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## Rotarians Saving Habitats

Here's the good news: forests managed by Indigenous people in Amazonia served as life-saving carbon sinks from 2001-21, removing the equivalent of the UK's annual fossil fuel emissions each year, according to a [new study](#) by the World Resources Institute. WRI's data show similar success for forests managed by Indigenous, Afro-descent and other peasant communities around the world. And here's the bad: "Deforestation, degradation and other disturbances, however, have already turned some of the [world's most iconic forests](#) into carbon sources and threaten to convert others," the WRI report continues. Read more about these challenges – and why Rotarians are well positioned to help meet them – in ESRAG's Feb. 1 blog "[Saving Forests to Save Ourselves](#)."

This newsletter is packed with news of the Rotary family responding with perseverance, dedication, and skill:

- Filipino students restore watersheds
- DGs deliver huge boost for French bees
- Restoring forests by benefiting all concerned
- RYLA students commit to be the ECOLUTION!
- Feb. 27-28 webinar on Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration in Niger
- A world of ways to restore biodiversity: Philippine Republic, South Africa and Australia
- How to share the good news of *your* projects and Global Grants

HABITAT RESTORATION TO  
REDUCE HUMAN-WILDLIFE  
CONFLICT NEAR MUDUMALAI  
TIGER RESERVE, INDIA



If you are going to the Rotary International Convention in Melbourne, come at least two days early for ESRAG excursions to an array of fascinating environmental projects, and two wonderful events on May 25: the ESRAG Environment Action Summit, and the evening RAGtime reception with members of other Rotary Action Groups and Rotary International staff and leaders.

We have beloved colleagues who were in Türkiye when the earthquake hit. ESRAG Chair-Elect Yasar Atacik and Regional Chapter Co-Chair Safak Oszoy relayed vital information about Rotary's response, and Communications Team member Kerim Parlak volunteered in search and rescue. ESRAG Director Yavuz Atila helped launch fundraising from abroad. In the midst of reaching out to loved ones in the earthquake zone and mobilizing support for the massive relief work ahead, they share news below on how we can help.

*Photos above illustrate the strategy RC Nilgiris West is launching to restore human-ecosystem balance in India's Western Ghats: protecting endangered species by removing invasive plants and turning them into income-producing products.*

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## Filipino Students Restoring Watersheds

**By Francis Abner Abanilla**



I serve as the School Director of San Lorenzo School in the City of San Pedro in Laguna Province, RP. Our school offers basic education from preschool to Grade 12, and was invited in 2019 to become a member of the Global Schools Program. This helped strengthen my resolve to educate the youth and get them involved in conserving the environment and contributing to the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The students have embraced the call to become leaders, adding their energy and vision to the habitat restoration work which is picking up momentum in our region.

**The Ecolution RYLA:** On Jan. 21, the officers of the San Lorenzo School Interact Club, the San Lorenzo School

Students Assembly, and the Rotaract Club of Metro San Pedro facilitated the team building activities for the 180-200 students, Rotarians, and guests who attended the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA), which was held at San Lorenzo School and sponsored by the Rotary Club of Metro San Pedro. The students are the ones who came up with the theme for this event, "Youth, the only Ecolution" (a contraction of Ecosystem Solution). You can read the powerful mission statement they wrote for their RYLA in this newsletter! Here's how the students are building their impact.

*Photo: Students sorting trash they've collected during their Fun Run for the Environment, with their School Director Francis Abner Abanilla cheering them on.*



## DGs Deliver Huge Boost for French Bees

**By Ariel Miller, ESRAG Newsletter Editor**

“Alone in our district we can’t do much. Together, we were able to do something wonderful!” That’s how French PDG Pierre Hageman of D1770 summed up the impact when all 18 French District Governors joined forces in 2021-22 to rebuild pollinator populations across France, Luxembourg, Andorra, Monaco, and D2160 in Belgium.

Collectively, clubs sold 50,000 rosebushes, raising over 450,000 Euros and using the proceeds to donate 2,000 hives and 3,000 bee hotels to beekeepers, apiculture training programs, schools and towns, as well 3,000 traps for Asiatic hornets – a major predator against bees – and tons of seed for flowering plants that add prized flavors to honey. This multinational project generated huge goodwill and hundreds of news reports about Rotary Clubs, including an [article in the world-renowned \*Le Figaro\*](#).



The total cost to clubs and districts? Zero.

Here’s how they did it.

*Photo by PDG Pierre Hageman: Students of the beekeeping school of the Jardins de Luxembourg in Paris display their new Rotary-donated hives, with Didier Regnier (on right), then Governor of D1660.*

Read More

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## Restoring Forests by Benefiting All Concerned

**By Ariel Miller**



An innovative project in India's Nilgiri Mountains seeks to replace increasing animal-human conflict with a balance beneficial to both. Led by ESRAG member Dr. Bala, along with ESRAG Projects Director Dr Mina Venkataraman, the project will mobilize local people to remove the invasive plants driving the conflict. The waste plant material will be processed into plywood, generating new income to support families and ongoing conservation work. "This is a turnkey project which can be easily transferred to any location with a minimal adjustment to local needs," Rtn. Dr Mina explains.

Invasive plants in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve – especially *Lantana camara* and *Senna spectabilis* – have crowded out the grasses which wild herbivores like guar and elephants depend upon, driving them into areas where tribal communities are raising cattle. [This article](#) in *The Hindu* explains how the resulting human-animal conflicts can turn deadly.

"Carbon sequestration through habitat restoration in forests is higher than trying to reforest areas," adds Rtn Dr Mina, an ecologist.

[Read More](#)

## RYLA Students Commit to be the ECOLUTION!

**by the 2023 RYLA Participants of Area 1, Group 1, District 3820, San Pedro, Laguna Province, RP**

We live in a world where everything is inevitable. Too much urbanization, pollution, problems, overpopulation – all of these are only some of the problems that we are facing currently in our world. However, as we are growing towards the future, the problems of our environment continue to evolve



too. Prominently, the ecosystems are one of the most affected sectors of our environment. As we progress, we fail to realize that it is none other than US, humans, that continue to worsen these problems that were already existing to begin with. But, after seeing the start of the effects of climate change, the world, especially the government, is starting to see the scale of how big the problem actually is. It is something that needs to be solved not tomorrow, but NOW. As students, we believe that we should also be aware of what is going on with our surroundings. We believe that the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) 2023 is an excellent opportunity to spread awareness to our fellow students about the environmental crisis that we are facing. This vital issue that we are facing led us to the creation of the word ECOLUTION.

[Read More](#)

## Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration Webinar Feb. 27-28

**By Dr. Mina Venkataraman**



**FMNR WORKSHOP**  
(FARMER MANAGED NATURAL REGENERATION WORKSHOP)

**Date & Time Zones:**

- Seattle, United States  
Mon, Feb 27, 5:00pm - 6:30pm (PST)
- Chicago, United States  
Mon, Feb 27, 7:00pm - 8:30pm (CST)
- Melbourne, Australia  
Tue, Feb 28, 12:00pm - 1:30pm (AEDT)
- Chennai, India  
Tue, Feb 28, 6:30am - 8:00am (IST)

**Speakers:**

- Tony Rinaudo**  
Principal Climate Action Advisor  
Climate Action and Resilience Team  
World Vision Australia &  
Founder of Farmer Managed Natural  
Regeneration (FMNR)
- Rotarian Brian Gower**  
Rotary Liaison  
World Vision U.S.

ESRAG is proud to present this webinar on the breakthroughs now possible through Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration. Tony Rinaudo, Principal Climate Action Advisor for World Vision Australia, describes how a barren landscape can be restored by empowering and training local communities to manage it. Farmers learn to protect and revive existing tree stumps and roots that still grow even in degraded land. The original tree population can be regenerated without major financial costs. This short [World Vision video](#) describes the FMNR process.

Brian Gower, Senior Director for Foundations and Partnerships at World Vision USA, describes how this strategy can be used to create a Rotary Global Grant, citing the Rotary Club of Los Angeles \$1 million project with Niger. World Vision and Rotary now have a MoU which clubs and districts can also use to create such projects of scale and impact. ESRAG members can participate worldwide in the FMNR workshop simultaneously at 7:00 pm Feb. 27 (Chicago) and noon Feb. 28 (Melbourne) via Zoom. [Sign up here.](#)

World Vision has a Memorandum of Understanding with Rotary and has [implemented many global grant projects](#) on areas of focus shared by both organizations. Click "read more" for the speakers' inspiring bios.

[Read More](#)

## A World of Ways to Restore Biodiversity

**By Ariel Miller**

This winter's ESRAG's Projects+ Webinars offer a world of ways for Rotarians to restore biodiversity. Don't miss the Feb. 27 and 28 broadcast of the World Vision talk on Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (see article, this issue), a superlatively cost-effective strategy which is the basis for a global grant project of Rotarians in Niger and Los Angeles! Here are the other three Biodiversity talks that were presented in January and February:

- Community-Based Biodiversity Conservation on Negros, Philippine Republic (Jan. 25)
- Oyster-Reef Restoration, Australia (Jan. 31/Feb. 1)
- Conserving the Cape Floral Kingdom, South Africa (Feb. 8/9)



Click on "read more" for an overview and link to each talk. Thanks to the diligence of ESRAG volunteer Dietmar Biedermann, recordings are posted quickly on ESRAG's Vimeo channel so you can watch them at your convenience. Relevant webinars are also posted under each of the six Themes (biodiversity, climate, pollution, etc.) on ESRAG's website.

ESRAG is starting to broadcast each webinar twice to accommodate viewers in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, so you will be able to select which time works best for you. The presenters speak live at the first session, and their recorded talk is presented the next day. At either session you can network with fellow Rotarians in real time during the welcome and discussion parts of the agenda. Registration links for upcoming Projects + programs are on ESRAG's [Events page](#).

**ESRAG is showcasing Sustainable Living in March and Climate Action in April.** The webinar features Club and District projects every other week. If you would like to present a project, please [contact ESRAG's Karin Tome](#).

*Photo: an action shot from the Oyster Reef Restoration project in Moreton Bay, Australia*

[Read More](#)

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## Support Life-Saving Earthquake Response

**By Ariel Miller**

ESRAG leaders in Türkiye and worldwide began corresponding within hours of the massive Feb. 6 earthquake on how to aid survivors across Türkiye and Syria. RI President Jennifer Jones has posted a passionate [appeal to all Rotarians](#). ESRAG Chair-Elect Yasar Atacik, Regional Chapter Co-Chair Safak Ozsoy, and ESRAG Director Yavuz Atila have provided two ways to deliver funds to front-line disaster care immediately:

- [Rotary International's Earthquake Disaster Relief Fund](#) earmarked for Türkiye and Syria. "The collected funds will be distributed through the Rotary Foundation grants requested by the four Rotary districts in the region," writes Yavuz.
- Contribute directly to D-2420's Rotary Disaster Grant to provide a mobile multi-clinic hospital being organized by three Turkish Rotary Districts together (details in "read more")

You can also fund solar cookers through a [Raise for Rotary fund](#) set up by ESRAG East Asia Regional Co-Chair Michel de Vriendt.

*Photos above were included in D-2420 Governor Suat Baysan's letter asking Rotarians worldwide to contribute to the RI Disaster Grant to fund the mobile multi-clinic hospital.*

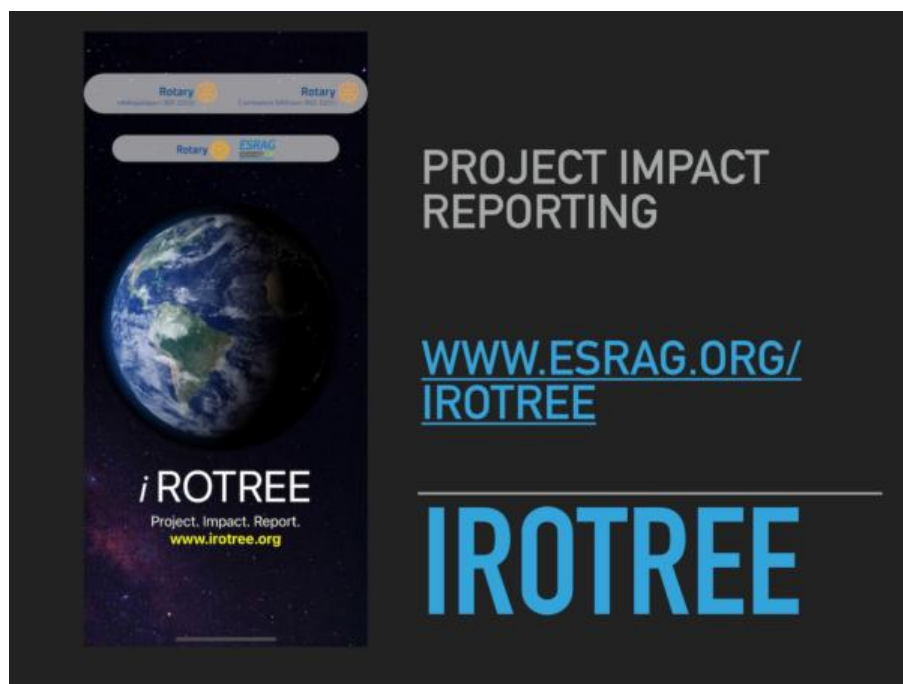
[Read More](#)

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## Tell us about your Global Grant!

**By Dr. Mina Venkataraman**





As a technical expert in Rotary's Environment Area of Focus, ESRAG would like to measure the impact of environmental global grants. Towards this end, we would like a record of the Rotary global grants approved for these projects. Please do [fill out our short form](#) to facilitate this endeavor.

Clubs are also encouraged to use our mobile app [iRotree](#) to keep monitoring the impact of their projects. iRotree includes databases for biodiversity projects, including tree-planting, mangrove, coral reef restoration, grasslands and pollinators, as well as pollution prevention projects focused on plastics, air, fresh water, oceans or soil.

## Inviting you to RAGTime at Royal Botanic Gardens

**By Dr. Pat Armstrong, ESRAG Chair**

Following the inaugural and successful RAGTime in RICON 2022 in Houston, Texas, the DNA RAG is organising a second RAGTime in Melbourne on Thursday, 25 May in the Jardin Tan room at the glorious Royal Melbourne Botanic Gardens. This is a unique opportunity to greet members of ESRAG face-to-face after another year of Zooming, and to meet, learn from and share ideas for joint projects with members of the other 26 Rotary Action Groups. You will also be able to have informal conversations with Rotary staff and our Rotary International leaders. Your ticket includes canapes, one free drink, and a bountiful spread of Rotary goodwill. If you are planning to arrive early for RICON, this is an event that you will not want to miss. [Click here to register.](#)

## ESRAG Environment Action Summit May 25

**By Dr. Pat Armstrong**



Keynoters: Professor David Karoly and Patrick McCafferty

If you are arriving in Melbourne ahead of RICON, you will not want to miss this ESRAG Environment Action Summit on Thursday, 25 May. To be held in a central Melbourne location, this Summit will feature leading environmental keynote speakers and showcase a number of outstanding Rotary environmental projects. After this inspiring introduction, delegates will work in breakout groups to develop practical ideas for Rotary club and district environmental projects. These ideas for projects will then be collated and produced into environmental action guides and made

available to Rotary clubs and districts worldwide. This will be the chance for you to share some of the innovative projects of your club and district and to also learn from speakers and other delegates.

You will hear from two outstanding keynote speakers:

**Professor David Karoly** is an honorary Professor in the School of Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences and an honorary Senior Research Fellow in Melbourne Climate Futures, having retired from CSIRO at the end of January 2022. He is an internationally recognised expert on climate change and climate variability.

**Patrick McCafferty** is Managing Director at Yarra Valley Water and Chair of the Thriving Communities Partnership. Yarra Valley Water was the first water utility to join the UN Global Compact, a global organisation with a strong sustainability focus. Aligning its operations to this Compact, Yarra Valley Water uses anaerobic digestion for sewage management and treatment and to convert food waste to renewable energy. It also recycles water from sewage for use in homes, parks and sports grounds.

Our prospective speakers and topics include:

- Salvador Rico: Cleaning the Rivers of the World
- Christopher Puttock: Mangroves Restoration
- Rob Anderson: Rotarians for Climate website
- Clari Nolet: Lithium-Ion Battery Recycling (A Program of Impact)
- David Brawn: Environmental Envoys to Engage Rotary Clubs
- Colin Scobie: Oyster Shell Reef Restoration
- Trees for Survival
- Pat Armstrong: Light up Timor Through Enterprise

Tickets - which include lunch- are US \$60 for Rotarians, and \$30 for Rotaractors, but ESRAG members get a 15% discount! Click here to [register](#).

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## Use ESRAG's Flight Carbon Estimator

**By Dr. Pat Armstrong, ESRAG Chair**

If you're flying to Melbourne to attend RICON and are concerned about the carbon emissions from your flights, then you can use the [ESRAG Flight Carbon Estimator](#) to calculate the approximate carbon emissions from your flights. Based on this estimate, you can compensate for these emissions by making a voluntary donation to the Environment Fund of The Rotary Foundation. Your donations will support Global Grant projects that address the causes of climate change by reducing emissions and sequestering carbon.

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## **The Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group**

operates in accordance with Rotary International policy, but is not an agency of, or controlled by,  
Rotary International.

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