

A



INTERNATIONAL ROCHA

Conservation and Hope



CHANGE-MAKERS

Festus: educating young Kenyans for conservation and careers

Andrew: inspiring future Christian leaders to care for the Earth

Jesse & Sarah: equipping interns in Canada to combine theory and practice

Jeremy & Bob: providing academic mentoring and field experience

Sara: reducing deforestation and improving human health in Uganda



Editorial

I've been involved with A Rocha since 1984: first as a supporter and volunteer, then for the last 20 years as an employee, with roles which have changed as the organization has grown. When I started, A Rocha ran one field study centre in Portugal. Now we engage communities in nature conservation in 20 countries. My one constant has been the joyful task of bringing you encouraging stories.

The job has immeasurably enriched my life. I've met inspiring supporters and visited many A Rocha projects. In a little foretaste of heaven, I've worshipped at our Leaders' Forums with colleagues whose native tongues include French, Spanish, Portuguese, Czech, Arabic and Swahili. My understanding of Jesus as Lord of Creation has been deepened and widened, not just by outstanding teachers, but by seeing and hearing about the practical response of so many individuals and communities.

This newsletter is my last, as I retire at the end of March. It's the first time I've devoted an entire issue to A Rocha's impact on individuals, but often, the human stories are those which we remember best. Whether A Rocha is working to protect major estuaries or ponds, great forests or small urban green spaces, we work with and through people. I hope you will enjoy their stories, and that A Rocha will be a blessing to your own life.

Because of my departure, the phone number is changing. From 23 March, please contact my colleagues on +44 (0)300 770 1346 if we can help you in any way. They will be delighted to hear from you.

Barbara Mearns

Festus Masha

ASSETS Community Officer, A Rocha Kenya



(Chris Naylor)

Festus has been working in community-based development with A Rocha Kenya for over ten years and it is truly his passion. He grew up in the coastal village of Gede, close to A Rocha's field study centre, Mwamba, so well understands the aspirations of local youngsters.

The Mwamba team is committed to protecting the outstandingly rich wildlife habitats on their doorstep: dry coastal forest, mangrove-fringed creek and coral reef. Research in 2000 showed that the vast majority of local children did not attend secondary school because their parents could not afford the fees, but many tried to raise funds by logging. So ASSETS was born, an eco-bursary scheme which enables some of the brightest young people to complete their school education. However, they can only qualify if their parents join the ASSETS Parents' Association and agree not to damage the forest.

Over the years, education about the importance of forests for local well-being and global biodiversity, plus the involvement of whole families in cultivating tree nurseries for a sustainable source of timber, has notably changed attitudes for the better. Many communities now eagerly participate in pro-active forest protection, such as patrols to prevent illegal bushmeat hunting.

Festus says, 'We currently provide bursaries for 128 students who have graduated from nine primary schools. It's my job to find new donors and other sources of funding. I also try to keep up contact with all the students, visiting them at home to see how they are getting on and encouraging them.'

Educating young Kenyans: for conservation and careers



(A Rocha Kenya)

Oscar Mwero:

'Without an ASSETS bursary I would have dropped out of school. During the holidays, through A Rocha activities, I developed a great interest for the environment, so at university I did Geography and Environmental Studies. I also learned French, German, Spanish and Italian and have since worked in colleges and at international conferences as a translator. ASSETS made me who I am today, so in 2015 I helped Festus with fundraising.'



(A Rocha Kenya)

Daniel Kazungu:

'My whole personal and professional life and my attitude to the environment have been shaped by A Rocha. At primary school I got involved in conservation through the wildlife clubs. ASSETS enabled me to go to secondary school from 2007-2010, and then through a partnership between A Rocha and Turtle Bay Beach Club I worked as an intern in the hotel's Community and Conservation Office. Afterwards I gained a BSc in Project Management. Now I am with World Vision Kenya. A Rocha's Bible teaching and conservation activities helped me find a sense of direction. ASSETS gives hope to otherwise hopeless children.'



(A Rocha Kenya)

Lydia Kayaa:

'My father has three wives and 18 children, so I never expected to get to secondary school: it was just a big dream! As a child, I loved the wildlife clubs and worked hard, coming top at Nyari Primary. ASSETS picked me: I went to the best girl's secondary school in Coast Province and volunteered in the holidays with Stanley Baya, A Rocha's Environmental Education (EE) Officer. My passion for the work grew, so I studied EE at university and now I am employed by A Rocha! I really love what I do, and through it all, I have learnt to trust in God.'

Festus's work influences whole communities, benefiting local forest and wetland habitats. The Red-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus pusillus* is a widespread barbet which needs tree holes for its nest. (www.benporterwildlife.co.uk)

Andrew Shepherd

Co-Director, A Rocha Aotearoa / New Zealand

Inspiring future Christian leaders to care for the Earth

We live in a time of ecological crisis. A plethora of data points to the sad state of planetary health – rapidly declining biodiversity, acidifying oceans, changing climate. How can we foster a generation of young people who will care for the Earth? The struggle is for hearts and minds, so alongside information, personal experience of the natural world is essential. E3 is a partnership between A Rocha, Scripture Union NZ and Adventure Specialties Trust which, through facilitating significant encounters with the Creator (through Scripture and creation) and an experience of community, seeks to develop future Christian leaders who see engagement, enjoyment and care of creation as an integral aspect of Christian life and discipleship.

Andrew writes, ‘I hugely enjoy the challenge of leading one of our two, 11-day E3 wilderness expeditions each year for school students (aged 17-18) transitioning into the next stage of life and faith. Travelling as a temporary community through remote and beautiful landscapes provides the ideal context for nurturing leadership skills, fostering ecological awareness and – away from the distractions of digital media – significant discussions on life and faith.’



Andrew co-leading the E3 Otago expedition. (Gwyneth Barr)

Kate Donaldson participated in expeditions in 2015 and 2016. She says, ‘E3 has been hugely formative. I have grown in confidence in myself, and in my ability to lead others. On my first expedition, beside a lake on Day 8, we had a small group discussion about Colossians 1:15-23 and reflected on how Jesus is reconciling “all things” in creation. I was challenged by the question, “How can we reconcile our relationship with creation?” E3 has given me a new respect for creation and the need to conserve and appreciate what we have.’

The E3 programme is bearing fruit. Many alumni are moving into leadership roles within churches, schools, Christian camps and other environmental education ventures. Kate was one of two E3 alumni who assisted Andrew on an A Rocha / SU camp in July 2016 for 10-14 year-olds, another opportunity for her to practise leadership and share her growing love of nature.

Having taken part in two A Rocha expeditions, Kate (in pink headband) is now helping to lead other young people on adventures which engage them physically, emotionally and intellectually with the land and its wildlife.



(Andrew Shepherd)

Jesse & Sarah Wildeman

Internship Coordinators,
A Rocha Canada

Equipping interns to combine theory & practice in life & work



Jesse and Sarah Wildeman

What job description covers everything from fielding applications to playing music to mentoring to asking people to do their dishes? Sarah and Jesse have been doing all that and more, living and working with interns at the Brooksdale Environmental Centre for two and a half years.

Interns come for three months, focused on one area (agriculture, education, hospitality or conservation) and participating in community meals, weekly teaching times about environmental theology, community worship, mentor meetings and social evenings. The aim is to develop the interns’ knowledge and skills, and help them integrate environmental stewardship and their faith into every aspect of life, be it work or play.

With Jesse and Sarah both trained as scientists (Forest Resource Management and Forest Sciences, respectively) plus Jesse’s background in discipleship ministry, outdoor guiding and leadership training, and Sarah’s Life Coach certification, they are well suited to mentor young people. They bring their whole selves to the role: living in the same house along with parenting two small girls leaves no room to be anything other than oneself. For Jesse and Sarah, that’s what discipleship is about – doing life alongside one another.

Sarah comments, ‘It is beautiful to watch interns grow in confidence. Residential experience is a big part of it: we live out the things we’re talking about, with ideas becoming actions rather than just theories. Many say they see their faith more holistically than before, and leave with a more hopeful perspective on environmental issues, mobilized to be agents of change in their home communities.’

Interns come from all kinds of backgrounds and for a variety of reasons, each bringing a unique perspective and set of gifts. Sarah and Jesse describe it as a joy to be part of each one’s integration into the community, sharing who they are as they contribute to the work and mission of A Rocha.



Heather Maekelburger working on the Brooksdale farm.

In the words of two 2016 interns:

‘What I consider to be A Rocha’s distinguishing factor is its integrity. From my garden supervisors to the families who live on site, there is a permeating sense of conviction being lived out. I’ve seen a commitment to creation care that is met with everyday action rather than a fearful blind eye – a summer of learning from people who demonstrate a deep consistency between what they preach and what they practice.’

Mallory Bowen, Conservation Science Intern

‘I feel a new sense of love and acceptance for the person I was created to be, a result of the natural process of living in community with different types of people. Each staff/volunteer has their own role and purpose, one that affirms their character and giftings. Outside of the context of community, I’ve often felt like I have to be everything. When I consider myself within a community, I experience greater freedom to pursue the passions and gifts I’ve been given, rather than trying to be someone I’m not.’

Heather Maekelburger, Sustainable Agriculture Intern

A Rocha Canada also welcomes volunteers: local regulars and residential visitors



Jonny Hanson

Time after time, volunteers describe their time with A Rocha Canada as transformational. For example, Jonny Hanson and his wife, Paula, live in Northern Ireland and have long dreamed of starting a community farm. To get some practical experience, the family headed to Brooksdale for four weeks. Here's what happened:

What did you hope to learn?

Three things: how to run a Christian community farm, how to run a food business and how to engage with low-income and asylum-seeking families.

Why is it important to you to involve socially diverse families?

I think that too often, community farms – whether faith-based or secular – slip into the easy rut of remaining comfortably white and middle-class. Yet usually, this group is already able to access good food and the outdoors. The revolutionary whom we follow crossed boundaries of race, religion, gender and class to encounter people and manifest the kingdom of God amongst them. If Christian community farms are going to match social diversity with biological diversity, then they must adopt this approach. At Brooksdale, they'd found that the best way was to partner with organizations already engaging with asylum-seeking families.

Were there any surprises?

Yes! The most important lesson was one we hadn't sought out. As confirmed introverts, we were distinctly more comfortable with the 'Christian' and 'farm' components of our planned project than the 'community' bit. But Brooksdale changed that. We encountered a beautiful balance between individuals of all types in community with each other, with the rest of creation and with God. We're still introverts but now we're introverts unafraid of community. Our trip was a resounding success. We discovered how to achieve our goals: by doing less and not more, by working with others, by going slowly.



The barn at Brooksdale.

Providing academic mentoring and field experience for young scientists

Change Makers

(Sarah Young)



Dr Jeremy Lindsay & Dr Bob Sluka

Science & Conservation, A Rocha International

'Working with students is a very important part of the role for Bob and myself,' says Jeremy (above left), Director of Science and Conservation. 'It is a pleasure to see highly motivated people enthusiastically researching a theme and delivering valuable insights for our work. Student projects give us opportunities to benefit from university expertise. Dr Freya St John, from the University of Kent, is at the forefront of conservation social science so I was keen to bring her experience to bear on our work with A Rocha Ghana in studying and seeking to protect Atewa Forest, one of the most biodiverse rainforests in West Africa. I was delighted when she agreed to supervise a project into the connections between mining and natural resource use and suggested Amy Collis for the work.'



(Jeremy Lindsay)

A White-bellied Pangolin, *Phataginus tricuspis*, one of the threatened species illegally hunted in Atewa.

Amy Collis

Amy, what support did you receive from A Rocha International (ARI)?

'Jeremy assisted with the design of my project and kept in touch throughout. ARI also provided logistical support during fieldwork, undertaken as part of my Masters in Conservation Biology.'



Amy Collis with Ransford Agyei.

What drew you to Ghana?

From a social science perspective, Atewa is fascinating! We wanted to understand why individuals work as miners and wanted information useful for A Rocha Ghana's alternative livelihood strategies. We also sought to examine how mining affects natural resource use, particularly illegal logging and hunting. And would communities support the designation of Atewa as a National Park?

So after you chose to study Atewa, what happened next?

I worked with A Rocha Ghana's office in Kyebi, particularly with Emmanuel Akom, the Atewa Project Manager, and Ransford Agyei who acted as my logistics supporter, translator and field assistant on day-long visits to 15 villages.

And you used new research techniques?

Yes, we used the 'bean questioning method,' not previously tested in a conservation context. It increases respondent anonymity to encourage truthful answers about illegal behaviour.

These are our conservation conclusions from 16 community leaders and 144 miners:

- Attitudes to mining were generally positive, so education about the negative impacts is needed
- 87% intend to continue mining
- 51% would expect to be unemployed if they stop – so new skills and jobs are needed to reduce mining
- 12% openly admitted to illegal logging compared to 45% using the bean method
- 28% openly admitted to illegal hunting compared to 36% using the bean method
- Most miners and chiefs supported designation of Atewa as a National Park.

What is the ongoing legacy of your involvement with A Rocha?

My findings have been included in the formal justification document given to the government to present the case for Atewa becoming a National Park. The results have also informed A Rocha Ghana's livelihood strategies programme. I've drafted a scientific paper with Freya and Jeremy on the use of the bean method as a novel tool for conservation managers. And I received a distinction for my Masters!



Dr Paul Simonin

Paul is an aquatic ecologist, based at Cornell University, USA. He says, 'My research is primarily

in fisheries ecology, studying how aquatic communities and systems adapt to change. I first connected with Bob five years ago while a graduate student. We have worked together periodically ever since, including several months at A Rocha's coastal study centre in Kenya. Bob and his Marine Programme deeply integrate faith with practical management of marine systems in a way that is unique in the global marine conservation community. His interweaving of scientific study with theology, peacemaking and poverty alleviation is yielding richer fruit than if these threads were pursued independently. I know my work with fishing communities in Indonesia has been made more effective through ongoing thoughtful interactions with Bob.'

Sara Kaweesa

National Director, A Rocha Uganda



(Melissa Ong)



Left: In Africa, charcoal production is a major cause of deforestation. We estimate that each filter provided by Sara and her team saves 15 trees a year from being felled for fuel. (Jaap Gijbsbertsen)



Right: Mrs Nanyonjo Ephrance shares her bio-sand water filter with 11 members of her family and 211 members of her church and local school. What a generous woman! (A Rocha Uganda)

Improving human health and reducing deforestation

Every day, around nine million people in Uganda risk their lives and health by drinking from contaminated water sources, so we are helping some of the poorest people in Kampala to make bio-sand water filters. These remove 99% of pathogens and parasites without boiling the water or using chemicals, based on cheap, easy-to-use technology. It's wonderful to see families enjoying better health.



Mary Kitandire is the mother of three children and uses her bio-sand water filter for all their drinking water. She tells us that typhoid fever was a big problem in their area, but since 2014, when the filters were installed in people's homes, there hasn't been a single local case! (Craig Mercer)

INTERNATIONAL A ROCHA Conservation and Hope

Choose by category Choose by country About A Rocha £0.00

Home / Shop / Bio-sand water filter, Uganda

Bio-sand water filter, Uganda

£66.00

Bio-sand water filters reduce deforestation and help to provide clean, safe drinking water for communities in Kampala. Based on a cheap and easy-to-use technology, the filters remove 99% of pathogens and parasites from any water source without the need for chemical treatment or boiling.

Add to basket

Choose a currency Pound sterling

Could you be a change-maker?

Shop at Gifts with a Difference and browse our list of products to empower Ugandan women and Kenyan ASSETS students

www.shop.arocha.org



We are a Christian organization engaging communities in nature conservation.

A Rocha International, 89 Worship Street, London, EC2A 2BF, England.

Tel: +44 (0)300 770 1346 E-mail: international@arocha.org

Registered Charity No. 1136041 Company Registration No. 6852417



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



www.arocha.org



facebook.com/arocha.international



twitter.com/arochaint



www.instagram.com/arochaint