

# THE TREE OF LIFE AND THE LIFE OF TREES

## IDEAS FOR ACTION & RESPONSE

### How to support A Rocha

A Rocha's work in planting and protecting trees and in working with the human and wildlife communities around them is vital and unique in terms of its biblical motivation. There is so much more we would like to do with more resources. You can get involved by:

#### Prayer & information:

- subscribe to our monthly e-news: [www.arocha.org/you/news-email.html](http://www.arocha.org/you/news-email.html)
- read our monthly blog at [www.blog.arocha.org](http://www.blog.arocha.org)
- join your A Rocha national organisation – details at [www.arocha.org](http://www.arocha.org)
- read our international newsletter online: [www.arocha.org/news/publications](http://www.arocha.org/news/publications)

#### Financial Support:

Regular monthly donations enable us to plan and budget effectively.

- £10 a month can help us plant more native trees.
- 20 a month can help us train men and women to identify and monitor plants and animals in their local forests.
- £40 a month can help us protect new areas of tropical forest.

You can give in several ways:

- To support A Rocha's Tropical Forests Programme: [www.arocha.org/11596-DSY.html](http://www.arocha.org/11596-DSY.html)
- To give to A Rocha International online: [www.arocha.org/donate](http://www.arocha.org/donate)
- To support our Climate Stewards tree-planting programmes & offset harmful emissions: [www.climatestewards.net](http://www.climatestewards.net)
- Undertake a fundraising challenge. See [www.arocha.org/you/opportunities](http://www.arocha.org/you/opportunities)
- To donate by cheque, please made payable to 'A Rocha' and post to:  
A Rocha, 3 Hooper Street, Cambridge, CB1 2NZ, UK

#### Volunteering:

If you have time to volunteer or any specialist skills that A Rocha can use please contact your national office or A Rocha International on [international@arocha.org](mailto:international@arocha.org).

If you are interested in spending time volunteering or as an intern at an A Rocha Centre, or in working for A Rocha, please look at [www.arocha.org/you/opportunities](http://www.arocha.org/you/opportunities), where you will find information and a link to a Volunteer Application Form.



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## Useful Websites & Links:

- Lots of information on A Rocha projects in 19 countries: [www.arocha.org](http://www.arocha.org). Also, please see Appendix A for details on tropical forests where A Rocha is working.
- A Rocha's "Forests on Flickr" photographic competition has some wonderful images of trees from around the world: [www.flickr.com/groups/arocha-forests](http://www.flickr.com/groups/arocha-forests) and [www.arocha.org/12282-DSY.html](http://www.arocha.org/12282-DSY.html)
- A Rocha Kenya's ASSETS programme, supporting communities and protecting the Arabuko Sokoke Forest: [www.assets-kenya.org](http://www.assets-kenya.org)
- Climate Stewards is the climate initiative of A Rocha and supports tree-planting programmes in Ghana and elsewhere: [www.climatestewards.net](http://www.climatestewards.net)
- Good Seed Sunday – an initiative of A Rocha Canada – mobilizes and resources churches to care for God's creation: <http://goodseedsunday.com>
- A guide to Tropical Forest Conservation: [www.fs.fed.us/global/lzone/student/tropical.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/global/lzone/student/tropical.htm)
- Forests and conservation: [www.iucn.org/forest](http://www.iucn.org/forest)
- Taking Root: the vision of Wangaari Maathai (3 min. Video, telling the story of the birth of the 'Greenbelt' movement): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5GX6JktJZg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5GX6JktJZg)

## Practical Advice on Tree Planting:

Advice on what to plant and when to plant it will vary from country to country so, where possible, consult local information. Basic principles include:

- Plant native species
- Adequate moisture / watering (not too much or too little)
- Dig a hole as deep as the roots but approximately three times the diameter of the root system – to enable the roots to take and spread healthily.
- Replace soil carefully, ensuring no air pockets are left but not compacting it too hard.
- Keep vegetation clear within 1.5m of the sapling for at least 3 years
- Place mulch (damp wood chips, leaves etc) in this area around the tree, but leaving a gap around the trunk so that it will not rot.
- Consider the suitability of possible planting sites. Habitats such as swampy or boggy ground, scrub, sunny clearings or bare ground can be of greater local importance for scarce plants, insects or other wildlife than woodland. If in doubt, seek advice.
- Think big! What size will your trees be in 10, 50, or 100 years? Plant well back from roads, wires, rivers and ponds.



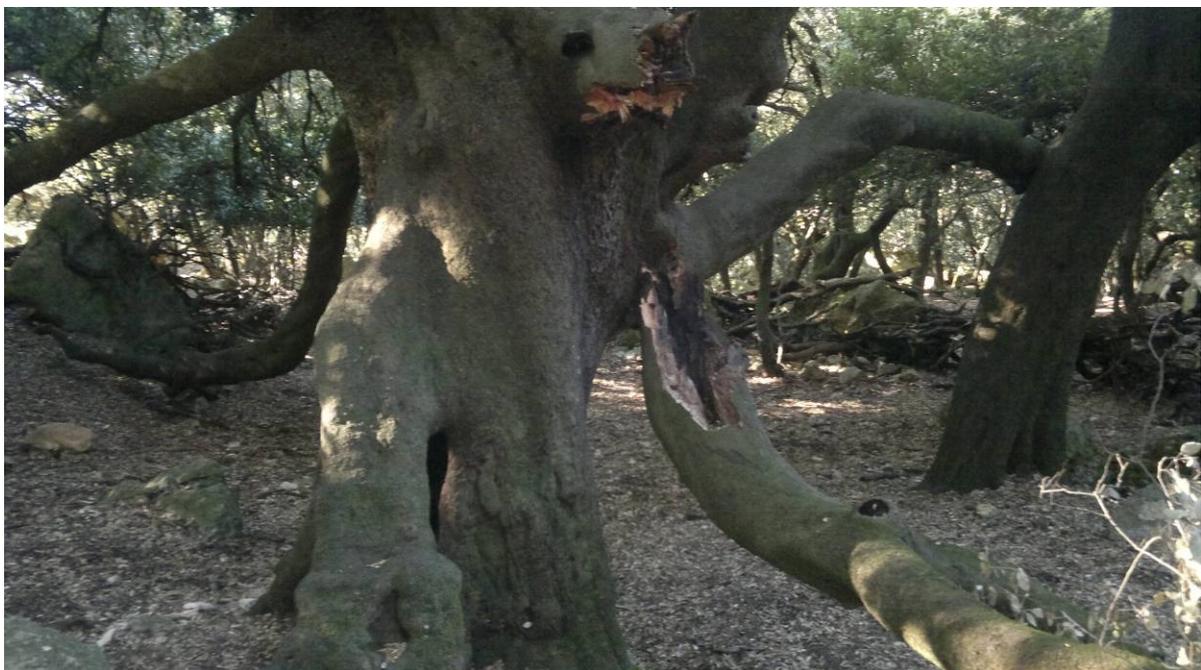
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## Tree stories from A Rocha around the World

*Do use these as stories in talks, newsletters and magazines, or to inspire action.*

**A Rocha Netherlands:** In the Netherlands, land and trees are scarce and precious commodities. A Rocha Netherlands has several local groups that are quite active in cutting and pruning trees, to create more diversity in the agricultural landscape and keep the landscape 'alive'. This is a great way of improving biodiversity, giving people hands-on experience of nature, and links with the biblical theme of God 'pruning' our lives as part of his work (e.g. John 15:1-8 especially verse 2), to make us more fruitful.

**A Rocha France:** At A Rocha's France's centre, 'Les Courmettes' in the hills behind Nice, there are some huge Oak trees, a few thought to be more than 1000 years old. This past year (2011) the most impressive Oak lost two of its great branches. A Rocha France is planning to work with school-children with the idea of using this apparent tragedy as a learning tool to explain to visitors that this old tree is simply experiencing the final and natural stages of its life. After a long stay on this earth, it is time for it to move on. Its old wood will serve as precious habitat for many other life forms and other trees will grow up to take its place some day.



*'Broken' Oak tree at Les Courmettes'*

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**A Rocha USA:** ‘Listening to our Trees’ project: *Also see Appendix B at the end of this document.*

*Listening to Our Trees* was a project of the West Annapolis Civic Association with support from A Rocha USA. The goal was to use community trees to discover the area’s natural and cultural history and to help residents see their neighborhood in a new way. The project involved surveying the trees, dividing the neighborhood into zones, creating a map, selecting a walking tour route, gathering tree stories and historical data, writing a walking guide, and planting an historic tree at the community school in honor of the graduating class. Key to the project was working with volunteers within the community as well as with a retired tree expert, who not only knew tree identification but had a passion for the trees themselves. One of the major challenges was maintaining a reasonable scope for the project. So many ideas were generated, and so much interest from people that it was hard to focus on completing the task we had set out to do. This project sparked interest within the community for several other initiatives: to gather an oral history of the residents; and to create a plan to preserve the character of the neighborhood in the face of change and development. The project had the following main rationales:

- Understanding neighborhood trees is a practical way to regain a sense of wonder in the world around us. The ancient Celts longed to have “eyes like Eagles” to see God around them in all of life.
- Trees span generations. They are witness of past events and may live many lifetimes beyond our own. Their presence tells us something of the soils, natural conditions, or historic land use.
- Local trees generate wonderful opportunities for conversations within a community. Residents are interested in trees for many reasons: “I planted a tree when each of my children was born.” “I remember when this whole area was an apple orchard.” “It shows I am interested in science, or attracting particular species of birds.”

Ginny Vroblesky, who led the project for A Rocha USA, says: “We undertook our tree project as a way to help the community understand where they lived. My neighborhood has no sense of its own history. This was a wonderful project. We had a small grant and then raised funds from local businesses to have it printed. We then gave a copy to each of the neighbors. People have stopped me to thank me for doing this. It connected them to their relatives that had lived here before. People enjoy learning about where they live. They love to walk and learn. It was good to have a written brochure because the information has lasted many years. I have also been asked to do live walking tours which is fun.”



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### APPENDIX A: Tropical Forests Where A Rocha is Working:

Location	Type of forest	Significance
<b>Ghana:</b> Ankasa National Park in the south west	'Rainforest' Evergreen forest	Guinean Forest of West Africa (according to Conservation International) is one of the most critically fragmented regions on the planet.  Part of West African Global biodiversity hotspot  See A Rocha International News 49: <a href="http://www.arocha.org/int-en/news/publications/arin49.html">www.arocha.org/int-en/news/publications/arin49.html</a>
<b>Ghana:</b> Bia-Goasa	'rainforest' moist semi-deciduous and moist evergreen	Important for West African Elephants & primates including Chimpanzees.
<b>Ghana:</b> Climate Stewards	new forests	Severely degraded ecosystems being restored.  See: <a href="http://www.climatestewards.net">www.climatestewards.net</a>
<b>India:</b> Bannerghata National Park	Scrub and thorny forest – part of Eastern Ghats	Contiguous to the largest remaining scrub and deciduous forests of the world (the Western and Eastern Ghats). A home to the endangered Asian Elephant and many other species.
<b>Kenya:</b> Arabuko Sokoke Forest	Dry coastal forest: Brachystegia, Cynometra and mixed forest. Seasonal pools.	Largest stretch of coastal forest remaining in East Africa  6 Globally Threatened birds, of which one, Clarke's Weaver, completely endemic. (East Coast Akalat, Sokoke Scops Owl, Sokoke Pipit., Amani Sunbird, Sokoke Ground Thrush). 3 mammals largely confined to Arabuko Sokoke Forest including Golden-rumped Elephant Shrew.  <a href="http://www.birdlife.org/action/ground/arabuko">www.birdlife.org/action/ground/arabuko</a>  <a href="http://www.assets-kenya.org/asf.htm">www.assets-kenya.org/asf.htm</a>
<b>Kenya:</b> Mida Creek	1,600ha Mangrove forest	Classified as an Important Bird Area (IBA) for waterbirds, spawning fish, turtles  <a href="http://www.arocha.org/int-en/work/conservation/sites/906-DSY.html">www.arocha.org/int-en/work/conservation/sites/906-DSY.html</a>
<b>Kenya:</b>	East African dry coastal	Classified as an Important Bird Area (IBA)



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Dakatcha Woodlands	forest, with dense thickets and open woodland dominated by <i>Brachystegia</i>	<p>Clarke's Weaver only found here and Arabuko Sokoke Forest (probably breeds here)</p> <p><a href="http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/casework/details.aspx?id=tcm:9-263030">www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/casework/details.aspx?id=tcm:9-263030</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/sitefactsheet.php?id=6398">www.birdlife.org/datazone/sitefactsheet.php?id=6398</a></p>
<b>Kenya:</b> Tana River Delta	Palm woodland, coastal & riverine forests, seasonally flooded acacia woodland, mangrove forest with 8 species	<p>Globally important for many species – see Nature Kenya brief for Kenyan National Environment Management Authority (NEMA): <a href="http://www.tanariverdelta.org/1076-DSY">www.tanariverdelta.org/1076-DSY</a></p> <p>Classified as an Important Bird Area (IBA)</p>
<b>Peru</b>	Huarango – coastal 'hyperarid' desert forest	One of the world's most threatened ecosystems, essential for rare endemic Slender-billed Finch and Black-necked Woodpecker



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## APPENDIX B: Helpful Hints for Creating a 'Listening To Our Trees' Project

### A. Key Points to Remember

1. Be clear on the ultimate purpose of the project. Is it to identify neighborhood trees? Or tell the story of the community? To satisfy your own curiosity?
2. Use your curiosity to the fullest. Record the ideas or questions that nag at your mind. Try to find answers to these questions and use your curiosity to shape the flavor of your project.
3. Know the scope of your project. A project such as this raises many opportunities for further research. This is especially true if you are combining topics, such as local history and the natural history of trees. Recognize that each can provide questions for a lifetime of study. What is the end point of this particular project?
4. What form will the end product take? How do you want to transfer the excitement and information you gain to your intended audience? Will it be a verbal presentation? Or will you commit it to writing?
5. If written, who will own the article or booklet? It is especially important to be clear on this if the project is funded by a community association or if many people are involved. How will the written guide be made available to the intended audience? Who will fund the printing? Will the booklets be distributed without charge? If given away, who will distribute them? Who will be listed as sponsors? Will they be sold? By whom? Who receives the proceeds?
6. At least three people should be involved: a. a tree expert – reap the benefits of someone who has spent a lifetime studying trees. Learn why they are passionate about trees, and some of that excitement will flavor your product. b) A project leader, with a curious mind who can weave together the information. (Perhaps do the needed research). c) A cheer leader, or encourager. Though this person may not do data entry, their role coming alongside and keeping the focus in perspective is essential.
7. The process is as important as the product. People are excited to tell their own stories. And recognizing each person's value is a great gift in return.

**B. Questions to ask once the survey is completed.** Can be expressed as "What scientific, economic....questions has the survey raised." These guide your research.

### A. Science:

1. From the survey data, what species are represented? Their totals? Any trends in the neighborhood? Can the neighborhood be divided into zones based on the survey?



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2. Which trees are natives? Which are landscaping specimens? Are any trees pioneers? Successional varieties? Can any provide clues to soil type, former land use, age of the area, etc.?

## **B. Economics.**

1. What has been the use of the land over the recorded history of the neighborhood? Do the trees highlight any aspects of land use?
2. Are there any trees of economic significance, past or present?
3. How has the growth of small businesses (or the railroad, or any aspect of community life) affected the diversity of trees? Do small business landscapes look different from large, full block office buildings? Why? What lessons can be learned for the future.

## **C. Legal:**

1. Do any of the trees mark property lines from the past?
2. What is the history of the subdivision in the neighborhood?

## **D. Sociological:**

1. What is the character of the community? How has it changed over the years? How did it begin, grow?
2. Are there rumors of old orchards, or farm fields? What is the community memory of the neighborhood? Are there memories of great trees, favorite trees, tree lined streets, etc.
3. How have trees spread? Has landscaping trends been a part of community life? Did residents gather trees from the woods? Did they plant trees for shade, windbreaks, etc?

## **E. Psychological:**

1. Have some trees been planted to make a statement or reflect a personal commitment, interest, etc.

## **G. Historical:**

1. Are any trees connected with historical events (discovery of Dawn Redwoods, treaty with Japan, etc? Do any have special stories related to explorers, researchers, presidents?
2. Some tree plantings are associated with architectural styles. Can you tell the age of the tree by the period of time when the style of the house was popular?
3. What are the oldest trees in the community? Oldest homes?

## **H. Religious:**

1. If looking at trees in a utilitarian way, we would ask: What do these trees contribute to the neighborhood by their existence? Any examples of trees who work hard?
2. Are there any that serve to inspire wonder and awe? Do any portray a character or personality that causes us to pause? Can we consider how each glorifies God in its own unique way?

## **I. Aesthetics:**

1. Beauty is part of a pleasant community. How do these trees contribute to that beauty? (color, texture, size, shape) Do different parts of the community reflect different styles of beauty?



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2. Where are the beautiful trees? And what of those that are unlovely to view, but valuable for some other aspect of their lives?
3. What are examples of beautiful landscaping and why?

A final question would be: What is this area becoming? All life changes. Are there aspects of our neighborhood we want to preserve? Are there changes we might want to make in the future to create the type of community we would like? Do our trees challenge us in any way? The more questions you ask, or are raised by the trees, the more interesting your project will become. Just keep in mind the scope and ultimate goal. Have fun.

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