



Exploring the Wild Side Responsibly

Observed annually on August 31, National Zoo Awareness Day highlights the vital role zoos play in wildlife conservation, education, and animal welfare. It's a day to reflect on how modern zoos are evolving beyond entertainment to become sanctuaries for endangered species and centers for scientific research. The occasion encourages people to visit their local zoos, learn about animal habitats, and support ethical practices that prioritize the well-being of animals. By raising awareness, the day aims to foster a deeper connection between humans and wildlife, ensuring a more compassionate and sustainable future for all species.

#ALEXANDRINE

Meet India's Largest Parrot



Alexandrine enjoys urban life, city parks, gardens, and historical ruin where greenery is abundant, lush Lodi Gardens offer the perfect perch!



When it comes to parrots in India, one species stands out for its impressive size and regal bearing, the Alexandrine parrot. Named after Alexander the Great, this bird truly lives up to its majestic title, ruling the forests and wild spaces of India with a presence that's hard to miss. But don't be fooled into thinking that it's just a creature of the wilderness. The Alexandrine also enjoys urban life, often found perched in city parks, gardens, and even the occasional historical ruin where greenery is abundant. If you're in Delhi, the lush Lodi Gardens offer the perfect perch for this feathered badshah (king).

Parrot or Parakeet? Clearing Up the Confusion

One of the common debates among bird enthusiasts and nature lovers is the difference between parrots and parakeets. It's easy to get confused, especially since many birds casually called 'parakeets' in India are actually parrots in the scientific sense. Here's the truth: all of India's so-called parakeets belong to the order Psittacordea, a group that includes all true parrots worldwide. The term 'parakeet' is mostly a common name used to describe small-

er parrots with long tails. In fact, in the United States, the word 'parakeet' usually refers to species like the budgerigar and cockatiel. Meanwhile, the rose-ringed parakeet you see in India is known in America as the Indian ring-neck parrot. The Alexandrine is a perfect example of this overlap. Due to its large size and striking appearance, it's often called both a 'parakeet' and a 'parrot' depending on who you ask. But scientifically, it's a true parrot, one of the largest in India.

Survivors and Global Travellers

Beyond taxonomy, what's truly fascinating about the Alexandrine is its resilience and adaptability. These birds are incredible survivors, reclaiming their native habitats across India despite increasing urbanization and habitat loss. Their ability to thrive in both wild and urban settings makes them a symbol of nature's tenacity. Interestingly, the Alexandrine has also become something of a global traveller, establishing

invasive populations in parts of Europe and West Asia. This spread is often traced back to the exotic pet trade, a karmic twist attributed to Kamadeva, the god of love in Hindu mythology, who might just be paying the price for human fascination with these beautiful birds. From the green canopies of Indian forests to the rooftops of European cities, the Alexandrine parrot is truly an avian Alexander, bold, majestic, and far-reaching.



What is BRICS?

#WORLD ORDER

Kshema Jatuhkarna

The grouping was invented in 2001 by a Goldman Sachs banker to describe a group of fast-growing developing countries. The foreign ministers of the countries, initially just Brazil, Russia, India, and China, began informally meeting in 2006, and had their first formal summit in 2009.

South Africa joined in 2010. Many more countries have sought to join the BRICS orbit since the 2023 expansion, which China championed. But not all were so eager: Argentina declined the invitation after a change of government, and Saudi Arabia has

not officially joined despite an invitation. Today, its members account for more than 35 per cent of global economic output, adjusted by purchasing power. BRICS has long sought to present a united front against what its members see as an unbalanced global order that is dominated by the United States and Western Europe. Some members believe "that the current global order is kind of made by the West, for the West," said Stewart Patrick, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. This summit will also be an opportunity for BRICS to show off its new roster, weighted Egypt and the Emirates have grown closer with China, while also working with the United States and Israel on regional security. Brazil, a strong proponent of de-dollarization, still relies heavily on the U.S., which is its second-largest trading partner. "These are not anti-West, but they do have cri-



What about the 'Global South'?

Many BRICS members are trying to balance competing alliances and priorities. They still work closely with the United States and other nations in the West, even as they seek to gain more global leverage. India, which has touted its strategic multi-alignment, is also in the Quad, a security partnership with Australia, Japan, and the United States. Egypt and the Emirates have grown closer with China, while also working with the United States and Israel on regional security. Brazil, a strong proponent of de-dollarization, still relies heavily on the U.S., which is its second-largest trading partner. "These are not anti-West, but they do have cri-

tiques of the current order and they want to hedge their bets," said Mr. Shidore. Participation in BRICS is partially an economic bet. Some members, as well as the would-be partner states, are also looking for alternative sources of financing. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are dominated by the West, especially the United States. Some developing countries see the BRICS development bank as less demanding. It has given out billions of dollars in loans, and allows repayments in local currency. But many members also see BRICS as geopolitical insurance against a shifting world, and a hedge against the unpredictability of the United States. The uncertainty around the presidential election only adds to the sense of uncertainty. Dr. Patrick said: "The United States has shown that it's able to upend its foreign policy 180 degrees, depending on the occupant of the White House."



What holds the group together?

It's not easy to pigeonhole the BRICS. The group includes some countries that are allies, but also some that are antagonists and rivals. Some of the countries are opposed to the United States (Russia, Iran); others are recipients of U.S. military aid (Egypt) and hosts to U.S. military bases (U.A.E.). Some members are democracies; many are not. Ethiopia is a poor country; China is the world's second-biggest economy. Some states produce oil and gas; others import their energy. They do not share a religion or fight the same wars, either except, perhaps, against each other. Last month, for instance, tensions escalated between Ethiopia and Egypt in a longstanding dispute over a

hydroelectric dam on the Nile River. Sarang Shidore, Director of the Global South program at the Quincy Institute in Washington, described the BRICS as something like a two-pronged coalition. He calls one side the 'Global East,' China, Russia and, at times, Iran, which are rivals or antagonists of the United States and NATO. Many of the other countries in the bloc fit more comfortably into the category of 'Global South.' They tend to be more neutral or outright U.S. allies.

What does the 'Global East' want?

China is a major U.S. rival. Russia and Iran, U.S. adversaries, are subject to tough Western sanctions and are fighting proxy wars with the West in Ukraine and the Middle East. Together, these three countries hope to present a more united bloc to counter the West. Mr. Putin is also determined to show the West that he is not alone, and has important allies on his side. Mr. Putin presents his country's war in Ukraine as the spearhead of destroying the old world order and helping to build a new one, said Alexander Gabuev, Director of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center in Berlin. "And BRICS is the most potent and representative structure of this new world order." One additional goal: reducing

global reliance on the U.S. dollar. Reducing the dollar's dominance could give members insulation from Western sanctions, both now and in the future. "These sanctions only work because the dollar dominates the world," Mr. Shidore said. "It is an attempt to insulate from the dollar's hegemony." For now, the goal is mostly aspirational. There is no clear agreement as to what could replace the dollar. Experts are also skeptical that any new BRICS-specific currency would be stable enough to be trusted for cross-border transactions.

What does China want?

China, which championed the expansion, is seen as the unofficial powerhouse of BRICS. "Nothing happens in the BRICS that goes against the national interests of China," said Jacob Kirkegaard, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. China and Russia are close, even though they sometimes compete for influence. China has been a key trading partner for Russia during the war in Ukraine. Recently, the two countries have grown bolder: Their militaries have held joint exercises near the U.S., Japan and Taiwan. China also buys nearly all of Iran's oil exports. Any loss of supply from Iran, because of a military strike by Israel, for example, would have China turning to global markets for even more of its energy needs. And China and India are in a reassessment period. The countries, which have fought several wars against each other, also see each other as potential future adversaries. India's population is growing; China's is shrinking. India is buoyed by economic optimism; China's growth has been lackluster. But after many Indian and Chinese soldiers died in border disputes, the countries seem to be trying to work out a truce. Some analysts are watching to see if their leaders are friendly at the summit, which could be a sign of warming ties.

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#TRIED AND TASTED

Corn Bursts And Banana Flapjacks



Banana flapjacks are sweet, fluffy, and a total treat for kids. They're healthier than regular flapjacks and so simple to make!

How to keep your small children entertained and confined to indoors, on a rainy day. That's a problem? No, take them to your kitchen and treat them to a snazzy lesson on filling up on tasties.

Corn Burst

Corn burst is a fast, flavourful snack that's healthy and so easy to throw together. It's a rainy day game-changer!

Ingredients

- 1 cup boiled sweet corn kernels
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 small tomato, chopped
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp chaat masala
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves, chopped

Method

- Mix the corn, onion, and tomato in a bowl.
- Add lemon juice, chaat masala, and salt, then stir well.
- Sprinkle coriander on top and serve.

This snack is a burst of flavour that's ready before the rain stops!



Banana Flapjacks

Banana flapjacks are sweet, fluffy, and a total treat for kids. They're healthier than regular flapjacks and so simple to make!

Ingredients

- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 ripe banana, mashed
- 1 cup milk
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- A pinch of salt
- Oil for cooking

Method

- Mix the flour, mashed banana, milk, sugar, baking powder, and salt into a smooth batter.
- Heat a non-stick pan and add a little oil.

3. Pour a small amount of batter and cook until bubbles form on top.

4. Flip and cook until golden brown.

5. Serve with honey or a drizzle of syrup.

These flapjacks are a sweet way to brighten up any rainy day!

Rainy days don't have to be boring with these amazing snacks in your kitchen! They're quick, healthy, and so delicious that your kids will be begging for more. You'll feel confident knowing that you're giving them something good, and they'll love every bite. Next time, the rain starts pouring, pick one of these recipes and make some happy memories with your little ones!

Fruity Delight



This fruity delight is a colourful snack that's as fun to make as it is to eat. It's a sneaky way to get kids excited about fruit!

Ingredients

- 1 apple, diced
- 1 banana, sliced
- 1 orange, peeled and segmented
- 1/2 cup grapes, halved
- 1/2 tsp chaat masala
- 1 tbsp lemon juice

Method

- Mix all the fruits in a bowl.
- Sprinkle chaat masala and drizzle lemon juice on top.
- Stir gently and serve fresh.

It's sweet, tangy, and ready in minutes, perfect for a quick snack!

Oats Mini Cakes

These oats mini cakes are a healthy spin on a classic Indian dish. They're soft, fluffy, and great for kids!

Ingredients

- 1 cup oats, ground into powder
- 1/2 cup semolina
- 1/2 cup yogurt
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- Salt to taste
- 1/2 cup grated carrots
- 1/4 cup chopped coriander

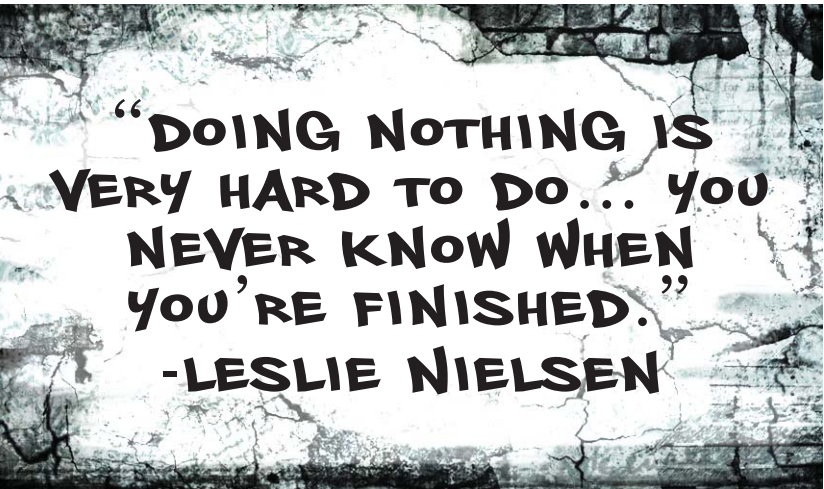
Method

- Combine oats powder, semolina, yogurt, water, baking soda, and salt into a batter.
- Stir in the carrots and coriander.
- Grease small molds and pour in the batter.
- Steam for 10-12 minutes until done.
- Serve with a dip like coconut chutney.

These mini cakes are a wholesome treat that kids will ask for again and again!



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman