A small bird with a long, thin beak and streaked plumage is perched on a plant with thick, reddish-brown stems and green leaves. The bird is facing right. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the plant and some rocks.

***A Rocha South Africa
Annual Review 2013***



Annual review and Chairman's report to the 9th Annual General Meeting of A Rocha South Africa, November 2014

Dear members of the Board of Reference, Members of A Rocha and Friends

Thank you for being present at this 9th Annual General Meeting of A Rocha South Africa for the 2013 calendar year.

The well known dr. Moss Nthla, Director of the Evangelical Alliance in South Africa, once said: *It is time that Christians recover a biblical view of the world and live with a sense of accountability to God for the way in which they relate to neighbours and to the environment.* And in the publication *The land is crying for Justice* the authors highlight that South Africa is facing many environmental challenges. They call on the church to play a profound role in contributing and fostering a just and sustainable society for all. They call upon all Christians to commit themselves at a spiritual, personal, local, national and global level to work and pray for the healing of the earth.

A Rocha South Africa is committed to play its part in nurturing and fostering the renewal of life in creation.

I would like to highlight the following from our activities in 2013:

Strategic planning

The ARZA team and board met in January 2013 to revisit the vision, mission and strategy and to realign our efforts accordingly. The vision was tweaked and now reads: ***"All communities discovering and fulfilling their biblical role to restore God's creation and live sustainably"***.

The mission was reformulated to read: ***To catalyse, lead and inspire local conservation action, scientific research and environmental education through working in partnership with individuals, churches and organizations from diverse backgrounds.***

Based on the strategic direction the pillars for the work are still firmly based on three areas of involvement: Scientific Research, Conservation Education (Theology and Citizenship) and Community Based Projects.

Conservation Science

Groot Marico Biosphere:

Steve Weaver, director for Conservation Science, worked tirelessly with Marico River Conservation Association (MRCA) to provide technical advice in setting up the Land User Incentive Programme for the Groot Marico area which was funded by the Department of Environmental and Water Affairs. A



funding proposal (Thokomelo III) was submitted to the UNDP Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme for the work in the Groot Marico area. The proposal was approved and funded to the amount of \$39,000 US for a period of 12 months.

The objectives of the project include: Establishment of an Ecology Field Education Centre; Establishment of an Indigenous Nursery and permaculture garden with rain-water harvesting; Expanding of the existing Beading and Sewing Groups; Establishment of Bee-keeping groups and Developing environmentally sustainable ecotourism “slack packing” (hiking) routes in the Groot-Marico area.

Unfortunately after the first funds were released to ARZA the relationship with MRCA was put under severe pressure and ARZA could not transfer funds as agreed. In early December 2013 an emergency meeting was arranged with MRCA where the relationship was restored and funding started. The project is still to be completed.

The Hilton Quarry Project: This project has run for a number of summers and was designed to manage the natural areas around the Hilton Quarry. The aim was to remove alien invasives and introduce indigenous plants. Unfortunately, this project came to an end during 2013. ARZA is very grateful to the owners for the opportunity given to ARZA over the past number of years to assist in caring for this quarry.

Environmental Education (Theology and Citizenship)



ARZA participated in the **Earthkeepers Conference** arranged by the Dutch Reformed, Uniting Reformed and Anglican Churches in Cape Town. The director T&C introduced A Rocha at one of the workshops.

A pastors retreat "Encountering Christ in Creation" was well received by the participants. Other events arranged include a Celtic Earth Hour evening of music, Celtic poetry and song, two contemplative walks, and a slide presentation by Michael Cassidy on Antarctica. ARZA participated in discussions hosted by a Mennonite group where input was given on environmental aspects of peacemaking. Various articles were written during the year. They include: *Being placed environmentally as we follow Jesus*, *Environmental justice and the future of peacemaking in South Africa*. A sermon "Jesus with the animals" was developed and distributed to churches.

The result of a 2012 Writer's Workshop was the regular meeting of five poets. Their poems on creation was collected in an anthology titled *Creation's Yes* that would be published in 2014.

The National Director addressed a number of churches to encourage them to become Eco-Congregations. He also participated in an environmental expo arranged by a DRC church in Durbanville, Cape Town.



Rest Kanju, National Director at eco-expo

Community Based projects

- ARZA participated in the Sustainable Living Fair in Pietermaritzburg arranged by the National Botanical Gardens where we shared a stand with SAFCEI and jointly presented the Eco-Congregation programme to the public.
- The North Riding Methodist Church in Johannesburg was assisted in establishing a mini-botanical garden at the church.
- A donation supported ARZA to sponsor the water tanks for rainwater harvesting and a permaculture garden at the Assembly of God church in partnership with the Vuya Endaweni in Stellenbosch.
- ARZA collaborated with WWF on a project to create awareness about the rhino poaching called Rhino Miracle Project. The idea was to involve high profile gospel musicians to mobilize the voice of the church against the tragedy of poaching. Although the project was well received by WWF they unfortunately withdrew and the project was discontinued.
- A number of schools were introduced to environmental education and tree planting was promoted.
- The Rosebank Methodist Church and Christ Church Kenilworth have active ARZA committees that run various projects, including a sustainable supper, worship services focusing on creation and walks in nature.



Partnerships

The Memorandum of Understanding with **Safcei (Southern African Faith Communities and Environment Institute)** to collaborate specifically in the area of Eco-Congregations was finalized. Special recognition must be given to Geoff and Kate Davies of Safcei for their commitment over decades in guiding people to integrate their faith and caring for the environment. And as they slowly step into retirement ARZA would like to thank them and wish them all of the best for the new phase of their lives.

A Rocha International

ARI Consultation: During 2013 ARI initiated a process of intensive consultations with all 20 ARNOs worldwide on the future values and direction of the organization. ARZA was represented by the chairman at a gathering in Kenya where the ARNOs of Africa and India met. It was a wonderful exposure to the work being done in Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, India and South Africa. During the visit I was also fortunate to visit Mwamba, the field study centre on the coast where AR Kenya does marine and forest research.

30th Anniversary. ARZA celebrated the first three decades of A Rocha's existence during the year with nature walks Cape Town and KwaZulu Natal.



Staff

In a report to ARI during 2013 a remark was made that the board was feeling as if ARZA was in a fairly good place with a ND, Rest Kanju, and a director for T&C. The ND had completed his first year with us while Allen Goddard had been with ARZA since our inception. Then suddenly things changed dramatically. Late in the year the ND informed the board that he had found other fulltime employment and short time later the director of T&C indicated that he would be doing his Ph.D. from early 2014.

This meant that ARZA had lost all three employees during 2013 as the director for Conservation Science, Steve Weaver, left South Africa early in the year to return to the USA due to ill health.

We would like to acknowledge the contributions made by Rest Kanju, Allen Goddard and Steve Weaver. We pray that all three former staff members will cherish fond memories of the time with A Rocha and we pray that the Lord will guide them in future.

Statistics

In 2013 ARZA had 3 staff members and 5 volunteers. During the course of the year 60 persons were donors to ARZA. There were 527 individuals on the database and we had 120 followers on the Facebook.

Closing

I would like to close with an extract from a book, *Psalms Now*, by Lesley F Brandt who interprets the Psalms for today. The first verses of Ps. 104 read:

O Lord, how great and all-powerful You are!

And how beautiful is the world You created for our habitation.

Even before Adam was brought forth from the dust,

or Eve was brought forth from Adam's rib,

You prepared for them a place in which to live and to grow.

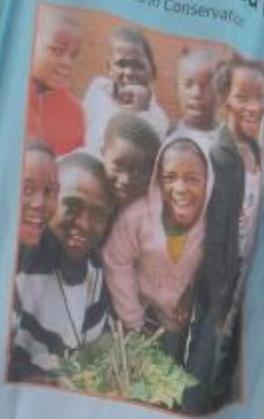
And everything they saw around them

reflected the beauty and power of the living God.

I thank you.

Carl Swart

A Rocha
South Africa
Christians in Conservation



*Caring
for
Creation*



A ROCHA

A Rocha South Africa

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