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# A Rocha Australia ENEWS

Summer, 2022

We are a Christian organisation engaging communities in nature conservation

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## Chair's report...

Welcome to the Summer 2021/22 issue of A Rocha Australia's ENews.

I hope that you were able to have refreshment after another difficult year and enjoyed reconnecting with family, friends and our great outdoors. I was glad to stop work and rest, to celebrate God's amazing love and mercy in His son Jesus, and enjoy bushwalking and nature photography. Below is a photo at Valla Beach near Nambucca Heads, northern NSW on Gumbayngirr country, with Brown kelp – *Ecklonia sp.* being jostled around by rushing waves.

As for A Rocha Australia, following the holiday break we have been seeking nominations for board directors. We have been in discussions with a few people about what is required, and would love to hear from you if you are interested.





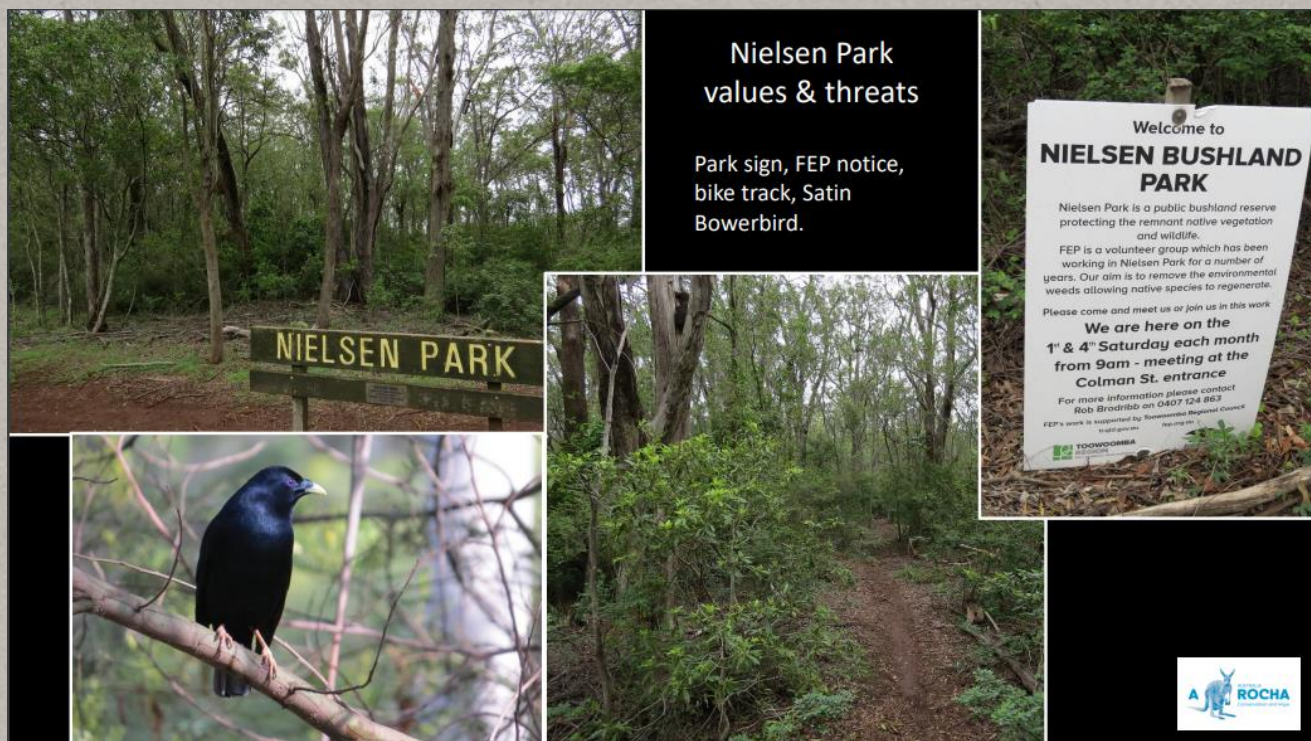
## Chair's report continued...

...We would love to see you join our Annual General Meeting to be held viz Zoom on Thursday 31 March 2022, from 7:30pm (Sydney/Melbourne time). You will find out about our activities in 2021 and plans for 2022, hear about the organisation's finances, and be able to ask questions of the board.

Members of A Rocha Australia are invited to submit an expression of interest for the role of Executive Officer. Details of the role and selection criteria are in an email sent to members by our Communications Officer Jen Schabel. Interested? Please contact me to discuss the role and your interest before Eols close on 17 March.

During the pandemic lots of great projects and activities have continued, Covid-safe of course, across south-eastern Australia. Two I would like to note are ongoing bird surveys in Council reserves at Toowoomba, Queensland, and Hart Road wetlands in Aldinga, South Australia.

The notes taken during surveys at Nielsen Park, in Toowoomba, and uploaded to BirdLife Australia's Birddata website contain field observations that are so descriptive that you can feel transported into the forest. One for the 1st of December reads "*Breezy on E side. Ground layer of green vegetation was lush*" while others note the presence of a host of birds including Eastern Whipbirds, Satin Bowerbirds, Musk Lorikeets and Dollarbirds.



One of the "Projects in Toowoomba" slides shown in 'The Big Chat' A Rocha Australis member webinar in November

I loved reading the emailed report from Phil Barron about results from a bird survey conducted by Taylor Headland and himself at Hart Road wetlands a couple weeks ago: "*Nankeen Night heron flushed from a reed bed in the SW corner + a possible Lewin's Rail calling in a reed bed in CN*".



## Chair's report continued...

...The Land Purchase Working Group has provided a report to the Board proposing questions to ask, and criteria for scoring against, when we consider leasing or buying land for conservation and – hopefully! – setting up a field studies centre. Some of the questions are straight forward, such whether the property is within A Rocha Australia's price range, are there diverse ecosystems and wildlife within a 30-minute drive, and can we generate sufficient income and attract enough volunteers to operate the site even during difficult times (think a Covid pandemic, or a recession)?

Some criteria were more important if the land considered for purchase was primarily for nature conservation rather than establishing a community. For example, the presence of threatened species and vegetation in good ecological condition scores a 'high' if nature conservation is the priority, but 'medium' if use by people is the focus. Conversely, presence of buildings, power and water supplies are of high importance if we want to establish a field studies centre there, but low importance if we do not.

Over the next months the board will be considering purchasing a property that has been offered by one of our partner organisations. If you pray I ask that you pray for wisdom for the board as we consider the option.



I will be attending the A Rocha Forum in France in early June. The Forum was held virtually last year due to Covid. The upcoming face-to-face Forum will be the first held since the 20 A Rocha organisations globally agreed a new Worldwide Covenant in October 2020.

If you pray, please do for the participants as we fellowship together and encourage one-another. We will also make some important decisions regarding how we work together in Creation care across many different countries.

In comings and goings, we thank Jo Knight for her support of A Rocha Australia on our reference group and in leading the TearFund ecochurch consultation. Jo, congratulations on your new role, we are praying for you.

I encourage you to look at the program for the ISCAST-NZCIS Conversations on Creation Care over 10 Thursday nights from March-May, see further details on the back page of this ENews.

Lastly, I enjoyed providing a seminar to a small group of people from my church regarding why, and how, we could be involved in Creation care. I was gladdened by the level of interest, and am excited about how our church can be even more engaged.

I hope you enjoy this issue of ENews.



Dr Stuart Blanch  
President (Chair, board of directors)  
[stuart.blanch@arocha.org](mailto:stuart.blanch@arocha.org)



# 2021 Bird survey results from Hart Road Wetlands, SA

The Hart Road Wetlands in Kaurana country at Aldinga Beach, South Australia is a system of artificial wetlands to treat urban stormwater. Since February 2020 A Rocha Australia has been monitoring birds to assist the City of Onkaparinga with their site management.



Surveys were conducted in six sites (plots), marked in red, above. The '2.0 ha, 20 minute' method of BirdLife Australia was used. Each plot represent different habitat, including open water and beds of cumbungi *Typha sp.*, reed *Phragmites australis*, rushes (e.g. *Juncus sp.*) swards of nardoo *Marsilea sp.*, tussocks of cutting grass *Gahnia filum* and clumps of lignum *Duma florulenta*, or planted woodland or mowed grassland.

A near-doubling of survey effort and bird records due to completion of a second year of activity has greatly strengthened our understanding of how birds use the Wetlands.

## Summary Statistics

- 30 standardised surveys in 2021 (cumulative total: 66).
- Total number of bird records = 500 in 2021 (cumulative total: 1093)
- Total number of species recorded, from all surveys = 64 in 2021 (cumulative total: 75)
- Non-indigenous (introduced) species = 7
- Migratory Species = 1 (Latham's Snipe, recorded in January 2021)
- Total number of species found breeding from all surveys = 10
- Species of ornithological interest (are unusual or secretive): Peregrine Falcon; Baillon's Crake; Spotless Crake; Crescent Honeyeater



White-faced Heron

## Example management recommendation to Council:

The number of waterbird species so far has been relatively low. About 20 not-recorded species prefer open shallow or muddy habitat, which was scarce in 2020 and 2021. With a possible increase in stormwater influx from expanded urban areas adjacent to the Wetlands, this is not likely to change unless dedicated habitat for shallow-water species is created and maintained, such as through manipulation of water levels. Due to natural colonization of emergent aquatic plants such as cumbungi, any new wetland created for wading birds may need to be managed for reduction or exclusion of such plants.



# Birdwatching in Dusky Woodswallow Conservation Reserve, NSW



A Rocha Australia continues to collect data at Cassinia Environmental's Dusky Woodswallow Conservation Reserve in Wiradjuri country at Alleena, NSW, and is in the process of considering how it might further support conservation work in this Reserve into the future.

In December outgoing Executive officer Roger Jaensch visited for a couple of hours, bird watching in different vegetation types including shrubby grassland, mallee, box-gum woodland, *Callitris* woodland, and *Acacia* plantations.



Roger identified 31 species of birds across 101 individual counts. Apostlebird *Struthidea cinerea* and White-winged Chough *Corcorax melanorhamphos* were the most common, with 10 sightings each. He observed Major Mitchell's Cockatoo *Cacatua leadbeateri* probably coming to drink at one of the dams. This population has been recently assessed as meeting an IUCN Red List criterion for Endangered.

Jen Schabel, Director – NSW



# Prayer is powerful and Christians are called to pray: A Rocha Kenya article in Christianity Today publication



Colin Jackson, A Rocha Kenya  
(website photo)

*Colin Jackson, Founder and Director / Science and Conservation Director for A Rocha Kenya was born in north-west Kenya and started A Rocha Kenya in 1999.*

*We were encouraged to read [a recent article](#) about A Rocha's work in Kenya, in Christianity Today.*

*Here are some excerpts, and we encourage you to read the full article, written by Ryan Truscott:*

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There are only so many things you can do to save a forest. You can lobby for environmental laws. Buy land and place it in a trust. Raise money. Raise awareness. Promote scientific research on the importance of the habitat for biodiversity.

And, according to Jackson, you can pray.

"There have been times when things have looked pretty desperate and yet we've managed to break through and things have improved," he said.

A Rocha Kenya, the local branch of the international network of environmental organizations with Christian ethos, has set up a "wall of prayer" to protect the Dakatcha Woodland and other key sites. It consists of a WhatsApp group of about 80 or so Christian conservationists around the world that A Rocha Kenya can call on for intercession when faced with a crisis.

Many people are skeptical of the power of prayer, and there is an especially fierce criticism of those who invoke "thoughts and prayers" as a way not to take action on pressing social issues. But Christians who care about the environment have been increasingly turning to intercession as a spiritual tool commensurate with great need.

Today, A Rocha is also helping train some of Dakatcha's farmers in methods that protect the forest, while also promoting soil health, boosting crop yields, and minimizing water usage. Through the churches it is able to give biblical teaching on why God cares about the earth and all things in it—including the farms people work, the birds they see and hear, the air they breathe, and the water they drink.

But while Jackson agrees that faith-based arguments for protecting trees, owls, and shrews are effective, he also has a most straightforward reason to prioritize prayer at A Rocha. He's a Christian, and Christians are supposed to pray.

"God is sovereign, and he works his purposes out," he said. "But we do know that God loves us to talk to him and to bring our requests to him and he does answer prayer."

He also believes that prayer is powerful.



## Upcoming events:

# Annual General Meeting

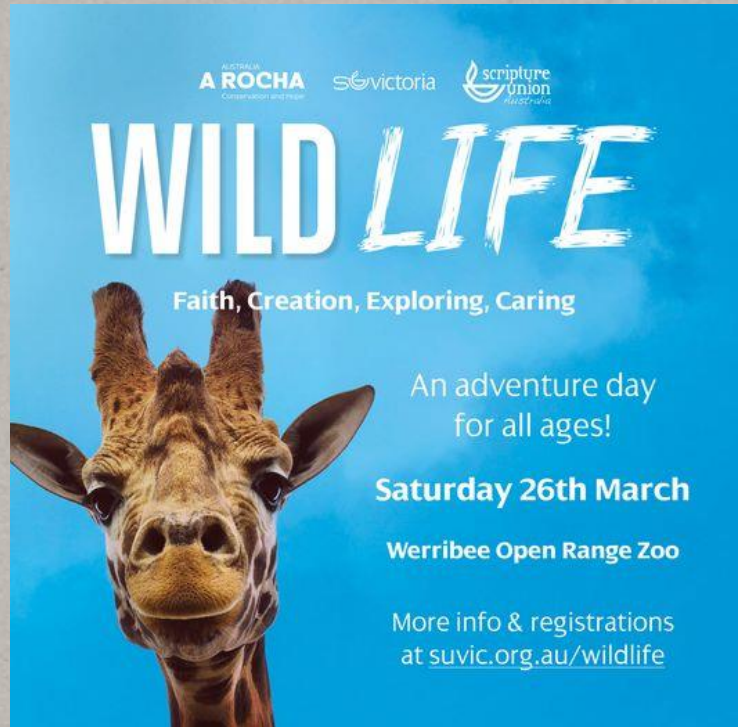
Our AGM is on Thursday 31 March via Zoom at 7:30pm (Sydney/Melbourne). Members will be notified by email by 9 March. Financial members of A Rocha Australia may participate and vote. Non-members are welcome as observers. If you would like to join in on the meeting, please email [julia.jardine@arocha.org](mailto:julia.jardine@arocha.org).

Victorians, join us at Werribee Open Range Zoo on Saturday 26 March!

With our friends at Scripture Union, we'll be exploring the wildlife and learning more about God's good and fabulous creation, and how we can play our part in caring for it.

We'll have one of the zoo keepers giving us our own tour, providing insights into the work at the zoo, and leading us in Biblical reflection on faith and conservation. For details and registrations go to:

[suvic.org.au/wildlife](http://suvic.org.au/wildlife).



**A ROCHA**  
Conservation Australia

**S@victoria**

**scripture union**  
AUSTRALIA

# WILD LIFE

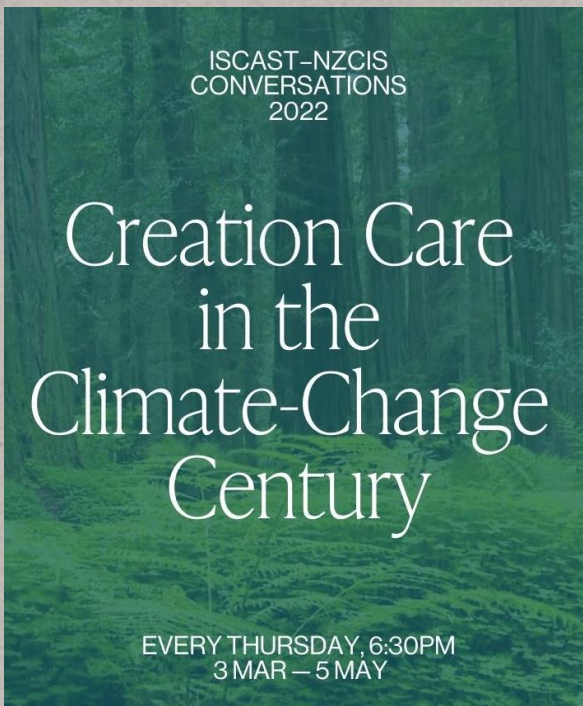
Faith, Creation, Exploring, Caring

An adventure day for all ages!

**Saturday 26th March**

**Werribee Open Range Zoo**

More info & registrations at [suvic.org.au/wildlife](http://suvic.org.au/wildlife)



ISCAST-NZCIS  
CONVERSATIONS  
2022

# Creation Care in the Climate-Change Century

EVERY THURSDAY, 6:30PM  
3 MAR – 5 MAY

ISCAST (Christians in Science and Technology) and NZCIS (New Zealand Christians in Science) are returning for the first Conversations series of 2022, with 10 weekly online conversations on Thursday nights from the 3rd of March to the 5th of May on the theme of Creation Care in the Climate-Change Century.

A number of the speakers are directly connected with A Rocha Australia, including board members Dr Philip Hughes and Sally Shaw, as well as Dr Andrew Shepherd and Prof. Andrew Bennett. We strongly recommend you join in! For more details and to register, visit the [event page](#).

We have not yet had a 2022 members webinar "The Big Chat" and we are looking to hold off until later in May. We welcome your topic suggestions! Please email [australia.comms@arocha.org](mailto:australia.comms@arocha.org)

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Send feedback and suggested events or articles for the Autumn ENews by 20 May to [australia.comms@arocha.org](mailto:australia.comms@arocha.org)

