clean-up, which is held on 17 September 2016.

During this week, community groups and schools are encouraged to 'clean-up' beaches, waterways, parks, streets, local communities and schools. The focus of an individual clean-up may vary and will depend on issues pertaining to a particular community, such as litter picking and the clearing of illegal dumping. An important part of the clean-up is to include a component to ensure that the benefits of the clean-up are sustained. This may take the form of an education campaign or ensuring that local facilities for cleansing are in order.

In 2010, the Plastics Federation of South Africa's Enviromark initiated an annual recycling day for South Africa. Recycling Day South Africa encourages South Africans to recycle at home, school and at work and buy products made with recycled material. This day occurs during National Clean-Up Week and aims to increase awareness by educating the community about the social, environmental and economic benefits of recycling.

? Find a place in your environment that could do with a clean-up, like a stream, forest or walkway. Then, organise a clean-up day!

 Douw Steyn, Director Sustainability, Plastics SA.
Tel: (011) 653 4794. Cell: 083 301 8157. Fax: 086 158 313.
E-mail: Douw.Steyn@plasticssa.co.za

 *Enviro Facts. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW www.cleanup-sa.co.za

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE OZONE LAYER ~ 16 SEPTEMBER

"Recent scientific findings reveal the importance of the Montreal Protocol. Without the Protocol and associated agreements, atmospheric levels of ozone-depleting substances could have increased ten-fold by 2050. Concerted action has prevented millions of cases of skin cancer."

United Nations Secretary-General's Message on 16 September 2014

The Montreal Protocol was adopted on 16 September 1987 when governments agreed to co-operate in phasing out chemicals that deplete the ozone layer.

This invisible layer in the atmosphere protects the Earth from harmful ultra-violet rays from the sun. Should these ultra-violet rays reach Earth by passing through the thinning ozone layer, skin cancer and damage to crops will increase. Ozone depleting substances such as chloro-fluorocarbons (CFCs), hydro-fluoro-carbons and methyl bromide, to mention a few, are pollutants used all over the world. These pollutants are emitted from products such as refrigerators, air conditioners, spray cans, agricultural products and pesticides.

By observing this day, we are reminded of the necessity to live in ways that do not contribute to the depletion of this vital and essential layer of atmosphere that shields the Earth. It also gives individuals and organisations time to reflect on what progress has taken place to combat this environmental threat.

? Did the size of the ozone hole increase or decrease during 2015?

 *Enviro Facts; Puzzling Climate Change Games; My Carbon Footprint (auditing our electricity, travel, water use, waste and food). Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW <http://ozone.unep.org/en/>

INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEAN-UP ~ 17 SEPTEMBER

On the third Saturday of September each year, more than 700 000 volunteers in 120 countries around the world take part in the world's biggest clean-up. 2016 marks the 31st annual International Coastal Clean-up (ICC) when people head to the beaches and begin removing debris from shorelines, waterways and oceans.

Each year there is a vast increase in the number of marine animals injured or entangled in debris found in the oceans. Turtles mistake floating bags as food and thousands of seals, whales, dolphins, sharks and birds die from entanglement in fishing line and other waste. The aim of the clean-up is to remove debris from all bodies of water; to collect valuable information about debris; to heighten public awareness of the causes of litter and debris; to make a positive change; and, to promote water pollution prevention efforts worldwide.

With its great lake areas and waterways, as well as the islands in the Indian, Atlantic and Southern Atlantic Oceans, Africa can play an important role in reducing the amount of manmade material finding its way to the sea.

? **What percentage of coastal litter is washed in from the land?**



Douw Steyn, Director Sustainability, Plastics SA. Tel: (011) 653 4794. Cell: 083 301 8157. E-mail: douw.steyn@plasticssa.co.za



Hands-On Coastal Library; Waste Resource Pack; Hands-On: Stream and Pond Life; A Beginner's Guide: Seaweeds (algae); A Beginner's Guide: Some Common Waterbirds and Marine Reptile Life of southern Africa. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW www.oceanconservancy.org and www.clean-up-SA.co.za

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE ~ 21 SEPTEMBER

In 1981, the United Nations General Assembly declared that the opening day of its regular session in September "shall be officially dedicated and observed as the International Day of Peace and shall be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples".

Resolution 36/67 states 21 September should mark the International Day of Peace and, to inaugurate the day, the 'Peace Bell' is rung at UN Headquarters, in New York City. The bell is cast from coins donated by children from all continents (apart from Africa). It was given as a gift by the United Nations Association of Japan, and is referred to as 'a reminder of the human cost of war'. The inscription on its side reads:
'Long Live Absolute World Peace'.

The marking of this day is intended to have the entire world observe a day of peace and non-violence and all organisations and individuals are encouraged to observe this day in an appropriate manner, which can be as simple as lighting a candle at noon, sitting in silent meditation, or doing a good deed. Or you can be more pro-active and participate in, or even organise, a large event. When millions of people in all parts of the world come together for one day of peace, the impact is immense and can make a difference!

? Debate whether you think that we are justified in spending enormous amounts of money on weapons of war, rather than on rehabilitating degraded ecosystems.

 The World Peace Prayer Society. 26 Benton Road, Wasaic, New York 12592 USA. E-mail: info@worldpeace.org
Website: www.worldpeace.org

WWW <http://www.gov.za/international-day-peace-2016> and
www.internationaldayofpeace.org/

ZERO EMISSIONS DAY ~ 21 SEPTEMBER

"... take some time and figure out how you can spend one day out of the year producing no or as little emissions as possible. It's just one day, so why not give it a try? You might find it's easier than you think."

USagain

On 21 March 2008, a website calling for a global moratorium on fossil fuel combustion on 21 September was launched from Sealevel in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The message: 'Giving our planet one day off a year', was simple, yet profound.

When strolling with his newborn daughter past unrelenting traffic, and seeing a driverless, yet idling truck, Ken Wallace, of Sealevel Special Projects had a strange epiphany: 'Stopping all this for a bit would be most excellent for our world altogether'. The notion of stopping, resting, recharging and reflecting was no doubt a mechanism built into many world cultures and traditions. This timeless wisdom allows systems to rest, without which, we are in jeopardy.

For one day, on 21 September 2016, the world can go back to square one - everyone can take a break, and give the world a break.

ZeDay Guidelines are simple – do not burn oil, gas or coal, do not use fossil-fueled electricity, don't put anyone in harm's way (all essential and emergency services operate normally) and have fun!

? **What fun alternatives are there to get yourself about today?
Think roller-blading, skiing, cycling, horse-cart ...**

 *My Carbon Footprint (auditing our electricity, travel, water use, waste and food). Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW ZeroEmissionsDay.org or Twitter @ZeDay or facebook.com/events/22853693713

WORLD RHINO DAY ~ 22 September

World Rhino Day brings non-government organisations, zoos, rhino sanctuaries, and concerned citizens across the globe together to raise awareness and funds for the five species of rhinoceros - all of which are under threat from the illegal rhino horn trade.

In an effort to save the planet's rhinos, World Rhino Day was initiated by WWF in 2010 and has since become a global phenomenon. Many organizations are working on anti-poaching, which includes highlighting the medicinal myths about rhino horn.

Each day, on average, three African rhinos are killed for their horns which are used in traditional Asian medicines. However, rhinoceros horns, unlike those of other horned mammals (which have a bony core), only consist of keratin. Sadly, few people realize the challenges facing those on the frontlines – including, having inadequate resources and thousands of kilometres to patrol, with little to no idea of where the poachers plan to hit next. Visit

https://www.savetherhino.org/rhino_info/rhino_population_figures to find updated information about the global rhinoceros population.

World Rhino Day celebrates all five species of rhino. By working together on this day we can grab the headlines and let the world know we care about the plight of rhinos.

? **The case of the poacher is hotly debated. How can poachers be encouraged to work towards conservation instead of destruction?**



WESSA Rhino Initiative. Tel (033) 330 3931 ext 2127 or 079 5044 296. Website: www.wessa.org.za. Toll-free hotline (National Wildlife Crime Reaction Unit): 0800 205 005



Hands-On: Life around the Waterhole; Enviro Facts: Rhinos Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW www.worldrhinoday.org

HERITAGE DAY (SA) ~ 24 SEPTEMBER

Heritage Day commemorates the World Heritage Convention signed in 1972. The mission of the Heritage Convention is for countries to:

- conserve the natural and cultural heritage in their territories, and
- encourage states to nominate sites within their territories for inclusion on the World Heritage List.

In South Africa, its significance is to recognise various aspects of South African culture which include creative expression, historical inheritance, language, culturally specific food and the land in which we live.

Natural and cultural heritage include monuments, architectural works, sculpture and painting, structures of an archeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and groups of buildings. Also included are sites of outstanding universal value from an historical, aesthetic, and ethnological point of view to geological and physiographic formations and natural sites.

Of the 1 007 cultural and natural properties forming part of the World Heritage List, which the World Heritage Committee considers as having outstanding universal value, *eight* can be found in South Africa.

The need to acknowledge this rich and varied cultural heritage is knowing that it has profound power to help build our nation.

? Name South Africa's World Heritage Sites and state where they are found.

 South African Heritage Resources Agency. 111 Harrington Street, Cape Town, 8001. Tel: (021) 462 4502. Fax: (021) 462 4509. E-mail: info@sahra.org.za; Website: www.sahra.org.za

 *Indigenous Knowledge Series. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list>

WORLD TOURISM DAY ~ 27 SEPTEMBER

"Harnessing tourism's immense benefits will be critical to achieving the sustainable development goals and implementing the post 2015 development agenda."

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, message for World Tourism Day 2014

The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) instituted World Tourism Day, which was first celebrated on 27 September 1980, because the date co-incided with an important milestone in world tourism: the anniversary of the adoption of the UNWTO Statutes on 27 September 1970.

World Tourism Day, celebrated every year on 27 September, is a global observance to highlight tourism's social, cultural, political and economic value. Tourism has experienced continued growth and deeper diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world.

Responsible tourism offers opportunities to develop products that can contribute to national socio-economic objectives by providing livelihoods for local economies and contributing value to the maintenance of local heritage, culture and traditions and to generate revenues for environmental conservation and management.

However, the numbers of tourists and methods of approach in the tourism industry must be carefully monitored to maintain the spirit and natural status of an area and avoid disturbing both wildlife and ecosystems.

? **What sustainable and eco-tourist attractions are there in your area? How could they be improved or developed?**

 Department of Tourism 0860 121 929; callcentre@tourism.gov.za

WWW www2.unwto.org; www.ecotourism.org/Africa;
<http://www.tourism.gov.za>

WORLD RABIES DAY ~ 28 SEPTEMBER

September 28 is World Rabies Day, a global health observance that seeks to raise awareness about rabies and enhance prevention and control efforts. Rabies is present on every inhabited continent and is a disease that affects the brain, causing death of animals and humans. It is transmitted via a bite of an infected domestic or wild animal. Annually and globally, it results in more than 55,000 deaths (approximately one death every 10 minutes). Most deaths are reported from Africa and Asia with almost 50% of the victims being children under the age of 15.

World Rabies Day is an excellent time to take steps that can help prevent and control rabies, such as vaccinating pets, including dogs and cats, and providing education on how to avoid the animals that typically transmit rabies. It is imperative that people are educated on what to do if bitten i.e. wash the area(s) with soap and running water and visit their nearest clinic immediately.

If you see an animal acting strangely, report it to your nearest state vet, private vet or animal health technician. Some things to look for are:

- General sickness
- Problems swallowing
- Lots of drool or saliva
- An animal that appears more tame than you would expect
- An animal that bites at everything
- An animal that's having trouble moving or may even be paralyzed

? **When and where was the latest rabies scare in South Africa?**



State vet's: 0333438320 (KZN) or 0112402522(Gauteng);
National Council of SPCAs. PO Box 1320, Alberton, 1450.
Tel: (011) 907 3590. Fax: (011) 907 4013.
E-mail: nspca@nspca.co.za

WWW www.animalsmatter.org; www.daff.co.za;
www.cdc.gov/worldrabiesday

WORLD HABITAT DAY ~ 3 OCTOBER

WORLD CITIES DAY ~ 31 OCTOBER

'We have the technology and the know-how to build economically, socially and environmentally sustainable cities based on local solutions. Ensuring that our towns and cities expand in a well-planned and managed way is not only necessary to meeting the housing needs of our growing urban population, it is also vital for combating climate change, protecting the environment and supporting sustainable development. Let us focus on a new urban agenda that leaves no one behind.'

Message of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, World Habitat Day 2014

World Habitat Day is observed every year on the first Monday of October throughout the world. It was officially designated by the United Nations and first celebrated in 1986. The purpose of the day is to reflect on the state of our cities and towns and the basic human right to adequate shelter. It also aims to remind the world of its collective responsibility for the habitat of future generations.

The UN themes often promote one of UN-Habitat's focal areas, such as: inclusive housing and social services; a safe and healthy living environment for all (with particular consideration for children, youth, women, elderly and disabled); affordable and sustainable transport and energy; promotion, protection, and restoration of green urban spaces; safe and clean drinking water and sanitation; healthy air quality; job creation; improved urban planning and slum upgrading; and better waste management. World Habitat Day provides an excellent opportunity to highlight key human settlement issues. Each year UN-Habitat calls upon its partners in central government, local government, civil society, the private sector and the media to take part in organizing activities to raise awareness and stimulate debate on the selected theme of the year.

? World Habitat Day focuses on human habitation. Is there a similar day for other life-forms that share our space?

 021 657 5640 or email info@habitat.org.za

 *Eco Puzzles; Enviro Facts; Hands-On and Beginners' Guides.*
Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW <http://unhabitat.org/world-habitat-day/> and
<http://www.habitat.org.za/>

WORLD ANIMAL DAY ~ 4 OCTOBER

World Animal Day takes place every year on 4 October. Animal welfare groups, sanctuaries and individuals throughout the world hold special events to heighten public awareness of animal issues and to encourage people to think about how we as humans relate to animals.

The mission statement of World Animal Day is:

- to celebrate animal life in all its forms;
- to celebrate humankind's relationship with the animal kingdom;
- to acknowledge the diverse roles that animals play in our lives from being our companions, supporting and helping us, to bringing a sense of wonder into our lives;
- to acknowledge and be thankful for the way in which animals enrich our lives.

World Animal Day was started in 1931 at a convention of ecologists in Florence as a way of highlighting the plight of endangered species. Since then it has grown to encompass all kinds of animal life and is widely celebrated in countries throughout the world. 4 October was chosen as World Animal Day as it is the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals.

It is intended as a day of celebration for anyone in the world who cares about animals. It is not restricted to any one nationality, creed, religion, political belief or ideology.

You do not have to be an activist, you just have to care! Buy a few tins of animal food for your local SPCA, make a small donation to an animal charity, plant a shrub that will attract butterflies and birds to your garden - the possibilities are endless.

? Do animals have rights? Make a list of animal rights, and find out whether institutions (circuses, zoos) in your area are abiding by those rules. Do something about it if you find they are not.

☎ National Council of SPCAs. PO Box 1320, Alberton, 1450.
Tel: (011) 907 3590. Fax: (011) 907 4013.
E-mail: nspca@nspca.co.za

WWW www.worldanimalday.org.uk and www.animalsmatter.org

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY ~ 5 October

World Teachers' Day, held annually on 5 October since 1994, commemorates teachers' organisations worldwide. Its aim is to mobilise support for teachers and to ensure that the needs of future generations will continue to be met by teachers.

The supply of teachers is failing to keep pace with the demand for primary education. According to the latest UNESCO Institute For Statistics data, the world needs to create 1.7 million new teaching posts by 2015 to reach Universal Primary Education. In addition, 5.1 million teachers are expected to leave the profession and must be replaced.

In total, 6.8 million teachers worldwide will be needed to ensure every child's right to basic education!

World Teachers' Day celebrates the role teachers play in providing quality education at all levels. This enables children and adults of all ages to learn to take part in, and contribute to, their local community and global society.

Over 100 countries observe World Teachers' Day. The efforts of Education International and its 401 member organisations in 171 countries, have contributed to this widely spread recognition. Every year, Education International launches a public awareness campaign to highlight the contributions of the teaching profession.

? What actions could you take to show your appreciation to your own teacher and teachers in your school? Speak to your teacher today about the challenges of teaching.

 Department: Basic Education. Private Bag X895, Pretoria, 0001.
Website: www.education.gov.za

 *Lesson Planning for a Healthy Environment; Enabling EE Processes in Teacher Education; Learners, learning and teacher-learner relationships; Teacher Education Workbook for Environment and Sustainability Education in Southern Africa.*
Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW <http://www.worldteachersday.org/map/>

NATIONAL MARINE WEEK ~ 8-15 OCTOBER

National Marine Week is a campaign that aims to educate all South Africans about the role oceans play in our daily lives, including recreation and employment. It is celebrated every year during the second week of October.

It creates awareness on the marine and coastal environment and the promotion of sustainable use and conservation of these resources, for all and both present and future generations.

Since 1988, celebrations centre around our marine life and spectacular ocean heritage and create public awareness about our marine conservation issues.

The 3 000 kilometers of the South African coastline, which stretches from the Orange River in the west to Kosi Bay in the east, are rich in marine life and support many different marine ecosystems. Great demands are put on these ecosystems by various bodies.

The increase of marine pollution has caused the decline of many species and it is our duty, as humans, to ensure that our marine resources are not overexploited resulting in total destruction and possible extinction.

To acknowledge this special week, we can learn more about our fragile oceans and their inhabitants in order to help conserve and utilise this natural resource in a more sustainable manner.

? Was the last piece of fish you enjoyed eating sustainably caught?

 You can check on the conservation status of any fish, by texting its name to 079 4998795.

 *Enviro Facts; Beginner's Guide: Common Marine Fish, Seaweeds (algae); Hands-On: East Coast Reefs, East Coast Sandy Shores, East Coast Dune Plants, East Coast Estuaries and Mangroves, East Coast Rocky Shores, Marine Reptile Life of southern Africa. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za*

WWW www.wwfsassi.co.za and www.msc.org

NATIONAL WEEDBUSTER WEEK ~ OCTOBER*

The Working for Water Programme is a multi-departmental alien clearing initiative led by the Department of Water Affairs. It is the Programme's intention that by the year 2020, substantial control over invading alien plants (IAPs) in South Africa will have taken place in order to contribute to economic empowerment, social equity and ecological integrity. Invasive alien species are causing billions of rands worth of damage to South Africa's economy each year, and are the single largest threat to the country's biodiversity. IAPs pose a direct threat not only to biodiversity, but also to water security, the ecological functioning of natural systems and the productive use of land. They intensify the impact of fires and floods and increase soil erosion. IAPs can divert enormous amounts of water from more productive uses and invasive aquatic plants, such as water hyacinth, affect agriculture, fisheries, transport, recreation and water supply.

National Weedbuster Week aims to raise awareness and increase public understanding about the problems alien plants cause; help the public make the connection between gardening and agricultural practices and potential land and environmental degradation; provide the public with the information and skills required to play a responsible role in the sustainable use of land and water resources and ultimately make the necessary changes in behaviour to help the environment; and, foster community ownership of problems resulting in acceptance and support for alien plant management projects.

? What effect do invasive alien plants have on biodiversity? What action could you take to reduce the number of IAPs in your area?



Department: Water and Sanitation, Working for Water Programme. Website: www.dwa.gov.za/wfw/



Hack Attack Pack: making sure your school is free of invader plants; Catchment Action: 28 Alien Plant Invaders in KZN.

WWW www.dwa.gov.za/wfw/; <http://invasives.org.za> and <http://www.sana.co.za/alien-invasive-plants/>

* National Weedbuster Week usually falls in the first or second week of October. Please contact the Working for Water Programme (website above) in 2016 for confirmation of dates.

AFRICAN PENGUIN AWARENESS DAY ~ 13 OCTOBER*

The African Penguin (*Spheniscus demersus*), is also known as the Black-footed Penguin. Because of its call, which sounds like a braying donkey, this penguin used to be called the Jackass Penguin.

The African Penguin is so named because it is the only species of penguin that breeds in Africa and it is endemic to the south-west coast. There are various colonies between Namibia and Port Elizabeth, the largest of which can be found on Dreyer Island, near Kleinbaai.

Unfortunately, due to egg harvesting, guano harvesting (collection of bird droppings for fertilizer), disease, pressure from commercial fishing, and oil pollution on their food supply, African Penguin populations have rapidly declined and the bird is now listed as "vulnerable to extinction". One hundred years ago, it was estimated that the African Penguin numbered 4 million - today there are only around 56 000 breeding pairs left.

African Penguin Awareness Day is an international SANCCOB (Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds) initiative to raise awareness around the plight of this delightful bird. The University of Cape Town's Avian Demography Unit have shown that SANCCOB's rehabilitation efforts have meant that the penguin populations are as much as 19% higher than they would have been, had action not been taken. Since 1968 this organisation has treated more than 90 000 birds.

You can help year round by reporting injured penguins and/or oiled birds to SANCCOB by calling (021) 557 6155 (Western Cape) and (042) 298 0160 (Eastern Cape).

? What marine life does the African Penguin depend on and how is its habitat being protected?

 SANCCOB. PO Box 11116, Bloubergrandt, 7443. Tel: (021) 557 6155. Fax: (021) 557 8804. E-mail: info@sanccob.co.za

WWW www.africanpenguin.co.za/ and www.sanccob.co.za/

* Date may change. Please contact SANCCOB (website: www.sanccob.co.za or e-mail info@sanccob.co.za) in 2016 to confirm date.

WORLD FOOD DAY ~ 16 OCTOBER

Every person in the world has the right to have access to nutritionally acceptable food and to feed themselves with dignity. World Food Day addresses the issue and helps to uphold this international law.

This World Food Day marks the date of the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on 16 October 1945. In 1980, the United Nations General Assembly initiated the day by stating that 'food is a requisite for human survival and well-being and a fundamental human necessity'.

World Food Day is celebrated on a global level. The purpose of this event is to make people aware of the hunger problem that continues to plague countries across the world. In addition, this international day of awareness strives to show that by working together, hunger, poverty and malnutrition can all become a thing of the past.

Did you know?

- 842 million people in the world do not have enough to eat. This number has fallen by 17% since 1990.
- Asia has the largest number of hungry people (over 500 million) but sub-Saharan Africa has the highest prevalence (24.8% of population).
- If women farmers had the same access to resources as men, the number of hungry in the world could be reduced by 150 million.

Society, economy and the environment are all factors to consider to ensure healthy and sustainable eating habits.

? **Are you involved in a feeding scheme? If not, volunteer!**

 Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations,
Dr Tobias, PO Box 13782, The Tramshed, Pretoria, 0126. Tel: (012)
354 8540, e-mail: FAO-ZA@fao.org

 Enviro Facts; Health Gardening: a guide to growing food for life;
How to make a trench garden; How to build a chicken tractor;
Nutrition in schools: a teacher's guide; Eating for the Earth.
Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW www.fao.org

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY ~ 17 OCTOBER

"On this day we recommit to think, decide and act together against extreme poverty - and plan for a world where no-one is left behind. Our aim must be prosperity for all, not just a few."

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
Message for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 2014

Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names; 1 billion children live in poverty (1 in 2 children in the world); some 1.1 billion people have inadequate access to water; 2.6 billion people lack basic sanitation; for the 1.9 billion children from the developing world, there are 640 million without adequate shelter (1 in 3); and 270 million have no access to health services (1 in 7).

It is difficult to comprehend this in a world of great wealth, of scientific and technological advancement and in a world in which people are more aware of how others live. Yet, it is still a disturbing reality.

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, first observed in 1987 after the UN proclaimed the observance of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (Resolution 47/196), encourages authorities, at all levels, to promote activities that will aid in combating poverty and destitution.

The acquisition of resources and education which will lead to an improved quality of life, is an imperative need of the world's poor, which should be an individual and government prerogative.

? **Is the term 'living below the bread line' an accurate global description of poverty?**

 Food & Trees for Africa. PO Box 2035, Gallo Manor, 2052.
Tel: (011) 656 9802. Fax: (086) 547 1258. E-mail: info@trees.org.za

Food and Agriculture (FAO) Representation in South Africa,
Metro Park Building, 351 Schoeman Street, Pretoria, 0001.
Tel: (012) 354 8540. E-mail: FAO-ZA@fao.org

 Rethinking Poverty: UN Report on the World Social Situation 2010.

WWW www.fao.org and www.un.org/en/events/povertyday/

DISARMAMENT WEEK ~ 24-30 OCTOBER

"The world is over-armed and peace is under-funded."

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Disarmament Week begins on the anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and is an important occasion to raise awareness in the public and among governments, about the crucial need to recognize disarmament as a key element in creating a more peaceful, just and sustainable world. It also aims to highlight the danger of the arms race and propagate the need for its cessation .

Worldwide there are threats of war and in many countries there is civil war. Although families have the right to safety, it is not a safe solution to own a weapon and countries are not more secure through increased militarisation. When we develop our potential and human dignity, and when nations learn to solve their differences peacefully, the safety needs of the community and individuals will be met without armed conflict.

Wars are not only financially costly but also environmentally and socially costly. The money spent on weapons could be used more sensibly by making contributions towards the upliftment of communities and moving towards a more sustainable lifestyle.

"Our hard-won political freedom will mean nothing unless we have freedom from violence, freedom from fear ..." *Former President, Nelson Mandela (1918-2013).*

? **Is it even possible to find out how many civilians are affected due to modern war methodology ?**



Gun Free South Africa (GFSA). PO Box 3048, Killarney, 2193.
Website: www.gunfreesa.org.za; Claire Taylor: 072 341 3898
claire@gfsa.org.za; Fax: 086 545 0094

WWW www.un.org/disarmament/

WORLD SCIENCE DAY FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT ~ 10 NOVEMBER

The observance of the International Week of Science and Peace (WSDPD) was proclaimed 25 years ago by the United Nations General Assembly, to raise awareness of the benefits of science worldwide. At the World Conference on Science in Budapest in 1999, recognition was made that science and society should work hand-in-hand. UNESCO thus established the WSDPD through a proclamation at a general conference in 2001. It is held annually on November 10 since then.

Science offers many answers to shared threats and many innovations that can help seize common opportunities. This is the first generation with the knowledge and the tools to end extreme poverty. We have the technologies at our disposal to forge a path towards a sustainable future. We also have a responsibility to protect all humankind against the destructive uses of scientific achievement and capacity, most notably by working for a nuclear-weapon-free world and to contain the spread of other weapons of mass destruction (see Disarmament Week, pg 49).

As citizens of the world, we need to work together to harness the power of science for the greater good everywhere, and promote evidence-based policy-making.

? **When did you last visit a science museum? They are fun and exciting places to be. If you don't have one close to home, how about doing a virtual tour?**

 Iziko Museums of South Africa, 021 481 3800 or info@iziko.org.za

WWW www.un.org/en/events/scienceday or
www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/online_science.aspx

UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S DAY ~ 20 NOVEMBER

"The one thing all children have in common is their rights. Every child has the right to survive and thrive, to be educated, to be free from violence and abuse, to participate and to be heard."

UNESCO Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Universal Children's Day marks the day in which the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. It was in 1954 that all countries were approached by the United Nations to observe a Universal Children's Day, promoting the welfare of children around the world and doing everything in its power to protect and promote children's right to survive and thrive, to learn and grow – to reach their full potential.

Children represent the future of all countries around the world. It is the duty of all adults to ensure that the safety and the rights of children are considered and met.

The present generation should carefully manage and respect the Earth's resources for future generations to benefit and maintain a sustainable way of living. Children need to learn, from a young age, about the importance of being environmentally literate and responsible citizens so that they can grow up to enjoy a decent quality of life.

Universal Children's Day is an excellent opportunity to encourage and empower our children to tread lightly on the Earth.

? Choose 3 countries. Find out the similarities and differences in the lifestyles of the children in those countries. Look at things like education, home-life, access to Internet and food.



WESSA Eco-Schools South Africa. PO Box 394, Howick, 3290. Tel (033) 330 3931 ext 2155. E-mail: thobile@wessa.co.za



*United Nations: Declaration of the Rights of the Child. 1959.
United Nations: Convention on the Rights of the Child. 1989.*

WWW www.un.org/en/events/childrenday/

BUY NOTHING DAY ~ 26 NOVEMBER

"Today, humanity faces a stark choice: save the planet and ditch capitalism, or save capitalism and ditch the planet."

Fawzi Ibrahim, Environmental Economist

Buy Nothing Day was started by Adbusters in the early 1990s and has since grown into an international event celebrated in more than 65 countries on the last Saturday in November. Developed countries, which house 20% of the world population, consume 80 % of the Earth's natural resources – a disproportionate ratio indeed! The idea is to stop and think about this statistic, about what and how much we buy, and how this affects the environment.

Buy Nothing Day is an opportunity for you to make a commitment to consuming less, recycling more and challenging corporations to clean up and be fair, especially with regard to transport, packaging and fair working conditions. While modern consumerism offers great choice, this shouldn't be at the cost of the environment or developing countries. It therefore challenges us to avoid participating in the economy – this includes mobile phone, fuel and electricity usage – anything on which money is spent for at least one day of the year.

Supermarkets are also challenged on this day, (when, should the day be celebrated by all, there will be no shoppers!), as they need to think of ways to be more environmentally friendly, by, for instance, removing unnecessary packaging from their stores. Production methods have harmful side effects, such as toxic waste, destruction of wildlife, and wasted energy. Also, they need to consider how to reduce the impact of the transport of goods by air, road and rail, as locally produced goods, which don't have to travel far and are seasonal, have less impact on the environment. Alternatively, consumers need to reflect on how they are contributing to the problem and think of creative ways in which we can live on this planet in a more sustainable manner.

? Keep a log of how many 'transactions' involving money you make in a day. Assess the impact these transactions may have on the environment and consider the people involved in getting the goods to you.

WWW www.buynothingday.co.uk or www.adbusters.org

BIRDING BIG DAY (SA) ~ 26 NOVEMBER

Birds belong to the class Aves and, of the higher vertebrates, they are the most studied, the most easily seen and accessible, the most melodious and, many think, the most beautiful animals on Earth.

Fish are the only other vertebrates that have a higher number of species than birds. There are approximately 10 000 species of bird distributed over most of the Earth. They are found in forests, deserts, mountains and prairies, and on lakes, rivers and oceans. A few species have even visited the North Pole and one, a skua, was seen at the South Pole! Some birds dive to depths greater than 45m to prey on aquatic life while others live in caves and in this total darkness are able to find their way around by echo-location.

South Africa is richly endowed with a diversity of approximately 890 different bird species.

In recognition of our bird heritage, BirdLife South Africa co-ordinates Birding Big Day. Birding Big Day is a competition open to everyone with the aim of seeing how many birds can be spotted on that day, within a radius of 50km. Prizes are awarded to the team who spots the highest numbers. Give Birdlife SA a call (details below) and get twitching!

? **What different roles are performed by birds in an ecosystem in/around your school or home?**

 BirdLife South Africa, PO Box 515, Randburg, 2125. Tel: (011) 789 1122. Fax: (011) 789 5188. E-mail info@birdlife.org.za

 *A Beginner's Guide: Some Common Waterbirds; Beginners Guide: Owls; Hadedea Island Curriculum Pack.* Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW www.birdlife.org.za

WORLD AIDS DAY ~ 1 DECEMBER

The World Health Organisation declared 1 December 1988 World AIDS Day in recognition of the deep concern about the pandemic proportions of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

According to WHO, there was globally an estimated 35 million people living with HIV (the Human Immunodeficiency Virus), which is the precursor of AIDS, in 2013. It is a virus which attacks the body's immune system — the body's defence against diseases. More than 39 million people have died from the virus, making it one of the most destructive pandemics in history. 70 % of new cases are from sub-Saharan Africa.

The HI virus that causes AIDS, is transmitted through blood, semen, breast milk and other bodily fluids. It disables the immune system by destroying the T4-lymphocytes (white blood cells) that help 'killer' lymphocytes attack invaders. HIV weakens the body's natural defences against infection, making those with the virus less able to fight the organisms that cause infection and disease. Infections are indicative of AIDS once the HI virus is active.

Sadly, AIDS sufferers are often rejected by society at a time when they most need physical, medical, emotional and spiritual support.

Some facts about HIV:

- Over 90% of people with HIV were infected through sexual contact.
- You can get tested for HIV using a saliva sample and have the result within 20 minutes.
- HIV is not passed on through spitting, biting or sharing utensils.
- Only 1% of babies born to HIV positive mothers have HIV.
- There is no vaccine and no cure for HIV.
- TB remains the leading cause of death among people living with HIV.

? What foodstuffs can be eaten to improve the immunity system?



The AIDS Healers: a compilation of AIDS-related stories with grammatical and comprehension exercises. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

WWW www.worldaidsday.org and www.unaids.org

WORLD SOIL DAY ~ 5 DECEMBER

Soil is the basis for food, feed, fuel and fibre production and for services to ecosystems and human well-being. It is the reservoir for at least a quarter of global biodiversity, and therefore requires the same attention as above-ground biodiversity. Soils play a key role in the supply of clean water and resilience to floods and droughts. The largest store of terrestrial carbon is in the soil so that its preservation may contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation. The maintenance or enhancement of global soil resources is essential if humanity's need for food, water, and energy security is to be met.

Soils constitute the foundation for agricultural development, essential ecosystem functions and food security and hence are key to sustaining life on Earth. It contributes to food, reduces biodiversity loss, and secures energy. Problems like deforestation, bad agricultural practices and pollution causes soil degradation and erosion.

World Soil Day is held annually to highlight soil's importance on Earth. The UN saw a need to raise awareness about the dangers of soil loss, so it made World Soil Day an official day. It was first celebrated on December 5, 2012, which corresponded with the birthday of Thai king Bhumibol Adulyadej, who officially sanctioned the event.

? What are the key indicators of good and fertile soil?

 Soil is Life; Hands-On Soil and Compost Life; Health Gardening; Soil Conservation through IK practices; African Ecological Footprint Challenge. Available for downloading from sharenet.org.za

 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, 012 319 6000

WWW <http://www.fao.org/globalsoilpartnership/world-soil-day/en/> and www.oneacrefund.org

INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN DAY ~ 11 DECEMBER

The International Year of Mountains was launched at the headquarters of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 11 December 2001. This observance, which, from 2003, is celebrated annually, aims to draw attention to the important roles that mountainous regions play in water, recreation and food supply.

Mountains cover about 27% of the world's surface and provide sustenance and wellbeing to 720 million people. Mountains are the water towers of the world – providing freshwater to at least half of the world's people. However, mountains are also high-risk environments; avalanches, landslides, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and glacial lake outburst floods threaten life in mountain regions and surrounding areas.

International Mountain Day is intended to raise awareness about the importance of the sustainable development of mountains, as they provide a habitat for many wild animals and are home to thousands of minorities and tribes. They play an important role in influencing global and regional climates and weather conditions.

The sustainable development and protection of mountain regions and the improvement of local livelihoods should be at the core of mountain legislation. Such legislation needs to address the protection of ethnic minorities and the cultural heritage of mountain people, and to recognize community-based property rights. Many mountain ranges are transboundary, so sustainable mountain development requires international co-operation.

? Find your hiking boots, then get out there and climb your nearest mountain. A mountain is generally +1000ft (+300m) above sea level.

 Mountain Club of South Africa, contact Gavin Raubenheimer 082 990 5876 or gavin@peakhigh.co.za

WWW <http://www.fao.org/forestry/internationalmountainday/en/>
and <http://cen.mcsa.org.za/>

DAY OF RECONCILIATION (SA) ~ 16 DECEMBER

On 16 December 1838, a group of Voortrekkers defeated the Zulu army at the battle of Blood River. This battle was the climax of many battles that had been fought between the two armies as a result of land disputes and failed negotiations. In preparation for the battle, the Voortrekkers took a vow before God stating that, should they defeat the Zulu army, they would build a church and they, and their descendants, would celebrate the day as a day of thanksgiving for their victory. It was then known as the Day of the Covenant and later the Day of the Vow.

With the advent of democracy in South Africa, 16 December remained a public holiday but was renamed the Day of Reconciliation.

It was also on this day in 1961 that Umkhonto we Sizwe, the liberation army of the ANC, launched its first military acts of sabotage against the apartheid government. This day was celebrated by supporters of the liberation, as the beginning of their armed struggle.

On 16 December 2013, the unveiling of the statue of former President Nelson Mandela (1918-2013) took place at the Union Buildings in Pretoria. While the statue is a monument dedicated to the life of former President Nelson Mandela and his contribution to freedom and reconciliation in South Africa, it is also a collective memorial to the struggles and sacrifice that millions of South Africans made so that our country could be free and her citizens live in peace and prosperity.

? **Is South Africa unique in having a 'Day of Reconciliation'?**

WWW <http://www.gov.za>



WESSA

PEOPLE CARING FOR THE EARTH

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Why not join the WESSA Eco-Schools Programme?

Is your school ready to take up the challenge? Are you ready to join the growing number of schools in South Africa and around the world which are caring for the environment?

When schools register with the programme, they commit to improving environmental learning and action through the curriculum. Relevant themes are chosen by the learners and teachers, lesson plans are developed and school improvement plans and records of their progress in the form of a poster.

Eco-Schools is an internationally recognised programme of the Foundation of Environmental Education (FEE) www.eco-schools.org, that accredits schools that make a commitment to continuously improve their school's environmental performance. Currently 59 countries are part of the programme worldwide with over 30 000 schools participating.

*Contact the Eco-Schools National Co-ordination Team on
(033) 330 3931 ext 2155; e-mail thobile@wessa.co.za*

DISCLAIMER: Please note that at the time of printing, the dates and contact details were correct to the best of our knowledge. WESSA is not responsible for changes that take place after printing.

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