

# A Rocha South Africa

[December 2016](#)



Kai, son of Colin Jackson (A Rocha Kenya), birding at Rondevlei, Cape Town. Join A Rocha every 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month from 8.00 to 12.00 for bird ringing.

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## Simply Christmas

Christmas has become so commercialized that Christ has got lost among the glitter, glamor and expensive gifts. Consumerism has highjacked the true message and meaning of Christmas. Luke 2:7 describes the birth of Christ: *She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger — there was no room for them to stay in the inn.*

Christ was not born in a palace, but in the backyard of an inn, in a stable. The announcement of His birth was not made to the Jewish religious leaders or scribes and prophets, but to simple shepherds. These outcasts were the first to hear of the birth of the Messiah. They were the first to hear: *Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!* And they went to Bethlehem and found Him in a manger.

As you celebrate Christmas, may you experience the same peace as the shepherds after meeting Christ and sing praises to God.

Our best wishes to you and your family for Christmas! - *From the A Rocha SA team*



### Prayer for Fire Season

During summer the Fynbos is prone to serious veld fires. A prayer service was recently held in Kleinmond for the 2016/17 fire season. [Read More](#)

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### Cleaning the Kuils river

Two clean-up events recently took place along the Kuils river in early December. The first clean-up was in Durbanville and the other in Kuilsriver. [Read More](#)

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### Darvill conservation project

The Darvill Resources Park is a small nature reserve on the south side of the Msunduzi River, just south of Pietermaritzburg in Kwa-Zulu Natal. A Rocha is in the process of developing a new conservation project at Darvill. [Read More](#)

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### Prayer service for fire season

During summer the Fynbos is prone to serious veld fires. A prayer service was recently held in Kleinmond for the 2016/17 fire season. The firefighters of the Overstrand attended.

In a moving ceremony to mark the launch of the fire season the congregation was made aware of passages in Scripture that refer to fire that symbolize God's holy presence or His wrath. The members were called to be intercessors like Moses, Aaron and Hur (Ex. 17:8-17)

The director of Fire Services and Disaster Management spoke about the dangers fire fighters have to contend with during the summer months.

Special prayers were made for the safety of the fire fighters; for the public to be extremely careful when lighting fires and the congregation pleaded that the season will pass without serious damage to the Fynbos and all its inhabitants.

### Kuils river clean-up

Two clean-up events took place at different sections along the Kuils river on Sunday, 4 December 2016. One was done in Durbanville during early morning and the other at Kuilsriver late the afternoon. Members from different congregations took part.

Six persons participated in the morning to remove litter from the river. At one point the river was totally blocked with rubbish. It was very fulfilling to watch the water take it's natural course again after the clean-up. The group was very surprised to see a Grey Duiker hiding in the reeds in this densely urbanized environment. The second clean-up site was further down the river. Unfortunately the weather was very unpleasant. So the group decided to walk along the bank to survey the area. One of the team is a hydrologist and she entertained the group with interesting facts about the river. She pointed the invasive plants out, and the effect of erosion and water pollution. They also came upon a blocked and overflowing sewage pipe that was causing serious contamination in the water. The local authority was informed about the spillage.

### Davill conservation project

The Darvill Resources Park is a small nature reserve on the south side of the Msunduzi River, just south of Pietermaritzburg in Kwa-Zulu Natal. A Rocha is in the process of developing a new conservation project at Darvill and a number of positive meetings have been held with stake holders.

The focus areas of the project will include: *Conservation, Faith, and the Engagement and Involvement of the local community.*

Aspects of the project will include:

- A bird guiding course to upskill local communities
- Guided walks with suitable info boards
- An Environmental Education program suitable for junior schools
- An indigenous nursery to educate and uplift local communities
- Identification and eradication of Alien species
- Planting of Indigenous trees

Volunteers are welcome to contact us at [south.africa@arocha.org](mailto:south.africa@arocha.org)

### Environmental Education camp, Zeekoevlei

A Rocha recently invited youth from various churches around Cape Town to participate in an Environmental Education camp at Zeekoevlei. The camp was presented in collaboration with CTEET.



Rachel Mash lead a worship service and evening prayers. In the evaluation someone said: *I learnt that humans and the environment are interlinked. And that God created everything for a purpose. Nature is important and we need to look after it.*



### **IUCN debates Spirituality and Conservation**

A truly amazing event recently took place in Hawaii. More than nine thousand leaders and decision-makers from 184 countries met to define the global path for nature conservation for the years to come. And for the first time spirituality and faith featured on the program.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) met in Hawaii on the theme: *Planet at a crossroads.*

Over the past year several important events made an enormous difference so that the voice of faith communities were suddenly being taken seriously.

- In June 2015 Pope Francis published his Encyclical *Laudato Si* on Care for our Common Home. In *Laudato Si* St Francis praises God with all of his creation, but states that our planet is "reaching a breaking point". He decries "the centuries of exploiting of the earth, exploiting other people and acting as if the point of human life is to buy and consume"
- At the COP21 United Nations talks on climate change in Paris at the end of 2015 faith communities joined in one voice for action on climate and played a pivotal role.

The Spirituality and Conservation dialogue at the IUCN meeting took the form of workshops, roundtables and presentations where questions such as: *What are the links between religions, spirituality and conservation?; What can spiritual leaders and faith-based organisations bring to conservation? How can we help turn the great commitments and statements of religious leaders - such as the ground-breaking Laudato Si' of Pope Francis - into action?*, were debated.

Of the outcomes at the Congress were that caring for creation is no longer seen as strange; Christian voices are accepted and listened to. So new opportunities are appearing to care for creation. (Provided by Sarah French, ARI)

### **Caring for our planet, our home**

Recently A Rocha helped to draft a letter, *Caring for our planet, our home*, to be sent to more 500 congregations in the Western and Northern Cape encouraging them to become water-wise and creation conscious. Congregations are encouraged to establish eco-teams to coordinate, launch and monitor activities. The following areas for activities are highlighted:

- Integrating "green issues" in the liturgy and in the life of the church.
- Encouraging members regularly to live more responsibly (reduce carbon footprint), make plans to save and help to restore the injustice that causes suffering in creation.
- Affiliating with eco-organizations
- Establishing local partnerships
- Playing an Advocate's role for Environmental Justice. ([View the full document here](#))

### **Inspiring videos**

Peter Harris speaking at the IUCN meeting in Hawaii - [Click here](#)

Katharine Hayhoe on Faith and Climate Change - [Click here](#)

Restoration of the Kuils river - [Click here](#)

### **ARI newsletter**

Read the latest newsletter on Marine Research and Conservation - [Click here](#)

### **Membership and donations**

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