

A ROCHA

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND
SPRING 2009

Caring for the Earth, caring for people & sharing resources.



A Rocha is an international conservation organisation working to show God's love for all creation.



Our commitment is to environmental education and action, through community based conservation projects.



VOLUNTEERING WITH A ROCHA

A MONTH IN PROVENCE

Carol Johnson and her husband Simon were delighted when they first heard about A Rocha a few years ago, and readily joined others in the Manawatu to help establish the local group's nursery and tree planting project. Carol claims she is not particularly knowledgeable about environmental issues but can readily relate to global environmental concerns, and closer to home, the increasingly polluted state of the Manawatu River. Both Carol and Simon felt a Christian environmental organisation was a wonderful idea, and have found great joy and satisfaction working as regular volunteers in their own "backyard". Simon calls it his eco-penance, and just recently this took on a whole different meaning as they cast their eye across the pond. Carol shares a little about their summer sojourn in Provence...

The idea of volunteering with A Rocha suddenly took on a whole new dimension back in February when I was reading my emailed copy of A Rocha International news. A Rocha France was advertising for a couple to serve as part-time relieving caretakers for the month of August at Les Tourades, near Arles, in the south of France. They wanted people who could speak French, who could shop, plan meals, do some of the cooking, welcome visitors – I was sure I could do those things.

Thirty years ago I spent a year in France as a teaching assistant after studying French for many years, so I knew the ability was there though it would be a bit rusty. Simon has schoolboy French. We were amazed and thrilled when our application was accepted only a fortnight later. In over 25 years of married life, we were finally going to travel to Europe together, and not just as tourists but as volunteers. What an awesome gift from God!

I can honestly say that the experience exceeded my expectations. Les Tourades is a property oozing with character, in a very beautiful part of France. There are many Roman remains and interesting medieval buildings in the area, so in our spare time we found plenty to see and do. Parts of our job felt rather challenging, especially during the first week or two when we were still jet-lagged. Driving on the "wrong" side of the road was very difficult at first (I left that up to Simon). Shopping for fruit and vegetables at the huge bustling colourful market was fascinating, but exhausting. We worked hard, played hard, and had a wonderful time.

What really made our stay were the people, who were all very friendly. The old hands were invariably helpful and tolerant of our continual questions; new arrivals were just as thrilled to be there as we were.

Les Tourades is a very fluid international community, including A Rocha employees, volunteers (both short-term and long-term) and visitors. We met not only people from France, but also England, Canada, America, Estonia, the Czech Republic, and even someone from New Zealand. It was often hard to know how many people to expect for a meal, which meant that planning could be rather tricky. During our stay, there were usually between six and fourteen at the table, though we were told there can be up to twenty-five people. Mealtimes were filled with laughter and conversation, with people typically switching from French to English and back again, according to need - everyone spoke at least one of these languages. All of the permanent staff speak English, so don't be put off if you love the sound of Les Tourades but can't speak French.

Prayer sessions and a weekly "epilogue" provided nourishment for the soul and helped to build community, however non-Christians are equally welcome at Les Tourades. I like to think that some seeds get sown there. If you'd like to read more about our experience, here's the address of the blog I maintained while we were in France:

 carol-amonthinprovence.blogspot.com



BY ARANZ CHAIR RICHARD STOREY

FROM MY TREE STUMP

This issue of the ARANZ newsletter celebrates the local groups that have taken root in several places around the country. The Trustees have been delighted to see these groups develop and to accept the first two, Palmerston North and Christchurch, as official ARANZ local groups. We have been particularly encouraged by the wide vision and the diversity of activities that the various local groups are undertaking. In this diversity they are engaging the skills and interests of many different types of people, and showing God's love for creation in a variety of ways. But even more importantly, meeting together in different contexts allows us to hold together the theology and practice of creation care.

Theology – to truly be God's stewards, we need to keep growing in our understanding of God's love and purposes for all of creation. 1 John 4:19 says "We love because God first loved us". While this passage has love for people as its primary focus, it can apply equally to love for all of creation, human and non-human.

The more we delve the depths of this love the more we will deepen our relationship with, and our care for, all of creation. And remembering God's love for creation will keep us committed through good times and hard. We also need to understand as much as we can about God's kingdom purposes on earth so we will understand how to align our lives and work to those purposes. Understanding God's purposes will keep us being more than "just another conservation group" and will guard us against going off-course. ARANZ has been blessed with a number of people who are focused on the theology of creation care, so make good use of them!

The conservation work we do is an expression of God's love. Just as our relationships with people would be stunted if we only ever read about and talked about them, so our relationship with creation would not reach its fullness if we only preached sermons and held discussions. Instead, we connect with God's beautiful creation, touching it, smelling it, admiring it, and working with our hands to restore it.

As we together restore our little part of God's creation we build community, develop credibility as an organisation and interact with other groups. These interactions also give us the opportunity to talk about why we care. Actions may speak louder for some, words for others, but actions and words together are a powerful combination.

There are many kinds of dialogues in A Rocha, but the dialogue between our understanding of God and our work to restore ecosystems is a central conversation that we must always continue. We pray that this dialogue will continue in each local group. We also look forward to our leaders' hui in October, when we can continue the conversation as a national body, trusting that it will unite us in heart and in purpose.

"Volunteering with A Rocha was one of the best things that ever happened to me, and I'd encourage anyone who gets a chance like this to just do it."



THE KIDS BELLOVED THE SONG WITH GREAT ENTHUSIASM

JESUS LOVES THE LITTLE KIWIS

"They're really getting into this" I thought. Great! A suitable antidote perhaps, for the overly anthropocentric stuff in church most of the time. All six verses about koalas and kakapo, whales and hawks, were very well received, then as I put my guitar down one of my own kids asked "Dad, does Jesus love possums too?" "Ummm... errrr... Yes I suppose so," I replied, with a sense of dread about the inevitable question that was looming. "Then why do you go and kill them every month?"

They were of course referring to the main project that the A Rocha local group in Christchurch is involved with. A dozen or so of us go bush bashing for a couple of hours a month through Kennedy's Bush on the Port Hills topping up poison bait stations. The Christchurch City Council is in charge and we provide the people to do the groundwork. It seems to be going pretty well and the birds are flourishing. Landcare with input from the CCC Park Rangers are working on a report of bird numbers in the region, due out towards the end of the year, which should confirm everyone's impressions that numbers are up in almost all bird species present. We've also started a roving work party that assists other groups where needed,

which is aimed at less energetic activities that the whole group can work together on. So far the "whole group" has consisted of two of us up to our knees in mud doing some sedge planting at Travis Wetland (it was indeed wet). We need to work on this concept a bit, but they're planning to plant a whole new forest on the wetland, so there's plenty of opportunity to improve our team effectiveness. The monthly discussions have also been very stimulating. How to develop possum theology for five year olds? "Jesus loves a healthy well balanced ecosystem" doesn't have quite the same ring to it. In the end I came up with the following verse:

"Jesus loves the furry possums. Most of the possums in the world. But round here there are too many and the birds they jolly bully. Jesus loves the furry possums overseas."

"Dad, does Jesus love possums too?"



PHOTOGRAPHY: OLIVIER BALL



OVERSEAS EXPERIENCES WITH A ROCHA

EMBARKING ON AN A ROCHA OE

Lynton and Anna Baird were relieved to discover a few years ago that there was a Christian organisation like A Rocha that took the theology of creation and stewardship seriously by active participation in conservation and educational work across the globe. The young pair lead a small group of A Rocha supporters in Wellington, and the group among many other things, has recently initiated a native mistletoe re-introduction project involving 'planting' the native parasitic plants on trees in an 80 acre bush plot near Paraparaumu on the Kapiti coast. They are a typical twenty-something Kiwi couple with a difference – when embarking on their OE next year they will be volunteering for A Rocha in Canada and Kenya. They share a little about their plans with us.

Rather than opting for the usual working holiday in the UK or backpacking through several continents, we have decided to volunteer at two A Rocha field centers in two rather contrasting countries. This trip still promises the excitement and adventures normally had on more traditional OEs, whilst giving us an opportunity to serve Jesus at A Rocha centers in Canada and Kenya.

There are many similarities between Canada and New Zealand, both being developed countries with vast areas of beautiful bush and wilderness. Our time at the field centre in Surrey, British Columbia, will hopefully give us ideas and inspiration about what can be done in New Zealand. Anna, a primary school teacher, will be involved in the educational programmes run at the centre for school groups and camps, as well as helping on the sustainable agriculture and conservation projects. I will primarily be involved with the conservation work and chipping into the other two.

Living onsite at the field centre, we will experience the blessings and challenges of living in community; an experience we are really looking forward too.

After our time in Canada we will move onto Kenya; from affluence to poverty. The A Rocha Kenya field centre is situated in Watamu, a village in the Kenyan coastal district of Malindi. We are looking forward to being involved wherever we can help; in the education, accommodation, conservation and research programmes they run.

For more info about the Wellington group or to support Lynton and Anna visit the A Rocha website or email us.

arocha.org

new.zealand@arocha.org



CAROL IN THE KITCHEN AT LES TOURADES



STEVE MUIR ON BIKE WITH TRAILER AND KIDS IN TOW



WITH NELSON LEBO, A PHD STUDENT IN SCIENCE EDUCATION

PERMACULTURE WORKSHOP AT TE KAAKANO NURSERY

Nelson Lebo, a PhD student in science education at University of Waikato, was invited by ARANZ to run a workshop on Permaculture (permanent agriculture) at Te Kaakano (Desert Springs) Community Garden and Nursery in Hamilton, in July, which was attended by about 20 keen gardeners and A Rocha supporters. Nelson is a passionate advocate of the theory and practice of permaculture, having run his own commercial scale organic farm in New Hampshire, USA. He outlined some of the principles of the permaculture movement (starting in the 1970's through the work of Bill Mollison and David Holmgren), including the foundational ethics of caring for the Earth, caring for people and sharing resources.

Nelson presented the concepts of (ecological) design of food producing gardens in relationship to tools and timing in practical human-scale food production. He presented some (3 or 4-year) rotation systems designed to break pest and disease cycles while sustaining soil fertility, and emphasised easy weed control, no-till systems (the worms do the work!), and clever plant spacing and mulching.

Despite bitterly cold windy weather, participants were given a hands-on demonstration by Nelson of composting and hoeing outside in the gardens at Te Kaakano. He emphasised design of the composting system to reduce handling work (and strained backs!), for example the compost should ideally be placed near the centre of the garden area. He demonstrated the "stirrup" hoe (shaped like a horse's stirrup) which may be superior to the "push" hoe familiar to most kiwis. Hoeing with either tool should be done early when weeds are still very small (and easily disturbed), ideally on a sunny windy day when the up-rooted weeds will rapidly die from desiccation.

Participants then recovered from hypothermia over tea and coffee and shared snacks in the house at Te Kaakano, while Nelson fielded enthusiastic questions. In the late afternoon (when we felt warm enough to brave the elements once more) he gave a demonstration of easy approaches to developing new garden areas ("foodscapes") from back-yard lawns. One clever option involved using a spade to turn turf upside down onto lawn areas (so killing off the grasses while doubling topsoil depth in the new garden!). Access paths are then developed (e.g. using wood chip) adjacent to the new garden beds on bare soil areas from which the turf has been cut.

Thanks, Nelson, for sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm.

Rob Davies-Colley is a water quality scientist and keen gardener; he is currently restoring his backyard gully and is on the ARANZ National Team.



NELSON & THE WORKSHOP ATTENDEES



SARAH JOYES



KARIOI MAUNGA RAGLAN



KAHIKATEA SEEDS



NATIVE MISTLETOE



ARANZ INTERVIEW WITH SARA JOYES

5 MINUTES WITH SARAH JOYES

Sarah is a student at The University of Waikato completing a Bachelor of Science in Biology. She is currently working together with ARANZ and Te Whakaoranga o Karioi Inc Society (TWOK) in Whaingaroa (Raglan) on the restoration of a small segment of Karioi Maunga called the "Upper Wainui Reserve" through pest control and monitoring of flora and fauna. We asked Sarah to tell us a little about it.

ARANZ: How did you become involved with the Karioi Project?

Sarah: At Uni I do an independent research project of my choice for one of my third year papers. I wanted to do something related to biodiversity and pest control and my lecturer, Dr Kim King, mentioned the Karioi restoration project as a possible option. I was very excited and emailed Kristel (ARANZ) almost immediately.

ARANZ: What is your particular part in this project?

Sarah: I am monitoring the rat abundance in Upper Wainui Reserve before and after trapping.

ARANZ: Why did you choose to study science/biology?

Sarah: I have always loved animals and being outdoors. I originally went to University to become a zoologist but the more I studied the more I began to love ecology!!

ARANZ: What's the most rewarding thing about being part of this project?

Sarah: Getting to hang out with an awesome, dedicated group of people and knowing that I am helping restore the reserve, that's a great feeling.

ARANZ: What are your plans for next year?

Sarah: I'm seriously considering doing a teaching diploma.



MT. KARIOI

RESTORING OUR MAUNGA ONE SMALL STEP AT A TIME

Karioi Maunga in Whaingaroa (Raglan) is magnificent and awesome yet its steep cliffs and rugged terrain make an on-ground pest eradication project seem very ambitious. However, despite the daunting task, ARANZ, together with a bunch of dedicated local volunteers and Te Whakaoranga o Karioi (TWOK) initiated a monitoring programme and in August began pest eradication on a small segment of Karioi Maunga – the upper Wainui Reserve, on the lower slopes of the mountain, with the hope of expanding the project further around the Maunga in future.

Our group, supported by The Department of Conservation, has been collecting information about the native vegetation and resident terrestrial and stream invertebrates, carried out bird counts, and are monitoring the rat population using tracking tunnels deployed around the reserve. A student from the University of Waikato, Sarah Joyes (see "5 minutes with Sarah Joyes"), is also helping out, using the information that is collected to identify the type of rodents present and assessing their abundance before and after rat trapping.

It's been exciting to see the support and interest the project has generated in the community so far, and ARANZ hopes more local residents will get involved as they continue trapping and monitoring through the summer months. Although the reserve is small, there are 70 rat traps, arranged in 4 lines, deployed throughout the reserve. Traps have been set in specially designed tunnels, made by volunteers, so we avoid capturing anything other than rats.

"God cares more about creation than we do"

Trapping has been successful - 52 rats were caught in the first week, and up to 12 each subsequent week - Malibu Hamilton (TWOK chairman and upper Wainui road resident) thoughtfully commented when clearing the traps... "They are all God creatures... These just don't belong here"... A sad reality we constantly face when our aim is to improve native biodiversity in Aotearoa. Things have slowed down a little now, and rat activity in the reserve has decreased by 60-70% since trapping began. Volunteers have committed to checking trap lines once every week over the next few months, after which we will reassess the frequency depending on trapping numbers.

A highlight of the project is the way it has provided a wonderful chance for people to work together with others while getting out and enjoying the forest all at the same time. At the recent TWOK AGM Malibu thanked ARANZ for the awesome contribution ARANZ made in the writing of the Karioi Management Plan, the successful liaison with the Department of Conservation that helped gain approval for the project and the efforts of all volunteers involved in the project. Joint applications for funding and plans to expand the project to other areas of the mountain are now under way.

Donations for the Karioi project can be made to ARANZ. If you would like to know more about the project email us or visit us on the web:

arocha.org

new.zealand@arocha.org

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO TAKE PART IN ARANZ ACTIVITIES IN YOUR AREA CONTACT US BY EMAILING: NEW.ZEALAND@AROCHA.ORG OR VISIT US ON THE WEB AT WWW.AROCHA.ORG



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Become an official supporter of A Rocha Aotearoa NZ in 2009 and receive an ARANZ t-shirt *free!* Official supporters pack ~ \$80 a year plus receive the A Rocha international & national magazines in your mail box four times a year.

Regular support is encouraged but you can also make one-off donations to help with projects. Please use these payment options:

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A Rocha Aotearoa NZ
ASB bank
Shortland St Auckland

Bank account number:
12-3045-0603503-00

CHEQUE

Cheques payable to:
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PO Box 19104
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COMING UP

A ROCHA EVENTS

OCTOBER

ARANZ Leaders Hui ~ Auckland

DECEMBER

Trees At The Meteor ~ Hamilton

Incedo have chosen A Rocha to be in receivership of Trees At The Meteor profits. Incedo likes what ARANZ does, looking after earth mother papatuanuku. We hope you do too. Not that there is anything wrong with driving around Harrowfield looking for Santa's and reindeers in peoples houses' windows on balmy December nights - we just think there might be something more. Thankfully, for those who'd like a fresh experience, *now* is the time to celebrate ~ Trees at the Meteor has arrived! Putting the Christmas ham back into Hamilton! True story. Read more at:

treesatmeteor.co.nz

JANUARY

ARANZ Summer Youth Camp

Do you love God, ecology and seeing teenagers get excited about both? We are looking for some young, fit and enthusiastic people to help lead Bible studies and introduce a group of 16-20 year-olds to the ecosystems of Tongariro National Park, 10-15 January 2010. Previous experience not essential. Contact Richard Storey:

r.storey@niwa.co.nz

scriptureunion.org.nz/camps/tongariro.htm



ARANZ NURSERY IN THE MANAWATU

TREES, TREES, TREES IN THE MANAWATU

The Manawatu group has been planting native trees around Palmerston North City. Tree planting was chosen as the ARANZ's local groups main focus because native trees both encourages native wildlife and also sequesters carbon, thus countering global warming. Also, Palmerston North is on the Manawatu floodplains. Big floods, like in 2004, bring down much silt from deforested uplands, thus raising the floodplain level and causing flooding of the city. Raising the stop banks to prevent this is very costly.

A wonderful answer to prayer came when the local seventh day Adventist college invited ARANZ to use their plant propagation unit (with automatic watering) for growing trees from seed. So now we can grow thousands of trees a year. We are careful to eco-source most of our seed, ie: we collect it from near where we intend to plant the trees, so the trees have a greater chance of success.



BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

A NEW INITIATIVE IN AUCKLAND

The ARANZ Local group in Auckland has been gathering momentum over the last year. They have been getting to know one another through discussions, field trips, working bees, fellowship and developing goals towards a practical project, ideally in partnership with another existing local environmental group.

Input and expertise from a number of Forest and Bird members, of the Waitakere Branch of Forest and Bird has been valuable for the group, with John Staniland taking us on a guided fieldtrips to 'Ark in the Park' and 'Matuku' Reserves. ARANZ also has a strong relationship with Kodesh Christian Community in Avondale, and in June ARANZ supporters from the Auckland region celebrated World Environment Day at Kodesh with

The group meets regularly at the SDA unit on Sunday afternoons to sow seeds, pot and weed, including a tea break and time for prayer. Planting has taken place mainly in winter; the main areas have been a privately owned section, a public park created from an old brick pit, and a farm high in the Pohangima valley. The farm site is hoped to eventually become a QEII nature reserve.

The group consists of approximately 20 people, and new people are gladly welcomed. We would love your support to help ARANZ grow 10,000 trees a year in the Manawatu. Generous donations from individuals and organizations have hugely helped us purchase the necessary equipment, which has been wonderful but we would like to invite you to join and support us either practically or by donating to ARANZ to continue towards our goal.

John Flenley, is the ARANZ local group co-leader in the Manawatu, a passionate tree planter, retired scientist and Easter Island expert.

a walk along Oakley Creek track adjacent to the Kodesh Community. The area is being replanted in conjunction with "Friends of Oakley Creek - Te Auaunga".

The Auckland team has been encouraged by what A Rocha is doing around the world, and hope that the small steps made in Auckland will help each of us to care for creation and to live more sustainably in our local environment.

James and Clare Drury are ARANZ leaders in Auckland who enjoy the outdoors with their two enthusiastic young sons, and are involved in a number of environmental projects.



SUSTAINABLE RELATIONSHIPS

SUSTAINABLE URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS

"Sustainable" is a rather trendy word at present and Te Kaakano Nursery and Community Garden is just a small, not for profit organisation, selling native plants and creating gardens. So what does "sustainable" mean to us at Te Kaakano and A Rocha in the Waikato?

Firstly, it is sustainable to have employment in your local neighbourhood. Te Kaakano is situated on the eastern side of Hamilton and is dedicated to creating entry-level employment opportunities for the community in the Enderley/Fairfield area. Our focus is to give people an opportunity to gain work experience, skills and work history.

Secondly, it is sustainable when everyone has an opportunity to care for the environment. Te Kaakano offers support for the urban gardener to increase biodiversity in their very own garden. Together we can create welcoming homes for native birds and animals and improve our local environment. Te Kaakano sells native plants, provides labour and gives advice so that gardeners can create a bird friendly back yard, build a vegetable garden or grow their own fruit trees.

Thirdly, it is sustainable when groups cooperate. A Rocha not only cares for Gods creation but is also committed to developing positive relationships with local communities. Te Kaakano has benefited from A Rocha's involvement, gaining advice, encouragement, and hands on voluntary work.

Initially, Ian Weir, a dedicated A Rocha member, started to spend time volunteering at the nursery, and we have had several A Rocha local group gatherings at Te Kaakano. Potting up seedlings and hosting a permaculture seminar, using the community garden as a venue.



Ian Weir is now working at the nursery. Glen Mossong (aka: Possum) has kindly lent his design skills to the Te Kaakano & A Rocha publicity brochures, including this newsletter. Our mutual families and friends have planted trees together, helped build rat-trap tunnels for the Karioi project in Whaingaroa (Raglan) and shared great meals with the A Rocha community in the Waikato. Together we have become part of a bigger network.

Finally it is sustainable when people are enjoying themselves. Because of our shared faith in God, conservation is not all doom and gloom. We can celebrate Gods goodness now and his plan for the future. We look forward to Te Kaakano and A Rocha communities continued partnership and friendship, centered on working positively for creation, with diverse groups of people, while taking the time to celebrate God's goodness through shared meals and practical activities.

Tania Ashman is the Desert Spring Ministry coordinator and Kristel van Houte-Howes is ARANZ National Director. Both are passionate about creation care and sustainable communities, and have teenage kids.



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