

ISSUE 43 FALL 2016



A Rocha Annual Review

CANADA
A ROCHA
Environmental Stewardship

*Inspiring Hope,
Caring for Creation*

All Things New

Much of A Rocha's work is about perseverance. It's about the patience it takes to grow vegetables, pull endless weeds, count myriad birds, bugs and fish. It's about lingering long enough with a child to notice the flit of a chickadee from a branch. It's about offering another cup of tea or plate of food with warm hospitality. It's about doing these things over the long haul and in the same places.

Because our work is in this sense "ordinary," it's always nice when a bit of newness gets thrown into the mix. And while this past year has included a lot of perseverance in the humble and long-standing tasks of earth-keeping, it has also included a number of exciting new things.

On the people front, we were thrilled to welcome Christie Goode to our leadership team. She serves in the newly created role of Vice President of Advancement. We were also thrilled to build our relationship with climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe through a new partnership with Tyndale University in Toronto. Together we hosted an evening with Hayhoe called "A Climate for Change: Paris and Beyond."

After countless hours of writing, editing and programming, we launched a new and nifty website this summer. Word on the cyber-street is that it's wonderfully user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing.

But that's not all! There's a new A Rocha initiative, under the leadership of Paul Heintzman, in Ottawa. A new office for our Ontario director Luke Wilson and his team in Hamilton. A new A Rocha network forming in Winnipeg. A new fish hatchery near Houston, BC. New conversations percolating in Alberta. New university classes on the themes of creation care taught by our staff Matt Humphrey and Sarah Wildeman. And a new land title for the Brooksdale property, allowing us to embark on a capital campaign to improve and build financial stability.

And of course, there are the standard new things: new batches of interns trained, new children inspired, new veggies grown, new surveys completed on threatened species.

Given that A Rocha is a Christian organization that follows the One who claimed, "Behold, I am making all things new," perhaps all this newness is fitting. At any rate, we encourage you to read on and get a small taste of some of the good morsels that have made up this past year.



MARKKU AND LEAH KOSTAMO
Co-Founders of A Rocha Canada

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

"Outdoors we are confronted everywhere with wonders; we see that the miraculous is not extraordinary, but the common mode of existence. It is our daily bread."

— WENDELL BERRY

Environmental Centres

A Rocha's Environmental Centres in Surrey, BC, southern Manitoba and Hamilton, ON are places where both people and the land flourish. Visitors, volunteers and interns not only roll up their sleeves to care for creation in practical ways, they also enjoy the healing goodness of creation and community as they work, learn, play and share meals together in these special places.

1

Brooksdale Environmental Centre

Brooksdale's Guest House welcomes overnight visitors year-round. Individuals and groups can enjoy private retreats or join in the community's rhythms of work, worship, meals and fun.

2

Brooksdale Environmental Centre

The internship program at Brooksdale provides transformational experiences for approximately 30 future farmers, educators, and environmental scientists every year.

3

Pembina Valley Interpretive Centre

A partner project of A Rocha, The Pembina Valley Interpretive Centre's private guest rooms and stunning scenery make it a perfect place for a getaway in creation.

4

Pembina Valley Interpretive Centre

Children come away inspired to care for creation after exploring the Pembina Valley Interpretive Centre's picturesque pond and many kilometres of trails.

5

Cedar Haven Farm

Cedar Haven Farm near Hamilton, Ontario is owned by Bill and Lyndia Hendry, but stewarded by A Rocha. The farm welcomes visitors for events like our annual Star Gazing Night, Bio Blitz, Harvest Celebration and regular Volunteer Days.

6

Cedar Haven Farm

Adults and children living on the economic margins are given the restorative experience of a day in creation at Cedar Haven Farm through A Rocha's Operation Wild project.



Visit one of our centres!

Find out how at arocha.ca/where-we-work



Conservation: Here for the Long Haul

Hands-on Conservation

A commitment to hands-on conservation undergirds everything we do at A Rocha. Yes, we train, educate, inspire and encourage, but we also pull, plant, study, and restore. This kind of work is not flashy, but neither is it a flash-in-the-pan, since we are committed to specific places regardless of funding cycles or the latest trends. That’s why we’ve stuck around in places like the Bulkley Valley in Northern BC, or in the Pembina Valley of Manitoba, or in the Greater Toronto Area—to make a difference over the long haul.



Little Campbell River Watershed

And our persistent work is bearing fruit. Nowhere is this more apparent than in BC’s Little Campbell River Watershed, where A Rocha’s 13 years of conservation studies are now being consulted by City of Surrey staff as they formulate a Local Area Plan. The Area Plan will affect future development goals for a 600-acre swath of South Surrey—land which includes the environmentally sensitive Little Campbell River. Our research is timely, especially as Surrey considers rezoning applications from agricultural use to more urban uses.

Without A Rocha’s baseline research, decision makers would not be aware of the rare and vulnerable species present in this important streamside landscape. They might be unaware, for example, that only a handful of endangered Salish Suckers swim and breed in the stretch of the Little Campbell River near Brooksedale; or that the decline of freshwater mussels in this river indicates degrading water quality; or that Barn Swallows’ breeding success is linked to available open pastures for foraging; or that only one Western Toad breeding pond has been found in the Little Campbell River watershed and that valuable forested corridors are necessary for their survival. We all know that forests and rivers are critical for biodiversity, but when city planners discover more about the species using these resources, they can make better decisions about which areas to protect.

A Rocha’s dedication to on-the-ground conservation and research makes us unique among faith-based conservation groups. The fact that we do it well and over many years makes us an invaluable voice for stewardship in the places we work.



“The environmental research work done by A Rocha, and in particular their mapping related to species of concern, has been a very valuable resource for City of Surrey staff as we seek to understand and address the environmental values of the Little Campbell Valley/Hazelmere area of Surrey. This work is important as we develop land use plans and policies to guide future development, and as we assess development proposals and make informed recommendations to City Council.”

— DON LUYMES
Community Planning Manager
for the City of Surrey

CONSERVATION IN NUMBERS:

- 248,516 hectares benefitting from A Rocha’s conservation work
- 402 hectares directly managed by A Rocha for conservation
- 18 Species at Risk monitored and protected
- 8,500 m² of streamside habitat restored
- 15 conservation projects completed
- 41 landowners engaged



Environmental Education for All

At A Rocha we believe that experiencing the goodness and wonder of creation should not be a privilege of the wealthy or culturally advantaged. Our Operation Wild project in Hamilton, Ontario, which operates out of Cedar Haven Farm, works with children and adults who have little access to the natural world. Some participants are newcomers to Canada, some live on low income and others have physical or mental challenges that prohibit them from jumping in a car for a trip into the country.

It's been a delight to welcome residents of Hamilton's Indwell community this past year. Indwell provides affordable housing and support for individuals with mental health issues.

A snapshot of one of the Indwell participants is indicative of how these folks respond to the gift of a day immersed in creation. Getting into the spirit of the setting, Susan* arrived at Cedar Haven donning her straw hat and wearing a bandana. She smiled and laughed throughout her visit, harvesting rhubarb with obvious joy. She reminisced about the "long beautiful hike" she took last year during her Cedar Haven visit.

When asked what she enjoyed most about coming to the farm she replied, "My favourite part is the serenity. I'm fortunate to live at Indwell, but it's in an area of town that has constant traffic and sirens, so I really enjoy the peace and quiet that I've found at Cedar Haven."

* Name has been changed to preserve privacy.



Operation Wild is looking for volunteers to expand our programming. Find out more at arocha.ca/Ontario-centre

EDUCATION IN NUMBERS:

- 16,199 people reached with the creation care message
- 10,935 people directly engaged through churches
- 5,264 people involved in environmental education activities
- 2,024 school children hosted on field trips
- 273 education activities and programs held

Get involved

We run education programs for all ages in BC, MB and ON. Check out our website for opportunities to get up close and personal with creation: arocha.ca/education



Welcoming Refugees with Fresh, Local Food

Gracepoint Church is extending a warm welcome to recently arrived Syrian refugees in Surrey, BC. Having sponsored an eight-member family and experienced the reciprocal goodness of such hospitality, church members are reaching out to other newcomers in the area by providing weekly A Rocha Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) bins of fresh local veggies.

Community Shared Agriculture


Every Tuesday throughout the growing season, Gracepoint Church members pick up the overflowing bins, chock-full of everything from lettuce to tomatoes to leeks, and deliver them to seven local families. In so doing, congregants are a conduit between the farmers who grew the food and the appreciative newcomers who enjoy it.

When asked why the church chose A Rocha's CSA instead of just shopping at the local market, Gracepoint member Bernard Poller had this to say: "What better way to welcome these families to our community than to provide them with a weekly supply of the very best seasonal local and organic vegetables we could find? Food is a universal language and a basic need – it ties so many issues together, such as personal and community health, the environment and social justice. On a practical

level, a CSA share provides these families with both nutritious food and a connection to place – their new home of Surrey."

A wonderful side benefit to delivering the CSA bins has been the opportunity for real connection. Friendships between Canadian church members and the newcomers have developed, and the newcomers often end up offering hospitality through cups of tea and Syrian food – an experience of true community and dignifying encounters for everyone.

A Rocha is also serving newcomers to Canada and others living in challenging circumstances through our Farm to Families program at the Brooksdale Centre and through our Earth to Table program in Hamilton, ON.

 **Find out more on our website:**
arocha.ca/what-we-do/sustainable-agriculture

Get involved

Even if you live far from our CSA project, never fear; there are ways to connect with your community through A Rocha's sustainable agriculture projects.

Check out our Community Garden Network for ideas on how your church can grow food and transform your community: arocha.ca/community-garden-network.

AGRICULTURE IN NUMBERS:

45,000 lbs of vegetables grown

960 people receiving fresh A Rocha produce

300 people engaged in our Farm to Families project in Surrey

160 newcomers served through our Earth to Table project in Hamilton

2 school gardens supported in Surrey

Volunteer Spotlight

Kirsten Jeffrey Johnson

You don't have to live near an A Rocha Centre to be an A Rocha volunteer. Though A Rocha's vision of hands-on creation care is tangibly lived out at our centres, there are scores of volunteers across the country building the capacity of our organization and caring for creation in their own places.


Meet one such volunteer: Kirsten Jeffrey Johnson of Lanark County, Ontario. In reflecting on her journey with A Rocha, Kirsten said, "I think my husband Greg's and my most significant contribution has been introductions: sharing our excitement about what A Rocha is and what it does with friends as we bring together people and a mission we love."

Sometimes the introductions produce fruit long after the initial seed has been sown. Back in 1999, Kirsten sent information about A Rocha to a young 10-year-old second cousin, a boy whom she had only met once but who had impressed her with his love of birds. Nearly 15 years later, Kirsten and Greg were visiting Brooksdale when they stumbled upon the same second cousin. He was now an A Rocha intern and a graduate in environmental studies. "We had totally lost touch, so it was quite a thrill to be reunited in such a setting!" she recalled.

Throughout her years of cheerleading, financially supporting, and connecting others with A Rocha, Kirsten has lived with the debilitating effects of rheumatoid arthritis. Though she would love for her own farm in the Ottawa Valley to be used as an A Rocha centre of sorts, her physical realities limit her hosting capacity. But what she lacks in physical mobility she makes up for in creativity in the networking cause!

With impish delight, she admits, "I intentionally leave exciting A Rocha newsletters in our 'reading pile' in the bathroom. In fact that's where our copy of A Rocha Canada's story *Planted* permanently resides!" Evidently, her strategy is working. Kirsten was recently contacted by a local minister who had stopped by the previous week. He confessed he'd taken a peek at *Planted* while visiting her loo and wanted to know more about mobilizing his church to care for creation.



 **Pitch in! Check out** arocha.ca/volunteer for opportunities at our centres and across Canada

In Memoriam

This past spring held much sadness for the A Rocha team. Two dear members of the Brooksdale community passed away within six weeks of each other. We are so grateful for their singularly beautiful lives and for their impact on our own lives.



Rob Des Cotes

Rob and his wife Ruth began their involvement with A Rocha in our earliest days in Canada. For the past five years, the Des Cotes resided at Brooksdale, where together they served as Centre hosts and where Ruth continues to live and serve as an environmental educator.

In addition to his significant pastoral, writing and speaking ministry with Imago Dei, Rob led the Brooksdale community into deeper ways of knowing and experiencing God, as well as experiencing the depth and goodness of community. Rob brought a rare combination of humour, wisdom, and intentionality to every setting. In his faithful pursuit of God, he shaped the culture of A Rocha, and Brooksdale in particular.

 **More information on Rob's life and work can be found at** imagodeicommunity.ca



Thea Anderson

Thea Jeane Stewart Anderson, the daughter of Brooksdale's Centre Directors David and Shauna Anderson, passed from death to life on a Sunday in May after an 18-month journey with leukemia. She was 10 years old.

Thea was strong, sweet, sassy and lovely. She found joy in exploring nature, whether hunting for crawdads with her father and brothers in the Little Campbell River or traipsing across fields with her mom to visit the farm's sheep and chickens. Thea truly loved growing up at Brooksdale.

In her memory, A Rocha has set up The Thea Fund for Brooksdale, so more children can explore creation and know the love of their Creator in this special place.

 **Find out more at** arocha.ca/thea-fund-brooksdale

Equipping the Church to Care for Creation

Churches across Canada are making creation care part of their congregational life and mission. One church that has taken the call seriously is Tenth Church in Vancouver. Even before former A Rocha staff Jay and Milissa Ewing joined the team, lead pastor Ken Shigematsu was helping his flock think more biblically about stewarding the earth as an act of Christian discipleship.

When asked how Tenth fosters this earthkeeping ethic, Jay responded, “At Tenth, we believe we’re called to be a community that tangibly shows God’s love to the rest of the world. Every time we preach the gospel, every time we share a glass of water, every time we plant a tree,

every time we compost our waste, we are participating with God in ushering in God’s kingdom. While we don’t do this perfectly, we do desire to honour God’s original command to steward the earth.”

Practically, that stewardship has meant starting a community garden called The Healing Garden, which produces many of the fresh veggies that get turned into soup for those struggling with homelessness. It has also meant switching to paperless bulletins, using compostable coffee cups, and hosting “Engaged Ecology” prayer walks.

Jay continues, “We are thankful for the opportunity to participate in restoring the relationship between people and God’s good creation. A Rocha has been both a support and a great encouragement, especially through their Good Seed Sunday resources. We are grateful for their partnership and wisdom in the area of environmental stewardship.”

Get involved

Kick-start a creation care movement in your church! Check out: arocha.ca/good-seed-Sunday for resources



Introducing Christie Goode

Christie Goode recently joined the A Rocha team in the role of Vice President of Advancement. Christie has been a friend of A Rocha since 2001 and brings over 10 years of experience in fundraising, mixed with a personal interest in food systems, and a healthy dose of creation-care theology gained at Regent College.

She was drawn to A Rocha because of its spirit of hospitality that, in her words, “permeates everything A Rocha does.” She also is passionate about A Rocha’s vision to connect people with creation. “I think consumer culture often de-humanizes us,” she says. “But connecting with nature re-humanizes us. For us to really know our place, to care for it and in turn be cared for by it – that would make for a pretty vibrant society.”

When reflecting on the role philanthropy can play in people’s lives, Christie reflects: “Practising generosity – whether through financial giving or service or hospitality or even just smiling at someone – it all aligns us with God’s way of being in the world.”

Believing that God does indeed have an intended way of being in the world, Christie has initiated a new prayer network on behalf of a Rocha. She writes, “I am acutely aware that our mission of ‘transforming people and places by showing God’s love for all of creation’ truly cannot advance without prayer. This is spiritual work – caring for God’s people and God’s places always is.”

The commitment to be part of the Prayer Network is small – just an email update every couple of months. To sign up or connect with Christie about her work in philanthropy email her at christie.goode@arocha.ca.

International Focus: Uganda

Bio-sand Filters

A Rocha Uganda is working in the slums surrounding the Lubigi Wetland, training some of Kampala's poorest women to make bio-sand filters for easy access to clean, safe drinking water. This means improved health, more free time, less expense, reduced deforestation and lower carbon emissions.

And a rural church in Alberta is helping make it happen. When the members of Bow Valley Church learned that approximately 25% of Uganda's population still lacks access to clean, safe drinking-water, they decided to partner with A Rocha to be part of the solution. Thanks to their generous support, A Rocha Uganda has implemented the bio-sand filter project. By filtering water through layers of sand and sediment, drinking water no longer needs to be boiled, reducing the number of trees that need to be cut down for charcoal production. The project is a win-win for the local community and their surrounding environment!

Ashley Dueck had this to say about her church's partnership with A Rocha Uganda: "Some people think you have to choose between poverty relief and creation care. But this project, based on such a simple technology, shows otherwise. It's saving human lives and helping protect a vulnerable ecosystem."



THE IMPACT OF A SINGLE BIOSAND FILTER IN NUMBERS:

98% of pathogens and parasites removed from water

25 people with clean water

\$2,400 saved in charcoal costs and medical fees

30 trees saved per year

 **A Rocha has projects in 20 countries around the world. Learn more at arocha.org**




A Rocha Internships

Every year A Rocha trains approximately 30 interns from around the world in hands-on creation care. Interns are typically university-aged (though some come in their 30s or 40s) and join in one of our conservation, education or sustainable agriculture projects while experiencing the richness of living in Christian community.

Mallory Bowen came to A Rocha from Austin, Texas after visiting the Brooksdale Environmental Centre with her mother as part of a Regent College conference. While it was the charm of Brooksdale's Tudor-style buildings and its rural setting that first enticed her, Mallory's internship in agriculture and hospitality proved to be more transformational than she could have imagined.

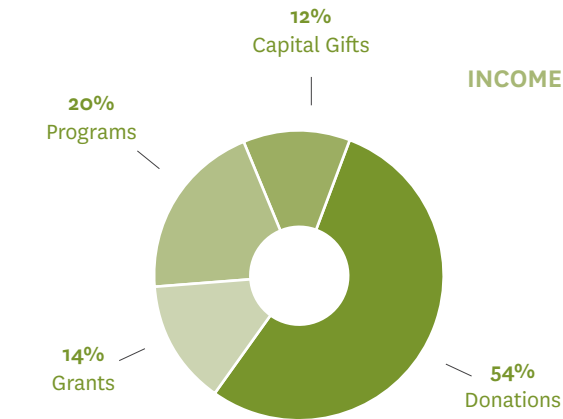
"My internship was unlike anything I've ever experienced," she says. "I had never seen such integrity up close. Within the whole community there is a permeating sense of conviction being lived out. I have seen a commitment to creation care that is met with everyday action. Whether it's washing and drying old plastic cheese wrappers for recycling, or putting together Community Shared Agriculture bins on harvest days, every task is done with the 'why' in mind. It was such a delight to spend the summer in such a beautiful place, learning from people who demonstrate a deep consistency between what they preach and what they practise. I leave not only with skills in gardening and cooking sustainably, but with deeper convictions and the joy and hope to act on them."

 **Intern with us. Find out more about our apprentice-style internships at arocha.ca/internships**

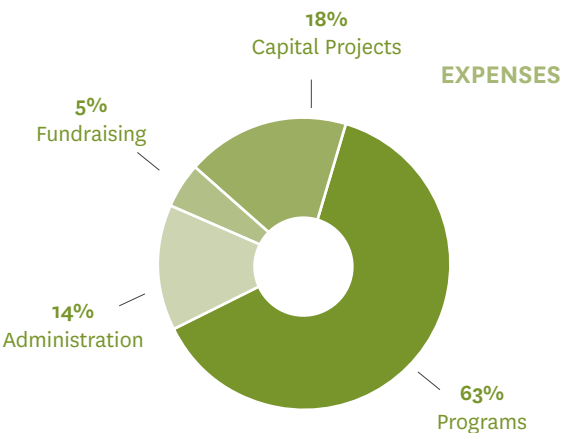
Financial Information

Report for fiscal year ending April 30, 2016

INCOME	2015-2016
Donations (Individuals, Churches, & Corporations)	\$1,066,457
Grants (Foundations & Government)	\$277,459
Environmental Centre Revenue & Program Fees	\$384,637
Operating Subtotal	\$1,728,553
Capital Campaign Gifts	\$ 234,411
Total Revenue	\$1,962,963



EXPENSES & CAPITAL ASSET INVESTMENT	2015-2016
Programs (Conservation, Education, Sustainable Agriculture & Brooksdale, Hamilton & Pembina Valley Centre Operations)	\$1,276,388
Administration	\$287,305
Fundraising	\$99,537
Operating Subtotal	\$1,663,231
Capital Campaign & Improvements	\$368,657
Total Expenses	\$2,031,888*



A Rocha Canada Conservation Foundation:
In 2015, the foundation received a gift of property (Brooksdale) of \$4,093,550 with costs of \$15,102, totaling \$4,078,448.

* Please note that the apparent deficit is due to capital expenditures of funds raised in previous years.

We are so grateful to our supporters across Canada. And we extend thanks to the following foundations and government agencies for their partnership:

BC Hydro
Charis Foundation
D.H. Falle Foundation
Canada Summer Jobs (Govt. of Canada)

Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Habitat Stewardship Program (Environment Canada)
Science Horizons Program (Environment Canada)

Sitka Foundation
United Way of Lower Mainland
Vancity Community Foundation
Vancouver Foundation
World Vision Canada

A Gift Going Both Ways

In 1972, at age sixteen, Brenda Neufeld drove down the Brooksdale driveway for the first time. The property, which served as a residential care facility for people with mental health issues, had just been purchased by her parents. In the 30 years to follow, the Neufelds and the residents worked the land. They played games on the lawn and threw parties in the barn. They became a community, and Brooksdale became a place of healing and rejuvenation.

Brenda’s father, Arnold, often said that they had been blessed with the property for a season, and they needed to steward it well for whatever was next. After Mr. Neufeld passed away and the residents transitioned to a neighbouring facility, the family waited for the “next” thing. A decade passed and still they waited.

When Brenda and her mother finally encountered A Rocha in 2008, they sensed almost immediately it was a good fit. Brenda was particularly impressed by the integrity of the relationships among the A Rocha team. As she and her mother were drawn into those relationships, she appreciated the sensitivity and open-handedness of A Rocha’s leaders, Markku and Leah Kostamo, as the Neufelds considered the future of Brooksdale.

In reflecting on the donation process, Brenda comments, “We’re just normal working folks who happen to have been entrusted by God with stewarding this asset for forty-four years.



We loved this place so much. What would it mean to give it away? We were able to make the gift because we came to trust A Rocha.”

The experience of giving a major gift has turned out differently than Brenda anticipated. “At the start,” she explains, “I thought this was a responsible step that fit our values. I thought giving Brooksdale away would make me satisfied. But I had no idea the joy I would experience. Every day, every time I think of what is happening at Brooksdale, I feel joy! Every time I see a school bus unloading children; every time I sit at lunch with an intern who tells me how they are being transformed; every time I see visitors wearing hijabs and harvesting fresh vegetables with their kids.”

“Everyone is blessed with something to share. Whatever it is, we need to step out and share it. We shouldn’t be afraid of giving something big, because the blessing coming back is more than could ever be imagined.”

— BRENDA NEUFELD

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

Transforming people and places by showing God's love for all creation.

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, 3, 5 (numbers 1,2,4 & 5), 7, 9, 11, 15. World Vision: pg. 5 (number 6). Konul Rosario: pg. 13 of Thea Anderson. Peg Peters : pg. 19.

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W: arocha.ca/donate/

E: canada@arocha.ca

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