



Biodiversity Day

Saturday 22 May is International Biodiversity Day. In addition, 2010 has been declared International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations. Now is the time for the world to take action to celebrate and safeguard the diversity of life on earth, and to recognise the value that it brings into our lives.

So what is the big deal about biodiversity? Every day, often without even realising it, we make use of the world's biodiversity in its many forms: the food we eat, the roof over our heads, furniture, clothing, paper, beauty products, vitamins and many life-saving medicines. Biodiversity can also take credit for providing us with essential 'ecosystem services' upon which we depend: services and goods that nature provides us and that we often take for granted. Living organisms filter the air we breathe and the water we drink, regulate water flow, moderate climate change and limit soil erosion. It is a well-researched fact that communities living within a healthy ecosystem are able to enjoy a better, healthier life.



Despite the innumerable ways in which humans benefit from the earth's biodiversity, we are the biggest threat to the survival of many species. Human activity is responsible for massive habitat destruction, pollution and overharvesting – all of which have devastating, irreversible effects on biodiversity.



South Africa is the third most biologically diverse country in the world. It occupies only 2% of the world's land surface yet is home to nearly 10% (more than 23 000) of the planet's plant species and 7% of the reptile, bird and mammal species. We are privileged to experience such rich biodiversity, and have a responsibility to safeguard it not just for ourselves but for future generations. 2010, and Biodiversity Day in particular, is an opportunity for us

to not only celebrate our spectacular biodiversity, but also to familiarize ourselves with the threats to it and the ways in which we can combat them. **Here are a few small ways in which you can make a big difference to South Africa's (and the world's) biodiversity:**

- **Learn about biodiversity.** Learn why it is important and what threatens it - and teach others what you've learnt.
- **Reduce, reuse and recycle.**
- **Eat sustainably produced food.** Buy organically produced fruit and vegetables that have been produced without the use of harmful chemicals, and seafood that has been sustainably harvested. You can even grow your own fruit and vegetables.
- **Shop smartly.** When shopping, buy only what you need; choose products that use less packaging and opt for locally produced products.
- **Encourage biodiversity in your garden.** Turn your garden into a natural habitat by landscaping with indigenous plants, and avoid plants that are not native to the region. Eradicate any alien invasive species immediately, before they have an opportunity to multiply. Avoid the use of pesticides and other chemicals, or switch to natural alternatives.
- **Limit natural resource consumption.** Use fuel efficient vehicles and limit energy consumption in your home. Calculate and reduce your carbon footprint (visit www.cap.org.za), and investigate ways in which you can reduce it.



“SOMETHING WILL HAVE GONE OUT OF US AS A PEOPLE IF WE EVER LET THE REMAINING WILDERNESS BE DESTROYED...” Wallace Stegner



WESSA
PEOPLE CARING FOR THE EARTH

Join WESSA in celebrating and protecting our country's exceptional biodiversity, and caring for the Earth.



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