



May, 2024
Volume 8, Issue 11

Conservation across the world of Rotary

ESRAG members share a bounty of conservation work and resources in this month's issue focused on biodiversity, mobilizing people of all ages within and beyond Rotary. In addition, we share breaking news about grants and fellowships. Here's the May story lineup, coming to you from Africa, Australia, Latin America, North America, and Asia:

- Saving Lake Tuxpan by teamwork: a Global Grant in Guerrero
- May 4: Integrating environment into club planning
- Latin Americans: apply by May 15 for WWF conservation fellowships
- Leap into conservation: how you can help save amphibians
- Rotarians accelerate success of Million Trees Miami
- Pioneering agroforestry with women in Ghana
- ESRAG at RICON: volunteer, meet, greet, eat, explore, engage, learn
- Solarizing two small homes yields giant impact
- American Rotarians excited to leverage EPA grants
- Vote May 13: empower ESRAG to change the world
- Projects + webinars for May

In June, we'll showcase Food Systems and in July, Sustainable Living. If you have a project or resources to share on either of these topics, please write us right away at newsletter@esrag.com. Let us know if you'd like to write an article or would prefer to be interviewed. We're working ahead because the newsletter editor, an ESRAG volunteer, will be away for most of June larking about with family and hiking.

We're thrilled that new contributors are coming forth for every issue, like environmentalist Dimitri Oubda of Burkina Faso, who is volunteering as our new West Africa reporter. His story on Ghana appears in this issue. Your stories and personal example are powerful in inspiring and equipping readers to start new environmental work with their clubs and communities. Thank you!

Graphic by Taesun Connors: *ESRAG's May 1 Projects + Webinar*. Join the discussion [here](#).

Global Coral Reef Alliance

Increasing coastal ecosystem biodiversity, and carbon storage.



Recent work has been done in coral reefs, oyster and mussel reefs, sea grasses, and salt marshes and the result of it will be shown.

Speaker: Tom Goreau

He is a highly educated biogeochemist and President and founder of The Global Coral Reef Alliance.

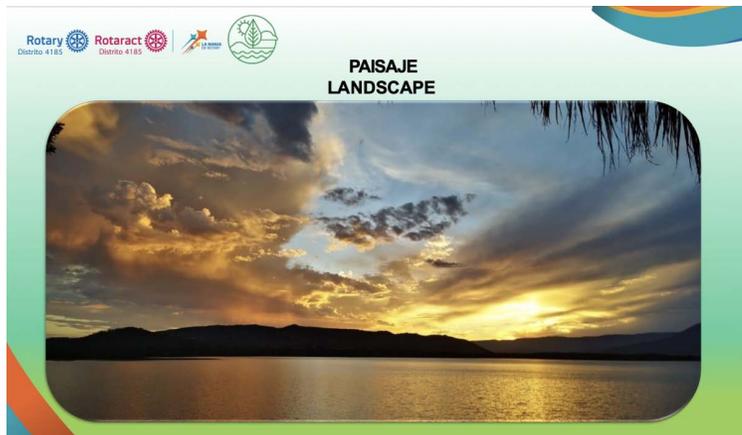
1st May 2024
2:00pm - 3:00pm UTC





Saving Lake Tuxpan by teamwork: a Global Grant in Guerrero

By Michael Drake, Rotary Club of Tucson Verde



Lake Tuxpan is near the municipality of Iguala de la Independencia in the State of Guerrero, México. Created in the 1940's as a reservoir for drinking water and irrigation, the lake and its shoreline had become very polluted with garbage and silt eroded from nearby bare, denuded hillsides. Erosion of the hilly watersheds was dumping 28,700 cubic meters of sediment a year into the lake, reducing its average depth from 24 to 4 meters. This pollution severely damaged the fish habitat, recreational opportunities, and the supply and quality of potable water. Approximately 130,000 people live in the

area.

This article describes the solution proposed by the Rotary Club of Valle de Iguala under the leadership of then-President Elvira Duran-Ramirez, leading to a Global Grant under the Environment Area of Focus. The Valle de Iguala club was the Host Sponsor, and the Rotary Club of Tucson Verde in Arizona, USA was the International Sponsor. The project is a good example of successful collaboration of Rotary clubs, Rotaract clubs, community environmental organizations, local governments, technical advisors, community volunteers, and international Rotary project fairs. The article concludes with suggestions on how to develop a successful Global Grant project.

The project included reforestation of nearby hills to prevent erosion of sediment into the lake, dredging built-up sediment out of the lake, and training 150 local citizens on environmental measures to maintain the health of the lake to promote recreation, fishing, and safe drinking water.

The \$40,000 US Global Grant was funded by contributions from 11 Rotary clubs in the US and Mexico, District Designated Funds from three Districts, one individual, and ESRAG. The project included four cooperating organizations: the municipal governments of Iguala de la Independencia, Tuxpan, and Tomatal, and the Ecological Park of Iguala.

Photo: Lake Tuxpan, by Rotary Club of Valle de Iguala

[Read More](#)

May 4: Integrating environment into club planning

Saturday, May 4, 9 am AEDT/Friday May 3, 11 pm UTC (seminar runs two hours)

By Pat Armstrong, PhD, ESRAG Immediate Past Chair

Join me and fellow ESRAG Oceania member Clare Caulfield in an interactive workshop that will give you the background, tools and resources to encourage and empower Rotary clubs to integrate environment and climate into their club's activities. All ESRAG members may apply.

At this workshop, we will share stories, tools and strategies to help your Rotary/Rotaract Club, as well as other clubs in your District to:

- Appreciate the opportunities offered by the Environment Area of Focus for engaging members in exciting club activities.
- Incorporate environmental and climate projects into club planning.
- Become more climate friendly, building on their existing projects, and using the amazing ESRAG climate resources.

There are only a few spaces left in this workshop, so you will need to book early. [Register here.](#)



Native bee, Northern Territory, Australia
Photo by Bob Winters, used with permission

Latin Americans: apply by May 15 for WWF graduate fellowships in conservation



Fonseca Leadership Program



Angie fish, Diving in Daphne Menor, Santa Cruz Island, Galapagos, Ecuador.

Scaling up capacity for local conservation leadership in the Latin America region

Heartfelt thanks to British Rotaractor Rob Sisson for alerting ESRAG to the World Wildlife Fund's new funding opportunity for Latin Americans to earn advanced degrees in conservation. The deadline to apply is May 15. Please share it immediately with scholars you know from eligible countries. Access the [application here](#). The site provides grant guidelines in either [Spanish](#) or [English](#).

The Fonseca Leadership Program is a program of WWF's Russell E Train Education for Nature Program (EFN), supported by the [Global Environment Facility](#) (GEF). It will provide financial support to nationals of eligible countries within WWF-US and GEF priority areas who are already enrolled or considering a master's or PhD program in research relevant to applied conservation. Eligible countries include: **Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, and Suriname.**

Master's degree applicants may apply for up to two years of funding and PhD applicants can request up to three years, for up to \$30,000 per year. The amount of funding approved will vary. Accepted applicants will be notified by July 2024. Any questions about the application process or program should be directed to efn@wwfus.org.

Leap into conservation: how you can help save amphibians

By Kerry Kriger, PhD

Amphibians are under severe threat worldwide, and urgent action is necessary to prevent their extinction. As the world's leading amphibian conservation organization, [SAVE THE FROGS!](#) is at the forefront of efforts to protect these essential species.



Since 2008, our international team of scientists, educators, policymakers and naturalists have been protecting amphibian populations from pollution, pesticides, infectious diseases, global warming, invasive species, habitat destruction and over-harvesting for the pet, food, and laboratory trades. In this article, we will guide you through three impactful ways you can get involved: building wetlands, celebrating Save The Frogs Day, and participating in the SAVE THE FROGS! Art Contest. But first, why should we even care about these small creatures that many people rarely see?

Why Amphibians Matter Amphibians, the group comprised of the frogs, toads, salamanders, newts and caecilians, are vital for maintaining ecological balance. They help control pest populations and their larvae help clean our water systems. Over 10% of the Nobel Prize winners in medicine and physiology have gone to researchers whose work involved amphibians. Despite their importance, nearly one-third of the world's amphibian species are threatened with extinction, and hundreds of species have already disappeared in recent decades. The loss of amphibian species at an unprecedented rate—far exceeding natural extinction levels—signals a profound disturbance in our global ecosystem that could have lasting impacts on the balance of nature and human health. Amphibians serve as bioindicators, early warning systems of environmental decay. Heeding their call is of critical importance to them and to us.

Rotarian Steve Andrews, an environmental activist, writer, and singer-songwriter, has been using his art to champion Save the Frogs since meeting me in Portugal. "I have loved nature since I was a little boy and amphibians were among the wonders of the natural world I discovered as a child," he says. "I remember keeping tadpoles and seeing how they transform into froglets. I also had my first experience of habitat destruction as a boy when a pond in a local park that in spring was the home of tadpoles and newts was drained. I was horrified.

"I am originally from Wales but now live in Portugal, and I keep an eye on the local frog populations. I see for myself how climate change is a big threat because some years the vernal pools the amphibians need either fail to form or dry up quickly. I am a singer-songwriter and author and environmental activist, and I use the platform that this gives me in the media, to speak out about the dangers to amphibians worldwide."

Click "read more" to find resources your club and community can use to save amphibians. *(Graphics used by permission of Save the Frogs!).*

[Read More](#)

Rotarians accelerate success of Million Trees Miami

By Robert Bull, Rotary Club of Pinecrest, D 6990

Finding locations for planting over a hundred trees



within an urban environment can be challenging. Florida's Miami-Dade County includes over thirty-four unique and separate municipalities, each with their own local government, parks and facilities. While the Greater Miami area is in a subtropical region with plenty of rainfall, the tree canopy of the city is not up to standard. Fortunately, the county's Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces Department has a tree planting initiative, Million Trees Miami, whose sole purpose is to rectify this. Rotarians have embraced this challenge and we're now recognized as a major part of the solution.

About five years ago, when I was community service chair for the Rotary Club of Miami, I started including environmental projects amongst our programs. We conducted beach cleanups and then added tree-planting activities. We have created a close association with this county initiative and have planted nearly two thousand trees in several locations, creating forests in several areas of the county. Because of this impact, the program is now

called Rotarian Forests.

We're excited to do this because we know that trees are great at capturing CO₂, absorbing water, preventing soil and beach erosion, and mitigating urban heat islands which endanger our neighbors, particularly in lower-income communities.

Photo: Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava (on right) and Parks Director Maria Nardi (left) during the Rotarian Forests planting day and BBQ on Pelican Island, February, 2023. Photo credit Miami-Dade County.

[Read More](#)

Pioneering agroforestry with Ghanaian women

By Dimitri Oubda, ESRAG West African Correspondent

Ummy Farms was founded in 2020 by Rotaractor Abdul Rashid Wumpini in the northern region of Ghana. "Ummy Farms Empowerment Initiative is a transformative project dedicated to uplifting local women farmers through sustainable agriculture practices," he explains. "By offering comprehensive training, establishing Ummy Farms as dedicated cultivation hubs, and fostering community collaboration, we aim to empower women and create a thriving agricultural ecosystem"

Through the [Ummy Relief Foundation](#) Wumpini engages and partners with Rotaract on agroforestry, organic farming, and supporting women to generate income through sustainable agricultural practices. The initiative has received a \$2,500 grant from the International Service Committee of the Rotary Club of Denver Southeast and the Rotaractors are working on a global grant proposal to expand the agroforestry project.

An essential part of the work is engaging local farmers, combining "cutting-edge techniques with time-tested wisdom," Wumpini explains. The project has gained



significant capacity and momentum by partnering with innovation hubs, universities, and institutes on research and prototyping.

How women and organic farming became the

heart of the project: "Uummy Farms started when I visited the hospital with my grandmother and we were advised by the doctor to change her diet to vegetables," Abdul Rashid Wumpini says.

Photo: Uummy Farms founder Abdul Rashid Wumpini in one of the organic cabbage rows.

[Read More](#)

ESRAG at RICON 2024: Volunteer, Meet, Greet, Eat, Explore, Engage, Learn

By Karen Kendrick-Hands, ESRAG Co-Founder and Past Chair

We're delighted to report that there will be many opportunities to learn and network about environmental projects at the 2024 Rotary International Convention (RICON) May 23-29. Use this guide and [check for updates](#) on our website to maximize your engagement with ESRAG members, and other strategic opportunities— in (mostly) chronological order. Here are the highlights:



- **Volunteer:** sign up for a shift at ESRAG's booth in the House of Friendship
- **Meet and Greet:** Rotary's 2024 RAGTime reception May 23 at the PARKROYAL Collection
- **Learn:** The WASH World Water Summit on Sustainable Sanitation on May 24, and six environmental breakout sessions on May 27 and 28. ESRAG leaders are teaming up with Past RI President Ian Riseley on "Learn How Rotary Can Become Carbon Neutral by 2040" on Tuesday, May 28 at 13:30 in HIBISCUS 3706.
- **Eat:** ESRAG Fellowship Dinner, May 25 at Eight Treasures

- **EXPLORE:** Five ESRAG environmental talks at the [WASH Hub](#) in the House of Friendship, May 25-29

Thanks to Ambaree Majumder and her Singapore team for all the time and effort invested in planning this rich array of events. Click "read more" for more details and registration links!

Photo: PARKROYAL Collection, venue for RAGTime 2024.

[Read More](#)

Solarizing two small homes yields giant impact

By Steve Solbrack, Twin Cities Rotary EcoClub



The [Twin Cities Rotary EcoClub](#) (EcoClub) in District 5950, Minnesota, USA collaborated with Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity (Habitat) to purchase and install solar panels for two new Habitat homes. Funding for the project included contributions from 15 other Rotary clubs and district grant funds from Rotary District 5950. The total project cost was \$52,500. Rotary contributions are providing \$21,500, and Habitat will receive a federal tax rebate and City of Minneapolis Green Cost Share grant to pay for most of the remaining balance.

The collaboration with Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity to make solar energy available to new Habitat homeowners will reduce monthly expenses for low-income families, reduce air pollution, and decrease carbon emissions. Installing an 8 kW solar array on one home will save more than 150 metric tons of carbon emissions, which is equivalent to over 3,500 trees planted and grown for 25 years or over 350,000 miles not driven. Now double that: solarizing two houses will have a huge impact for good.

The solar panels were installed at the end of February, and the final interconnection and activation with Xcel Energy occurred the last week in March. In early October, eighteen Rotarians from six Rotary clubs volunteered for a two-day Habitat home build at one of the two new Habitat homes with half the group participating each of the two days.

The installed solar panels have been logged into ESRAG's [Million Solar Panel Challenge](#).

Shown above: Rotary and Habitat partners at the 6th Street house, left to right: Andy Goke, Apadana Solar Technologies, Steve Solbrack, EcoClub, Tim Conners, Eden Prairie AM Rotary Club, Mike Robertson, Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity, Mike Menzel, EcoClub, and Kathy Iverson, EcoClub. Photo by Liz Andress, EcoClub.

American Rotarians excited to leverage EPA solar grants

By Ariel Miller, ESRAG Newsletter Editor

On Earth Day 2024, states, tribes, territories, municipalities and nonprofits across the United States learned that they had been awarded Solar for All (SFA) grants from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). One of the grantees is Grid Alternatives, which includes Habitat for Humanity among its implementation partners.

This brings huge joy to ESRAG's [Habitat Solar](#) team, led by Dr. Liz Henke of North Carolina, who have been working hard to help local clubs find grants to cover the capital costs of rooftop solar in the quest to keep monthly housing costs from rising out of reach for low-income people. As heatwave days expand and electric costs rise, the savings from solar power buffer rising utility bills, a major factor in housing insecurity.



Solar panels on a Habitat for Humanity development in Orange County, NC. Photo by GiveSolar's Jeff Heie

"Under the \$7 billion Solar for All program, the 60 selected applicants will create new or expand existing low-income solar programs, which will enable over 900,000 households in low-income and disadvantaged communities to benefit from distributed solar energy," [announced the EPA](#).

"Residential solar electricity leads to reduced monthly utility bills, reduced levels of air pollution in neighborhoods, and ultimately healthier communities, but too often low-income and disadvantaged communities have been left out," the EPA added in a more detailed [press release](#). "This federal funding will help correct the current inequity in deployment of solar for low income families."

You can find the full list of grantees on the EPA's [Solar for All website](#). "Habitat affiliates around the country will have access to multiple streams of Solar for All Funding, says Jeff Heie of GiveSolar, a key partner for ESRAG's Habitat Solar projects.

"Every state has at least one Solar for All recipient," he adds. "Some states have as many as three unique Solar for All grantees from whom Habitat can access solar funds. GiveSolar is partnering with nine Affiliate Support Organizations [statewide Habitat offices] to start up solar programs to make the most of Solar for All in those states. Every Solar for All program is likely to be different as each grantee will be responsible for designing their own program. If they haven't already, Habitat affiliates and Affiliate Support Offices should be in contact with the Solar for All grantee in their state to express interest in both helping to develop the SFA program and participating in the partnership to deploy solar on low-income homes."

[Read More](#)

Vote starting May 13: empower ESRAG to change the world

By Laurie Zuckerman, ESRAG Communication Director

How would you like ESRAG to change the world?

Imagine that.

Now imagine ESRAG members inspiring and empowering Rotary clubs on every continent, especially those most impacted by the climate-biodiversity-pollution crisis, with

extensive expertise, networks, education, and projects to create a thriving planet.

Starting on May 13, ESRAG members will vote for new board members. To make your vision become reality, we need board directors who will help ESRAG and Rotary:

- **Grow our Reach**, especially in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Island Nations
- **Increase our Impact** by sharing expertise in leadership, governance, strategic development, policy-making, and the Rotary Global Grant process
- **Expand our Coverage**, especially by sharing managerial expertise with teams utilizing information technology, CRM's, or data management systems
- **Adapt**, especially through knowledge of non-profit development, fundraising, human resources, and international law pertaining to non-profit organizations



Vote with this big vision in mind. Make the time to thoughtfully read each candidate's qualifications. Is this candidate from a region most affected by the environmental crisis, AND does this candidate have skills that your ESRAG Board needs? See [Characteristics for Candidates](#).

Why is this critical? Unlike most non-profit organizations, we do not have any full-time staff people. We rely on ESRAG Directors and members to provide over 90% of our services to Rotary worldwide. ESRAG provides the expertise for, not one or two, but 6.5 of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). The world needs your thoughtful vote.

How has ESRAG Created Hope in 2023-24? Find out at ESRAG's Annual General Meeting on Friday, June 21 at 1300 UTC. Press to [REGISTER](#).

Projects + Webinars for May

ESRAG hosts a weekly seminar on Zoom covering an array of environmental issues and solutions, alternating presentations by subject experts with project reports from clubs around the world. The seminar draws a global audience with wonderful opportunities for networking during the discussion period. The talks are recorded and posted on ESRAG's [Vimeo channel](#) and [ESRAG/Projects](#) where they are easy to access and share with your club.

Here is the schedule for May, 2024:

May 1: Tom Goreau: increasing Coastal Ecosystem Biodiversity, 2 pm UTC

Thomas Goreau is a highly educated biogeochemist and President and founder of The Global Coral Reef Alliance. He has dived on coral reefs across the Caribbean, Pacific, Indian Ocean, and South-East Asia for more than 60 years. He will share recent work on coral reefs, oyster and mussel reefs, sea grasses, and salt marshes, and explore their relevance to Tanzania. [Register here](#).



May 8: David Rice: How AI is helping prevent fires, 2 pm UTC

David Rice will discuss how the collaboration between Rotary Club Newport Beach, CA, United Nations Association, The Tanzle

Corp, and the Alert California program is helping prevent fires in California and beyond, and will become the basis of enabling communities to develop "digital dashboards" to track and manage efforts on addressing local issues like climate and housing. Rice is President of the United Nations Association of Orange County, California, Director of Rotary Climate Action Team IRCAT), member of Congressman Mike Levin's Task Force on Nuclear Waste at San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, and a member of the Rotary Club of Newport Beach. [Register here.](#)

May 15: Joshua Fabrico Céspedes Campos, Trash 'N Fashion Show in Puerto Rico, 2 pm UTC

This talk will report on sustainable fashion with recycled garments, which raises awareness about the importance of preserving the environment. Joshua Fabrico Céspedes Campos is a political science student at the University of Costa Rica, President of Rotaract Cartago, and District Green Team Coordinator. [Register here.](#)

On May 22 and 29, the Project Seminars team will be on holiday due to the Rotary International Convention.

Photo: Joshua Fabrico Céspedes Campos.

The Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group

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