

2010 the International Year of Biodiversity.

The United Nations General Assembly declared that 2010 will be the International Year of Biodiversity in order to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity all over the world.

Biodiversity is the term used to describe the variety of life on Earth. It includes every plant and animal as well as micro-organisms such as bacteria and viruses.

Our lives are intertwined with nature. We use plants and animals to produce our food, drink, clothing, building materials, fuel and medicines. Living systems also provide the services we take for granted such as clean air, fresh water, and fertile soil, breakdown of natural waste, plant pollination and regulation of climate. Biodiversity is all around us and it shapes and enriches our way of life.

Yet this rich diversity is being lost at a greatly accelerated rate because of human activities. This impoverishes us all and weakens the ability of the living systems on which we depend to resist growing threats such as climate change. The threats to species and ecosystems include habitat destruction, over-exploitation of natural resources, pollution, the introduction of alien species, climate change and increasing demands on nature from rising human populations. We need to act now to halt the current trend of the loss of biodiversity and to ensure a quality of life for future generations.

Here are some action ideas: Create a wildflower meadow or plant a window box, enjoy the seasons and the changes by going for walks, don't mow your lawn as an untidy garden encourages wildlife, learn how to identify 12 birds this year, get down and dirty and gain new practical skills, such as horticultural conservation, recycling, or clean up a local river, go on a tree hunt, eat organic foods, visit a local flower show for gardening ideas, get out of the office and offer opportunities for groups of employees to undertake team tasks such as pond-building or maintenance, fence or path construction, clearing invasive scrub, cutting or planting trees, monitoring and conserving your local wildlife, and by join a botanical society.

Saving biodiversity requires effort from everyone. This year is our chance to learn more about the rich tapestry of life around us and to discover why it's important for a healthy environment.

Article compiled by Jeanette Stewart. 079 184 5011
enviro.education@telkomsa.net