

World Environment Day 5 June 2016

This day is celebrated each year as the principal vehicle for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the environment.

Despite the absolute value of such a day, the way in which the day is described presents somewhat of a problem for all who are seeing the human as part of an intricate web of life sustaining systems. To speak of 'the' environment is to suggest that we are separate from it and this is not so. The wonderfully reciprocal process of green plants breathing out oxygen for our lungs and we breathing out carbon dioxide for theirs illustrates that Earth's systems and ourselves are inseparable.

That said, there is still much good done each year around the theme of this United Nations Day. In 2106 the focus is on illegal trade in wild life under the heading of ***Go Wild with Life***



According to the UNEP website, this year's World Environment Day celebrations are hosted by Angola, a country seeking to restore its elephant herds, conserve Africa's biodiversity-rich wildlife, and safeguard its ecosystems as it continues to rebuild after more than a quarter-century of civil war. The country has pristine coastline as well as forests and grasslands.

The wildlife includes lions, great apes and giant sable antelope, a critically endangered species found only in Angola and listed as critically endangered by the International Union of Conservation of Nature. Bird life includes African Grey Parrots, whose decline across the continent is widely blamed on their illegal harvesting for the pet trade.

The illegal wildlife trade, particularly the trade in ivory and rhino horn, is a major problem across the African continent. By hosting this day of celebration and awareness-raising, Angola aims to send a clear message that such practices will soon be eradicated.



Whilst these vitally important actions are being taken in Angola and elsewhere, we might mark World Environment Day on Sunday 5 June this year by visiting a favourite tree and spending a little time beside it breathing in and out our prayers of gratitude for its gifts. As Hildegard says 'Prayer is nothing but the breathing in and the breathing out of the one breath of the Universe'.