

AROCHA

INTERNATIONAL NEWS



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USING THE ARTS TO CHANGE HEARTS

John Roff has worked in environmental education and interpretation for 23 years, firstly for the Wildlife and Environment Society of Southern Africa, then for the South African National Biodiversity Institute and now at a secondary school in Hilton, near Pietermaritzburg. As a poet and musician, he has a particular interest in the power of the arts and plays an influential role in A Rocha South Africa's very varied environmental education programmes.

Environmental education is a fundamental part of A Rocha's conservation work all over the globe, and it's no surprise – one of the most obvious responses to creation in crisis is to educate children and adults towards a more ecologically sustainable future, particularly by encouraging people to change the way they relate to, and therefore behave towards, all of nature.

Many A Rocha teams incorporate the arts extensively in their educational work, motivated by the bold idea that scientific evidence and facts alone are not enough. We simply must engage emotions, beliefs and imaginations – the head and the heart – if we expect to see real change in behaviour:

'A solution to ecological challenges demands more than just economic and technological proposals. It requires an inner change of heart which leads to the rejection of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. It demands an ethical behavior which respects the principles of universal solidarity, social justice and responsibility.'
Pope John Paul II

'Modern ecologists may have reached a limit on how effectively they can convey messages to the public, and they may now need to draw upon the emotional vibrancy offered by the arts.'

Mark Moffett (entomologist and photographer)

Education as a whole in the 'information age' has been strongly based on scientific evidence. Many people know a great deal about the environment, but, as Joseph Cornell points out, 'People often confuse knowledge with wisdom, and think that if we learn enough, then we'll care enough.' He quotes Tanaka Shozo: 'The care of rivers is not a question of rivers, but of the human heart,' and adds, 'For love is the greatest stimulant to the will'.

In the same way that knowing about God and knowing God are entirely different things, knowing about caring for the earth and actually caring for the earth are worlds apart. Care arises from a changed heart, and hearts are not usually changed

by facts and knowledge alone. Rather, heart change comes about as people's emotions are stirred, which can happen in a variety of learning situations. The arts, including architecture, theatre, film, literature and many more, are a deeply powerful way to stir emotions and reach hearts.

I believe that we glimpse something of God's character as we engage in the arts – creativity in the outdoors is often enough to point people to God as Creator, and deepen a reverence for the natural world. Equally, being creative in beautiful places somehow affords us a glimpse of God's creative power which is still at work.



John Roff. (A Rocha South Africa)

MUCH OF A ROCHA SOUTH AFRICA'S WORK INCORPORATES THE ARTS:

Guided walks with children and adults

In addition to learning about biodiversity, many of our guided walks include hearing and playing musical instruments, useful in attuning people's ears to birds' sounds. We include opportunities for writing poetry, listening to prose or poetry with a conservation-oriented theme, creative activities with natural materials, and hearing scripture, much of which is deeply poetic.

Writers' workshop

In March, A Rocha organized a writers' workshop in the Western Cape, on the themes of reconciliation and creation care. The fruit from this workshop includes a volume of poetry entitled *With the Earth*, from



(A Rocha South Africa)

which the poems below are taken:

Anthem of an endangered species

*I do not care if I am extinguished,
all my beauty lost,
extinct and faded into memories
or images that never held
my essence anyway.*

*But you will lose something,
though you know not what,
you will miss the scent of my flowers
on the wind,
and the promise
of what might have been.*

Naming

*In the morning, on the wall under the light,
a kaleidoscope of little insects
around a great orange inkblot
of Emperor moth;*

*but should we really call them moths:
five days as adults,
a month or two as caterpillars,
nine months as pupae?*

*Surely they should be named
according to some longer-lasting aspect
of their life,
chrysalises perhaps, or even larvae,
although, thinking about it,
perhaps something more pronounceable,
like moth.*

Poetry blog

Please visit the A Rocha South Africa blog at <http://wordsforcreation.blogspot.co.uk/> through which we are sharing poetry, with a creation-oriented theme, from around the world. You are welcome to email me at john.roff@arocha.org if you have poems which you'd like to be considered for inclusion.

Created for life!

These courses are designed to teach young Christian leaders about the biblical basis of care for the Earth, and to equip them with the skills and confidence to teach out of doors. Since 2002 we have woven journal writing and drawing, as well as kalimba and flute music, into these courses.

Creation Carnivals

Christchurch Kenilworth's annual Creation Carnival put together by the A Rocha Community Group has run for four years. It includes a craft fair and an 'arts in creation' talent evening.

Much of this 'heart work' is intangible and virtually impossible to measure, yet many people attest to the powerful heart changes wrought in them through experiences with the arts.

I encourage you to try it out – to educate towards a growing movement of people who are not only well-informed about the Earth and biodiversity, but moved to care and act for the welfare of all creation. The arts can help us get there.



Traditional scientific methods of studying nature can be successfully combined with arts and crafts to inform, delight and inspire people of all ages. (Allen Goddard)



(Srihari)

DISCOVERING ELEPHANTS

A Rocha India has been studying the Asian Elephant, *Elephas maximus*, since 2004, and seeking solutions to the frequent conflicts between the animals and farmers.

During that time they have welcomed many kinds of visitor: foresters, biologists, elephant specialists, church and school groups. A group of blind and partially sighted youngsters made a lasting impression when they arrived on a windy, drizzling day, accompanied by family members and teachers. They too wanted to learn about Bannerghatta National Park and its elephants, so the team took them into the forest where they had the opportunity to feel and smell different plants, soils and stones, listen to bird songs and sniff fresh piles of elephant dung! A Rocha's Senior Research Officer, Gopalakrishna SP, gave a talk on the importance of the forest, the need to protect it, and the role of elephants in sustaining its health. Afterwards, the young people were each given a model elephant to explore by touch, and then they made their own models: creating a herd of aggressive males, mischievous calves and obedient animals bearing a mahout, as varied and unique as a real herd of these threatened giants.



ART & CRAFTS FOR ALL AGES

LEARNING ABOUT WATERSHEDS

A Rocha Prairie Canada is situated in the Pembina Valley, in southern Manitoba. Winters are long – and very cold! When a class of Grade 8 students from Emerado School, Winkler, spent time at the centre doing watershed studies, Centre Managers Nick and Susan Pharaoh decided to make the visit not just educational, but fun as well. Nick took them snow-shoeing and built a luge-like sled run for thrills and spills. A professional sculptor, Jake Goertzen, well known in Manitoba and further afield for his huge works in steel, bronze, iron and ice, taught the students the basics of working with blocks of frozen snow.

(Srihari)



(A Rocha Prairie Canada)

CELEBRATING PRAIRIES

Crafted by women actively involved in the work of conservation, the 'Patterns of Change' quilt was first exhibited in Winnipeg at the 9th Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference, where A Rocha Prairie Canada presented two poster sessions. A Rocha subsequently sponsored a month-long display of the quilt at the Pembina Hills Art Gallery in Morden, Manitoba.

'We believe that art can convey a powerful conservation message,' says Larry Danielson, one of the A Rocha organizers of the Morden show. 'It helps people connect emotionally to the subject of habitat protection and species preservation.' The quilt reflects an aerial perspective of the Canadian prairie, with its different land covers and grid pattern of roads. One of the squares, 'Traditional Knowledge,' incorporates Bison hide, deer hide, and Wolf Willow seed and utilizes dyes from wild grape, dock root, and acorn shells.'



(A Rocha Prairie Canada)



SWISS LAND ART

Youngsters at an A Rocha Switzerland summer camp enjoyed searching for natural objects, then experimenting with different ways of using them to create a work of art. One child commented, 'I found many pebbles that looked alike, with a white line on them. So, I used the lines to make one or two long curvy lines. It was fun and looked cool!'



(A Rocha Prairie Canada)



(A Rocha Switzerland)

THE POWER OF DRAMA IN WETLAND & FOREST CONSERVATION

A Rocha Uganda's conservation focus is the Lubigi Wetland, which drains over 70% of Kampala's water and holds at least 120 species of birds, including wetland specialists such as the Papyrus Gonolek *Laniarius mufumbiri* and species of global conservation concern: Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* and Grey-crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum*.

Unfortunately, this wonderful wetland has been affected by encroachment for settlement and industrial development. It has also suffered from waste disposal from nearby households.

From February to June, A Rocha Uganda partnered with Climate Action Network Uganda to work on an Urban Resilience pilot project involving Bwaise and Makerere, two communities located around Lubigi Wetland. The aim was to build the capacity of these urban dwellers to adapt to climate change and weather shocks. It also involved raising awareness of the need for wetland conservation.

The campaign included six schools which often suffer from floods when it rains, floods which affect their studies, cause injuries and sometimes even deaths. A Rocha runs environmental clubs there, and the pupils came up with short plays, songs and poems advocating the conservation of the wetland. They emphasised the role of wetlands in climate change adaptation and mitigation, especially flood regulation, and called upon parents to stop disposing of rubbish, or constructing buildings, in the wetland. They pledged to work together to protect Lubigi and all that is in it. *Eddie Jjemba, Environmental Education Officer.*

A Rocha Czech runs a weekly wildlife club in Česká Skalice, enthusing children about birds, mammals, insects and plants, teaching identification skills, and involving youngsters in a wide range of outdoor activities, from bird ringing to fungus forays.

This year, twelve children scripted a play called 'Fuss in the forest', using animal puppets, in which a mole gets trapped in an empty, discarded can, the animals assemble to write a letter of complaint to the Ministry of Environment and their meeting gets interrupted by a teenager roaring through the wood on his quad bike. The play was premiered at a Palm Sunday service, with many parents attending church for the first time. Afterwards, the congregation watched a film about Šumava National Park, in Southern Bohemia, where A Rocha Czech has been active in opposing logging within the old growth forest.



(Pavlina Prudilová)



New Chapter Junior School presenting one of their songs. (A Rocha Uganda)

PAINTING MOUNTAIN & SHORE IN NEW ZEALAND

A Rocha's first ever Eco Grommet* Camp, in March, was a lot of fun! Based at Raglan, on the west coast of North Island, it was attended by campers aged between ten and thirteen. The camp provided a place for us all to get outdoors and be inspired by nature.

The activities included a visit to the rocky shore at Whale Bay and Raglan Harbour, where we explored the tidal pools. Scrambling across rocks and playing in the mud was brilliant – especially when you can get wet! On our bush walk we learned a little about biodiversity and why we trap rats and possums to protect our native birds and trees.

Painting equipment was available throughout the weekend. Our first creative activity was making a personalised bandana which some of the kids wore all the time. We also painted a mural, designed completely by the kids and young leaders themselves, reflecting the landscape and the variety of habitats explored: mountains, streams and the ocean. At the end of the weekend we used playdough to create impressions gained by exploring creation while Tania read from Genesis and we listened (silently!).

A real highlight was a cruise around the harbour on the Raglan Coastguard Boat – and did we mention the food? It was really good! The success of the weekend was summed up by one participant, Ben Drury, who wrote, 'Thank you for organising a great Eco Grommet Camp! I had a lot of fun and learnt heaps too. I can't wait for the next one!'

Tania Ashman and Kristel van Houte, Director, A Rocha New Zealand

* 'Grommet' or 'grom' describes a young, energetic, enthusiastic participant in extreme sports. The term was first used in surfing, but in recent years has been expanded to include other extreme activities, most notably ecological care: hence Eco Grommet.



(Tania Ashman)



Please donate!

Environmental education is an essential part of our conservation programmes.

Through positive and practical encounters with nature, A Rocha is inspiring communities around the world to better care for the Earth.

(Tania Ashman)



Please support our global environmental education appeal by giving a gift online

at  www.arocha.org/donateeducation

If you have a credit card, you can donate here in almost any currency, from anywhere in the world. You can make a one-off gift, or you can set up a regular payment, which is even more helpful, as it helps us to plan with confidence.

If you can't donate online, or you prefer not to, please contact the International Office and we'll advise you on the easiest way for you.



Front cover: Children at Bwaise Primary School, Kampala, singing a song which they have written about wetland conservation. (A Rocha Uganda)



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

The name 'A Rocha' is Portuguese, and means 'The Rock'. In all the countries where we work, A Rocha is identified by five core commitments and to a practical outworking of each:

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 programmes for people 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 the world.

Cooperation

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



A Rocha has National Organizations in 19 countries: Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Ghana, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Peru, South Africa, Switzerland, Uganda, UK and USA.

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