



JOIN THE RACE TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE THIS WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

3 June 2016

Start

What will YOU be doing on June the 5th to make our world a better pace? How will YOU contribute to the commemoration of one of the most celebrated and longest running 'special days' on the global calendar?

Since 1973, when World Environment Day (WED) was first proclaimed, every June the 5th millions of people around the world have rallied around the cause of ensuring that our environment is protected to sustain current and future generations of humans and other forms of life. Led by the United Nations, WED is one of the biggest global tools used to advocate for environmental protection and to call for political action to safeguard our natural world. Although the entire month of June is called Environment Month, June the 5th still remains the highlight and will be celebrated worldwide in hundreds of different ways, including through river and beach clean ups; educational talks; peaceful marches; public debates; competitions; tree planting ceremonies; recycling drives; awareness campaigns and storytelling.

WED 2016 is themed around the rampant illegal trade that is decimating wild populations of many animals and plants globally. Themed "Go Wild for Wildlife: Zero Tolerance for Illegal Wildlife Trade", the day should, at the very least, allow for some quiet, sombre reflection on the plight of millions of animals and plants that are trafficked daily along illegal trade routes towards consumers with more sinister objectives than the conservation of these species in their natural habitats.

In South Africa, we are painfully aware of the impact of the illegal wildlife trade on rhino, with nearly 5,500 rhino known to be poached in South Africa in the last eight years. We may however, be less

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The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-profit, public benefit organisation dedicated to conserving species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.

NPO Number: 015-502, **PBO number:** 930 001 777, **Member of IUCN** - The International Union for Conservation of Nature
The Endangered Wildlife Trust is US 501(c)(3) compliant under **US IRS Registration number:** EMP98-0586801.



aware of the fact that illegal wildlife trade has had devastating effects on a range of other species. In fact, South Africa has lost no less than three cycad species to extinction due to their illegal removal from the wild and trade, with the remaining 35 of our 38 cycad species all being threatened by trade.

Small elusive mammals such as pangolins; marine species such as abalone; plants such as Hoodia; a variety of birds ranging from cranes to vultures; carnivores such as Cheetah and Leopards: none are safe from the ravages of illegal trade in either the whole animal or plant, dead or alive, or their body parts. To demonstrate, all eight pangolin species worldwide (four in Asia and four in Africa) have been assessed as being closer to extinction by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species primarily due to the increasingly industrial scale of illegal trade, with seizures regularly weighing over 100 kg. The illicit trade in wildlife is ranked as the 5th largest illicit trade globally in the 2011 Global Financial Integrity Report and, if you combine wildlife with the value of illegally traded fish and timber, it will rise to 4th place after drugs, counterfeiting and human trafficking.

The illegal wildlife trade has been linked to social disruption, threats to national security and economic instability. It affects the advancement of developing countries and the ability of poorer nations to develop sustainable livelihoods for people living in poverty. The illegal trade in wildlife has also been associated with terrorism and transnational criminal syndicates, fuelling political unrest and economic instability. The extinction of traded species is the most devastating and final consequence.

The problem is not just a global one, and has links much closer to home and every South African can play their part in addressing illegal wildlife trade.

DON'T:

- buy wild animals and pets through online traders;

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- remove plants and animals from the wild (including insects, reptiles, fish, birds and eggs) without valid permits;
- support corruption in any form or fashion; or
- use wildlife products from muthi traders of unknown origin and without seeing valid permits.

DO:

- always ask to see permits for any wild animals in captivity;
- visit parks and reserves that focus on keeping wild animals and plants in the wild;
- report suspected wildlife crime to the Department of Environmental Affairs hotline on 0800 205 005;
- cultivate a love for wildlife and plants alive and well in their natural habitats.

Over and above the theme for this WED, you can still take a few minutes out of your day on Sunday and celebrate our earth. Plant a tree; play in the soil; pick up litter on your street; recycle the batteries and plastic in your trash cans; buy a reusable shopping bag; scoop your bath water onto your lawn; start a compost heap or worm farm; walk to the corner store instead of driving; go hiking in a local nature reserve; or just breathe in fresh clean air and remember how our environment supports us all.

No matter what you do to commemorate this WED, recall the original theme from 1973: “There is Only One Earth” and it is ours alone to love and to protect.

Ends

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NOTES: The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), founded in 1973, is registered as a South African based non-governmental, non-profit organisation dedicated to conserving threatened species and ecosystems in southern and East Africa to the benefit of all people. As a leading high-profile player amongst various conservation organisations, the EWT fills the key niche of conservation action, through applied field-work, research and direct engagement with stakeholders through specialist Programmes and a large team of skilled field staff. See www.ewt.org.za for more.

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