

Sheep in Vienna — sheep in Dobruška and Prague?

Recently we had an online meeting with A Rocha representatives from all over the world. It is always a wonderful experience for me to see how people around the globe, in very different circumstances, long for and work toward one goal: to help people become grateful for God's creation and responsible for the environment around us. Every meeting with other A Rocha members from other parts of the world is inspiring. Unlike our Indian brothers we don't have to protect elephants (and risk our lives), unlike our friends in New Zealand we don't have to massively exterminate rats, and yet it is the same desire that we bring to life in our circumstances.

Inspiration is of course found also outside of A Rocha. I wonder if the following idea could become reality in our country...?

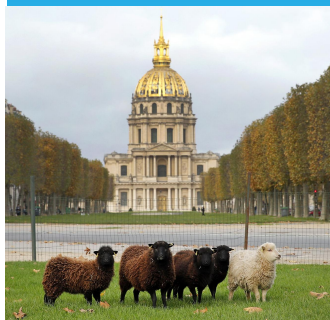
The city of Vienna found a special solution to the problem of mowing grass on the Danube Island. No more noisy mowers, hours and hours spent by mowing, no more wasting of the mown grass. The area of 18 acres is cared for by a flock of seventy sheep. The city of Vienna has joined the European project called LIFE DICCA, trying to promote local response to climate change in Europe and setting an example to other cities and individuals in how to deal with public green area and with grass, this valuable biomass, often dumped without further use.

The city of Vienna is happy with their sheep. They are more ecological than a lawn mower and nicer to look at than a tractor. The sheep are also better caretakers of their lawn. City representative Ulli Sima (by the way, her name suggests Czech roots) explains that sheep do not eat certain plants, creating in effect increasingly biodiverse meadows with taller and shorter plants. Rich vegetation invites rich animal life, with diverse butterflies, beetles and other insects.

And here we come back to humans: where all creation prospers, man also prospers. When bees and other pollinators thrive, growers and gardeners also thrive. I think of our brother in Christ Mr Hluchy and his company Biocont which specializes in natural, biological plant protection. Without unnecessary human intervention nature can restore its harmony.

Well? We will probably not let sheep and goat run in front of our town hall (however funny and Instagram-friendly that would be), but what about our city parks and meadows? In Vienna they made it possible. Vienna is "green" in their ecological attitude and also in the size of its green areas (over 50% of the city's area). Vienna has recently been proclaimed the "Greenest City of the World." When will Dobruška, Litomyšl or Prague join in? *Petr Pokorný*

A Rocha
 is an international
 conservation
 organization showing
God's love for all
 creation and our human
 responsibility.





From the yellow knight to the death cap

We managed to organize our two mushroom exhibitions in September just before the covid measures came in place. Several hundred visitors, all duly wearing masks, came to see the exhibitions, first in Dobré and then in Prachatice.

Both exhibitions displayed a colorful and diverse collection of some 150 species. For the exhibition in Dobré Vláda Špatný brought several specimens of the most poisonous mushroom, the death cap (*Amanita phalloides*), all the way from Šumava. He also brought the exotic looking *Anturus Archeri*, also known as devil's fingers or octopus stinkhorn. More death caps for the Prachatice exhibition were found on their traditional site in a pine forest by the Husinec dam. To teach both children and adults about this mushroom is, in fact, a prime goal of our mycological exhibitions. This beautiful fungus causes several fatal poisonings in the Czech Republic every year.



In Prachatice visitors were able to compare the death cap with the yellow knight (*Tricholoma equestre*), a popular mushroom which, however, has become suspicious in the last years. *Tricholoma* has claimed several lives in France. Poisonings progress from muscle weakness, dark urine and reddened skin to heart and kidney damage. Some experts claim that these rare poisonings are in fact individual intolerance and severe allergic reactions. Research into the chemistry of this fungus continues; we recommend not to pick it.



Both exhibitions boasted of beautiful specimens of the pine bolete (*Boletus pinophilus*) which is becoming more and more rare. It is not listed as a protected species yet but the numbers are declining and the pine bolete should not be picked.

Looking at the beautiful, colorful design of this part of creation – such as *russula*, *cortinarius*, *lactarius* – one's heart leaped with sincere joy and awe. How amazing and original our Creator is!

The exhibition in Dobré was embellished by large photographs from our German friend, mycologist Dr. Rita Lüder. These images of magically beautiful mushrooms were mounted by Jana and Filip and accompanied by the words of the Apostle Paul, inviting visitors to ponder that "God offers people an opportunity to know him. They can see his eternal power in created nature." What a wonderful invitation for all of us.



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Enjoying birds at church and in park

Our fluffy toy birds, a swallow and a sparrow, were sitting at their nests on the pulpit, next to a festive table full of fruits and vegetables. This was the children's talk on A Rocha Sunday, 4th October, which was also a Sunday of thanksgiving for crops. We talked about how these two bird species nested in the Jewish temple. Psalm 84 describes beautifully how much they enjoyed it. It became their home. The psalmist probably could not attend the joyful worship service and almost envied the birds, with a sad heart, that they could be so close to the House of God. Then we talked about birds' nests and about human nests, about our homes—about the warmth and loving atmosphere of our families, and how it contrasts with news we hear about homeless children who don't have parents or are in refugee camps. We thought about the wonderful gift of home, of mom and dad and a loving wider family.

In the afternoon we invited the public together with church goers for a walk to the Ratiborice Chateau, led by Jana and Filip. They observed and recorded bird species. I was in charge of the tricky part: to catch birds and explain the purpose of bird banding. Two weeks earlier we had installed a new bird feeder in the park and added an attractive amount of sunflower seeds but birds visited it but sparsely. Luckily my recordings of the robin attracted several nuthatches, a treecreeper, a blackbird, a chaffinch and half a dozen tits. Jana and Filip added a talk about nest boxes and about the bird of the year (the house martin), and added a quiz for the children. We enjoyed a warm exchange of thoughts regarding matters of faith and human responsibility for creation. The group of 56



participants, including a sizeable group from Dobruška led by Dean Slaninka, did not know when to stop. There was no end to talking, taking photographs of birds, of people, of handing out leaflets of A Rocha and the Czech Society of Ornithology. Dean Slaninka led us in a concluding prayer of thanks.

We wish to express our gratitude to the town of Česká Skalice. The A Rocha Sunday was financially supported by them as a part of a grant.

We are also grateful to all who attended with such open hearts. We are grateful to the Lord for providing a wonderful sunlit afternoon, after some rather heavy rain in the morning. We look forward to our next meeting.

Pavel Svetlik

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Covid Age does not find us idle

It has been a very long time since we have seen the children from our clubs. And I miss them! Leading our clubs and teaching in schools is such refreshing work. We use the remaining time to prepare our natural garden for winter. That is never ending work, as many of you know. And we have some news: we have started a next phase of the renovation of our center. This year we renovated the kitchen and now we are getting ready for the construction of new toilets and reading room on the upper floor. We break down, we create clouds of dust, we sweep and vacuum and we think it will never end. Hard beginnings... When you come visit you will enjoy seeing how our center flourishes. We hope to see you soon at Kruparna!

Jana Ledecova

A ROCHA CALENDARY

A special A Rocha Czech conference was supposed to take place last summer to celebrate 20 years of ARCZ. We hope we will be able to have the meeting in 2021, June 18-20. The conference will take place in Husinec, possibly with a bird monitoring follow up in Arnoštov, June 20-25.

There were also plans for an international volunteer week at the beginning of the summer break. We hope to have this event in 2021. Dates are July 10-18, 2021.

We also hope to meet you soon, God willing, in person. We plan to hold our annual Sauerkraut Contest (February/March) and to resume our talks for the public and Dawn Chorus Day. We will keep you informed.

In January we can be together in our hearts as we join the project of the Czech Society for Ornithology, "Counting birds on feeders." For more information visit www.birdlife.cz.

We look forward to seeing you!

But I trust in you, Lord; I say, "You are my God."

My times are in your hands. Psalm 31

For detailed info visit www.arocha.cz or [facebook @arocha.cz](https://www.facebook.com/arocha.cz)

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