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A Rocha Australia *ENEWS*

Autumn 2017



Update from our President

Our network of members, supporters and associates has continued to grow. During March, the board of directors of A Rocha Australia formally agreed to the accreditation of the Capernwray Environmental Plan – Stage 1 (Southern Highlands, NSW) as an Associated Project of ARA. The next step involves completion and joint signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between ARA and Capernwray Torchbearers Australia to define this arrangement. Our cooperative interactions with Capernwray regarding creation care have been a great blessing and we pray that this will continue and grow, to the glory of God."

Roger Jaensch
President (Chair, board of directors – QLD)

Spotted at Tahlee!!

This healthy looking koala was seen in early March by a local birdwatching group on a tour of the Tahlee property.



© Bruce Watt



Director Jen Schabel helped to lead a Creation Care camp near Tamworth in April, a wonderful time of community, permaculture, cooking and gaining a biblical perspective on creation care.

Capernwray project update!

As reported in the previous newsletter, the first on-ground A Rocha Australia project at Capernwray got underway in October 2016 with the planting of trees along the Wingecarribee River in the Southern Highlands of NSW. Students at the bible school put 150 plants of local varieties of *Eucalypts* and *Acacias* into the ground, added mulch and erected guards around each plant. Recently Daniel Johnston (Capernwray property manager and ARA member) and Greg Stone (ARA member) met to discuss the progress of the project. Growth has been better than expected following a good season, and just seven months after planting some of the trees are up to 2m in height. The grass surrounding the trees has also grown, and action is being taken to keep this under control. Encouraged by the success of the tree planting, Dan is ready to move on the next stage of the project, which will involve planting more of the threatened species *Eucalyptus macarthurii*.

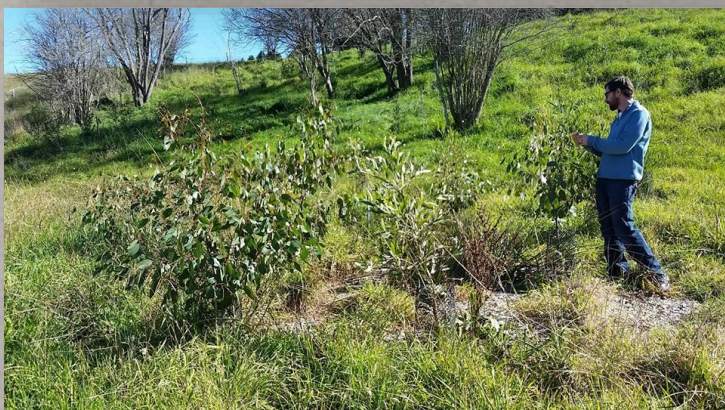
Following A Rocha Australia and Capernwray co-hosting a community Threatened Species Seminar in September last year, the NSW Office and Environment and Heritage and Southern Highlands Associated Project have begun discussions about our possible involvement in threatened species mapping as a part of the Saving Our Species program. More news on this as it comes to hand.

Greg Stone, member – NSW

top left: Capernwray students planting in October 2016.

bottom left: Daniel Johnston inspecting Swamp Gums after seven months growth.

right: Daniel Johnston and Greg Stone with young Blackwoods.



A Rocha Brisbane network gathering – 1 April

The Brisbane network is operating with approval-in-principle as an A Rocha Australia network while the A Rocha board continues to discuss and refine guidelines regarding the affiliation of local A Rocha networks. There were 9 attendees at the meeting on 1 April, with two new people.

Dr. Bruce Hooper – an international water policy advisor and A Rocha Australia member, gave a presentation highlighting that in Queensland (and in Australia in general) there are ample conservation efforts (mainly secular) but the one area that needs urgent attention is educating Christians about our responsibilities re: Creation Care. He drew upon a course (God, the Bible and Creation Care – <https://www.regent-college.edu/course-listing/course-details/BIBL.540>) that has been designed by A Rocha Canada in collaboration with Regent College and suggested that through our networks this could be a first-step to gaining traction for Creation Care and projects. During Bruce's talk, reference was made to making connections with the Seminary Stewardship Alliance (<http://seminaryalliance.org/>); Johannes Luetz at Christian Heritage College recommended that the Seminary Alliance might be an important initiative to work with. It was proposed that A Rocha Australia make contact with and work with this alliance in developing educational material and contacts.

More details about Bruce's session are on the next page.

The second speaker was Ms Daniela Cox who was born and raised as a guide in the Galapagos Islands. She gave a fascinating and colourful talk, explaining the history of the Galapagos Islands and how tourism has changed the island over the years.

We also had two people (Cielle Jansen-van Vuuren and Marie Doraisamy) display some of their artwork under a theme of appreciating God's Creation.

Ross van Vuuren, member – QLD



The Environment and the Christian: Education and Training Options

From previous page...

Bruce then facilitated a workshop where the group then brainstormed some ideas for suggestions on:

- (1) how A Rocha can get most traction in education/training of a Christian worldview on the environment, and
- (2) what such a course might contain. A suggestion was also made that this could be done at Tahlee with volunteers to begin with, until something more permanent is established.

Bruce's presentation is being circulated with this Enews. – any feedback and possible connections would be most helpful in taking this forward and enabling it to have an impact for God's Kingdom. Feel free to register your contributions via our website contact form:

<http://australia.aroch.org/contact/>



Some holiday snaps of the Galapagos by the editor!

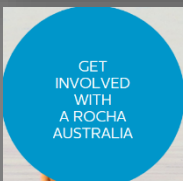


Victorian gathering – 1 April

On 1 April twelve A Rocha Australia members and supporters gathered an hour north of Melbourne for a field day of discussions and farm visit. We had a wide ranging discussion on sustainable and holistic agriculture in the context of conservation, communities, and being part of God's creation. Alex then took us to visit his free range and organic chickens that provide a source of sustainable eggs and meat that are sold in the local community. Raising chickens organically and in the most sustainable way benefits the soil and environment and the distribution network plays a role in benefiting the community. Following dinner in the Baynton hall, we watched Joel Salatin's film *Polyfaces* which explores the connection between land and community. Thanks to Paul and Rachel for hosting us and Alex for showing us around.



Philip Hughes, director – VIC



A Rocha Australia has come a long way in the last 18 months, and we would like to keep building our network of members and supporters across Australia. Can you help us by forwarding this Enews onto a couple of friends and contacts to keep us growing? They can sign up on our website.

Helping Christian campsites be eco-custodians

Four Christian campsites in the Sydney region are currently applying for government funding to help with weed control, revegetation, interpretation signs and other public awareness activities. Another two campsites are currently implementing funded projects.

NSW director Jen Schabel is a NSW government natural resource management officer in the Sydney region and has contacted local campsites through CVA (see right), providing those interested with management advice and assisting to apply for Landcare grants.

"It can be a good fit – campsites are usually located near bushland or waterways with many people visiting and staff who know that nurturing an appreciation for the environment can be good for business. These match government funding objectives," Jen said.

Katoomba Christian Convention Centre, directly across from the famed Three Sisters in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney, received a grant in 2015 to start a Bushcare group, tackle weeds in an endangered peat swamp system and plant locally native species back into degraded areas. Interpretive signage will help to communicate a biblical perspective for Creation Care. Here are some pictures from a working bee on 13 May:



Here are some weed issues at other campsites that we hope to start tackling in 2017:



English ivy escaping into bushland



Discussing tree planting post-lantana control

With so many Christian campsites around Australia there may be great opportunities to connect some with A Rocha Australia, and for us to perhaps help enable them to care more for God's Creation in word and action.

Jen Schabel, director – NSW



Christian Venues Association is the peak body for over 190 Christian conference, camp, retreat and outdoor activity providers in Australia. Their members sites total more than 24,000 beds and serve over 1,500,000 guests annually.