



## Environment Newsletter :

September 2023



*We serve to sustainably protect and restore our environment to improve the well-being of all communities*

### International Vulture Awareness Day - 2 September

The first Saturday in September each year is International Vulture Awareness Day.

Vultures are an ecologically vital group of birds that face a range of threats in many areas that they occur. Populations of many species are under pressure and some species are facing extinction.

The International Vulture Awareness Day has grown from Vulture Awareness Days run by the Birds of Prey Programme of the Endangered Wildlife Trust in South Africa and the Hawk Conservancy Trust in England, who decided to work together and expand the initiative into an international event.



Bearded Vulture

Vultures gorge themselves when prey is abundant, until their crops bulge, and sit, sleepy or half torpid, to digest their food. These birds do not carry food to their young in their talons but disgorge it from their crops. The mountain-dwelling bearded vulture is the only vertebrate to specialize in eating bones; it carries bones to the nest for the young, and hunts some live prey

A group of vultures in flight is called a 'kettle', while the term 'committee' refers to a group of vultures resting on the ground or in trees. A group of vultures that are feeding is termed a 'wake'



African Hooded Vulture, KNP

Vultures have relatively bare heads and often bare necks, which prevents feathers from matting with blood when vultures are feeding on carcasses.

A vulture's stomach acid is significantly stronger and more corrosive than that of other animals or birds. This allows these scavengers to feed on rotting carcasses that may be infected with dangerous bacteria, because the acid will kill that bacteria so it does not threaten the vulture.

Vultures urinate on their legs and feet to cool off on hot days, a process called urohydrolysis. Their urine also helps kill any bacteria or parasites they've picked up from walking through carcasses or perching on dead animals.



Vultures face many threats that are endangering their populations. Poisoning is the biggest threat to vultures, primarily from toxins or lead in the carcasses they eat. Other hazards include car collisions as they feed on roadkill and electrocution from collisions with power lines.

## International Coastal Cleanup Day 16 September

Every year thousands of tons of garbage winds up in the oceans, with at least 60% of that being composed of plastic material. Plastics, especially, last a very long time in the ocean and are in such abundance that there are 46,000 individual pieces of plastic litter for every square mile of ocean! This is a dire situation for the health of the earth's oceans, which directly impacts the health of its people.

It's time to celebrate International Coastal Cleanup Day and help make the planet a cleaner, happier place for humans, plants, and animals.



In the past 30 years, the efforts toward cleaning up the oceans have increased through International Coastal Cleanup Day. Volunteers from over 100 countries work together on this day to help make a difference in the way the beaches, coasts, seas and oceans are able to survive and thrive.



**International Coastal Cleanup is a great way to get people involved.**

While beach clean ups alone can't solve the problem of ocean trash, they certainly help! For many of our volunteers, the Cleanup is the only time that they witness the effects of marine debris first-hand. By participating in a cleanup at their local beach or waterway, they see the impacts of their trash and are more likely to think about the products they use, what they throw away and its implications for the environment.

**International Coastal Cleanup is an easy way to give back.**

The ocean provides us with so much. It's important to make sure we are taking care of it, so that it can continue to take care of us. This September, volunteers around the world are giving back to our ocean and joining the fight against ocean trash. Make sure you arrange or sign up for a clean up near you!





## SANParks Free Week 16 - 24 September

South African National Parks (SANParks) will be presenting its 18th annual SA National Parks Week from 16 to 24 September 2023 and is once again proud to celebrate it with our partners Total South Africa and FNB. This year SANParks is once again extending SA National Parks Week to include weekends at some of the national parks.



The week grants free access to most of the 21 national parks for day visitors, especially people from the local communities. It should be noted that free access to parks does not include free access to accommodation facilities and other tourist activities. Some of the parks will be extending the week to include the two weekends. For individual park dates and participating parks please visit: [https://www.sanparks.org/about/events/parks\\_week/default.php](https://www.sanparks.org/about/events/parks_week/default.php)

SA National Parks Week has proved to be a successful campaign in terms of education and awareness of conservation issues. "It's important for South Africans to visit and know the importance of national parks. They act as spaces to practice sustainable conservation, as spaces that preserve and celebrate our culture and heritage, and we now see national parks playing the critical role of empowering communities living adjacent to parks through job creation and we continue to explore ways of creating business



"This initiative aims to give the public an understanding of the role that SANParks plays as custodian of the country's natural heritage. If we are to create a sense of ownership of the natural heritage of South Africa in all South Africans, then all South Africans must be able to have access to such. Visit a national park this year for free during SA National Parks Week, to see what it has to offer and do your part by getting to know your national parks, celebrate your rich heritage offering and experience first-hand the iconic beauty and plethora of natural flora and fauna," concluded Sello. Don't miss out on this annual event to experience South Africa's beautiful natural heritage.



World Rhino Day is a day of awareness for all five rhino species and the work being done to save them. Since 2011, World Rhino Day has been celebrated internationally on September 22nd by rhino experts and advocates around the world! On World Rhino Day, the International Rhino Foundation celebrates the five species rhinos and all those who care about them. Join us on Team Rhino as we 'keep the five alive.'



# WORLD RHINO DAY

## SEPT 22

RHINOS.ORG



### KEEP THE FIVE ALIVE

The world's last remaining population of Javan rhinos remained stable but faced threats including human encroachment and insufficient habitat.



**JAVAN RHINO**  
*Rhinoceros sondaicus*

Located in: Indonesia

Estimated Population & Trend:  
**76**  
**STABLE**

IUCN Status:  
**CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

rhinos.org

The greater one-horned rhino population surpassed 4,000 individuals in India and Nepal.



**GREATER ONE-HORNED RHINO**  
*Rhinoceros unicornis*

Located in: India, Nepal, Bhutan

Estimated Population & Trend:  
**4,014**  
**INCREASING**

IUCN Status:  
**VULNERABLE**

rhinos.org

Experts estimated a 13% decline for Sumatran rhinos.




**SUMATRAN RHINO**  
*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*

Located in: Indonesia

Estimated Population & Trend:  
**<80**  
**DECREASING**

IUCN Status:  
**CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

rhinos.org



**BLACK RHINO**  
*Diceros bicornis*


Located in: Namibia, South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, eSwatini, Rwanda, Botswana, Mozambique, Chad

Estimated Population & Trend:  
**6,195**  
**INCREASING**

IUCN Status:  
**CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

rhinos.org

Africa's black rhino population grew across the continent.



**WHITE RHINO**  
*Ceratotherium simum*

Located in: South Africa, Namibia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Botswana, eSwatini, Uganda, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Zambia, Angola

Estimated Population & Trend:  
**15,942**  
**DECREASING**

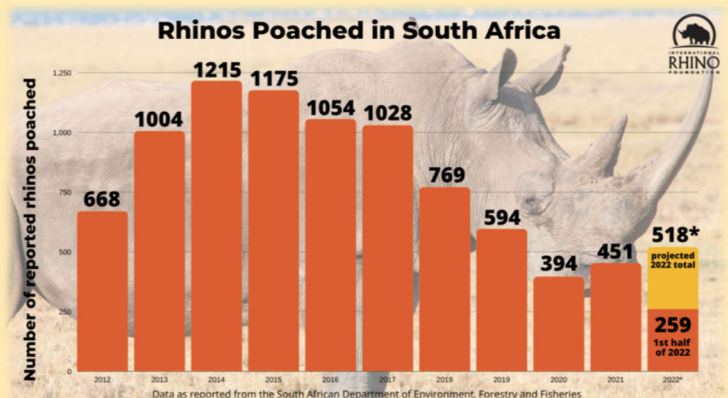
IUCN Status:  
**NEAR THREATENED**

rhinos.org

Africa's white rhino population, under pressure from poaching, continued to decline.

Illegal trade in rhino horn continued to drive poaching, with an estimated 1,000 rhino horns traded each year. The total worldwide rhino population is estimated to be fewer than 27,000.

The two African rhino species, white (*Ceratotherium simum*) and black (*Diceros bicornis*), are found in fifteen countries: Angola, Botswana, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, eSwatini, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Not all countries report population numbers or poaching data.



**World Rivers Day** takes place on the fourth Sunday of September, making it time for us to reflect on the significance of rivers.

On **September 24** this year, the best way to celebrate these Earthly lifelines is by reducing water pollution and although this can't be done in one day, we can start by raising awareness about ways to restore our rivers to pristine form, as reflected in the picture on the right.



Rivers provide us with the ability to generate electricity, water crops, and have potable water. That's why prosperous cities like Amsterdam, Bangkok, and Berlin were established near rivers.

**There are approximately 165 major rivers in the world.**

With over 36 rivers, Russia has the most rivers in the world., of which the Volga is the most notable, being the longest river in Europe (Left)

## Note to all our keen Lions Photographers:

Please take note that the closing date for entries for the Environmental Photo Competition has been extended to end March 2024, to coincide with the closing dates for all District Competitions



## Environment Calendar : September

02 September	International Vulture Awareness Day
16 September	International Coastal Cleanup Day
16 - 24 September	National Parks Week
22 September	World Rhino Day
24 September	World Rivers Day
04 October	World Energy Efficiency Day
14 October	International e-Waste day
14 October	World Migratory Bird Day