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A Rocha Australia *ENEWS*

Spring 2018

Chair's report...

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Welcome to the latest Enews, detailing A Rocha Australia activities over spring.

Prominent among the activities of A Rocha Australia in the past few months has been signing of an agreement on collaboration with Cassinia Environmental. This private venture headed by A Rocha member Paul Dettmann, who is based in the Kyneton area, Victoria, opens possibilities for A Rocha Australia to conduct nature conservation activities on a wide range of bush properties. Read more about this exciting opportunity on pages 6 and 7.

Several local networks of A Rocha Australia participated in globally-coordinated beach clean-ups and plastic nurdle hunts in September. Read more about this on pages 3 and 4.

Planning has recently been initiated on an A Rocha-sponsored conference in Sydney in 2019 on the theme of eco-theology.

The full scope of activities of A Rocha Australia during 2019 to 2023 has now been laid out in our Strategic Plan, adopted at the board's October meeting. This living document also provides a basis for monitoring of progress and outcomes achieved.

Successful activities typically require financial resources and the A Rocha Australia board has been encouraged by an increasing number of donors. Thank you to all those –



Continues page 2....

Ocean plastics have been a big focus for us this spring

Chair's report continued...

including some anonymous contributors—who are making once-off or regular donations, no matter how small or large. At present, our funds mainly cover insurance, some representative travel and contributions to the global A Rocha family but we hope to soon start funding practical conservation projects. The board has been applying to public donors and in 2019 will seek to have A Rocha Australia accepted to the revamped Register of Environmental Organisations, which allows tax deductibility for donors.

As A Rocha Australia has increased its membership, prospects for contributions of expertise and other resources have expanded. Greater membership means the standing of A Rocha will be elevated, which will help our funding applications, and we will represent a larger part of the Christian community in Australia. Please consider becoming a member and encouraging others to do so.

Visit <http://australia.arocha.org/get-involved/membership/>

Looking back over the past three years, much has been accomplished following A Rocha Australia's formal inception. The board has established administration systems, supported practical nature conservation, and represented creation care to the Australian church and secular world. The members are grateful to the present board directors for their faithful and fruitful efforts; all directors are required to retire at the upcoming AGM in March 2019. Some directors propose to re-nominate but there is need and scope for new directors. Please contact the board by email australia@arocha.org for more information, if you are led to nominate. Comprehensive information about operations and history of the board has been compiled to assist incoming directors.

Roger Jaensch
President (Chair, ARA board of directors)



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Have you considered supporting A Rocha International this Christmas?

Coastal Cleanups, Newcastle and Moreton Bay

As awareness increases about the extent of plastics in our oceans and its devastating impacts on marine wildlife, A Rocha Australia joined in global efforts.



Volunteers were greeted by a cloudless day for this year's international coastal cleanup on Redhead Beach, Lake Macquarie. The event was organised by director Stuart Blanch and promoted at churches around Newcastle. The cleanup was concluded with a reflection on God's creation. 27 participants collected 30kg of rubbish and cleaned 500m of beach, including hind dunes.



Volunteers cleaned up 900m of beach and reefy shore at Scarborough beach, Moreton Bay on a warm day with light cool breeze. A wide variety, but happily a limited quantity, of rubbish items—plastic and otherwise, was found. The event included a short discussion on plastics and their environmental impacts and a reflection on Romans 8. Most of the group were from a Brisbane 'house church' fellowship, which studied creation care last year with a little input from A Rocha.

A Rocha Australia joins the global nurdle hunt

Here are some pictures from our nurdle hunts around Australia in September:



Statistics from our nurdle hunts:

Brighton le Sands, NSW – 40 nurdles
North Narrabeen, NSW – 10 nurdles

Fairy Meadow, NSW – 0 nurdles
Point Cook, VIC – 33 nurdles
Sand Tracks, WA – 50 nurdles
Various beaches, SA – 0 nurdles



Nurdles are small plastic pellets about the size of a lentil. Countless billion are used each year to make nearly all our plastic products but many end up washing up on our shores.

Spills and mishandling by industry can mean nurdles end up at sea. Our oceans are now accumulating nurdles in worryingly large numbers.

Unlike large pieces of plastic marine litter, nurdles are so small that they go largely unnoticed. However scientists are becoming increasingly concerned about their effect on delicate marine ecosystems including ingestion by marine animals.



Sharing at SURRENDER conference, South Australia

The motto SURRENDER exists to raise up Christians to live the radical call of Jesus and follow him to the least, the last and the lost. Additionally, SURRENDER affirms, encourages and inspires those already committed to incarnational mission and justice and recognizes their crucial role in raising up the next generation. At the core of SURRENDER is the relationship with and involvement of the Indigenous Australian people of this land. <https://www.surrender.org.au/>



A Rocha director Sally Shaw attended the 2018 conference, looking after an A Rocha display stand and running a workshop titled:

"Fulfilling the great Commission presupposes that Jesus, as part of the trinitarian Godhead, is Lord of creation and that the earth belongs to him".

She was able to share that we humans, created in his image, are tenants in and stewards of, his property. Therefore, caring for God's planet is a justice issue. This idea was explored and reflected on through a number of creative activities using natural items, and Sally also shared stories about A Rocha.

Below is a photo from the very moving time had at the Colebrook Reconciliation Park during the conference. This is the site of the Colebrook home where many indigenous children from all over South Australia were placed after being taken from their mothers. The home was pulled down after it closed in 1972.



A Rocha Australia signs MoU with Cassinia Environmental



The Memorandum of Understanding recently signed by A Rocha Australia and Cassinia Environmental formalizes a collaboration on nature conservation in the context of creation care. Cassinia has undertaken

to make financial contributions to A Rocha Australia in exchange for conduct and reporting of nature conservation activities, such as scientific research on biodiversity on Cassinia property.

Through the collaboration, Cassinia and A Rocha Australia will also contribute to developing the environmental community's understanding of the relevance of Christian belief, and the Christian church's understanding of its Biblical responsibilities, with respect to conservation and care of the natural environment.

Cassinia Environmental was founded in 2000 to discover new ways of funding conservation reserves through the marketing of environmental services. A pioneer in carbon farming in Australia, the focus has always been on ensuring that biodiversity and other ecological value is enhanced, not compromised, by carbon projects.

Meet Cassinia's Founder and Director

Paul Dettmann studied agriculture at Dookie and farms Merinos near Kyneton in central Victoria. It was while working as an agronomist from 1999 that his eyes were opened to environmental markets, such as carbon credits, as a solution to environmental problems.



Paul and his wife, Rachel, had been given a 25ha parcel of the larger Dettmann family farm near Kyneton as a wedding present, and borrowing against that the couple bought their first conservation property. And then another, followed by another, in areas from Bendigo to St Arnaud, Stawell to Kerang, Quambatook and southern NSW.

"It sounds overwhelming to say we — and the bank — now have 25 properties. Our approach has been finding highly significant bush blocks, planting locally indigenous trees on them, securing these properties for the long-term by applying a Trust for Nature covenant, creating wildlife corridors and at the same time working in the niche space of environmental services and carbon credits.

"We now have secured about 5000ha of land under covenant with Trust for Nature and become their largest covenanter."

Through his business Cassinia Environmental, Paul works with government, but also businesses such as Green Fleet, Bendigo Bank and even local shires.

Excerpts from an article written by Sarah Hudson for *The Weekly Times*, August 22, 2018.

Would you like to contribute some time, assistance (and environmental expertise if you have some) to this collaboration? Keep an eye out on our website and in future ENews editions to hear what opportunities there are to become involved.

Cassinia Environmental projects – <https://www.cassinia.com>

Cassinia Environmental has protected over 7000 hectares (17,500 acres) of conservation property throughout Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales. Cassinia Environmental is the largest developer of Trust for Covenants and has undertaken revegetation on over 50 properties, with the vast majority now secured with conservation covenants that guarantee conservation management in perpetuity.



Here are two of their properties:

Located on the Volcanic plains **Myamyn** is a near pristine property, with almost no non-native species, a huge natural wetland and Ecological Vegetation Communities (EVC) including Lowland Forest, Herb-Rich Foothills Forest and Swamp Scrub. It has habitat for Long Nosed Potoroos and Powerful owls.

Locksley is a significant 68 ha remnant of the once prolific plains grassy woodland EVC, located within the Victorian Riverina Bioregion. It forms part of a future reconnection of the Alps and Grampians through the Central Victorian Goldfields & Victorian Riverina bioregions.

It is a small but excellent representation of this endangered EVC, of which most of the extent has been removed due to the fertility and flexibility of the soils for both cropping and grazing. The vegetation boasts an amazing diversity of ground layer species including (to date) 12 species of native grass.



A Rocha represents at Fairs Fair, Victoria



Victorian directors Julia and Philip attended the Truth and Liberation Concern (TLC Church) Fairs Fair event on 20 October in Bayswater North, Melbourne. Even though it was a wonderfully wet and cold day, they were able to inform people about creation care, conservation and the work of A Rocha Australia. Several of those who came to the church fair already knew about A Rocha and its world-wide work.



We're keen to hear from A Rocha members and friends about other promotional opportunities

A Rocha visit to Kinchina Conservation Park, South Australia

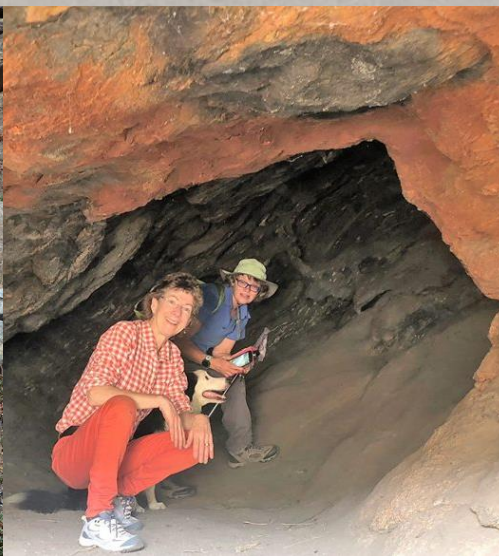


A group of South Australia A Rocha members and friends recently visited Kinchina Conservation Park near Murray Bridge.

Kinchina Conservation Park was only established in 2016. At 414 ha, it forms the largest area of native vegetation in the Monarto Crown Lands region. The Park protects the grassy woodland habitat of several rare birds, including the diamond firetail, restless flycatcher and hooded robin. There are populations of threatened plant species, such as Monarto mintbush (*Prostanthera eurybioides*) and Menzel's wattle (*Acacia menzeli*). This is the only area where Menzel's Wattle is formally protected.

This tour was guided by Phil Barron, an environmental consultant with an extensive knowledge of fauna and flora.

A Rocha director Sally Shaw reports "*Sadly the Monarto area has had no winter rain this year so there were no spring grasses or flowers. Despite that the rock formation was amazing*".



Tribute to Eugene Peterson by Peter Harris, A Rocha co-founder

We join the many thousands of others who are grieving the loss of Eugene Peterson, who was a dearly-loved teacher and guide to so many of us in the A Rocha family around the world.

From his powerful message at the first A Rocha / Regent College conference in Vancouver in 1997, to his last memorable talks at Laity Lodge, Texas nearly twenty years later, he was a steadfast and generous friend.

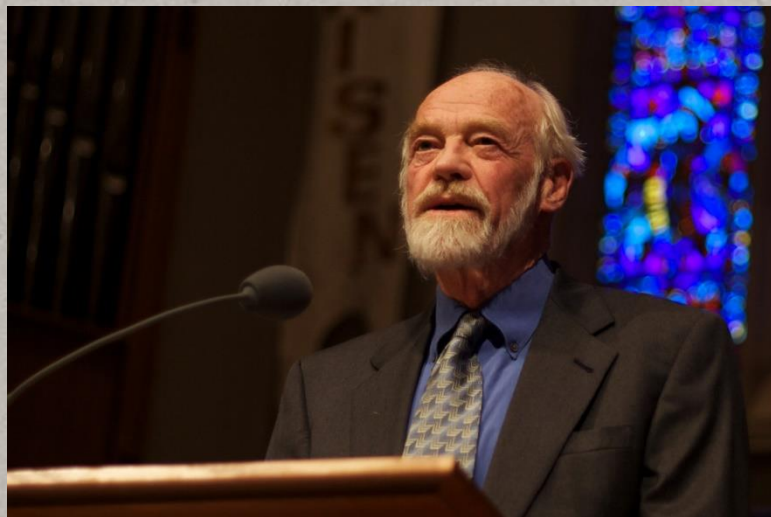


Photo by Clappstar (licensed under CC BY)

In his profound work of revealing the depths of biblical wisdom for all of life, he renewed our hope and helped us find deep wells of joy in our calling to care for creation. It was a calling he and Jan have shared and we were constantly moved by his commitment and fellowship.

In January 2008 he wrote to us after he and Jan had read *Kingfisher's Fire* aloud over the course of a month. 'What we experienced during those weeks of readings was an extraordinary feeling of congruence, even intimacy... there was a shared sense of identity in this kingdom work, a feeling of kinship, an intuition of some kind of cloned vocational DNA... We had the feeling that we had been working alongside you as partners for the last 25 or 30 years without knowing it. It makes us feel so good – so companioned in what has often been lonely work.' From a couple with such integrity and almost prophetic courage (how Eugene would have shunned those terms!) this came as extraordinary affirmation and encouragement.

It is also a reminder that while the wisdom and force of Eugene's writing and teaching are now bearing fruit in many of our lives, he was for most of his own life a hidden and even unappreciated voice, completely counter to the sheen and shimmer of most public evangelical sub-culture in North America. That he remained so faithful to his Lord, to creation and to the biblical texts is an enduring gift that we endeavour to honour as we press on 'to know and serve the Lord'.



Eugene Peterson was a Presbyterian minister in America and wrote more than 30 books, including the bestselling *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, where he explored discipleship and perseverance in the Christian life. He died on 22nd October aged 85.

Eugene, Peter, Miranda and Jan

New endangered orchid population discovery in Sydney

Historic Gilbulla homestead was built in 1899 as a wedding gift for a great-grandson of John and Elizabeth Macarthur. The Anglican Church purchased Gilbulla in 1949 to use as a retreat and conference centre. Ownership transferred to Ellel Ministries Australia in 2002 for a Christian discipleship and prayer ministry training venue.



For two years Ellel Ministries has embarked on a big weed control campaign targeting African olive, lantana, boxthorn and other weeds in eight hectares of Cumberland Plain Woodland (a critically endangered ecological community). A government grant supported bush regeneration expertise and interpretive signs (and A Rocha Australia director Jen Schabel provided assistance through her day job).

Before starting the project the groundstorey species diversity was impressive. In October 110mm of rainfall fell after an unprecedented dry period. Vanilla lilies (*Arthropodium milleflorum*) were one of the first natives to flower en masse.



On 13 November Talia Van Bockel, a ministry intern from Melbourne with a passion for wildlife conservation came across some inconspicuous-looking orchids while bird watching. A few emailed photos and a visit from ecologists the next day brought an unexpected finding: Talia had located a new population of the endangered Sydney Plains Greenhood (*Pterostylis saxicola*). The recent rainfall had led to this very fleeting flowering event. Prior to this discovery only about 350 plants were known to exist across six populations. With at least 28 plants at Gilbulla being looked after by Ellel, the known global population has increased by at least 8%.

Talia credits her dad who works for Parks Victoria for instilling a passion for native plants.

"Dad's taken me on many orchid hunting trips before, so it's quite a nostalgic memory for me. It turns out that these orchids are very special, which is super exciting," Talia said.

