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A Rocha Australia *ENews*

Summer 2018

Welcome to readers of this Summer 2018 edition of the A Rocha Australia e-newsletter! On behalf of the board I hope you had a meaningful Christmas, celebrating our Creator-Saviour, and perhaps a restful holiday as well.

All issues of *ENews* since inception have been faithfully and eye-catchingly prepared by Jen Schabel, our Communications Officer. Recently joining Jen and the other founding directors on our board is Julia Brown (see page 2), who brings experience from the wider A Rocha family and expertise that will complement capabilities of the existing team. In this Summer edition we also read

about a practical demonstration of creation care in Australian church congregations that have been accredited under the Five Leaf Eco-Awards program, developed by ARA member Jessica Morthorpe. We are also encouraged in reading about a first gathering of A Rocha members and friends in Sydney and their plans to establish a local ARA network—as exist in several other Australian cities.

Plans for the Oceania Conference of the Lausanne/WEA Creation Care Consultation, introduced in the Spring 2017 *ENews*, are well advanced and reporting from this ground-breaking event should be featured in a future edition of *ENews*. As a co-sponsor, ARA will support it in practical ways and by its directors mentoring delegates during and after the week of 23–27 April at Tahlee. We have also chosen to hold our annual board retreat at Tahlee in advance of the conference. In other news on A Rocha gatherings, arrangements seem to be falling into place for two of our directors to represent ARA at the International Forum of A Rocha in Portugal in June. A Rocha International has helped us with a fund-raising bid to facilitate employment of an executive officer for ARA, an aspiration mentioned in our winter 2017 *ENews*.

Nature conservation activities are proceeding at our Associated Projects. In January I visited the project managers on-site at Capernwray and Tahlee, NSW, and discussed achievements to date and next steps, including ways in which ARA could further contribute to outcomes.



ARA President seeking the elusive Crimson Rosella. Photo by Sun JiaJie

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Roger Jaensch— President (Chair, ARA board of directors)

Welcome to a new A Rocha Australia director – Julia Brown, VIC



Julia at Brooksdale, Canada in 2016

I'm thrilled to have joined the team at ARA. I'm excited by the opportunities to explore and better understand with other followers of Jesus what it means to have a "heart after God's own heart" in terms of loving and caring for individuals and communities through caring for the environment.

I've been particularly challenged recently over the question of how the good news of redemption is relevant for the whole of creation, and what this means in practice. I'm daily asking myself how my desire to live a "kingdom life" affects how I regard and relate to both the natural and man-made environment in practical ways. I'm loving this journey of discovery. The environment has such a significant impact on society, poverty, health, gender equality, I'm convinced that as Christians we should be leading the way in this area as we seek to love God and love our neighbours, and its this that resonates so strongly with the heart of A Rocha. My connection with A Rocha goes back to 1992, when at the age of 19 I spent a month volunteering at

Cruzinha in Portugal. As a young geography student and keen birder it was just fabulous! I've subsequently had opportunities to volunteer at Mwamba, in Kenya, and in Kampala with A Rocha Uganda. Both have been life-giving and defining times in my life. Back at home in England I saw ARUK working in a very different context in West London, and for a number of years our local Dorset group met to hear about the work of A Rocha at home and around the world and to undertake practical conservation work. Most recently whilst holidaying in Vancouver in 2016 I stayed (as a guest this time) at Brooksdale Environmental Centre.

A career in town planning has drawn together my care for people and the environment, as we plan, design and deliver healthy, high-quality and sustainable urban places and communities. The provision of jobs, homes, community facilities, places of leisure and recreation, as well as providing, protecting and managing natural habitats draws upon our God given creativity, and requires us to manage and steward His world to best of our ability. It is a very satisfying and rewarding career, albeit challenging and more often than not, controversial.

Melbourne became my home in April 2017, when I moved to Australia from the UK having married Bill Brown, a Victorian Baptist minister – we actually met during my holiday in Vancouver! This move from the UK has presented new possibilities, and I'm thankful for the opportunity to serve God and love people where my passion lies – in the environment. I'm looking forward to putting my experience to good use and to working alongside the team at ARA – my years of being an A Rocha 'tourist' are over!

Julia Brown (nee Jardine)

2018 A Rocha Australia Photo Competition

Here are some entries to our 2018 photo competition. We are going to leave this webform open throughout the year as we'd love to see where you have been and to wonder at God's creative hand.



Tawny Frogmouth – Philip Hughes, VIC



A chance meeting –
Warwick Grace, West Woombye QLD



Day's end – Ian Anderson, Wayo NSW

Please submit your photos via:

<http://australia.arocha.org/news/a-rocha-australia-2018-photo-competition/>



Clarke Gorge, Kosciuszko National Park – Jen Schabel, NSW

Passages of Scripture that encourage our Creation Care:

Genesis 1:11–12:

God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow all varieties of seed-bearing plants, every sort of fruit-bearing tree." And there it was. Earth produced green seed-bearing plants, all varieties, and fruit-bearing trees of all sorts. God saw that it was good.

Psalms 139:13–14:

¹³ For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and
wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.



Female palm cycad (*Cycas media*) seedling near Davies Creek, Far North QLD – Rowan Shee



Five Leaf Eco-Awards

The Five Leaf Eco-Awards are an Australian ecumenical environmental change program specifically designed for churches and religious organisations. Using a series of non-competitive awards the program assists, inspires and rewards faith communities for taking environmental action and becoming more sustainable in response to God's call to care for creation. A Rocha

Australia member Jessica Morthorpe runs the program: <https://fiveleafecoawards.org/>

The Five Leaf Eco-Awards encourage holistic environmental action in five areas:

Buildings Worship Congregation Outreach Community Leadership

To earn an award, churches simply complete actions to fulfill the criteria of that award, and are then presented with certificates of recognition for their achievement.

An award recipient in WA:

An award presented at the Spring Garden Festival at St Saviour's Anglican Church on Saturday 10th of October 2015 has made it the first church in the South West to receive the Five Leaf Eco-Awards Basic Certificate. Awards program director Jessica Morthorpe was present to present the award and congratulate the congregation on their achievement. This award also makes them the 23rd church in Australia, and the eighth in Western Australia to receive a Five Leaf Eco-Award.

"St Saviour's received the Basic Certificate in recognition of completing a range of environmental achievements as required by the criteria of the award, including conducting an energy audit, taking actions to reduce their resource use and create behaviour change, holding talks on the environment, celebrating World Environment Day, providing environmental suggestions to members of the congregation in their pew sheets, petitioning the shire to retain their recycling services, hosting the combined Boyup Brook Churches book sale to raise funds for Act for Peace's 'Seeds for Sustainability project' and hosting the Spring Garden Festival with a focus on caring for creation."



The award was presented at St Saviour's first Spring Garden Festival, a very successful event that drew crowds to 21 stalls with an environment, garden or recycling themes to assist people in caring for creation, from around the region.

<https://fiveleafecoawards.org/churches-involved/st-saviours-anglican-church-boyup-brook/>



A personal story of Creation Care: Jessica Morthorpe

All my life, I've had two central passions – my faith and my love of the environment. I spent my childhood getting my hands on everything I could find to do with animals, especially endangered ones, and plotting how I was going to save them all from extinction. That was what I wanted to spend my life doing, but my faith was also important to me, and I sometimes wondered where God most wanted me to be putting my energy.

I find it hard to believe now, but as a young person I struggled to see the green side of the Bible, and Christianity. I believed, along with much of society, that the primary Christian attitude to the environment was one of dominion, and because I was so uncomfortable with (read repelled by) that, I was never sure how to put my faith and love of the environment together in a way that worked. Mostly I kept them separate and hoped that God understood.

Then two things happened. I attended a public lecture by Bishop George Browning, and I was invited to Indonesia. Bishop George's lecture helped me to understand a more ecological interpretation of Genesis 1:28, and the invite to Indonesia was to attend an Asia Pacific Interfaith Youth Forum on Climate Change. As part of our preparations for the conference, we were asked to write a speech about what our faith had to say about the environment. So I went looking, and discovered the field of eco-theology.



Jessica (left) presenting awards to St Saviours Anglican Parish, Boyup Brook, a rural church in WA.

Suddenly the rift in my soul healed, and my two greatest passions came together. A few months later, I started the Five Leaf Eco-Awards. Now that I knew how much the Bible and the church had to say about caring for creation, I wanted to know why more churches weren't taking significant action and leadership in this area. I hoped the awards would inspire them to greater efforts.

Instead, what I have found, is that there are many congregations around Australia doing amazing things for the environ-

ment. And while the awards are inspiring and helpful in promoting further action, probably their biggest benefit is helping these churches to feel part of a community – part of a larger movement working for change in Australia. We are inspired by each other, and given energy to continue the work.

This year, the Five Leaf Eco-Awards will be 10 years old. I'm so proud of all our 32 awardee churches have achieved, and humbled to be part of their journeys. I'm still on fire to help churches deepen their ecological discipleship, mission and leadership and I'm really excited about supporting many more churches in the future as word gets out further that this program is for all churches. Lots of people I talk to think that their church has done nothing for the environment, but when I ask them more about it, they realise they actually have done some things, and there is more that they could do. So I hope everyone will sign up, and together we can work towards God's goal of the reconciliation and renewal of all creation.

A Rocha Sydney Gathering

On Saturday 10 February, a group of Sydney and region-based members and supporters of A Rocha Australia gathered together at the Northern Sydney home of Darrell Jackson, Associate Professor of Missiology at Morling College.

This is the first time we've had an A Rocha meeting for people in and near Sydney, and it was a very inspiring venue, perched in the treetops with views to Ku-Ring-Gai National Park.

We were greatly encouraged from the response on the day and in hearing from others not able to attend but also interested in being part of a Sydney network. We had a lot to cover in talking about our shared passions and diverse skills and experience. We prayed for the mission of A Rocha in Australia and around the world.

It is early days but a formal Sydney area A Rocha network may be a possibility in the future. We talked about meeting a couple of times a year, alternating meetings with on-ground activities. Our next gathering may be in Katoomba on 26 May to help with a Katoomba Christian Convention Centre working bee.

If you would like to be included in communications to this group or would like more information please contact Jen: australia.comms@arocha.org



Annual General Meeting

Our AGM is on Friday 2nd March via skype . Members have been notified by email. Only members of ARA may participate and vote. Non-members are welcome as observers. If you would like to join, please email australia@arocha.org. A special ENews addendum will be circulated following this AGM and the board meeting afterwards, including 2018 events.