



Environment Newsletter

District 410E - January - February 2023



The focus for Lions Awareness month in April will be Our Environment Pillar of Service, and L Sandy van Heerden, DC Public Relations, has the following message for clubs:



'We are asking Lions to showcase innovative concepts, best practice Environment Projects & Climate change ideas because climate change is real! We want to inspire others to join us & to make the difference!'

A Happy Earth starts with us!

Elephant diet choices are helping fight climate change



Elephants' preference for tasty leaves and large sweet fruits is helping mitigate global warming, according to new research that shows the importance to protect the mega-herbivores from extinction.

Asian and African elephants like to eat from small, leafy trees, leaving larger trees more space to grow. The latter absorb and store more planet-warming carbon dioxide and, as a result, forests with elephants hold more carbon than forests without them, according to a study published at Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Ecology on Monday.

The findings draw a direct link between the conservation of the giant herbivores and forests' capacity to store carbon. They come just weeks after a UN biodiversity summit in which countries agreed a landmark deal to ensure protection of a third of the Earth's land and oceans by 2030. The accord is expected to encourage the finance industry to assign a price to natural resources that had previously been treated as cost-free.

The African forest elephant is listed as "critically endangered," while the African savanna elephant is classified as "endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), an international organisation made up of governments and civil society organisations that studies and ranks the status of different species.

About 80% of the population of African forest elephants has disappeared in less than a century, a trend that's continuing and likely irreversible, according to the IUCN. The shrinking of their natural habitat as human population expands and poaching are among the main causes of the decline.

Climate Change is Real!

Animal populations experience average decline of almost 70% since 1970

Earth's wildlife populations have plunged by an average of 69% in just under 50 years, according to a leading scientific assessment, as humans continue to clear forests, consume beyond the limits of the planet and pollute on an industrial scale.

From the open ocean to tropical rainforests, the abundance of birds, fish, amphibians and reptiles is in freefall, declining on average by more than two-thirds between 1970 and 2018, according to the WWF and Zoological Society of London's (ZSL) biennial Living Planet Report. Two years ago, the figure stood at 68%, four years ago, it was at 60%.



Many scientists believe we are living through the sixth mass extinction - the largest loss of life on Earth since the time of the dinosaurs - and that it is being driven by humans. The report's 89 authors are urging world leaders to reach an ambitious agreement at the Cop15 biodiversity summit in Canada this December and to slash carbon emissions to limit global heating to below 1.5C this decade to halt the rampant destruction of nature.

The Living Planet Index combines global analysis of 32,000 populations of 5,230 animal species to measure changes in the abundance of wildlife across continents and taxa, producing a graph akin to a stock index of life on Earth.



Environment Calendar : January - April



02 February:	World Wildlife Day
12 March:	Plant a Flower Day
20 - 26 March:	National Water Week
22 March:	World Water Day (WWD)
25 March:	Earth Hour 8:30 pm
22 April:	International Earth Day

March is an important month on the Environmental calendar, as can be seen above. Start planning your Environment events now, if they are not already in place. Some interesting developments to guide you in your planning are featured below.



Take a leaf out of the books of the Soulbent Project in Saulsville (left), who do their part to help clean and maintain Pretoria's rivers

"The purpose of Water Week is to clean and maintain rivers" says the founder and director of Soulbent, Mashudu Makhado (39), adding that the Soulbent Project started in 2007 in Saulsville.

"It is our duty to keep our rivers clean to avoid pollution as it is a problem in our country."

"When the rivers are polluted, aquatic animals die and we need to protect our animals.

"I noticed many illegal dumping sites near streams and wetlands," he said.

Makhado said after it rains the rubbish flows straight into the rivers.

"The project is an ongoing thing, we clean Mondays to Fridays.

We scout areas, people call us, others send us an inbox on Facebook and teachers call us to clean their school.



Stakeholders like the City of Tshwane shows their support during the clean-up.

The community members, stakeholders and learners are invited to participate on the clean-up.

Water Week has a positive impact on our community because we are now exposed to workshops, education programmes and stakeholders."

Dumpsites turned into Food Gardens

"After cleaning we plant our seeds then nourish them daily," said Makhado.

"Our vegetable garden is assisting our community with food security as a lot of people lost their jobs because of Covid. We aim to give back to the community," he said.

Makhado said their aim is to expand to Pretoria West, Pretoria CBD, Mamelodi and Soshanguve.



According to the project's Moses Makgopa, they have planted spinach, carrots, onions, potatoes, tomatoes and beetroot.

Littering is endangering our Wildlife

Lodge manager and photographic guide Rihann Van Wyk, 41, from Mvuradona Safari Lodge was out on a game drive in the Kruger National Park in South Africa when he came across this scene:

"While on a game drive in the Kruger National Park, I was driving along the S108 dirt road, searching for the resident leopards that call this part of the park home, when a large raptor about to land caught my eye.

"This section was mainly grassland with some apple leaf trees and some shrubs. As soon as the raptor landed, I saw it was a young Bateleur eagle. I stopped the vehicle some distance away and waited to see what was going to happen, as I knew there must be something that got its attention. The next moment it picked up an 'egg' and tried to swallow it."

Bateleur eagles have diets that consist of a large variety of different items. They will consume rodents, small reptiles, small antelope and carrion. Bateleur eagles will consume eggs on very rare occasions.

"This egg was too big to fit down its throat, and I thought it was strange that the egg did not break. The bateleur picked it up and dropped it time and time again. The continuous attempts were tiresome and somewhat frustrating for the bird. Only then did I notice the poor bateleur was trying to swallow a golf ball."

How the golf ball got to the S108 is a mystery, as the Skukuza golf course is almost 50 km away.

The incident shows how harmful littering is to the environment and in national parks. If the eagle had swallowed the golf ball, it would not have survived.

