



**22<sup>nd</sup> May - The International Day for Biological Diversity.** This month the focus is back on biodiversity. Biodiversity is the number, variety, and variability of living organisms – is not just about plants, animals, microorganisms and their ecosystems, but also about humans and their needs such as food security, clean air and water, and a healthy environment.

Humankind relies on diversity as it provides us with food, fuel, medicine and other essentials which we need to survive. Biodiversity is the key to reducing poverty as it provides goods such as food, fibre and medicine and services such as air and water purification, climate regulation, erosion control and nutrient cycling. Biodiversity also plays an important role in economic sectors that drive development, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism.

Invasive Alien Species (plants, animals, pathogens and organisms which are not indigenous to an ecosystem) are one of the greatest threats to biodiversity. These species adversely impact indigenous species through competition, predation, or transmission of pathogens, resulting in a decline or elimination of native species and disrupting local ecosystems. This damage is aggravated by climate change, pollution, habitat loss as well as human-induced disturbance.

The rich variety of life on Earth has always had to deal with a changing climate. However, the unprecedented pace of change we are presently experiencing is so rapid that a great number of species can not adapt fast enough to the new conditions, change their reproductive timings due to changes in lengths of growing seasons for plants, or move to regions more suited for their survival due to habitat fragmentation.

As one of the best researched taxa, birds serve as vital indicators for the state of biodiversity and the biological health of the ecosystems they inhabit. If a bird species becomes threatened with extinction it is often a clear sign that the conditions of the required habitats have changed and that other species that depend on them may also be affected.

LEARNING THROUGH NATURE has designed practical activities especially for schools and conservancies: Celebrating our earth, learning about biodiversity, discovering our environment, understanding desertification, celebrating our heritage, greening our school, greening our classroom and getting to grips with climate change.

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