



# ZOOLOGICA



NEWSLETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY

QUEEN MARY'S COLLEGE

APRIL 2024 VOLUME: 25

**WORLD EARTH DAY – 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024**



World Earth Day, also known as International Mother Earth Day, is a globally recognised event dedicated to raising awareness and promoting the sustainability of our planet. The themes for each Earth Day vary, focusing on different aspects of environmental protection and sustainability. The theme for Earth Day 2024 is Planet vs. Plastics, a commitment to call for the end of plastics "for the sake of human and planetary health." The theme's proposed goal is to reduce the production of plastics by 60% in 2040 and ultimately build a plastic-free future. The concept of Earth Day can be traced back to the late 1960s, which saw a surge in public debate over environmental issues, with Rachel Carson's influential book *Silent Spring* (1962) and the Santa Barbara oil spill (1969) raising awareness about environmental destruction. However, it was first accepted in the USA when the UN officially acknowledged it in 1972 after peace activist John McConnell proposed the idea of celebrating a day in honour of the Earth and peace at a 1969 UNESCO conference, where it began as a national teach-in on the environment, led by Senator Gaylord Nelson and activist Denis Hayes.

## WORLD PENGUIN DAY – 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024



World Penguin Day is celebrated every year on April 25. This day is dedicated to spreading the word about these amazing birds, their habitats and the conservation measures needed to keep them safe. The day also aims to promote the special charm of penguins and encourage everyone to work together to ensure their survival for future generations. On this day, organizations, zoos, aquariums and conservation groups around the world organize special events, educational activities and fundraising initiatives to raise awareness about penguins. Penguins are some of the most beautiful, most loved and most impressive creatures in the animal kingdom. World Penguin Day is a celebratory and educational initiative that encourages people to learn more about penguins and their environment, their importance to our ecosystems and the threats they face.

### **History of World Penguin Day**

World Penguin Day takes place during the annual northern migration of Adélie penguins, a species of penguin that is native to Antarctica. Adélie penguins migrate north to have better access to food during the winter months when the sea ice expands and then, during the summer, return to the coastal beaches of Antarctica to build their nests. This annual celebration of penguins was created at McMurdo Station, an American research centre on Ross Island. Researchers noticed that the Adélie penguins began their migration around this day each year, and so they founded World Penguin Day as a way to mark the occasion and raise awareness of these creatures. While the day originated from the Adélie penguin's migration habits, it celebrates all species of penguin and highlights the plight of these water-loving creatures. Of the 17 or so species around today (the total number of species varies depending on how you classify them, but there are at least 17 and possibly as many as 20!), sadly 10 of them have been deemed endangered or vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and 3 are considered near threatened.

## WESTERN GHATS – UNESCO SITE

Western ghats of India also known as the Sahyadri Mountains is declared as the UNESCO world heritage site and top ten “Hottest Biodiversity Hotspots in the world”. This mountain range is older than the Himalayas and consists total of thirty-nine properties which were designated as world heritage sites in 2012, Twenty in the state of Kerala, ten in Karnataka, five in Tamil Nadu and four in Maharashtra. This mountain range is the dwelling abode to many rare species of flora and fauna.



The five world heritage sites of Tamilnadu Western ghats are as follows Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, Srivilliputtur Wildlife Sanctuary, Sathyamangalam Wildlife Sanctuary, Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary and Mukurthi National Park.

The decision will ensure the mountain range gets international support for the conservation of biological diversity, besides containing areas of high geological, cultural, and aesthetic values. Older than the Himalayas, the mountain chain of the Western Ghats influences Indian monsoon weather patterns by intercepting the rain-laden monsoon winds that sweep in from the southwest during late summer. Besides, it is one of the ten hottest biodiversity hotspots in the world as it has over 7,402 species of flowering plants, 1,814 species of non-flowering plants, 139 mammal species, 508 bird species, 179 amphibian species, 6,000 insects species, and 290 freshwater fish species. The Western Ghats are home to at least 325 globally threatened species.

## TWO MORE RAMSAR SITES IN TAMILNADU

A Ramsar site is a wetland site designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, also known as The Convention on Wetlands. It is an international environmental treaty signed on February 2, 1971, in Ramsar, Iran, under the auspices of UNESCO. Two more Ramsar sites, Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary and Longwood Shola Reserve Forest, have been approved by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC). With this, the total number of Ramsar sites in the State has increased to 16, the highest in the country.

The Karaivetti bird sanctuary is located in Ariyalur District, 310 km south of Chennai, covering an area of 453.7 ha. The site serves as the home to more than 500 species of flora and fauna. The sanctuary lies in the Central Asian Flyway and is an important breeding and foraging ground for water bird species. The wetland also helps in irrigation and recharging of the groundwater of the area.



The Longwood Shola Reserve Forest is located in the Nilgiris District, covering an area of 116.007 ha. It serves as the home for more than 700 species of flora and fauna. Out of 177 bird species found in the site, 14 species are endemic to the Western Ghats. The area is rich in herpetofauna diversity, with several species being endemic to the Western Ghats and also considered threatened species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.



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