



Contact

Wildlife Madagascar

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Embracing Diversity:
Celebrating the Inaugural International Chameleon Day
to Protect Nature's Masters of Disguise**

ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar (May 9, 2024) — Wildlife Madagascar proudly announces the inaugural International Chameleon Day, to be celebrated annually on May 9th. International Chameleon Day is a global initiative aimed at honoring and raising awareness about one of the planet's most unique and captivating reptiles—the chameleon. This special day serves as a platform to highlight the remarkable diversity of chameleon species, shed light on the significant challenges they face in the wild and issue a chameleon call to action to inspire conservation efforts on behalf of this unique reptile.

Chameleons, known for their ability to change color and their distinctive features, are a vital component of various ecosystems, particularly in Madagascar, where approximately half of world's chameleon species are found. Unfortunately, nearly 80 species of chameleons are currently classified as threatened by the IUCN Red List, facing various challenges such as habitat loss, climate change and illegal trade.

This first celebration in 2024 aims to draw attention to these issues and mobilize efforts to protect these remarkable reptiles and their natural habitats. International Chameleon Day provides a unique opportunity for individuals, conservation organizations and communities worldwide to come together, share knowledge and take action to safeguard the future of chameleons.

"We are thrilled to launch International Chameleon Day as a platform to raise awareness about the conservation challenges facing chameleons," said Tojo "Lytah" Razafimahefa, Country Director of Wildlife Madagascar. "By dedicating a day to celebrate chameleons, Wildlife Madagascar hopes to inspire collective action and advocacy to ensure the survival of these incredible creatures."

International Chameleon Day invites people to appreciate the beauty and uniqueness of chameleons while encouraging a sense of responsibility for their conservation and the preservation of their habitats. Through these collective efforts, it is envisioned that International Chameleon Day will contribute significantly to the global mission of protecting these mesmerizing reptiles for generations to come.

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Wildlife Madagascar has developed a comprehensive educational packet focused specifically on chameleons to engage and inspire students around the world about these unique reptiles. The packet includes interactive activities, fun worksheets, captivating coloring sheets and informative fact sheets, all designed to provide valuable insights into the world of chameleons. Available in English, French and Malagasy, these resources can be downloaded from the Wildlife Madagascar website at www.wildlifemadagascar.org.

"International Chameleon Day serves as a powerful reminder of the critical need for collaboration among the scientific, conservation and education communities," said Dr. Tim Eppley, Chief Conservation Officer of Wildlife Madagascar. "By joining forces, we can amplify our advocacy efforts and work toward a common goal of protecting chameleons and their habitats. Together, we can inspire greater awareness, foster a deeper understanding of these incredible reptiles and drive meaningful action."

The importance of this day and the work that the following conservation organizations conduct to ensure a future for chameleons and other reptiles can't be understated. Joining Wildlife Madagascar and the chameleon call to action are these partners: Abraham Foundation, Aspinall Foundation, Association Mitsinjo, Caméléon Center Conservation, Centre ValBio, Chester Zoo, Conservation Fusion, Dublin Zoo, Duke Lemur Center, Frank Glaw of the Bavarian State Collection of Zoology in Munich (SNSB), Full Forests at Montclair State University, Israel Nature and Parks Authority, IUCN SSC Chameleon Specialist Group, Lemur Conservation Foundation, Lemur Conservation Association (AEECL), Lemur Conservation Network, Madagascar Biodiversity Partnership, Madagascar Fauna and Flora Group (MFG), Madagasikara Voakajy, Mention Zoologie et Biodiversité Animale at the Université d'Antananarivo, Mikajy Natiora, Planet Madagascar, Sciences Agronomiques & Environnementales at the Université d'Antsiranana, Section of Herpetology at the National Museums of Kenya, SEED Madagascar, The Dr. Abigail Ross Foundation for Applied Conservation, University of Cumbria, University of Hamburg, University of Lomé, University of South Dakota, Vinako4Madagascar, Wildlife Conservation Society-Madagascar, World Wide Fund for Nature -Madagascar, Zoo Knoxville, Zoo Vienna and Zoo Zürich.

Wildlife Madagascar encourages everyone to join in on International Chameleon Day and be a champion for reptile conservation worldwide. Following are many ways that individuals can make a meaningful difference for chameleons and other reptiles.

- Take a stand for endangered chameleons by supporting one of the organizations dedicated to their preservation, especially those that work with local community efforts to conserve chameleons and their natural habitats.
- Visit zoos to see these fascinating reptiles up close, and, if possible, travel to places where you can see wild chameleons in their natural habitats.
- Opt for responsible tourism with ecotours that showcase nature through hikes and reptile- and bird-watching adventures.

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- Explore your local nature park to learn about native reptiles and compare them with the fascinating chameleons. Many natural history museums have hiking programs and guided tours.
- Transform your yard into a reptile-friendly haven by planting native plants and avoiding pesticides.
- Recognize that chameleons are delicate animals that can be extremely challenging to successfully keep under human care and are often heavily collected from the wild. As such, it is critically important that hobbyists become well educated about the specific demands of these animals, their legality and conservation status and strive to follow legal, ethical and sustainable practices related to their maintenance.
- Help spread the word about International Chameleon Day and inspire family and friends to join the movement towards a sustainable future for chameleons and other reptiles everywhere.

For more information about International Chameleon Day and Wildlife Madagascar's conservation initiatives, please visit www.wildlifemadagascar.org/events.

#internationalchameleonday
#chameleonday
#showyourcolors

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About Wildlife Madagascar

Wildlife Madagascar is dedicated to the preservation and protection of Madagascar's unique biodiversity through a multifaceted strategy and extensive collaborative efforts. Our approach involves forming alliances with Malagasy communities to develop sustainable conservation solutions that enhance both environmental wellbeing and livelihoods. By fostering partnerships among individuals, local organizations, non-profit entities and government agencies, we strive to establish impactful programs that bring about enduring change. Our overarching goal is to address poverty alleviation while concurrently ensuring biodiversity protection in some of the planet's most imperiled and irreplaceable ecosystems. Visit wildlifemadagascar.org for more information.