

ISSUE 41 FALL 2015

A Rocha Annual Review



CANADA
A ROCHA
Environmental Stewardship

*Inspiring Hope,
Caring for Creation*

ACROSS CANADA

The Year in
Numbers:

40,000 volunteer
hours invested

5,500 visitors
welcomed to
Environmental
Centres

15 threatened
or endangered
species researched

35,000 lbs of
veggies grown

15,000 people
reached with the
creation care
message

2,000 children
educated

500 churches
engaged

25 interns trained



A summer intern creates a native plant garden
at the Brooksdale Environmental Centre

A Rocha Across Canada: Grounded in Hope

This past year A Rocha Canada got a new tagline – that little phrase in the corner of our literature that sums up our mission with pithy precision. We went from “Inspiring Change, Caring for Creation” to “Inspiring Hope, Caring for Creation.” Hadn’t noticed? Don’t worry, most folks didn’t. But from those who did, concern was expressed. Did preferring the word “hope” mean we had suddenly embraced a pie-in-the sky optimism out of sync with current environmental realities?

Never fear, we assured them, we are acutely aware of the realities of a suffering planet, and we most certainly are still calling people to change. What the vocabulary tweak describes is A Rocha’s Christian identity and how we are inspiring people to care for creation – not from a place of fear or frenetic activity, but from a place of hope. This hope is rooted in the biblical understanding of God’s love for all creation and God’s call of stewardship.

In practice, A Rocha is bringing hope to inner-city neighbourhoods in Surrey, Winnipeg and Hamilton through community and school gardens serving newcomers to Canada, folks with mental disabilities, and those struggling with low-income. We are fostering hope in young volunteers and interns who often arrive stunningly aware of the planet’s plight but unsure how to make a difference.

We are creating hope through our education programs in British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario as we open children’s eyes to

the wonder of creation. Finally, we are enacting hope as our conservation teams study threatened species and restore sensitive habitats, believing that even the most humble of creatures is worthy of our care.

All this work requires a measure of tenacity. It also requires the generosity of friends. Perhaps one of the most encouraging events of this year will be the completion of the Brooksdale property donation in Surrey, BC. After stewarding this amazing property on behalf of the Neufeld family, A Rocha is able to truly fulfill the wishes of Elizabeth and Arnold Neufeld: this special place will be a protected area for conservation and community for years to come.

The gifting of Brooksdale also means that A Rocha can move forward with capital improvements and acquisition of adjacent sensitive wildlife habitat. This will make a huge impact on Brooksdale’s capacity to conserve threatened habitat as well as welcome, train, educate, and serve all who come. Of the 9.5 million dollar capital campaign goal, the gift of Brooksdale as well as lead gifts and pledges brings our total raised to 5.6 million. For more on the campaign check out our campaign website: arocha.ca/brooksdale/

We invite you to read on and get a small taste of some of the good and hopeful work A Rocha is doing across Canada.



MARKKU AND LEAH KOSTAMO

Co-Founders of
A Rocha Canada

Markku serves as
President of A Rocha
Canada and Leah serves as
Communications Director

Researching Species and Restoring Habitats

Caring for West Coast Rivers

Restoring the health of one of BC's most threatened rivers is a priority for the Brooksdale conservation team. Led by the highly competent conservation duo of Christy Juteau and Andrew Baylis, the team is taking a holistic and community-based approach to caring for this river. Working with world-class biologists, and with the help of interns and volunteers, the team completed an impressive 20 conservation and restoration projects last year, from surveying rare and endangered species like the Salish Sucker, to restoring habitat through a river remeandering project, to removing invasive plants and planting native trees. Finally, the team is working with local landowners to identify major sources of pollution as they survey feeder creeks for restoration opportunities, helping others in the watershed care for this gem of creation.

Further north, A Rocha community organizer Cindy Verbeek is leading a newly formed group of streamkeepers in the Bulkley Valley, near Houston, BC. Considered one of the most endangered watersheds in the Skeena



river system, the Upper Bulkley River has received very little conservation attention in the past, and yet is home to genetically unique populations of sockeye, chinook and coho salmon. In order to care for the whole watershed, the group completed Pacific Streamkeepers Federation's Streamkeepers course and are embarking on a monitoring program to assess the health of the river and plan for future restoration projects.

Stewarding Land in Manitoba and Ontario

The Pembina Valley Interpretive Centre in Manitoba is situated on a picturesque oak and aspen ridge overlooking Pembina Valley Provincial Park. Both Centre and Park were established through the vision and hard work of Henry and Elma Martens. Henry has been hard at work again, helping negotiate the sale of additional environmentally sensitive land to expand the park by more than five-fold to a planned 2,310 acres. A Rocha is proud of the role Henry has played in the preservation of such environmentally significant land.

One province over, the A Rocha folk in Ontario are turning their attention to the Greater Toronto Area. In Toronto proper, A Rocha

volunteers are preserving the ecological integrity of the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust's StarCliff Nature Reserve by removing literally tonnes of invasive species during their regular Saturday Stewardship Days.

In the Hamilton area, the team is stewarding Cedar Haven Farm. Their work has included a BioBlitz, in which they surveyed the 95-acre property's biodiversity of both plants and animals, resulting in a data baseline for further studies. In addition, the team has worked with local school groups to build and maintain bird boxes for the threatened Eastern Blue Bird, a project which has not only cared for one beleaguered species, but has ignited the imaginations of young people as they participated in hands-on care for creation.



Helping People Thrive

Welcoming Newcomers in Hamilton

The Akbar family* are newcomers to Canada. In their home country of Afghanistan, the three-generation family of 20 lived in a home surrounded by gardens. What food they didn't grow for themselves they bought at an open-air market down the road. The family was forced to flee because of threats issued in response to Dr. Akbar's support of education for girls and now has refugee status in Canada, making their home in Hamilton's Beasley neighbourhood on the 13th floor of an apartment block. Living in such austere conditions with so little green space, the family was thrilled to discover A Rocha's Earth to Table Project in their neighbourhood. In its first year of programming, Earth to Table helped over 40 newcomer families find community and become rooted in their new home through community gardening and cooking classes.

This past summer the Akbar family regularly joined in A Rocha's gardening endeavors, held in partnership with Hamilton's downtown Cancord Victory Garden, a garden created in a neglected lot adjacent to a rope factory. "Coming into the garden makes us feel like we're home," said Mrs. Akbar. The produce the Akbars and the other participants can't

use goes to the local food bank and the Good Shepherd Meal Service Program for disadvantaged youth.

Turning School Yards into Farm Yards in Surrey

A Rocha's Farm to Families project extends the good work of the Brooksdale Environmental Centre's sustainable agriculture program to local low-income communities by turning vacant corners of school grounds into thriving gardens. A special-needs teacher at L.A. Matheson Secondary reports that their new A Rocha garden is used by up to 150 students every week.

Not only are the students benefiting, neighbourhood families are enjoying the garden as well. "In years past," commented a 30-year resident of the area, "there has been a lot of vandalism and violence at the school. The creation of the garden changed that. It has provided a beautiful spot for friends and family to stroll through and benefit from. Besides the smells and colours, it provided many families with fresh, vitamin-rich produce. I didn't know so many different vegetables could be grown here; this community garden has been a blessing for the neighbourhood."

* The family's name was changed to preserve their privacy.



“Our initial goal with the A Rocha garden was to introduce locally grown fruit and vegetables to our students. Little did we know that this project would support so many more learning goals and opportunities than we ever imagined. From the initial planning stages, through the planting and harvesting stages, our students have benefited from this outdoor classroom.

My Lifeskills students have been exposed to fruits and vegetables that they had never tried before and it’s been a thrill for them to cook delicious meals using food they had a hand in growing.”

— ERIN SLANEY

Teacher at L.A. Matheson Secondary
(one of eight schools in the Surrey School District partnering with A Rocha’s Farm to Families project)

Inspiring the Next Generation

No Place Like Home: Education in BC and Manitoba

Children in classroom-based science programs often learn about far off places – places full of exciting creatures like tigers or toucans, but terribly distant from their own backyards. Enter A Rocha! Children on a field trip or day camp at an A Rocha Centre get up close and personal with the flora and fauna of their own home.

Last year A Rocha engaged over 1,500 students in BC and Manitoba. Children explored forests, rivers, ponds, gardens, and prairie meadows. They lifted binoculars skyward, dipped nets in water, pulled carrots from soil, and explored forest trails. Though they may not have encountered tigers or toucans, they were given the great gift of seeing their home with new, wonder-filled eyes.

A Rocha's Mission in Hamilton: Operation Wild

Imagine a summer defined by concrete, busy roads and tall buildings. This is the reality for a great number of children in inner-city Hamilton's Beasley and Gibson neighbourhoods. But A Rocha is bringing some green into these children's lives thanks to a new program called Operation Wild. In partnership with City Kidz, the Grub Club, and various local churches, A Rocha hosted 250 children on field trips and

a summer day camp at the wonderfully green Cedar Haven farm just north of town.

Listen to what the kids had to say:
"I like being in the forest because then I can be free." "This is my favourite field trip ever."
And from one child who was looking out at the garden and pond while eating lunch under a tree, "I am going to miss this place."

Equipping Young People through Internships

Every year up to 30 future educators, conservationists, and farmers, aged 18 to 80 spend three months in one of A Rocha's transformational internships. Here's how one of them describes his experience.



"As a conservationist in the midst of my studies, my time at A Rocha has given me both valuable professional skills and the comfort of knowing I am part of a movement of Christians taking seriously God's call to care for the earth. This sense of community gives me hope as I pursue a vocation stewarding God's creation.

— ANTHONY WALDROP
Summer Intern



Get Involved

To find out more about
our education work or to
book a field trip visit
[arocho.ca/environmental-
education/](http://arocho.ca/environmental-education/)

To find out more about our
internships visit
arocho.ca/internships/



Equipping the Church to Care for Creation



When people of faith take seriously the biblical call to care for creation they become agents of tremendous positive change. Therefore the A Rocha team is speaking from pulpits, hosting pastors conferences and equipping churches across Canada to put creation care theology into action.

Katharine Hayhoe on Climate Change

Words like, “I left feeling positive and hopeful” are not what one expects to hear following a presentation on climate change. Yet “hope” was the word that sprang to mind for many of the attendees of “Earthkeeping: A Climate for Change,” an event co-presented by A Rocha and Regent College within the week-long “Holy Ground” pastors conference dealing with creation care themes. The event featured renowned atmospheric scientist Dr. Katharine Hayhoe. Speaking to an audience of over 800, Hayhoe did not shy away from the hard facts. Climate is changing because of our actions, contends Hayhoe, and therefore our choices matter. This is where faith and the Christian teaching to love our neighbour come in.

The hopeful atmosphere was fostered not only by Hayhoe, but by the incredibly diverse response panel that continued the on-stage conversation Katharine began. Just the sight of Jeff Greenman (President of Regent College), Peter Robinson (CEO of the David Suzuki Foundation) and Preston Manning (former Leader of the Opposition) joking next to one another on stage was enough to warm the cockles of many a skeptical heart. But what really got the crowd cheering was their joint admonition that to tackle this problem we will need to work together and put aside partisan animosities.

To watch the whole presentation visit arocha.ca/climate-for-change/



Reaching Out in Winnipeg

For the past five years A Rocha has partnered with St. Margaret's Anglican church to help this inner-city Winnipeg parish reach out to their most vulnerable neighbours. Through the A Rocha-initiated Just Growing project's urban garden plots, the church is feeding those in need, many of whom are on welfare

or struggle with various mental and physical disabilities. The organically-grown produce goes to individuals who participate in tending and harvesting the gardens. It is also sent to local organizations such as Villa Rosa - which serves single mothers - and Madison Lodge, a social housing project serving those with developmental disabilities. The Lodge's director recently reported that St. Margaret's Just Growing project provides nearly all the fresh vegetables to residents, for which they are so grateful.



Get Involved

St. Margaret's is just one of over 500 churches A Rocha has helped with creation care training and resources.

For more information on how your church can serve your neighbours and care for God's creation, check out our Good Seed Sunday project: goodseedsunday.arocho.ca and our Community Garden Network: arocho.ca/communitygardens

Welcoming the World to A Rocha's Environmental Centres

A Rocha Centres are living labs where visitors, interns, and volunteers are immersed in compassionate environmental engagement, equipping them to be agents of change in their own communities.

Brooksdale Environmental Centre

A Rocha's flagship centre in Canada, the Brooksdale Environmental Centre in Surrey, BC is a living lab composed of forests, a threatened river system, organic gardens, and heritage houses. This unique combination of sensitive wildlife habitat and agricultural land makes Brooksdale more than a showpiece. It is a place where critical environmental issues are researched, addressed and solved. Here, we are:

- Restoring sensitive wildlife habitat
- Training young scientists, educators and farmers
- Inspiring school children
- Feeding low-income families
- Welcoming over 4,000 visitors annually

Pembina Valley Interpretive Centre

Situated in southern Manitoba, the Pembina Valley Interpretive Centre is an A Rocha Canada partnered project and is surrounded by more than 2,000 acres of protected Oak woodland. The Pembina Valley Interpretive Centre is truly a sanctuary for wildlife and people. A recipient of the Pembina Valley Tourism's "Award of Distinction," the Centre operates a full service B&B for overnight guests. For those just visiting for a day, the Centre offers several kilometres of interpretive walking trails, a winterized indoor meeting area and educational programming for school, community and church groups.



Cedar Haven Farm

Owned by Bill and Lyndia Hendry and stewarded by A Rocha, Cedar Haven is a picturesque 95-acre farm situated just 20 minutes from A Rocha's urban-based projects in Hamilton, Ontario and is within a 30-minute radius of more than a million people. With its rolling hills, fields, forest, and hedgerows, Cedar Haven is an ideal launching pad for A Rocha's transformational work in Southern Ontario. Last year alone, the A Rocha team hosted over 1,000 visitors, volunteers and school children to Cedar Haven.



Get Involved

For more information on volunteering, visiting or booking a program or retreat at one of our centres:

Brooksdale:

arocha.ca/bc-centre

Pembina Valley:

arocha.ca/manitoba-centre

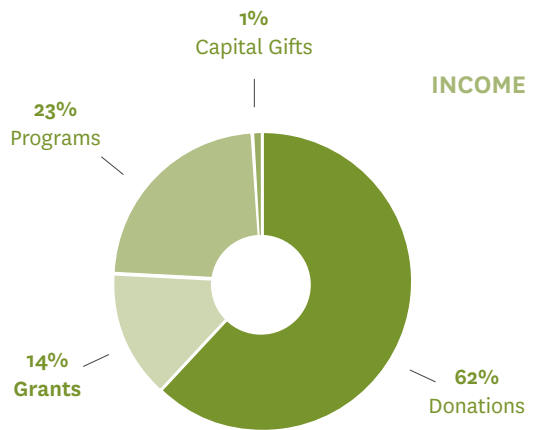
Hamilton:

arocha.ca/ontario-centre

Financial Information

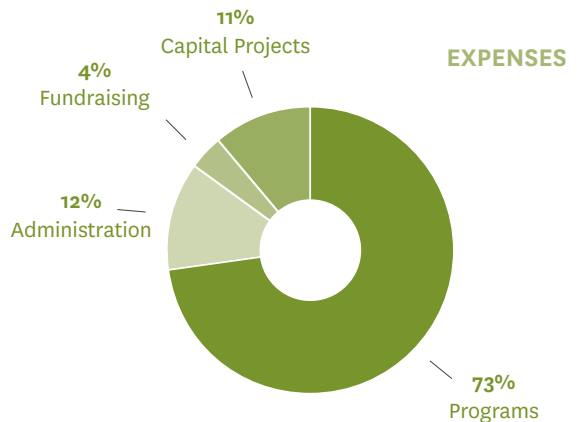
INCOME **2014-2015**

Donations (Individuals, Churches, & Corporations)	\$933,404
Grants (Foundations & Government)	\$218,422
Environmental Centre Revenue & Program Fees	\$344,610
Operating Subtotal	\$1,496,436
Capital Gifts	\$13,362
Total Revenue	\$1,509,798



EXPENSES & CAPITAL ASSET INVESTMENT **2014-2015**

Programs (Conservation, Education, Sustainable Living and Brooksdale, Hamilton & Pembina Valley Centre Operations)	\$1,170,416
Administration	\$199,026
Fundraising	\$70,464
Operating Subtotal	\$1,439,906
Capital Campaign and Improvements	\$171,059
Total Expenses	\$1,610,966



*Report for fiscal year ending April 30, 2015



At A Rocha We Love Partnerships.

We are invigorated by the collegial partnership of other environmental groups who lend expertise and camaraderie to the earthkeeping cause. We are inspired by the hands-on partnership of individuals and churches that gather at our centres to create community and steward creation. And we are grateful for the financial partnership of foundations, government agencies and individuals who give generously so that we can fulfill our mission of transforming people and places by showing God's love for all creation. In particular, we would like to thank the public and government funders that supported our program areas this past year:

Canada Summer Jobs
Charis Foundation
D.H. Falle Family Foundation
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
The Government of Manitoba
Habitat Stewardship Program
Pacific Salmon Foundation
Science Horizons Program
TD Friends of the Environment
Foundation

The Winnipeg Foundation
United Way of the Lower Mainland
Vancity Community Foundation
Vancouver Foundation
World Vision Canada

And to our 1,000 donors across Canada: **Thank You.** We are mightily grateful and couldn't do this work without you.

Our Mission

A Rocha is an international Christian organization, which, inspired by God's love, engages in scientific research, environmental education and community-based conservation projects.

Our Vision

Restoring salmon habitat, training young scientists, inspiring school children, feeding low-income families – A Rocha is transforming people and places by showing God's love for all creation through hands-on conservation projects, environmental education programs, and sustainable agriculture initiatives.

Our Commitments

CHRISTIAN

Underlying all we do is our biblical faith in the living God, who made the world, loves it and entrusts it to the care of human society.

CONSERVATION

We carry out research for the conservation and restoration of the natural world and run environmental education programs for people of all ages.

COMMUNITY

Through our commitment to God, each other, and the wider creation, we aim to develop good relationships both within the A Rocha family and in our local communities.

CROSS-CULTURAL

We draw on the insights and skills of people from diverse cultures, both locally and around world.

COOPERATION

We work in partnership with a wide variety of organizations and individuals who share our concerns for a sustainable world.

Join us in engaging thousands of people every year in the work of caring for creation. We can make a difference together! For opportunities to give through estate planning please contact our office.



Photography credits: Brooke McAllister: cover, pg. 2, 5, 9, 15 (all photos on those pages). Randall Peters: pg. 7, bottom image. Peter Quek, pg. 10.

WWW.AROCHA.CA

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