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A Rocha Australia *ENEWS*

Winter, 2022

We are a Christian organisation engaging communities in nature conservation

In this Issue:

- *Chair's report*
- *International family Forum in France*
- *Welcome to new National Officer*
- *Tony Rinaudo autobiography launch*
- *Planting at Mt Sandy, SA*
- *Cassinia project & Mount Sandy video*
- *Planting at Hart Rd wetland, SA*
- *Painted Button-quail discovery, QLD*
- *Season of Creation 2022*
- *Connecting better with you!*
- *A home in A Rocha blog posts*
- *Upcoming Climate Action webinar*

Chair's report...

Welcome to the Winter 2022 issue of A Rocha Australia's ENews.

I'm thankful to share the news with you that Julia Jardine has taken on the role of national officer. Julia has been serving as a director on the board of A Rocha Australia for more than four years, including as our very accomplished board secretary. But her involvement in Creation care goes back decades and spans three continents, which you can read more about on page five.

In June I had the great pleasure of meeting for five days with eighty other leaders from A Rocha organisations at the global A Rocha Forum in France. Highlights for me were listening to teaching from people working in Creation care and integral mission in some

Very challenging countries, joyful worship of the Lord each morning, discussing and agreeing on developing a global A Rocha Climate Programme, learning from others about how they set up and continue to operate A Rocha organisations, and grieving and laughing together. And I got to see a pair of massive Griffin Vultures soaring at dawn through a valley of the Alps-Maritimes, plus starfish and schools of reef fish in seagrass beds while snorkelling at Antibes! The A Rocha Worldwide Family is proposing to adopt updated Mission, Vision and Commitments, which you can read in the white box. What do you think of them? any comments? If so, please let us know. We need to provide our...



Planting at Mount Sandy, SA

Chair's report continued...

Mission: To live out God's calling to care for creation and equip others to do likewise.

Vision: A world where nature flourishes as people live equitably and sustainably.

Commitments:

- *Christian:* We follow Jesus Christ, who created the world and calls us to care for it.
- *Conservation:* We protect and restore nature and are committed to local places and people over the long term.
- *Community:* We invest in good relationships through our commitment to God, one another and the wider creation.
- *Cultural Diversity:* We celebrate the insights, perspectives and solutions offered by our diverse cultures.
- *Collaboration:* We seek to work with anyone who shares our vision.

Proposal: *Establish a Climate Program*

The A Rocha Worldwide Family decide to establish a Climate Program to support existing initiatives, coordinate efforts across AROs, and enable new projects and advocacy by willing AROs that address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

...response by January. You can read more about the Forum on page four.

I'm helping develop a new Climate Programme that will build upon existing activities related to climate mitigation and adaptation. Climate-relevant work across A Rocha organisations is already significant, and includes biodiversity conservation, tree planting, climate advocacy, forest protection, preaching and teaching, environmental education, church engagement, and production of creation care resources. We're identifying further needs and opportunities, and would welcome your prayer and donations to assist us in this important work.

The federal [Statement of Environment Report 2021](#) confirmed in stark detail the scale and rapid worsening of the climate and nature crises in Australia that, though unsurprising to those who are concerned about nature, was nonetheless a terribly message that made me sad and mad. The report highlighted the impacts of habitat destruction, invasive species and pollution that continue and are often worsening. The impacts of extreme weather over five years, starting with the 2017-19 drought, then the catastrophic 2019/20 bushfires, followed up by the record-breaking rainfall and flooding, were identified as clear signals of worsening climate change.

And yet I continue to walk and strive in hope amidst such news, not ignoring or downplaying the overall ecological and climatic trends. I am well aware of so many stories of regeneration and achievement about communities successfully restoring and protecting ecosystems and species, and striving for a safe climate. I lay hold of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, seeing A Rocha's work in Creation care as obedience to God's command to care for his world. Amidst the sobering news I was able to talk of the hope A Rocha maintains to a Christian radio station and Swedish mission magazine. During the Forum I was interviewed for a short video by A Rocha about how I maintain hope and 'bounce back' after dreadful events like the 2019/20 bushfires and ongoing destruction of Australia's forests and rivers.

Chair's report continued...

As Covid concerns ease, we have been getting our hands dirty planting native shrubs, given our binoculars a work-out surveying threatened birds, supported Indigenous Christians restoring native trees on their Country, established and nurtured relationships, and explored buying land for conservation.

Thanks to A Rocha International we have two additional camera traps that we will use to record and survey wildlife as part of our partnership projects in south-eastern Australia.

Jonathan Cornford from [Manna Gum](#) and I met to discuss options for collaboration between the two organisations. It was exciting to talk and pray about opportunities and the alignment of interests between our organisations! This could include jointly producing creation care theology materials, including a book that explores how – and explains why – Christians are involved in caring for God's world in Australia.

The board will meet for its annual retreat over Zoom on Saturday 17 September. I ask you to pray for our time together as we pause the day-to-day tasks to encourage each other, study the Bible and pray together. We will reflect on the past year, continue thinking about purchasing land for conservation, encourage each other and receive encouragement, and discuss important matters and decisions that will arise in the coming 12 months.

We were sad to see Peter Wilson step down from the board for personal reasons. I encourage you to consider whether you might want to serve on the board as a director. We are seeking people who have a couple hours, on average, to spare each week to help lead and grow the organisation. We are particularly seeking people with experience and skills in administration, being a board secretary, fundraising and marketing, the law, and theology or pastoral ministry. Interested? Please contact me to talk through what is involved and any concerns or questions you may have.

I've recently bought a copy of Tony Rinaudo's autobiography *The Forest Underground: Hope for Planet in Crisis* (see page five for more). I encourage you to buy or borrow a copy and read it, and listen to one or more of the various interviews of Tony available online. I'm also currently making my way through a gem of a book by Bob and Evelyn McDonald, called *A Nature Lover's Guide to Seeing God: reflections and photographs by a biologist and a pilgrim*. I commend it to you.

I leave you with these two passages from the Bible, which together spoke to me of the loss of nature and hope in God in difficult times that are hallmarks of our work in Creation care.

*Because of this the land dries up,
and all who live in it waste away;
the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky
and the fish in the sea are swept away.* (Hosea 4:3), and

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.
(Romans 12:12)

I hope you enjoy this issue of the ENews.



Stuart Blanch
President, A Rocha Australia

International family Forum in France

Story from: <https://arochoa.org/en/a-family-forum-in-france/>

For the first time in four years, the A Rocha family gathered for the 2022 Global Leader's Forum. The Forum is a chance for A Rocha leaders to come together in community for fellowship, prayer, and advancing the mission of the A Rocha worldwide family. Over 80 delegates convened in the French hills above the Côte d'Azur at Les Courmettes, with over 20 countries represented.

It was inspiring to reunite around our common vision and faith, across diverse cultures, and languages. We are grateful for the hospitality of the A Rocha France team who shared their beautiful centre at Les Courmettes. Special thank you to Canadian cook and farmer, Shelley Spruit, who made sure our bellies and souls were abundantly nourished with daily ground grain, freshly baked bread and other delights.



Photo credit: A Rocha International

It was a time of celebration with answered prayers and good news, including updates that the Atewa forest in Ghana remains protected and undeveloped, growth of the African Forest Programme and the new Friends of A Rocha Network. It was a privilege to witness the A Rocha Worldwide Covenant being acted out over the week as thoughtful and prayerful work was done to review and update A Rocha's mission and vision statements and A Rocha's commitments, all of which were approved at the first ever Decision-making Meeting held on the last day of the Forum. God's grace was tangible as the gathered leaders worked together on articulating our Christian commitment to conservation.

It was also a time for reflection and remembrance amidst the grief of losing our dear colleagues, Miranda Harris, Chris Naylor, and Susanna Naylor, at the end of 2019. We thank God for this time to mourn together, and the strength brought through community and fellowship in Christ. Thank you for your continued prayers for the A Rocha worldwide family as we surrender and partner with God through this season of renewal, like new wine in new wine skins (Mark 2:22).

Welcome to our new National Officer, Julia



We're excited to have Julia recently commence as our part-time National Officer, based in Melbourne. Julia has a long association with A Rocha both internationally and in Australia.

Julia and has volunteered with a number of A Rocha organisations around the world, initially at Cruzinha, Portugal in 1992, and subsequently in Kenya and Uganda. She became a member of the board of directors of A Rocha Australia in early 2018.

Julia is actively involved in church life and has over twenty years experience of urban planning, which draws together her care for people and the environment, through the design and delivery of healthy, high-quality and sustainable urban places and communities.

We are looking forward to seeing Julia in her new role continue to progress the work and reach of A Rocha Australia. Please join us in praying for her.

Book Launch: The Forest Underground by Tony Rinaudo

The official book launch of Tony Rinaudo's autobiography "The Forest Underground: Hope for a Planet in Crisis" was held at St Paul's Anglican cathedral in Melbourne on 31 May 2022. The event was organised by ISCAST (Christians in Science and Technology) and attended by Tony's family, members of ISCAST and A Rocha Australia, work colleagues from World Vision, and many others interested in Tony's work in Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration.

Former CEO of World Vision Australia Tim Costello introduced Tony and remarked how Tony's work



was both an agricultural and spiritual revolution. Tony read excerpts from his book and recounted the journey of faith that he, Liz and their family had been on. The evening concluded with Tony signing copies of his book for a long line of appreciative readers.

You can see the launch [online](#)

Philip Hughes, director – VIC

Planting weekends at Mount Sandy, Meningie, SA



Friends of A Rocha South Australia were invited by Clyde and Rose Rigney, elders from the Raukkan community (Ngarrindjeri country) to help with revegetation activities on two weekends in June and August at Mount Sandy in the Coorong area of South Australia, just over 100km southeast from Adelaide.

This project partners with Cassina Environmental, see more details [here](#) and on the next page.

At the June event there were 28 of us on Saturday and 20 on Sunday (some did both days – and some even came from Victoria!). We planted 1700 seedlings in challenging weather. At the smaller August event we planted 584 seedlings at Mt Sandy and 325 seedlings at Raukkan, this time in lovely sunshine.



We filled bare paddocks with a variety of healthy shrubs propagated in the Raukkan nursery.

On both weekends we enjoyed hospitality with the Rigneys, with singing round the fire, hot drinks and delicious food, and we listened to lots of hopeful stories. We enjoyed great fellowship together.

We all left Mount Sandy feeling inspired, invigorated and grateful to Clyde and Rose Rigney for inviting to participate in these exciting planting events and look forward to the next one!

Sally Shaw, director – SA

Cassinia project and Mount Sandy video, SA



Our partner, Cassinia Environmental has some new initiatives, a growing team and a [new website](#).

HRH The Prince of Wales and the Sustainable Markets Initiative commissioned a [mini-movie](#) about Cassinia and the Mount Sandy project. Below are some fantastic pictures from it, including an interview with Clyde and Rose Rigney and a look at the nursery where the Ngarrindjeri are helping to propagate native seed from Mount Sandy. The mini-movie goes for 8min and is well worth a viewing.



Photo credits: from mini-movie [RE:INVIGORATE – Reconnecting Ecosystems](#)

This [\\$50 banknote](#) celebrates David Unaipon, an inventor and Australia's first published Aboriginal author. David was born in Point McLeay and played a vital role with the mission church Raukkan Church as an organist and inspirational lay preacher.



Planting at Hart Road wetland, SA

Another excellent planting session was organised by Onkaparinga council staff at Hart Road wetland in Aldinga, SA (traditional lands of the Kurna people) recently. It was a cool day but we enjoyed some later sunshine. We had 20 adults and four children, with two people making the trek down from the Adelaide Hills!



We planted about 380 plants of these species: *Atriplex paludosa*, *Carpobrotus rossii*, *Cyperus gymnocaulos*, *Dianella brevicaulis*, *Gahnia filum*, *Goodenia amplexans*, *Juncus pallidus*, *Pittosporum phylliraeoides*, *Thomasia petalocalyx*, *Melaleuca lanceolata* and *Eucalyptus porosa*

Sally Shaw, director – SA



Painted Button–quail discovery in Nielsen Park, QLD

An exciting find has occurred in one of our study sites in Toowoomba, QLD (land of the *Giabal* people) this Winter. Remote camera surveys took place at Nielsen Park for three weeks in June–July, triggered by the discovery of an area of feeding scrapes ('platelets') and scats (droppings) of Painted Button–quail, *Turnix varius* ([Birdlife profile](#)). It is currently listed as Vulnerable under the federal EPBC Act. The survey revealed up to two of these birds on three of the 21 days, none in the early morning.



The discovery and confirmation that Painted Button–quail is in Nielsen Park is very exciting because it is the first record from the 2.5 years of A Rocha surveys in this park, and may be the first–ever record of Painted Button–quail here. We have an historical list dated between 2002–2012 involving many visits—mostly before the park became totally surrounded by houses—and it was not one of the 81 bird species documented. It has been a good couple of years for this species in our region; we confirmed it breeding in nearby Duggan Park not long ago.

Other creatures observed on the camera surveys include:

- **Birds:** Brush–Turkey, Magpie, Golden Whistler, Satin Bowerbird, Eastern Whipbird.
- **Native mammals:** Brush–tailed Possum, Long–nosed Bandicoot, possible Brown Bandicoot, Red–necked wallaby.
- **Introduced:** hare, rat, domestic cat (filmed at 04:00, 05:00).

It is sobering that a domestic cat was filmed in the same spot on the same day (but at night) on one occasion; hopefully this ground–feeding bird will survive in the park.



The 2022 winter bird survey recorded some small bush birds in new areas of the park, as well as the first Pacific Baza sighting. **collared domestic cat**

In our Spring 2021 ENews, we reported the discovery of Eastern Whipbirds here. In our Autumn 2022 ENews we presented the results of two years of bird surveys and gave a short history of the park. Toowoomba members of A Rocha have volunteered alongside Friends of the Escarpment Parks to remove weeds and encourage the regrowth of indigenous shrub species here for nearly three years. It is encouraging to see habitat improving, and to monitor the return of native species. This data will help to inform best practice management activities. The next quarterly survey of birds at Nielsen Park is planned for 13 October 2022.



Painted Button–quail at feeding scrape

Rob Brodribb & Roger Jaensch, QLD

Season of Creation 2022

September is the time of year when many Christian people from around the world pause and reflect on God's creation of the universe and particularly our common home Earth.



The Burning Bush
Ex 3:1-12

**Listen to the
Voice of creation**
SEASON OF CREATION 2022

The annual [Season of Creation](#) celebration of prayer, lament, praise, understanding, and confession takes place this year under the theme *Listen to the Voice of Creation*. The event handbook explains it this way: "*During the Season of Creation, our common prayer and action can help us listen for the voices of those who are silenced. In prayer we lament the individuals, communities, species, and ecosystems who are lost, and those whose livelihoods are threatened by habitat loss and climate change. In prayer we centre the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.*"

The Season of Creation themes of the previous two years were *A home for all? Renewing the Oikos of God* and *Jubilee for the Earth*. This year I want to describe some of the ways that I listen to the voices of creation.

Creatures' Voice

Nature is always making a sound: communicating, advertising, and simply rejoicing in its own existence. The sounds and voices of creation, whether the wind, pounding waves, cracking of glacial ice, or birdsong remind me that I share this planet, our common home, with myriad other living creatures and physical systems. For example, [here](#) is a recording I made earlier this year of the enchanting sounds made by the frogs living in a secluded freshwater wetland in south-west Victoria.



Praising Voice

When the authors of the Psalms looked up at the night sky, they could hear the testimony of the celestial bodies. The author of Psalm 19 wrote how the night sky declares the glory of God, and the author of Psalm 148 wrote that the stars were praising God.

Although I am fortunate to have a little more in optical technology than the psalmists, I too can hear the voice of creation testifying to God's creativity and goodness in making the universe. And even more so when, last month, the world was captivated by images from the James Webb Space Telescope demonstrating that the galaxies and stars of the universe have been praising God for many billions of years.



Season of Creation 2022 continued...

Groaning Voice

Despite the beauty of creation, one of its voices is crying out, or, as Paul puts it in Romans 8, creation is groaning. Paul's words look backwards to the alienation of humans from God, and forward in expectation that the creation longs for the redemption of all people and restoration of all things in the new creation. The groans reflect an incompleteness of God's ultimate cosmic plan of redemption, but to our modern ears might reflect the current environmental crises affecting many of the physical and biological systems of our planet.

The recently released Australian State of the Environment report uses science to amplify and interpret the groaning voices of God's creation. For example, the critically endangered Plains-wanderer has every reason to groan because most of its habitat has been destroyed or degraded during the last 200 years.



Hopeful Voice

In Revelation 5, John gives us a vision of the triumphant voices of every creature in heaven and on earth giving praise and honour to God the creator and redeemer. It is through the cosmic scope and ultimate hope of the restoration of all things by Christ's work on the cross, which Paul writes about in Colossians 1, that I listen to creation and participate in the work of bringing in the new creation and renewal of the garden.

Philip Hughes, director – VIC

(all photographs by Philip Hughes)

Connecting better with you!



Over 500 people around Australia now receive our ENews updates, and we would like to get to know you better. Mapping our distribution of postcodes around the country will help us plan ahead and to let you know about events happening locally to you.

With our last ENews we sent this short [form](#) to collect this information. Thanks to those of you who have responded. We are going to keep the form open for now to hear from more people. We look forward to seeing more dots on this map soon!

<https://blog.arochoa.org/en/a-home-in-a-rocha/>

A Rocha International has a new series of blog posts from around the A Rocha family exploring how someone first found a home with A Rocha, their memories of hospitality here, and how this changed how they know God.

Jo Swinney is Director of Communications and has co-written a book with her mother, Miranda Harris, "A Place at the Table: faith, hope & hospitality" which you can buy [here](#) (with all royalties going towards the work of A Rocha around the world). You might also like to watch this video about Miranda, Jo and the compiling of this book at the website: <https://placeatthetable.info/en/>

Here is some of Jo's blog post:

"I didn't feel at home in Portugal for some time and A Rocha was something that occupied my parents and little more. That changed when the first centre was bought a couple of years later and our family moved in, soon to be joined by a rotating household of wonderful and diverse volunteers, staff and visitors. The house, Cruzinha, was somewhere I felt I had a place. The community there at any given time were my people...

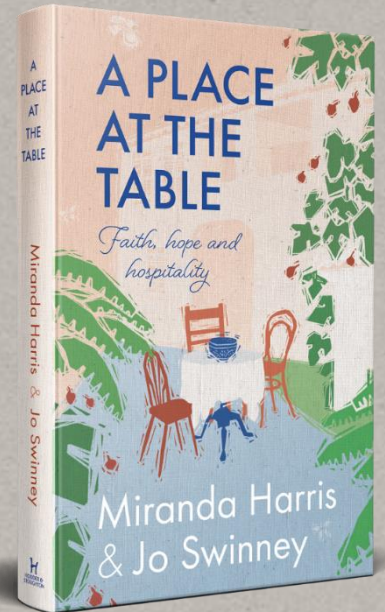
...Growing up in A Rocha formed my faith in ways too numerous to recount. Living among people who paid such careful attention to non-human living things, seeking to protect and tend them in the name of Jesus, gave me a big wide understanding of what it means to be a Christian. Watching gritty, sacrificial love in action in communal living was an – admittedly unconventional – introduction to church. The welcome of non-Christians into this community showed me the power of authentically lived faith to draw people towards God. Forming friendships across wide gaps of generation, culture and language showed me that all of us are made in God's image and have more in common than we often realise.

Perhaps most significantly of all was the amount of time I was able to spend outside with the freedom to roam, explore and play. Psalm 19:1 says, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands' to which Romans 1:20

adds, 'God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.' Much of what I know most fully of God's character I have learnt from immersion in the beautiful Portuguese landscape...in revisiting Cruzinha recently for the first time in many years, I was full of gratitude that I got to spend my formative years at the heart of A Rocha, on the headland of Quinta da Rocha, among kind and interesting people."



from the Harris photo archives



Upcoming online event: Climate Action Webinar

A Rocha Australia director Sally Shaw is one of the guest panelists for this free online event on 14 September. Visit [this website](#) for more details and to register.

1st September - 4th October



SEASON OF CREATION

"The burning bush is the Symbol for the Season of Creation 2022. Today, the prevalence of unnatural fires are a sign of the devastating effects that climate change has on the most vulnerable of our planet. Creation cries out as forests crackle, animals flee, and people are forced to migrate due to the fires of injustice.

"On the contrary, the fire that called to Moses as he tended the flock on Mt. Horeb did not consume or destroy the bush. This flame of the Spirit revealed God's presence. This holy fire affirmed that God heard the cries of all who suffered, and promised to be with us as we followed in faith to our deliverance from injustice.

"In this Season of Creation, this symbol of God's Spirit calls us to listen to the voice of creation."

SOURCE:
<http://theseasonofcreation.org/>



Listen to the Voice of Creation
SEASON OF CREATION 2022



CLIMATE ACTION WEBINAR

14 SEP, 2022

7-8 PM
FREE TO ATTEND
WWW.GIPPSLANDANGLICANS.ORG.AU

[CLICK TO REGISTER NOW](#)



Revd Dr Ji Zhang
Assembly Theologian-in-Residence
UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Revd Dr Zhang is the producer of a video series Towards Zero that brings together theology along with practical actions to reduce emissions, and importantly, tools to measure impact. Reflecting on his own personal journey, and drawing on his experience in the renewable energy industry, Rev Dr Zhang shows us the real possibility of becoming carbon neutral as a household, a congregation, a network of agencies and a whole church.
www.unitingchurch.org.au/towards-zero-2



Sally Shaw
National Director
A ROCHA AUSTRALIA

A Rocha is a Christian nature conservation organisation. A Rocha projects are frequently cross-cultural in character, and share a community emphasis, with a focus on science and research, practical conservation and environmental education.
www.australia.arocha.org



Ian Southall
Committee Member
BAW BAW SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK

Ian Southall is a passionate, knowledgeable and active Gippslander who has supported education and action on sustainability for many years. Returning from the inaugural Gippsland New Energy Conference (ghec.com.au), Ian is across the latest news and options for sustainable energy. Also a member of the Mirboo North Uniting Church, Ian understands the work and opportunities facing churches.
www.bbsn.org.au



Panel host, The Rt Revd Dr Richard Treloar
Bishop of Gippsland
ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF GIPPSLAND

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Send feedback and suggested events or articles for the Spring ENews by 21 Nov to australia.comms@arocha.org

