



Garden Wildlife Week

Garden Wildlife Week, observed in the first week of June, is a lively celebration of the natural world found in our gardens. This week encourages people to appreciate and protect the birds, insects, and plants in their backyards. The celebration highlights the vital role that these creatures play in keeping our environment healthy. The week promotes awareness about the importance of fostering wildlife-friendly habitats. Gardens can be havens for a variety of creatures. People are encouraged to create safe spaces by planting native flowers and installing bird feeders. This helps animals thrive in urban settings.

#HEATWAVE-ALERT

Avoid eye stroke, dry eye syndrome or allergies in summer

As temperatures soar and days lengthen, your eyes may feel gritty, sore, and tired. Blurry vision, burning, and watering can indicate eye strain from heatwaves. The intense heat affects your eyes as well as your skin.



Heatwaves can harm eye health, causing dryness, irritation, and blurred vision. Intense heat and UV exposure can lead to sunburn of the eye and worsen dry eye syndrome. Dehydration reduces tear production, increasing dryness and discomfort. High pollen counts can trigger allergic reactions, making eyes red, itchy, and watery.

- Extreme temperatures and UV radiation during heatwaves can lead to several eye conditions, including:
 - Dry eye syndrome:** High temperatures and dehydration reduce tear production, leading to dryness, irritation, and a gritty sensation.
 - Eye allergies:** Heatwaves often coincide with higher pollen counts, which can trigger allergic reactions, causing red, itchy, and watery eyes.
 - Stye:** A common issue, arising from heat exposure, is the development of a stye, a small, painful, red lump, that typically emerges from the base of the eyelash or the eyelid. This condition can cause discomfort and requires attention to reduce symptoms and prevent further complications.

Here are some effective tips to protect your eyes from the harsh rays and the above eye conditions.

Wear UV blocking sunglasses: Just like you protect your skin with sunscreen, shielding your eyes from harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays is also important. Prolonged exposure to UV rays can increase the risk of cataracts and macular degeneration. Invest in high-quality sunglasses that block 99-100 per cent of both UVA and UVB rays. Polarised lenses are a bonus as they reduce glare, making it easier to see on bright days.

Keep your eyes moisturised: Heatwaves often lead to dehydration, which can reduce tear production and cause dry eyes. Ensure that you drink plenty of water throughout the day. Using artificial tears or lubricating eye drops can also help maintain moisture levels in your eyes.

Limit exposure to AC: While air conditioning provides much-needed relief



from the heat, it can also dry out the air and your eyes. Taking breaks from air-conditioned environments can also help maintain your eyes' natural moisture balance.

Watch what you eat: Your diet plays a significant role in eye health. Foods, rich in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins C and E, and zinc can help reduce the risk of age-related vision problems, and keep your eyes healthy. Include plenty of leafy greens, fish, nuts, and fruits into your meals to give your eyes the nutrients they need, to combat heatwave-induced stress.

Practice eye hygiene: Wash your hands frequently. With increased outdoor activities during heatwaves, sweat and environmental pollutants can easily irritate your eyes. It can introduce bacteria and cause infections like conjunctivitis or styes. Wearing a hat or cap with a brim can also provide additional protection against the sun and reduce the amount of sweat and debris that reaches your eyes.

Take a screen-break: Staring at digital screens for extended periods can exacerbate eye strain, especially in the heat. Follow the 20-20-20 rule, 'every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.' This practice helps reduce eye strain and gives your eyes a chance to rest and recover.



Either We Of Flamingoes

Time and again, environmental problems are neglected and avoided stating lack of infrastructure, facilities, dedicated workforce, etc. What we believe is that a problem, minor and easily resolvable at one point, only aggravates and becomes a big challenge, when it is not dealt with at the budding stage. It is high time that forest administration and deputation of work is done in a way that it actually puts an end to troubles and punishes the troublemakers. If, Nalsarovar, a site of national and international importance turns into a 'mortuary' instead of a haven for the birds, who will be answerable for the devastation?



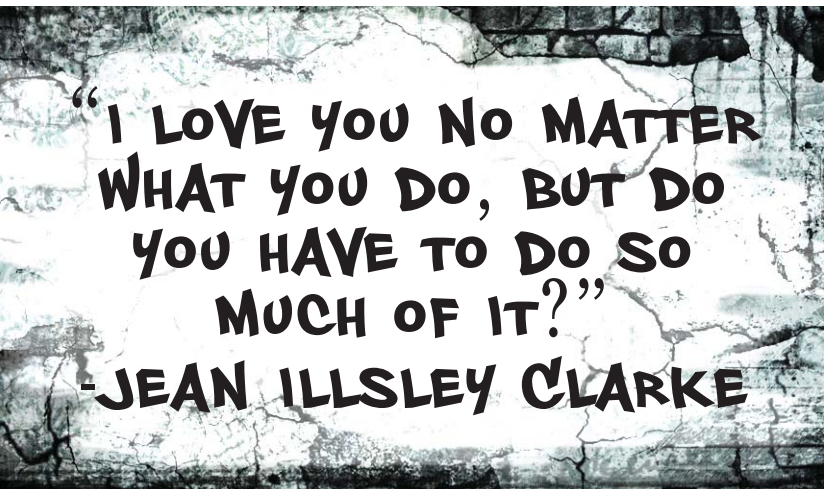
On one hand, we have bird-lovers and conservationists taking huge efforts to conserve the migratory birds and provide a suitable environment for their sustained survival, and on the other, are the so-called 'educated' predators, who crave for their meat and habitat.

Clearly, a lot needs to be done to sensitize the masses on respecting the diversity of our planet and giving them a chance to exist. It was reported around 2011 that the beautiful flamingoes, feeding and breeding in India's Western state of Gujarat, are the latest wildlife species, that may soon lose their homes to urban development. The state government had plans to construct a concrete road right through the *Kutch wildlife Sanctuary*, jeopardizing the lives of flamingoes and wild ass population of the area. The area under threat is known as the only breeding colony of flamingoes in India. As per reports, the Wildlife experts, associated with *National Board of Wildlife*, had firmly said a no to the project, when the proposal was brought for discussion.

The 'mudflats' of *Rann of Kutch* is a unique habitat home to some endemic species of India. Nowhere else in South Asia, both greater and lesser flamingoes congregate for breeding. The road plan, though, could have directly killed the entire fragile ecosystem, in turn harming the flamingoes, wild ass and many other flora and fauna of



THE WALL



Bamboo poles hold the net.



Unsuspecting birds get trapped.



Brutal blow on the head.



Taken away to become meal.

Killer Webs

During the winter months between September and February, when birds flying from Siberia and Central Europe flock the water body. Greater flamingoes are, undoubtedly, the most attractive of these winter visitors.

Sadly, the birds, that fly thousands of miles to get respite

from the chilly winter of their home country, face untimely and a brutal death on arrival to this sanctuary. Fishing nets, that seem harmless, stuck on two bamboo poles erected on the water body, are actually the death traps for the flying avian. Birds, swooping on the lake

floor, accidentally get caught in them. Once the birds are caught, they are either killed or their wings and legs are broken. The officials say that they have sometimes caught local villagers in the process of tying the nets, but most of them get away saying that the nets are for fishing pur-

poses only. The birds are most commonly caught for food. Admitting that there is staff crisis, a senior forest department official said that Nal Sarovar is so large, it is spread over two districts of Gujarat, Ahmedabad and Surendranagar. There is nothing that the forest guards can do against the villagers who poach with impunity.

#FLYING AWAY



Flamingo Birds, Bishnoi village, near Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India.

A Mortuary

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Coming back to our state and the problems at our end, the following factors have been attributed for the threatening of wetland eco-system of *Sambhar lake*,

PART:2

5. Dead algae in the brine contributed to the total organic carbon in the salt. To revive the present condition, rainwater should reach to the lake from the catchment area. However, during summer, the lake will completely become dry and the salt, deposited in the lakebed, will also be dried. In Rajasthan, in that particular area, there is lot of gale, storms, and heavy stormy wind during the month of May and June, which will take the salt through wind to nearby area, and that area will also become salty. These observations are discussed in the light of available field data on Sambhar salt lake.

The production of salt has also declined, which appears to be largely due to algal contamination of ponds (Lall, 1987). Despite its importance, water-fowl habitat, Sambhar, is known as a source of salt. It is the amongst the largest producers of salt in India, about 2.5 lakh MT is being extracted annually by *Sambhar Salts Limited* from surface water of lake and over 15 lakh to 20 lakh MT by private sectors by sub-soil brine by making borewells. Almost 8,000 ha. area of the lake has been appropriately given to salt pans. The plans to increase the salt production threaten to further disturb the lake's ecosystem.

In 1985, a flood situation occurred in Sambhar, which resulted in increasing the fishery resources, thus, inviting winged visitors to this lake. Later on, the situation remained for a year and due to high productivity, fishery resources were increased, and also marketed. In 1992, again, the lake experienced a very heavy rain. The fishery resources were again increased and after survival in the first stage, when the salinity increased to 1 to 1.2° Be, the fisheries were thinned out and ultimately died, and it had no commercial value. With the lapse of time, the salt content increased and diversity of the organisms decreased. The green algae, which were dominating initially in the fresh water, have completely disappeared. The flamingoes, which were visiting lake during the season, have migrated to the other feeding ground. When the river water increased in salinity, the density also increased, with a result that the leading salt manufacturers were tapping the resource and some low and marginal salt producers were also drawing the brine at the periphery of the salt lake from subsoil for salt production. The salt production became a lucrative business, with a production capacity of 2.5 lakh MT by Sambhar Salts Limited, by surface water of lake and about 15 to 20 lakh MT by private sector, by tapping sub-soil brine on the periphery of lake. The irony of the situation is that whatever is being done, ultimately salt is obtained as product. Effluent, in the form of bitter, instead of draining outside or using for another activity either biological or chemical, is recycled in the resource itself and the quality of salt gradually decreases. In addition, the lake is contaminated with the other organic compounds, which get mixed with the fine silt of the lake, decreasing the quality of salt.

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



#AROUND-D-WORLD

World's Most Beautiful Castles

Romantic and somewhat mystical, places that spark our imagination and conjure visions of long-ago knights...

What is it about castles that fascinates so many people around the globe? A lot of the allure derives from the history and human drama, that played out within the walls, as well as the astonishing architecture that features on so many castles. But they're also romantic and somewhat mystical, places that spark our imagination and conjure visions of long-ago knights in shining armour and powerful warrior queens.

What makes a castle 'a castle' is that it combines the functions of defence and dwelling. It's a fortification and a stately home, rolled into one. Creating a building, which is both comfortable and defensible, is difficult. The ingenious ways, in which castle-designers reconciled this balance, is always intriguing.

Although, we normally associate castles with European history, it's actually an architectural form found around the world, in nations as varied as Japan and India, Morocco and Mexico.

Many are now hubs of living history, where modern visitors can watch jousting and other ancient combat forms, listen to medieval music or watch artisans demonstrate the arts, crafts and everyday skills of a thousand years ago.

Read on to find out more about some of the world's most beautiful castles, fortified homes that are both, a feast for the eyes and a time trip back to the bygone age during which they were created.

Kalmar Castle, Sweden

Founded in the waning years of the Viking Age, *Kalmar Castle* traces its roots to a 12th-century defensive tower, overlooking the Kalmar Strait on the Baltic Sea. Four centuries later, King Gustaf and his sons transformed Kalmar into a splendid royal residence that (with the help of renovation) looks much the same today as it did in 1592.

Amber Fortress, India

Constructed in the early 17th century by the Mughal ruler of Rajasthan, the *Amber Fortress* crowns a hilltop near Jaipur, its stout walls reflected in the waters of Maota Lake. The palace complex, inside the walls, revolves around courtyards flanked by exquisite



Pena Palace, Portugal

Another offspring of the Romantic Movement that swept 19th-century Europe, *Pena* crowns a hilltop near Sintra, Portugal. Commissioned by King Ferdinand II on the site of a ruined monastery, dedicated to the Virgin of Pena, the castle is a flamboyant blend of

various historic styles including Gothic, Moorish and Renaissance details. The castle's vivid red-and-yellow colour pattern, and its flashy clock tower endow Pena with a much more playful air than the somber castles found elsewhere in Europe.

Palace of the Grand Master of the Knights of Rhodes, Greece

This classic medieval castle towers above the island of Rhodes in the Aegean Sea. Originally built as a Byzantine citadel, it was reworked into its present Gothic form by the crusading Knights of St. John, when Rhodes served as the headquarters of their grandmaster. During the brief Italian occupation of the Dodecanese Islands, Benito Mussolini used the castle as a holiday home. Its permanent archaeological exhibitions feature relics from ancient Greece and the early Christian period.

Ksar of Ait-Ben-Haddou, Morocco

This massive mudbrick structure, on the edge of the Sahara, has lasted in more than a dozen movies and television shows, including 'Game of Thrones,' 'Gladiator' and 'The Man Who Would Be King.' The complex features a fortified lower town along the Asif Ounila river, where people still reside, and a partially ruined hilltop citadel. Berber-style guest houses provide accommodation for visitors to a ksar, originally built in the 17th century as an overnight stop for caravans, travelling between Marrakech and the Sudan.

Himeji Castle, Japan



Located about 30 minutes by bullet train, west of Osaka and Kobe, *Himeji* rises above the Inland Sea and is considered the epitome of the Japanese feudal castle. Both, a Japanese national treasure and World Heritage Site, the elegant whitewashed structure is also called 'White Heron Castle' because of its resemblance to a great bird taking flight. Completed in the early 17th century, Himeji offers daily guided tours in Japanese and English.

BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman