

## Not tree-huggers nor consumerists - A Rocha

Come with me for a moment - into a sauna: the stove is hot and steam is rising, but the guys present are flushing red and fuming also with anger - grumbling about the Green Deal and nonsensical measures: they are structural engineers and they are shaking their heads at the compulsory start-stop system for cars: the production of such an engine is more expensive and ecologically more demanding, the engine will have a lower lifetime and it will save petrol maybe in big city traffic jams, but hardly in everyday traffic. So it is ultimately against nature, not for nature. Damn environmentalists! And then the fools who stick themselves to roads and pour tomato paste on paintings. They're eco-terrorists, tree-huggers - trees are more important to them than people. They protect all kinds of vermin, and humans are pests for them.

I sit in the heat (real and metaphoric) and wonder what to say. At times like this, I am even more grateful to belong to A Rocha, a Christian environmental organization. I think A Rocha gives the fullest answer to all these people. A Rocha has world-renowned experts who can explain how our current lifestyle and overconsumption are destroying the planet. A Rocha also has people with minimal education who open people's eyes to the fact that the Earth belongs to the Lord and we should behave accordingly.

And A Rocha doesn't see man as a pest, as someone who doesn't belong in the world. They see man as the crown of the creation, as one called by God to be a good steward of the Earth.

Many often (and sometimes rightly) feel that environmentalists present us with a dilemma - either nature will prosper or humans will. But A Rocha has good news for everyone - God created this amazing world and has placed us in the midst of it to enjoy it and use it wisely. In A Rocha, we are often reminded of John 3:16 - For God so loved the world - in Greek the world is the cosmos - the world that God loves so unconditionally to the point of giving His Son for us is the whole world, the whole universe, the cosmos - not just us humans, but the trees and squirrels, the flowers and the beasts.

A Rocha was founded by Anglican pastor Peter Harris in 1983 in Portugal (hence the name A Rocha - the Rock) and the Czech work was founded by Church of the Czech Brethren preacher Pavel Světlík and friends in 2002.

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



# A Rocha

Christians in conservation



How many times have I wondered why A Rocha was not founded by Augustine, Luther or Comenius? I think the answer is clear: even in Augustine's time human greed, self-centeredness and pride was destroying God's creation (just look at the Greek islands without trees and greenery), but only the industrial revolution has given man a tool that can destroy our world globally.

The point that the whole living world suffers because of man's sin is found in many places in the Bible (Isaiah 24, Romans 8, etc.).

In the same way, in Augustine's work we do not find calls to plunder nature, but to stewardship of the world entrusted to us. So, yes, I think that if Comenius or Francis of Assisi were alive today, they would be part of A Rocha too...

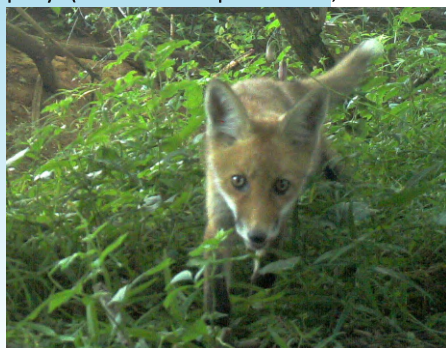
I think caring for God's creation is a natural part of the Christian faith, especially at a time when that creation is suffering more than at any time in history because of human sin. Just one example: palm oil. Palm oil is the cheapest oil on the market and as such is used in many industries. Rainforests are being cleared, giant palm monocultures are being planted, huge quantities of poisonous pesticides are being used. Countless animals and plants are dying. Indigenous people are being driven from their homes, suffering on poisoned land with poisoned water.

For the profit of the rich in rich countries, poor people in poor countries suffer.

If this leaves anyone indifferent, I doubt they are Christians. And A Rocha raises its voice against this and other injustices and suffering. I believe the church must have such a voice. *Petr Pokorný*

## The presence of mysterious beasts in our surroundings

With the A Rocha club in Podbřezí and Dobré, we have installed photo traps in the forest during the spring and waited to see what would happen. We were prompted to do this by the discovery of fresh ground burrows in Skalí near the Krupárna eco centre and later at the natural monument Skalecký háj. In both places there were fresh dug-out piles of earth and in Skalecký háj also remains of caught prey (feathers of pheasants, hens and legs of roe deer).



With great anticipation and interest we opened one downloaded photo and video from photo traps after another in the following weeks with the club children. Our first guesses about the mysterious forest beasts were soon confirmed. We have badgers living happily in Skalí and foxes in Skalecký háj. Thanks to the photo trap, we could at least discover a little bit of what is usually forbidden to most people because of the hidden life of animals.

*Filip Laštovic*





## Children's clubs

Together with the club children we spend an hour and a half every week on Wednesdays in Krupárna and on Thursdays in Podbřezí. Sometimes it doesn't seem enough for the kids and even for me. We just don't get to do everything we enjoy and love. But when I was going through this year's photos, I realized that we have experienced a lot together. For example, we made wood pendants, made pictures for our moms using wood burning, and repaired brush piles for snakes and birds. Built pools for newts. We buzzed around both villages and found a fox's den and badger's sett. We thoroughly explored the water from all angles. We watched birds, water and ground beasties and all nature in general. The club children enjoy nature, can work hard and have lots of questions. And that's hope and encouragement for us. *Jana Ledečová*



## Mácháč lake

"Anything Flies That Has Feathers"\* - workshop around crested tits, nuthatches, reed warblers, sundews, cotton grass with a bonus of indiacia.

I have held this region around Máchovo Lake (Mácháč) dear for more than sixty years. Back then I was there as a ten year old with a family of my cousins. Now, for a change, I have been invited by the Youth Union to try to find those interested in nature among ten-year-olds. Particularly in the world of birds, their protection or ringing. I was a little worried that in the midst of three hundred children and several dozen leaders offering twenty tempting adrenaline opportunities, there would not be much interest in ornithology. And lo and behold! Both Saturday offers for the twice repeated workshop for twelve teenagers were quickly successful. A group of girls quickly pounced on the sign-up form on the theme of "Anything Flies That Has Feathers" when it was announced, but there was no shortage of boys either.

The pastor Miloš Hejzlar and his dexterous daughter Miriam from Benátky were great helpers for the whole workshop. They helped me not only to stretch the trapping nets on the bank of the Máchovo Lake, but then ran to check them. They also assisted with bird weighing, measuring, and recording the ringing data. And what's more, they came up with an excursion to the nearby Svamp natural monument with its beautiful peat bog and interesting plants.

*\*name of a Czech children's game*







In particular, the currently flowering round-leaved sundew, a rare carnivorous plant, or the cotton grass and other plants.

We caught eight species of birds during the afternoon using the MP3 recording. Among the most beautiful were little 'punk' crested tits, Eurasian treecreeper, willow warblers, nuthatch and other beauties. The children then had a go at the nets with our stuffed animals to see how the live birds actually get in and out of the nets. We also meditated about bird migration, the life of birds in the home environment of the workshop participants or the possibility of their protection. As we called the workshop "Anything Flies That Has Feathers", at the end of the program visitors could play a feather Indian game called *indjaca*. Some of them were quite enthusiastic about it and immediately searched the internet for contact information on where and how to buy this feather flying game.

I hope that we have at least some of the children interested enough that they will come to our next A Rocha activities. Either to our Krupárna or to the ringing programmes in the field. Right now we are going with more than twenty little A Rocha friends on a research programme to the Natura area of the Eagle Mountains to catch the mysterious nocturnal callers corn crakes and study the life of the wolf pack that lives there. /see the next article about the follow-up event/ Come and join us.

## In the sign of the meadow caller, hawfinches and the dreaded beast



This is how one could describe our four-day programme at the cottage in Trčkov near Orlické Záhoří. Thirty-five children and adults gathered to search for the corncrake, ring the songbirds and learn about the local species-rich nature on excursions during the day and evening.

Already on the first evening we recorded the mysterious meadow caller at three locations, but our otherwise successful hunter Filip unfortunately failed to catch it for ringing, probably because of the low grass cover. Better results were

obtained when capturing and ringing songbirds, both in the Trčkov reserve and a little further away in Zelenka. This locality was recommended to us by our zoologist friend RNDr. Václav Pavel.

There was one big peculiarity in the bird trapping this year, the increased presence of beautiful blue-breasted males - hawfinches. These thick-beaked birds, capable of cracking not only cherry and plum pits, but also apricots or even rock-hard olives with their huge beaks, were surprisingly absent of females. That the ladies would so dutifully sit on the nests and the husbands would serve them with their food is hard to say. In any case, no captured females with so many caught gaudy blokes is a pretty strange thing.

The expedition to the forest complex of the back Trčkov, a nature reserve, was focused on the vocal monitoring of the Eurasian pygmy owl the owl's 'elf' - this year just nothing, not even a call. In previous years, we have not only seen it here, but also repeatedly ringed it just outside the reserve.



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A nice discovery was made at a stone bridge over a stream in the bowels of which sat juvenile grey wagtails, just before fledging.

However, the main desire of adults and children alike was to find evidence of the local wolf pack. This was a great success, not only fresh tracks were discovered, but also excrements. Sadly, only one adult got the opportunity to see a live wolf the next day. And that was right under the nose of our cottage. Our dear friend Magda went out just after five



o'clock to walk her female dog Chedy. The fox terrier was very restless when about 50 m from the cottage Magda saw a wolf running and then coming to a stop. She didn't lose her head, she ran to hide her dog in the cottage and also to get a camera. But in the meantime, the mysterious and feared by humans and dogs alike grey neighbour had disappeared without a trace. Actually, no - we found traces of him in the mud. What a pity we don't have even one blurry photo.

The beautiful stay included various nice competitions and games prepared by Jana and Filip. The children especially enjoyed building small ponds and dams in the sand of the meandering border river Orlice. And then there was one more thing they enjoyed very much - collecting small remnants of coloured glass, which are found here everywhere in nature after the glassworks disappeared. Everyone took home the colored shards, worn down by centuries, as a precious treasure.



I hope that small shards of the Bible were also embedded in the children's hearts - we read it together with Radka with a special focus on wind, storm, water energy, rain, rivers and sun. And always different texts from the Bible, and then a little bit about the use of this energy - wind, windmills, sun - solar panels, water, rivers - water mills and turbines. And then with a touch about the quiet breeze of God's Spirit, living water or the warming sun in Christ.

Hanka pleasantly helped our unskilled singing with guitar accompaniment.

Well, and the Kings in the kitchen reigned supreme. This couple - Mr. and Mrs. King, both pharmaceutical scientists - can mix it up in the kitchen like in a pharmacy. Dishes full of flavors, aromas, colours with a natural ease and lots of vegetables. The King's take on truly royal dining and still quite cheap. God gives such special and unusual gifts. Our thanks to all the participants and to God for guidance and protection....

*Pavel Světlík*



## Invitation



A Rocha - Christians in Conservation, o.p.s. cordially invites you to evening events during the volunteer week, which will take place at the Keith Morris Ecocenter - Krupárna (Dobré 85)



● Monday 14.8. (7 pm)  
Lecture by Josef Kučera, biologist  
**Interesting plants of our surroundings**

● Tuesday 15.8. (7 pm)  
Lecture: Václav Pavel, zoologist  
**Fauna of the Orlické Mountains**

● Wednesday 16.8. (7 pm)  
Lecture: Milan Hluchý, holder of the Silver Medal of the President of the Senate  
**4 + 1 The greatest problems of contemporary civilization and their solutions**

● Thursday 17.8. (7 pm)  
**Concert: Slávek Klecandr**

Voluntary admission



QR donation

## A Rocha - Křesťané v ochraně přírody, o.p.s.

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