

## Land for Life

Fundación Refugio

*Circular No. 27 August 2014*

### Let the need lead

Frustration with not being able to advance on the proposed aims of acquiring land for conservation nudged us to re-seeking God's guidance. Consequently (and going somewhat against the logic of strategic planning) we have sought to respond to what appear to be the most pressing needs. This has pushed us towards interacting more and more with the people who most suffer from deforestation. We are finding their insight, forged through suffering; provide a startlingly crisp focus to our ministry.

Being strongly rooted in "local" issues enables us to be more effective at regional level, as we engage with other conservation organizations and government authorities. In the space of a few short months we feel we have been catapulted from relative obscurity to being "important enough" to have been asked to appear on a national TV program, meet with Salta's Minister for the Environment, and shortly, to meeting with the Catholic Bishop of Salta with the aim of sharing about our ministry and seeking opportunities in which we can coordinate our work.



### Public hearings



Work over the past months has included the ongoing monitoring and documentation of deforestation projects. Our GIS database continues to grow, and is vital in that regard (we still need more funds for this aspect of our work). We have also continued to participate directly in several public hearings on deforestation projects in the departments of Rivadavia and Orán. Our regular presence at these hearings has been noted by the Minister of the Environment which is probably one of the reasons we are able to meet with him. Interesting how the sum of small actions can add up!

### Growing network

We have continued to share information on deforestation with key people and organisations across the Chaco. This has included indigenous and criollo people along Ruta 81 (one of the areas now being affected by the expansion of deforestation). We have also given a lot of time and effort to the emblematic case of Saucelito, which has had the effect of making us known across the region between Pichanal, Orán and Urundel. We are currently strengthening links with key people in Rivadavia and Anta.

### Information is power

The information we have shared on deforestation has been used by Greenpeace, in a national campaign that has just this past week pushed the Salta government into acceding to discuss deforestation with leading conservation organizations. Though we do not as yet have official confirmation, the government has stated

in the local press that it will be holding off issuing permits in certain regions of the Chaco. We have yet to see the fine print on this statement.

### Family News

All three kids are doing well with their studies. We enjoyed a week with all the family together here at home. This included a night away on a traditional Argentina Estancia, not too far from where we live. We have acquired another dog (5 in all!), a puppy from the Chaco, and she is keeping us on our toes (very sharp teeth).

### UK tour

Andrew will be in the UK between 13th - 30th September on (intensive) deputation. These are some of his engagements:

- 14/9 St. Mary's - Watford 10:30
- 14/9 St Paul's - St Albans 16:00
- 14/9 St Peter's- St Albans 18:30
- 19/9 St Wilfrid - Halton (Lancaster) (???)
- 20/9 Cumbria Churches Together - Kendal 13:00 - 14:30
- 21/9 Holy Trinity - Kendal 8:00; 9:30 and 11:00
- 22/9 University of Hertfordshire 16:00
- 23/9 Christ Church- St- Albans (20:00)
- 24/9 Emmanuel Stoughton, Guildford
- 25/9 St Mary's - Meysey Hampton (Gloucestershire)
- 27/9 Church on the Heath -Fleet (Hampshire)
- 28/9 Church on the Heath -Fleet (Hampshire)

### Communication revamp

We have opened a Facebook group for Land 4 Life<sup>1</sup>, and another called Deforestación Salta. The first is aimed at a broad international readership, the latter at a local and national audience.<sup>2</sup> For the time being we have closed our (out of date) blog, in order to allow for a more orderly revamp of our communication methods.

### Prayer Pointers

- Give thanks for having some (small) influence in terms of raising awareness on deforestation.
- Pray for ongoing strength and energy to keep up with the pace of work.
- Pray for Rosa P. and Jose V, who we are supporting as they seek to stop deforestation in their localities.
- Pray for Pastoral Familiar workshop Andrew is helping lead in Misión Chaqueña on the 29 and 30 Aug.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/land4life/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1438091596479095/>