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A Rocha Australia *ENEWS*

Winter 2018

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

Australia surely is a land of contrasts. It's been the wettest June in Perth in 6 years, while the entire state of NSW has recently been drought declared. Here is drought photo from south-west Sydney:



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Stuart and other members of the global A Rocha family in Portugal

Chair's report...

Soon after the Oceania conference reported in the previous newsletter, directors Anna Radkovic (Vice-President) and Stuart Blanch traveled to Portugal to represent ARA at the global Forum of A Rocha. Their lively participation was well appreciated and developments in Australia proved encouraging to the A Rocha family. Among various follow-up initiatives is the notion of specific activities involving ARA, A Rocha Aotearoa/New Zealand and A Rocha Canada; these members of the family share much in common with us in Australia. The model of operation of A Rocha in The Netherlands, where numerous community projects are coordinated with just minimal staffing, has provided food for thought. ARA is grateful to Anna and Stuart for their commitment and for raising funds to cover their travel costs for the Forum.

The board of directors has welcomed a number of new members to ARA. All are encouraged to promote membership in our networks of contact. Members are committed to our mission and beliefs and potentially we will find people with the means and time to contribute directly to our work from within an expanded member base. Please take the time to complete the questionnaire recently circulated as the results and discoveries will help ARA function optimally.

Some exciting collaborative activities with Christian and other organisations have been developing in several States and we hope to bring news of how these are moving forward, in the near future.

Roger Jaensch
President (Chair, ARA board of directors)

A Rocha International Leaders' Forum in Portugal



In June, the A Rocha Forum in Portugal brought together team leaders from around the world for an inspiring week. The theme was 'Sharing our stories', through workshops, songs, conversations, photos and videos. Each team also displayed a poster describing one of their projects. Because A Rocha is a distinctively Christian organization, time was spent worshipping God and praying together, considering how our faith and commitments shape A Rocha's direction and growth. This was the first Forum since A Rocha started in

Australia. Directors Anna and Stuart were there to meet and benefit from the experience of leaders from other countries and to provide detailed reports to our board to consider. Here are some of their reflections:

Stuart: The theme was 'Generosity' in response to God's generosity towards us, including in his Creation. I had a great time!

I felt encouraged and loved, gave encouragement, learnt a lot, developed some good relationships and ideas for partnerships, and came home thinking I want to continue helping grow A Rocha Australia.

The Forum attracted approximately 80 participants from across 18 A Rocha National Organisations and developing initiatives, all ARI staff, many ARI Trustees and a couple of projects (Eden Care, Nigeria; Eco Church, ARUK).

Probably my favourite part of the day was the shared worship service followed by a talk by one of the participants (which reflected the wealth of experience within AR globally). Worship was culturally diverse, sometimes in languages other than English, a great display of our unity in God.

Anna: "The A Rocha Forum was, for me, an incredibly encouraging time and I walked away feeling inspired and rather challenged. My favourite times were the conversations with other A Rocha people where they shared their own A Rocha stories. It is so wonderful to hear what God has been doing through A Rocha across the world."



Anna sharing about Australia in the poster session



Stuart: "The coast is reminiscent of southern Australian seascapes. Very often windy too. Peregrine Falcon nesting in cliffs. Yellow legged seagulls similar to Silver Gulls, but larger. Cold water, nice swells. Interestingly Eucalypts and Acacias were everywhere, felt like home. Everyone kept telling me how bad they are as weeds, and fuel bad wildfires, so I kept apologizing".

For more on A Rocha International visit: <http://www.arocha.org/en/>

South Australian visit to Aldinga Washpool, 27 July

Aldinga Washpool is one of the few remaining coastal freshwater and estuarine lagoon systems along the Adelaide metropolitan coast, and provides significant habitat, biodiversity, cultural and spiritual values. This area has had, and continues to have, a significance and involvement for the local Kaurna people (the site is known as Wakondilla), including the Tjirbruki Dreaming story. The Washpool also has a long history of both state government and community action.



A Rocha South Australia friends were invited to visit and hear about the history and present situation of the Washpool. It is currently under varying tenure with a variety of historical land use (always though being Kaurna land). The 2018 revegetation plan "seeks to define and consolidate these areas with a goal to enhance and restore the structural vegetation communities present". Detailed botanical, ecological and environmental assessments within and surrounding the study area have already been undertaken which are providing up-to-date data on site vegetation communities and location. There may be opportunities for A Rocha to assist here in the future.



We enjoyed a beautiful warm sunny afternoon visit to the Aldinga Washpool, but were sad to see a lack of water, due to poor winter rains. There was some good rainfall during the week following our visit and the transformation was stunning



A Rocha Australia has been planting trees in Victoria!



Geoff Gorfine holds a pile of tree guards – ready to start planting

On 30 June A Rocha Australia partnered with Sheoak Hill Glenmore for a tree planting day. Sheoak Hill Glenmore is a project aiming to revegetate 552 ha of farmland to re-establish a bio-link between the Brisbane Ranges National Park and Werribee Gorge State Park. It's an important project with amazing potential and we were privileged to be involved – praise be to the God of regeneration and new life!! It was cold and wet but we had a great time.



Tim Currie and Matt Zylstra looking wet but happy on the tree line



Marilyn Hughes demonstrating how to use a pottiputki



Dan Weaich with a tray full of young seedlings to be planted

Glenmore has box gum woodland and could support endangered birds such as Swift Parrot and mammals such as Brush-tailed Phascogale.

Some quick stats:

- 2 hours
- 1552 seedlings
- 15 pottiputkis
- 19 locally indigenous tree and shrub species
- 6.3 Degrees Celcius
- 4 mm rain
- 50+ people (hard to get an exact number with all the kids running around...)

God bless the trees we planted.

May their roots grow deep and their trunks grow strong. May they avoid drought or pest or damage. May they flourish in the sunshine and in the rain. May they grow to absorb lots of carbon and provide homes to many generations of birds and possums. May they benefit and be benefited by the life cycles they are part of such as carbon, nitrogen, and water. May they bring joy to all that see them and of benefit to those that never do.

Some recent Board members' visits

Director Julia shared at the Mountain District Christian School Environmental Day assembly. You can see her talk and the school's environmental project video on our website:

<http://australia.arocha.org/news/environmental-day-assembly/>



Directors Roger, Anna and Philip recently visited some properties being conserved and rehabilitated north west of Melbourne, (as well as other parts of Victoria), for the glory of God. There are obvious synergies and opportunities to collaborate with these initiatives, which are being carefully considered by A Rocha. Stay tuned for more updates on this!

Director Jen Schabel ran a workshop for campsite managers at the Christian Venues Association National Conference in Sydney recently. Campsite managers from different states heard about creation care activities happening at some campsites.

The handout (at right) is downloadable at: <http://australia.arocha.org/news/caring-for-creation-at-christian-campsites/>

To see where CVA campsites are at, visit: www.christianvenues.org.au

Please contact Jen if you are interested in connecting with your local campsites and to encourage them in creation care too.

Caring for Creation at Christian Campsites

Why should we do it?
Good stewardship is biblical! being neighbourly! good business sense!



Jen Schabel has worked for 15 years as a government biodiversity incentives officer. She studied at SMBC and teaches Christian SRE in three schools alongside part-time environmental work. Jen is a founding member of the board of directors of A Rocha Australia. Email: jenna.schabel@gmail.com



A Rocha is a Christian nature conservation organisation, our name coming from the Portuguese for 'the Rock'. Our five core commitments: Christian, Conservation, Community, Cross-cultural, Cooperation. website: <http://australia.arocha.org/>



Some creation care projects at conference centres around Sydney:



Installing interpretive signs



bush regeneration to remove garden escapee weeds



Carving nest cavities for animals



Baseline biodiversity surveys

Perhaps we can advise on what environmental values, threats and opportunities your campsite has, encourage Creation Care education and link you with government funding and support programs.



Christian Venues Association
National Conference 2018
The Collaroy Centre - NSW
August 6-10, 2018

A Rocha Australia joins the global nurdle hunt – 15 Sept!

We're going on a nurdle hunt, A Rocha family, and we'd love YOU to join us!

Nurdles are a type of microplastic that have started showing up on our beaches. Researchers, with the help of individuals like yourself, have started recording them to better understand the state of plastics in our oceans.

Australia has a lot of coastline which means there are a lot of beaches to hunt for nurdles. We need your help! Would you be willing to spend 15 minutes at your local beach looking for nurdles? All you need is a good eye and a jar to keep any nurdles you find. Send in your results to The Great Nurdle Hunt: <https://www.nurdlehunt.org.uk> (put in one of the text boxes that you are with A Rocha so they can see the contributions we are making, and email your results to Director Anna at azradkovic@gmail.com. You can join us on one of our organised hunts:



Can't make it to any of those spots? Go on your own nurdle hunt! Let us know where you're going and we'll add you to the map!

Are you busy on 15 September? That's ok! Pick another day to go for a nurdle hunt – there is never a bad time to hunt for nurdles!

The website has a guide with instructions. Need more info? Email Anna to get your answer to any and all nurdle-related questions!

Also on 15 Sept–International Coastal Cleanup, Newcastle

Help reduce marine pollution, fellowship with believers, and show our love for God's creation. 8:30– 10am at Webb Park, Redhead Beach, Lake Macquarie. Contact Director Stuart Blanch on 0403 209 805 for more details.

A Rocha Australia member survey

As a volunteer-based organization we would love to involve our members more in what we're doing, and to shape our events and initiatives around the interests and skills of our growing family. This will enable us to do more and at the same time grow a sense of family and belonging amongst our members, spread across Australia.

We've recently sent out a survey to members of A Rocha (for details on how to become a member visit <http://australia.arocha.org/get-involved/membership/>), but we are also interested to hear from other ENews recipients who may be interested in getting more involved. Please email Jen at australia.comms@arocha.org if you would like to contribute your ideas and suggestions.

