

A Rocha is an international conservation organisation working to show God's love for all creation.
 The name "A Rocha" means "The Rock"

Creation Communities Grounded in Hope

Allen Goddard, Director



The direct relationship between the environment and politics, economics and social development was the underlying factor in most of the challenges South Africa faced in 2008. The growing need for restitution within and between different communities here came to the world's attention as a wave of xenophobic attacks swept through our country. Environmental education in South Africa was at an all time low as the year began with 50 000 teachers too short, in the entry phase of our schooling system, and ended with the lowest matriculation pass rate since 1994. In 2008 44% of urban municipalities failed to provide the basic services of running water and sanitation to our growing cities, while municipal managers' salaries across the board continued on the up and up. It was a year in which concerted efforts were made to flout South Africa's constitution at local, provincial and national levels of governance. Of most concern for conservation were a series of attempts by the Department of Minerals and Energy to waive the constitution and open the way for lucrative mining opportunities in some of the world's last pristine biospheres: the Pondoland Wild coast, the Ehangala Grasslands of Mpumalanga and in the heart of the

Mapungubwe National Park of Limpopo. It was also the year when

200 or more people living in South Africa were diagnosed with Cholera, while thousands of people suffering from HIV/AIDS and waiting for anti retroviral treatment were turned away from South African clinics.

In the last quarter of 2008 Dr. Anthony Turton demonstrated the loss of the dilution capacity in South Africa's river systems and foregrounded the unscrupulous treatment of rivers by key mining companies. A strong connection between the environment and South Africa's future political, social and economic viability was cited with increasing attention in publications of the biggest conservation organizations in South Africa. Dr Turton's work and leader articles in Endangered Wildlife Trust, SANBI and WESSA about South Africa's increasing ecological and economic fragility at the onset of climate change are indirect reminders of a truth all South Africans have to face: *Greed* always has been at the heart of our nation's model of capitalism. And *greed* is presently causing South Africa's precipitous environmental degradation and

the rapid destabilization of our society. Unless greed at the heart of our way of life is transformed, along with the design and goals of our economy, social fragmentation and ecological degradation will compromise South Africa's sustainability. Critical environmental problems have to be addressed if the joys and benefits of flourishing biospheres will reshape the life chances of all South Africans.

Much more powerful than forces of opportunistic greed which increased their grip on South Africa in 2008 is the dynamic, creation-saving *love* of the living God through Jesus Christ. Jesus gladly adopted everything about createdness and blessed the world's biospheres by being born into creation. He entered our world as one of us, to learn from and live in creation. He also modeled what a creation community should really look like as he crafted friendships based on communion with his followers and with the creatures of Galilee, Samaria, Judea and the surrounding countryside. Jesus' willingness to live and die in creation demonstrates the depth and breadth of God's love for everything in our world. Most of all, Jesus' self sacrifice in crucifixion was made to transform, renew and restore everything in creation to God (Col.1:19-20). This message of hope: God reconciling all of creation to himself in Jesus, and through us (2 Cor.5:17-18), enables A Rocha South Africa to look back on the challenges of 2008 as an opportunity to celebrate *hope*.

More than 10 000 people heard the gospel of hope for all of creation in 18 sermons in churches and youth groups, one university *Faith and Science Forum*, two series of lectures at Pietermaritzburg's



Evangelical Seminary, and 6 hands on climate change workshops. Christ's invitation to Christians to be part of his restoration of creation went out in presentations by Sir Ghilean Prance, chairman of ARI, Colin Jackson of A Rocha Kenya, and members of the national team, in Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Maritzburg, Port Elizabeth, Pinetown, Hilton, Howick, Johannesburg and Grahamstown. The same story was told against the backdrop of the Elandsrivier Mountains near Port Elizabeth and the Karkloof Afromontane rainforests of KZN, during our sixth and seventh *Created for Life!* Courses. Fifteen young adults and five facilitators workshopped the question: *What does being a creature of God and being a new creation in Jesus Christ mean when it comes to following Jesus environmentally, in South Africa today?*

Coming down to children's height, the message was relayed in three Phila-Endalweni-Creation Alive Clubs to 60 primary school learners each week in hands on activities about creation care. 71 Participants had the opportunity to enjoy A Rocha's Wilderness Learning Programme in the Bisley Valley Nature Reserve.



Restoring Creation through Recreation

In 2008 the carbon sequestration potential of tree-planting projects was radically questioned even by prominent scientists like Mark Botha of SANBI because of the focus on cash profits in carbon trading rather than on achieving urgent, significantly reduced carbon emissions. Because carbon traders tend to increase rather than decrease their per capita carbon footprint they minimize if not nullify any carbon sequestered in these projects. It was also a year when



the unprecedented environmental degradation and related human suffering caused by competitive, profit-driven global sports extravaganzas like the Olympic Games was showcased in the Beijing Olympiad, and in South Africa's preparation for 2010.

For these reasons ARZA was glad to present South Africa's second carbon neutral marathon, demonstrating that it *is* possible to enjoy small scale non-profit recreational events that do no harm to the environment, simultaneously sequestering carbon and restoring biodiversity to degraded habitats. A Rocha Netherlands donated 300 trees which were planted by 22 walkers, runners and cyclists in a partnership with the Msunduzi municipality. 60 Trees were also planted in primary schools in 2008, on behalf of ARZA members.

A Rocha's message of hope was put into effect



mostly in communities that are still homogeneously white or black, reminding us that South Africa needs reconciliation and restitution to take place at the heart of our nation, which is still racially divided and ideologically polarized in most communities. Only Christ can create these diverse yet harmonious creation communities through



willing South Africans who sacrificially put into practice God's love for all creation. The opportunity to bring together South Africans of very different backgrounds through co-operation in conservation projects is what A Rocha South Africa commits itself to in 2009.

Financial Review 08

It was a difficult year to match grants that were raised in 2007 and so income fell dramatically while staffing and project costs increased steadily with rising inflation and the increasing cost of living in South Africa. A full report of financials will be presented by Carl Nielsen at the 2009 AGM for the 2008 financial year. What follows is just our income and expenditure for the year without mention of A Rocha South Africa's reserve funds, which providentially, kept our bank balance in the black.

Income	348 041
Expenditure	564 473
Net Deficit	216 432

A Rocha wishes to thank our corporate and civil society donors who made substantial grants to our work in 2008: Old Mutual Foundation, J Leslie Smith & Partners, Christ Church Kennilworth, and P.G. Bison. We extend no less thanks to 191 A Rocha Friends whose annual and monthly donations are sustaining A Rocha's staff and projects.

Siyabonga! Dankie! Khotsong! Thank you!

Photos in this review were taken by A Rocha national team members.

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