

Earth Day 2020

Earth Day is a global event that happens every year on 22nd April. The first Earth Day was held in America in 1970. Around 20 million Americans rose up to march for the environment, and now, 50 years later, 1 billion people from over 192 countries are taking action to protect and preserve our planet.



What Is the Aim of Earth Day?

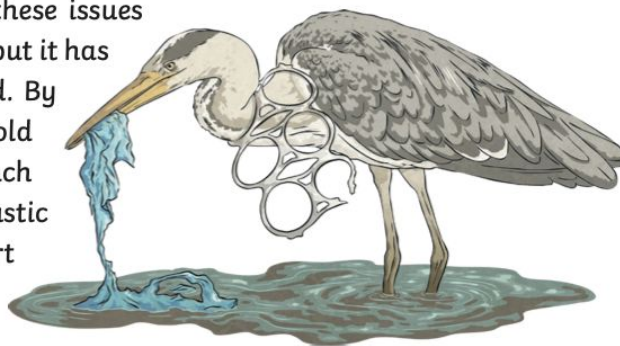
The theme for Earth Day 2020 is Climate Action. A worldwide clean-up of the planet's green and urban spaces has been organised. It is hoped to be one of the largest volunteer events in history. In addition to this campaign, people are organising climate change rallies and protests. Hopefully, these events will inspire schools, governments, businesses and individuals to take action to protect our planet and move towards a zero-carbon future.



There are lots of ways YOU can help the environment this Earth Day.


Our Plastic Problem

In the UK, we throw away around 295 billion pieces of plastic yearly. Plastic doesn't biodegrade and lots of it still can't be recycled. This is having a devastating impact on marine life. A recent study found that 90% of the world's seabirds and more than 50% of the world's sea turtles have plastic in their stomachs. Shockingly, plastic is even finding its way into the stomachs of marine mammals, including whales and dolphins. In recent years there has been growing concern that plastic also has a negative impact on the health of humans. As they break down, tiny pieces of plastic can end up in our food and water. Scientists predict that these issues could lead to health problems, but it has not yet been widely researched. By carefully sorting your household rubbish to recycle as much as possible and reusing plastic products, you can do your part to solve the plastic problem.



What's the Buzz?

Plants are a vital part of our planet's ecosystem. They take warming gases like carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and provide food for important pollinating insects, like bees. These stripy, furry fliers ensure that a variety of plants grow by carrying pollen from one plant to another. They are incredibly important in our fragile ecosystem. It is because of bees that many species of plants are pollinated in forests, meadows and other ecosystems, producing a variety of fruits that serve as food for many wild animals. Destruction of habitat, change in weather due to climate change and the use of chemicals called pesticides are causing numbers of bees to decline rapidly. Help protect this crucial species from extinction by creating a bee-friendly habitat, either in your back garden or in your local area.



Follow these tips to attract as many bees as possible.

- Choose flowers with one flower top, such as daisies and marigolds;
- Avoid using pesticides in your garden;
- Plant different types of flowers that bloom at different times to attract bees from spring to autumn.

Eat Less Meat

Deforestation and the destruction of natural habitats to make space for farm animals to graze is having a devastating impact on the planet. Studies suggest that switching to a plant-based diet would be more sustainable and would reduce the amount of land required for agriculture by up to 70%. Interestingly, it appears that a plant-based diet would also have a positive impact on emissions of warming gases, also known as greenhouse gases. The amount of energy from fossil fuels used to produce a calorie of animal protein is more than 11 times higher than the amount used to produce the same amount of grain protein. It is believed by some experts that switching to a plant-based diet on a worldwide scale would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 49%. See if you can convince your family to reduce the amount of meat they eat - there are lots of creative and delicious alternatives being developed every year!

The Future

In November 2020, the UK will host the 26th UN Conference about climate change. Over 30,000 delegates, including heads of state, climate experts and campaigners, will come together to agree on a united approach to addressing climate change. Everyone agrees that the time is now to take action against climate change - what part will you play?



Questions

1. When was the first Earth Day held? Tick **one**.

- 22nd April 2019
- 22nd April 2000
- 22nd April 1990
- 22nd April 1970

2. Match the section of the text to the summary of its contents.

Our Plastic Problem ●

● A plant-based diet may prove to be more sustainable for the planet.

Eat Less Meat ●

● Campaigners want people all over the world to take action against climate change.

What Is the Aim of Earth Day? ●

● Plastic waste is causing problems for humans and animals.

3. What percentage of sea turtles were found to have plastic in their stomachs?

4. Why does the text say we should protect the bees?

5. Do you think that the Earth Day organisers are succeeding in their mission to raise awareness of climate change? Explain your answer.

6. Summarise what you have read in the 'Our Plastic Problem' section.

7. Read the **What's the Buzz?** section.

What do you think the words '**decline rapidly**' mean and why do you think the author chose this language?

8. Discuss why it might be difficult for people to switch to a plant-based diet.

9. Do you think that the UN conference in 2020 will be successful? Explain your answer.

10. '**Everyone agrees that the time is now to take action against climate change - what part will you play?**'

Why do you think the author ended the text with this sentence?
