

INTERNATIONAL
A ROCHA
Conservation and Hope



INTERNATIONAL REVIEW
2015/16

Supporting A Rocha around the world



Chris Naylor (right) with the Co-Directors of A Rocha Aotearoa/ New Zealand: Kristel van Houte and Andrew Shepherd.

What a year! 2015 was hugely encouraging.

A Rocha International staff visited many teams to learn first-hand about their impact and to provide training in finance, leadership, conservation research, fund-raising or planning. It was a pleasure to award A Rocha Ghana a certificate of excellence for achieving international standards in financial management and governance.

Organizing the Leaders' Forum in Portugal

The Leaders' Forum was a wonderful opportunity for us all to benefit from teaching and training, share expertise and build closer relationships. Over 90 people gathered: the International Team, A Rocha leaders from around the world, plus a few guests. It was three years since the last Forum, and so we had eagerly looked forward to catching

up with each other. We worshipped and prayed together, taught by Ruth Padilla DeBorst, a veteran of leadership development and theological education in Latin America. Ruth's passionate teaching refreshed and inspired us.

Nurturing new A Rocha Organizations

In October I visited friends of A Rocha down under and since then it has been a joy to see A Rocha Australia launched. We are also in conversation with other potential groups around the globe.

Representing A Rocha at international events

ARI's Director of Theology, Rev'd Dave Bookless, was a plenary speaker at the Micah Global Consultation in Lima,

challenging Christian development organizations to integrate environmental responsibility into all their activities. He and other A Rocha leaders played a major part in Lausanne regional conferences in North and South America and West and East Africa, empowering the church for new environmental initiatives.

In Paris, at the UN Climate Change Conference, ARI and A Rocha France worked with partners (including Tearfund and the Lausanne Movement) to present a Christian response to climate change. Events included a panel discussion on 'Conservation and Faith' with atmosphere scientist Dr Katharine Hayhoe; the Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance, Bishop Ephraim Tendero and A Rocha staff. We also held a day conference on 'The Christian response to climate change'. Both proved to be much appreciated by delegates.

Launching the A Rocha Alumni Community

The A Rocha family is growing in other ways too! We annually welcome hundreds of interns and volunteers, so we have created a new way to stay involved: please visit www.arocha.org/alumni to sign up. Or join our Closed Group at facebook.com/groups/arocha.alumni where you can reminisce, swap stories and renew friendships.

Chris Naylor

Executive Director, A Rocha International (ARI)

Eastern Grey Kangaroos *Macropus giganteus* on the shore at Tahlee in NSW where A Rocha Australia's first conservation project is based. (Roger Jaensch)





Enabling communities to protect and restore habitats

(Dan Tay)

Charo Ngumbao, Chair of Gede FCA, urging the residents of Mida Creek to consider, 'how we are going to benefit from the [Arabuko Sokoke] forest and how we are going to protect this forest to make it better, so that it continues to benefit us.'
(A Rocha Kenya)



Protecting Kenyan coastal forests

In recent years, forest management in Kenya has been decentralized and Community Forest Associations (CFAs) have been set up to work with the Kenya Forest Service. Their aim is better wildlife protection and more sustainable use of forest products. Since 2014, A Rocha Kenya has been training the CFAs in Kilifi County, where A Rocha's Field Study Centre is based, and work focuses on protecting this ecological hotspot. The intervention was timely: at the end of 2014, when an energy company began exploring for oil and gas in the forest without following due procedure, an empowered Gede CFA mobilised all the stakeholders. In January 2015, the company withdrew their machinery.

The forest is also threatened by local activities, such as illegal logging and bushmeat hunting. The Gede CFA has organized groups to find and destroy snares, assess logging incidences and draw up action plans, which include educating villagers about Wildlife and Forest legislation. They have also begun issuing IDs for use when entering the forest for legal activities, such as gathering firewood and butterfly collecting, so that activities can be monitored. It's encouraging to see these forest-dwelling communities increasingly take responsibility for protecting the local habitats on which they depend.

A new project in Lebanon

The conflicts in the Middle East bring huge difficulties for A Rocha Lebanon. There are around two million Syrian refugees in the country, and many have settled in the Bekaa Valley, where the mountains are largely bereft of their natural tree cover and erosion is increasing. Our one team member has developed good links with the Qab Elias town council, in the West Bekaa. Together they have planned a woodland and community garden, now well underway in a poorer part of the town, to help counter tree loss and provide a beautiful, shady place where families can enjoy a picnic and play. A pond has been created and native trees, common fruit trees and herbs planted, so that visitors can learn about the diverse but endangered flora and fauna of Lebanon. It's a small-scale project, but we hope it can be replicated in other Bekaa towns.

On Independence Day, in November 2015, a student from each of the 12 schools in Qab Elias planted a small Cedar of Lebanon.
(A Rocha Lebanon)



Tackling over-fishing on Ghana's only natural lake

In March 2016, [Lake Bosomtwe](#) was declared a Man and Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. One of only six lakes in the world created by a meteorite, the whole wetland and forest basin is unique, with many endemic plants and animals, including the fish *Tilapia busumanna*.

Since 2012, with UNESCO funding, A Rocha Ghana has been supporting the conservation of the lake's wonderfully diverse habitats, seriously threatened by a growing human population: the 26 lake-fringing communities are mostly farmers and fishermen. A Rocha's work included consultations with them, the formation of committees to oversee the management of natural resources, faunal surveys and forest restoration. Lake pollution is being addressed by relocating refuse dumps and providing containers, as well as educating people through various media, including radio programmes.

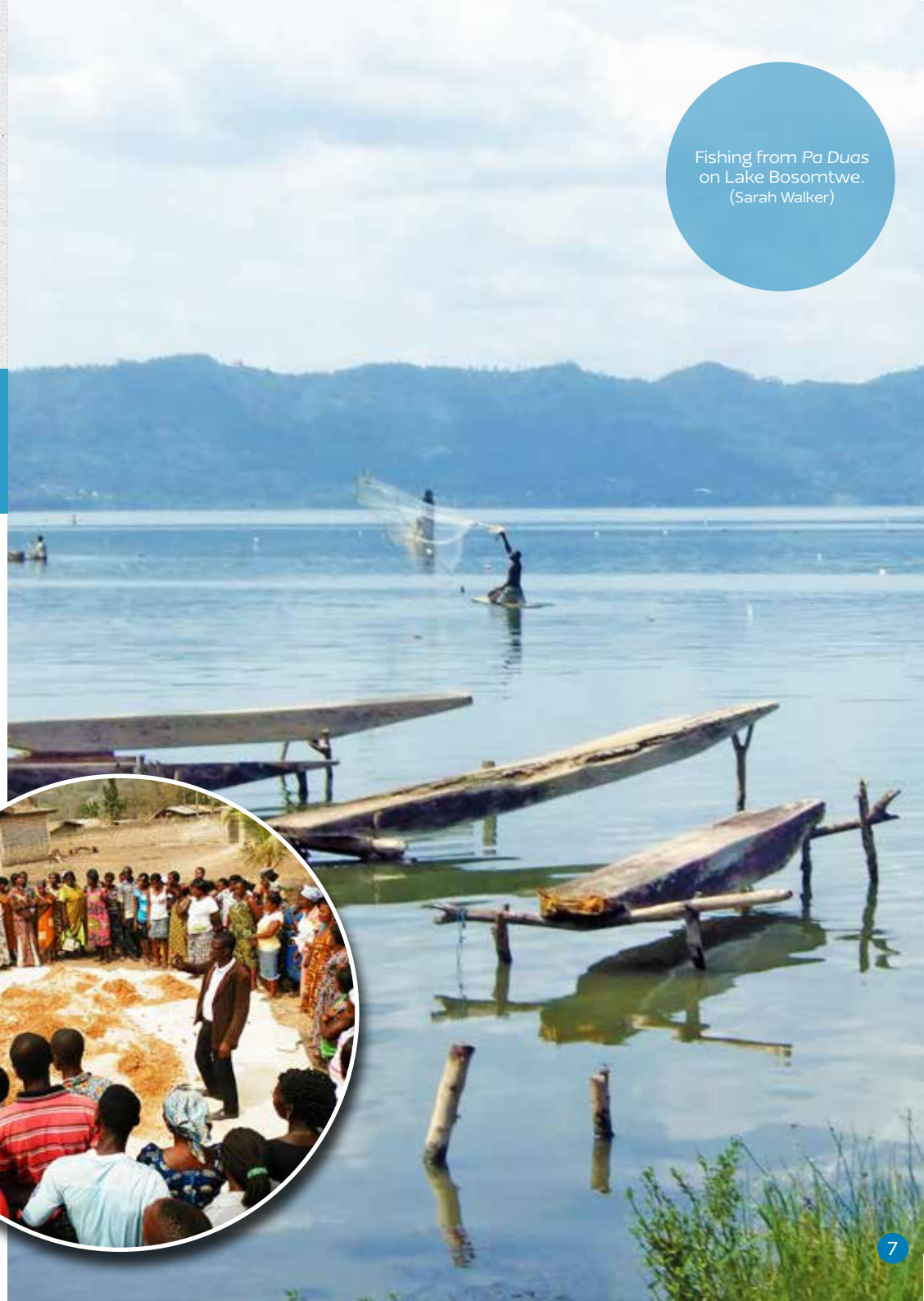
A key part of the work has been with fishermen, who go out on a simple wooden plank, a *Pa Dua*, and throw a net into the water. Many are using illegally fine mesh which prevents young fish escaping. The other threat is the excessive pressure from fishing: virtually every male living around the

lake (and a few women) goes fishing. Traditionally, there were rest days, but now they go out every day. As village representatives met in training workshops, they realized the need to cooperate. The new resource management committees will be responsible for reinstituting rest days, forming by-laws and insisting on legal gear.

A Rocha has also worked to reduce over-dependence on fishing by training more than 900 people as farmers of Grasscutters (Cane Rats), snails and edible fungi.

Lakeside villagers learning how to make a living from fungi farming.
(A Rocha Ghana)

Fishing from Pa Duas on Lake Bosomtwe.
(Sarah Walker)



Teaching young people about their environment

Changing attitudes in the Algarve

For 25 years, A Rocha Portugal has been engaged in environmental education with young people from pre-school through to university. Whether activities take place in schools, at Cruzinha (our Field Study Centre) or along the nearby Ria de Alvor, a key element is the ecology of local habitats: estuary, tidal edge, marshes, ever-changing sand dunes and traditional farmland. Young people learn how important this beautiful area is for wildlife and the economy. There's no doubt that they enjoy releasing birds which they have watched being ringed, handling colourful moths, catching wriggly tadpoles and getting engaged in thematic studies. But do these activities influence their values as adults?

We have evidence that they do. In February 2015, a public hearing was held presenting a proposal to build two hotels and two villa complexes on the headland beside the estuary. At a similar meeting 20 years ago, only two out of 50 attendees spoke in favor of nature conservation. The majority wanted job creation through development and modernization. This time, 50 people again turned up, but all the speakers were against the project because of environmental concerns. A year later, having listened to public opinion, the Council voted against the plans.

Education Officer Isobel Soares says, 'For us it is a clear sign that our educational work and community involvement have impacted society. Nature conservation is no longer considered a luxury that causes unemployment or slows down development. The community is aware of the importance of nature and prepared to speak out against plans that might threaten their environment.'



Providing wildlife adventures in Switzerland

These children, on A Rocha Switzerland's eco-adventure summer camp, identified more than 200 species including mammals, birds of prey, salamanders and dragonflies. All over the world, A Rocha teams are giving children opportunities to engage with and learn about the natural world. (A Rocha Switzerland)

Enabling young Peruvians to care for endangered forests

'I love being in touch with nature,' says 11-year-old Coco Mendoza Vargas, who lives in Puerto Chicama on the arid northern coast of Peru. Here, where A Rocha is restoring endangered dry forests, Coco and his friends have watered native saplings, been on field trips to see rare, mature dry forests and helped to create a school garden. Coco adds, 'I've learned to care for the planet by growing plants at school, separating waste at home and recycling plastic bottles. I hope that A Rocha's environmental club will last for years to come!'



(A Rocha Peru)

Training conservationists

Training Leopard conservationists in India

The Leopard *Panthera pardus* is locally common in parts of Africa and Asia, but rapidly decreasing across much of its range due to loss and fragmentation of its habitats. In February 2016, people around the world watched sensational footage of a frightened Leopard which mauled six men after entering a school in Bangalore city. A Rocha India had already surveyed human-leopard conflicts along the edge of Bannerghatta National Park and so, at this time of heightened fears, A Rocha was asked by the Park's Forest Department to educate schools about Leopard biology and the need for their protection, whilst teaching them how to respond to encounters. The team immediately trained volunteers who made presentations in English or Kannada in 32 schools, interacting with 138 teachers and 1,275 students. As a result, some schools have requested further training to help them prepare for incidents with monkeys and snakes.



Ales Vondrka, engaged in researching Corncrake *Crex crex* with A Rocha Czech, says, 'During our teenage years, my brother and I had a fabulous time in A Rocha's club. Many weekends, we went to a log cabin by the beautiful Blanice River where we learned how to identify, handle and ring birds. Later, once I was studying ornithology, A Rocha gave me more practical help and I now work in conservation.'



Holistic education for post-graduates

A Rocha International has begun a research and education project on micro-plastic pollution in the Mediterranean Sea. It's led by Aline Porteous, who says, 'I have learned to take responsibility for a project, which is very different from studying conservation at Uni. The trust and nurturing from the A Rocha team has allowed me to grow into a task that is bigger than I thought myself capable of!' This role also involves Aline in a diverse range of interactions, for example, with passers-by on the beach, with French churches and with decision-makers on issues such as manufacturing and plastic pollution. This training in science, environmental education, theology, advocacy and conservation forms a holistic education that goes well beyond what she would receive in a degree programme.

Making sand castles? No, Aline is taking sand samples to measure the concentration of microplastics on a French beach. (David Nussbaumer)

Nurturing young Czech ornithologists

Since 1992, A Rocha Czech has run wildlife clubs for young people, combining indoor teaching with fieldwork. Each spring, in partnership with the Czech Ornithological Society, A Rocha runs bird monitoring and conservation camps in South and Eastern Bohemia, involving the keenest teenagers in counting and ringing. Many of them retain an interest into adulthood and contribute to Czech ornithology.



Equipping the church to care for all creation

Biblical teaching in SE Asia

In recent years, ARI has been pro-active in empowering the SE Asian church to adopt creation care. In November, Rev'd Dave Bookless, ARI's Theology Director, flew to Taiwan for the launch of his book *Planetwise* in Chinese. He was joined by Samuel Chiu, our SE Asia Coordinator who translated it. For eight days they undertook a packed programme of talks, seminars and interviews arranged by the Taipei publishers, CEF Press, in churches, campuses and seminaries. Dave commented, 'There were a lot of thoughtful questions, often about the scope of the gospel and the biblical message regarding the future. The younger generation, especially, understand the relevance of Jesus' teaching to every part of life.'



Dave book-signing in Taiwan.

At the same time, Chris Naylor, with Peter and Miranda Harris (Founders of A Rocha) spoke at a four-day seminar on 'The Bible and The Environment'

hosted by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. Peter reported, 'We met academics, government officials and Chinese Christian leaders, including the Chairman of the Chinese Council of Churches, responsible for 30 million believers. We visited the world's largest Bible press, Nanjing Seminary and a plastics recycling factory. It was a wonderful opportunity for fast learning of country, context and challenges.'

Training Ugandan pastors in environmentally-sensitive development

A Rocha Uganda is enabling churches in the Kampala slums to share a gospel which transforms their neighbours and the neighbourhood. One of the leaders trained in August 2015 was Pastor Andrew Magomu. He learned how to



Pastor Andrew teaching the principles of sack gardening.

make briquettes from waste materials to replace traditional charcoal and thus reduce deforestation, as well as saving money. He was taught how to make insulated baskets in which hot food continues to cook, also reducing the amount of fuel needed. And he learned how to grow vegetables in sacks, which enable women without any land to improve their family's diet.

His church has now started a community project, passing on their new skills to both Muslims and Christians. The result? 'Our church is growing and the future looks bright,' he says. Pastor Andrew has been so encouraged by the local impact that he visited 12 other churches and persuaded them to undertake the same training.



A Rocha UK's new Eco Church awards

Eco Church was launched at St Paul's Cathedral, London, in January 2016. It consists of an online survey and suite of resources enabling churches to become more environmentally-friendly, from creed to coffee, invocation to insulation and worship to wildlife. Over 300 churches have already registered! The free resources at

ecochurch.arocha.org.uk give lots of support and advice, so even if you live in other parts of the world you are welcome to use them, although the awards (at Bronze, Silver and Gold levels) are only for churches in England and Wales. Churches in Scotland and Ireland have their own Eco-congregation schemes.

Left: Dr Ruth Valerio, A Rocha UK's Churches and Theology Director, at the launch of Eco Church. (Graham Laddao, St Paul's Cathedral)

Helping individuals to flourish



Welcoming newcomers to Canada

(World Vision)

The Waleed family* are immigrants to Ontario. In Afghanistan, their home country, the three-generation family of 20 grew much of their own food and bought the rest at a nearby open-air market. Because of threats following Dr Waleed's support of education for girls, the family was forced to flee and now has refugee status, making their home on the 13th floor of a downtown

apartment block. They were thrilled to discover A Rocha's Earth to Table project which helps newcomers become rooted through community gardening and cooking classes. 'Coming into the garden makes us feel like we're home,' said Mrs Waleed.

**The family's name has been changed to preserve their privacy. The photo shows one of over 40 other families who took part in summer 2015.*



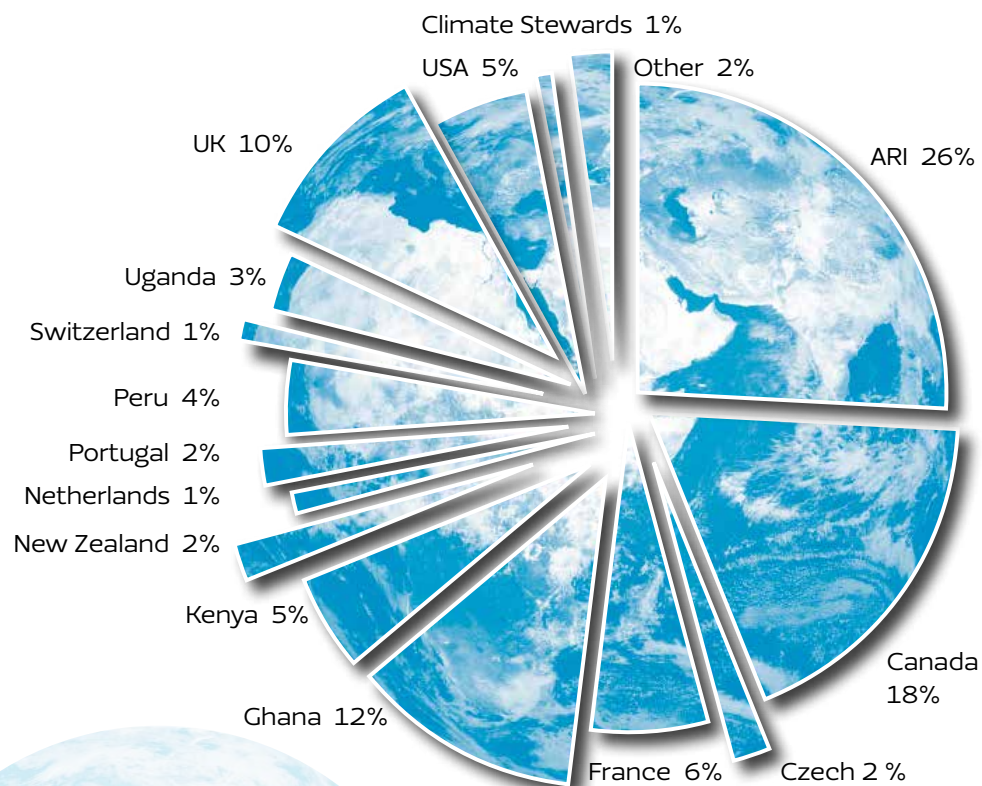
Ayako decorating rat-traps deployed for predator control to protect seabirds on the A Rocha Karioi Project.

Rekindling Ayako's love for nature

Ayako Omori was a student on the January 2015 A Rocha 'Ecology, God and Community' course at Laidlaw College, New Zealand. It changed her life, so we asked her to tell her story. 'Inherent to my Japanese culture is an affinity to nature. Growing up in Japan, I was taught to care for the environment. Not because it was trendy, but because there was a growing awareness that we had disrespected nature. As a sensitive child, I remember feeling the pain when I saw another wild field turned into a car park or smelled a polluted river.

Coming to New Zealand as a teenager, my life took a dramatic turn and I became a Christian. As time passed, I became more and more pre-occupied with my own life and problems. My attention was pulled inwards and sadly, I forgot, or learned to ignore, my responsibility to the wider ecological community. At the end of five years of theological study I took the A Rocha course which included an intensive community learning experience at the A Rocha project in Raglan. It was like a glass of fresh water! I was able to regain and reclaim my love for the environment and see it as an integral aspect of my Christian faith. I was inspired by A Rocha staff who genuinely loved God and all of creation! The course has left a lasting impact – shaping my understanding of ecological issues and my responses in a radical way.

Financial review 2015



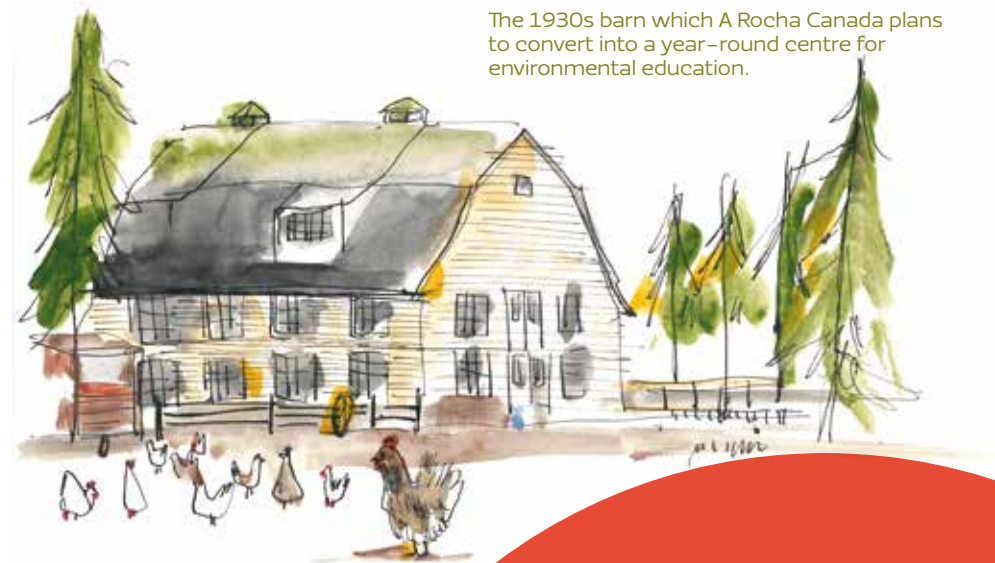
A Rocha's global income

We would like to begin this review by thanking the many individuals, churches and trusts who are such an essential part of A Rocha.

Because of your generosity, A Rocha's global income rose by 12%, from just over £4 million in 2014 to just over £4.5 million in 2015. This has allowed us to increase our environmental education, scientific research and theological education across the globe, not only

resulting in restored and protected habitats but also reducing poverty, empowering women and improving health in the communities with whom we work. With your continued support we could do even more: the greatest need is funding for our core costs.

The pie chart shows the undesignated income for A Rocha International (ARI) and the total income for the National Organizations. 'Other' refers to income



The 1930s barn which A Rocha Canada plans to convert into a year-round centre for environmental education.

We'd like to highlight a very special donation:

Since 2010, A Rocha Canada's base in British Columbia has been a beautiful 18 acre site in Surrey, close to the USA border, and leased from the Neufeld family. In February 2016, the estate of Arnold and Elizabeth Neufeld gifted the land - which includes forest and a stretch of the Little Campbell River - along with three Tudor-style buildings, to A Rocha Canada. Leah Kostamo, Communications Director, says, 'This wonderful gift fulfils Arnold's dream of finding a non-profit organization which would care for the land as lovingly as his family has done. We're now fundraising to fulfil our own dream, to make Brooksdale a world-class centre for environmental education and public engagement. We want it to be a living classroom, providing hands-on learning and showcasing A Rocha's conservation work; a vibrant, welcoming residential community of staff and interns modelling sustainable agriculture and sustainable living.'

of less than 1% each for Brazil, Finland, India, Lebanon, South Africa and our Associated Project in Nigeria.

The number of staff increased slightly, from the equivalent of 142 full-timers to 151 and we are grateful for the 950 volunteers and interns who contributed their time.

26,326

people, young and old,
took part in our
environmental
education activities.

217

We monitored, studied
and/or protected 217
species at risk, globally
or nationally.

8

Our 8 field study /
environmental
centres welcomed
1,772 residential
visitors.

2015

The A Rocha Year
in numbers

11

million hectares of land
benefited from our
conservation activities
or management advice.

950

We are grateful to 950
volunteers and interns
who contributed to
our work – and gained
valuable experience.

49,465

We provided speakers
at 500 Christian
conferences and
churches reaching
49,465 people.

20

We engaged communities
in nature conservation
in 20 countries.

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A Rocha International is a member of IUCN, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

Front cover photo: A Rocha India continues to study the endangered Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* and other mammals.
(Mogens Trolle / Shutterstock)