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A Rocha Australia *ENEWS*

Autumn 2018

Welcome to readers of this Autumn 2018 edition of the A Rocha Australia e-newsletter!

This edition is published in the wake of the Oceania regional consultation on creation care (see below) held at Tahlee NSW in April. A Rocha Australia was involved as a co-sponsor, in the organising committee and in support roles during the event. This was an inspiring conference, especially with respect to friendships formed with Christian practitioners in creation care from vastly differing places and circumstances. A slideshow is here: <http://australia.arocha.org/news/a-rocha-supports-oceania-creation-care-consultation/>

The board of directors of ARA held its annual retreat immediately before the consultation and was blessed with contributions from A Rocha leaders Dave Bookless (International) and Andrew Shepherd (Aotearoa/ New Zealand).



In updating our five-year strategic plan, we were encouraged from experience elsewhere in the global family of A Rocha to embrace small and cooperative activities as very worthwhile foundations. The board also discussed the formation of reference groups/advisors, development of educational resources, promotions and fundraising, and approaches to advocacy.



- In this Issue:**
- Lausanne / WEA Oceania Creation Care Consultation
 - QLD March network catch-up
 - Photo competition entries
 - Interpretive signs in Sydney
 - AGM highlights
 - Adelaide bird sanctuary signs



In March 2018, one of our founding directors, David Williams, resigned from the board in response to his changed circumstances. David's many pivotal contributions to the establishment of ARA included drafting of our constitution, advising on institutional structure and policies and registration of ARA as a charity. His considerable experience in Christian, not-for-profit and community-based organisations has been invaluable and we appreciate his ongoing availability to provide advice. The board wishes David well in his new endeavours.

Our prayers also extend to our Vice-President, Anna Radkovic, and other board director, Stuart Blanch, as they travel to Portugal in June to represent ARA at A Rocha's international Forum. These gatherings, held every three years, help shape and guide the global family in promoting creation care through nature conservation, across more than 20 countries.

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



The Lausanne/WEA Creation Care Consultation–Oceania was part of a global campaign that seeks to jump-start or strengthen evangelical creation-care movements. The consultation sought to catalyze a movement of Christians who will develop and strengthen creation care partnerships and initiatives throughout the South Pacific.

The consultation was held on the grounds of the beautiful Tahlee Ministries campus in NSW, from 23–27 April 2018. At this engaging, interactive, and multicultural consultation, participants together explored God's Word (the Bible), God's World (the nature and state of the planet), and God's Work (how Christians can be, and already are, engaged in caring for creation). The focus of the gathering was on South Pacific nations, including Australia, New Zealand, and all of the island nations of the region.

<https://www.lausanne.org/gatherings/lausanneweaa-creation-care-consultation-oceania>







Some Aussie delegates we met at the Consultation:



Mitch Hollier

What are your environmental interests, training, work?

I hold an Honours degree in Marine Biology, Grad. Dip. in Secondary Education (Science), Grad. Dip Divinity and a Masters of Education in Social Ecology, but really I just love wild places, vegetable gardening and riding my cargo bike with my children in tow.

Why did you come to the Oceania Consultation?

I was asked to come as part of professional/spiritual development and growth through Pioneers Australia, the church planting organisation who I work for in Arnhem Land, NT.

How were you encouraged at the Consultation?

The consultation was deeply encouraging for a number of reasons. To list just a few, firstly, it showed me that there are other followers of Jesus who genuinely see care of creation as a part of the Gospel message. Secondly, the exploration of creation care from an orthodox evangelical theological framework helped me to see that the Bible has a lot to say about the created world, and that God really does care about what happens to the good Earth that he made. Thirdly, spending time getting to know people who are also actively pursuing creation care projects allowed me to hear about some wonderful initiatives that are going on all over the world, and all in the name of the risen Lord Jesus! Amen to that!

What are you hoping to do in the future?

In the immediate future, my family (my wife Linda, and my two children Indigo (4) and Jarrah (2)) and I will be living in Arnhem Land in the NT learning Yolngu culture and language and spending some time sitting under trees building relationships with Yolngu. Long term I hope to continue to grow veggies, ride more, have chooks, worship Jesus, live off grid, hunt, be in community and explore all sorts of other low carbon, ecologically sustainable practices.

What are your environmental interests, training, work?

I have an undergraduate background in biology, geography and marine science, and I have spent the past few years in Cambodia working in wildlife conservation and environmental legislation.

Why did you come to the Oceania Consultation?

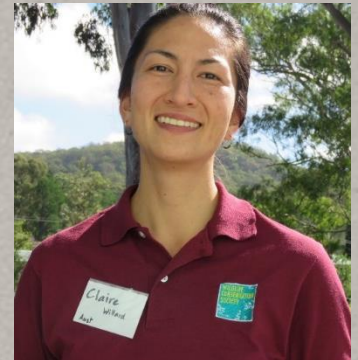
I was very excited to join the Oceania Consultation to meet like-minded Christians, hear other experiences and perspectives, and reflect on how and why we care about creation.

How were you encouraged at the Consultation?

I was encouraged by enjoying God's creation around beautiful Tahlee, together with Christian brothers and sisters whom God is using in so many different ways all over Oceania. I especially enjoyed hearing from Aboriginal delegates about how they see God at work in their communities.

What are you hoping to do in the future?

I will shortly be moving to Townsville to start a Masters in marine biology, and I look forward to sharing my hope for this world wherever God places me in future.



Claire Willard

Queensland network catch-up in March



Members and friends of A Rocha Australia in South-East Queensland met at the home of Bruce and Kaye Hooper on 24 March 2018, in the Noosa hinterland. In beautiful forest and garden surrounds, lush from abundant recent rain, we discussed current activities of A Rocha in Australia and possible activities locally for 2018. After lunch, our small group walked to the summit of Mt Tinbeerwah in Tewantin National Park and were inspired by the 360-degree view over coast, lakes, peaks and greenery. Bruce explained the Noosa Biosphere Reserve, laid out below us to the horizon

and gave a potted history of environmental conflicts and their resolution in this region. Our informal organizing committee hopes to hold several more gatherings at selected locations during the year, to lay foundations for future interventions by Christians in nature conservation in our SEQ communities.

2018 Photo Competition

Here are more entries in our photo competition. Head to our website to submit your entries!

"And God said "Let birds fly across the expanse of the sky.....so God created every winged bird."

Genesis 1 v20 21



Brown Falcon hunting , Papunya Aboriginal Community, NT – Don Hadden, QLD



Rainbow Bee-eater flying from its nest hole – Don Hadden, QLD

Interpretive signs in the Sydney area

A number of Christian campsites around Sydney have been participating in weed control activities and now have new environmental interpretation signs. Although not directly an A Rocha activity, each sign provides a scriptural basis for Christians to be motivated to look after God's creation. Jen Schabel will be presenting a workshop titled "Caring for God's creation at Christian campsites" at the upcoming Christian Venues Association (CVA) national conference in Collaroy NSW in August 2018.



Highlights from the March 2018 AGM

13 members attended the Annual General Meeting via skype. We opened in prayer, giving thanks for our beautiful and intricate world and for the work of A Rocha in looking after God's creation.

In his President's report, Roger highlighted the Victorian conference, board retreat, and ongoing conservation work in the two associated projects at Tahlee and Capernwray as some of the significant events of 2017. Roger also noted the work that the board had done in attempting to raise funds for an executive officer, and was pleased that two directors would be attending the A Rocha international forum in Portugal in 2018.

There are currently 45 paid single memberships and 10 couple memberships. The A Rocha Australia mailing list now has over 320 people. The approximate value of known in-kind work performed by directors and members in 2017 was calculated as \$39,000.

All director positions will become vacant at the next AGM in March 2019 and that there will be opportunities for interested people to join the board. The AGM closed with prayer by thanking God for what had been accomplished through A Rocha Australia during 2017 and that we might grow in capacity and love for others in 2018.

Sign support for Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary

Some members recently made a donation on behalf of A Rocha Australia towards the development of interpretive signs, now set up in the bird sanctuary as shown below. These will be a wonderful environmental education asset into the future, and it is exciting to have the A Rocha Australia logo included in the supporters section. We are thankful for their generosity.



In March over 70 people attended a Cultural Awareness day held in the bird sanctuary, including members, people from the Kurna and Vietnamese communities in the region, interested Rangers and local residents. Aboriginal and Kurna educator, Jack Buckskin, was invited to talk about key cultural and heritage beliefs that still guide the lives of Kurna people in the Adelaide Plains and Sanctuary environments. It was an enlightening and thought-provoking session that highlighted the significance of birds in the area and the need for shared custodial responsibility for the land and all its inhabitants.

A Rocha Australia continues to consider other ways to be involved in the bird sanctuary.



A Rocha Australia on Facebook reminder

If you're on Facebook remember that you can follow A Rocha Australia too. We currently have 148 followers and it would be great to have a large social media following to further promote who we are and what we get up to.

