

Dear Friends

A very happy and peaceful new year to you! Following a challenging 2022 in terms of its economy and politics, the stressful excitement of watching Argentina win the world cup brought some welcome relief as we rounded out the year. Celebrations, as can be expected here, were fantastic and far exceeded those we witnessed many years ago when Argentina was crowned champion in 1978 and 1986.

Family news

Another celebration during 2022 was Andrew's 60th, an event Carolina nimbly used to justify us going to see *Coldplay* in Buenos Aires. This was Andrew's first-ever experience of a concert, and we were all blown away by the show.

Tomas moved to the UK after easter. He is now working in renewables with the NextEnergy Capital Group and living in Brixton. Ceci continues to work remotely at the Washington-based Ombudsperson Office of the Organization of American States. Carolina is gaining experience with a veterinarian clinic in Salta and continuing with further studies. Both Carolina and Ceci have visited family and friends in the UK.

Dog-wise, 2022 was a year of goodbyes. We were sad to lose Dory, who passed away from wounds from a fight in which our other dogs ganged up on her. We also had to say goodbye to Negrito, an adorable stray dog we could not adopt but whom we helped local police look after in our local park.



New Year's Eve celebration, including Mauro, Ceci's boyfriend

Local work



Figure 2 Maria interviewing wichi people near Tartagal on their perspectives on wildlife

Maria completed her certificate in Christian Rural Environment Studies (CRES), run by Ripon College Cuddesdon (Oxford), and was awarded a distinction. Her thesis title was: "A rapid assessment of indigenous perspectives on wildlife in a deforested region of NW Argentina." As mentioned in our previous letter, this project involved her traveling to Tartagal, where she met and interviewed members of the community of *Hala Pelaj* (San Benito), located in a region that has been heavily deforested over the past 20 years.

Compassion

Andrew resumed travel with Compassion and made trips to the USA, Guatemala, Togo, and Ghana. He also made a personal trip to see his parents in the UK and joined them for a big family reunion.



Andrew visiting a community in Togo

Andrew continues to support Compassion's National Offices worldwide as they grapple with the devastating impacts of climate change on children in poverty. Amid the often-overwhelming negative news on climate, it is encouraging to witness local churches across the globe stepping up to the challenges.

Andrew will be heading to Guatemala at the end of January. He will support the Compassion Guatemala office in running its first conference on creation care and climate change. The event is aimed at pastors from across the country, with presentations from various specialists on climate change adaptation. The keynote speaker is Dr. Ruth Padilla, a world leader in the theology of creation care.

Representatives will attend the event from other countries Compassion works with in Latin America and The Caribbean, and we hope that this event will serve as a platform for extending creation care initiatives across the region,

New pastures

As part of exploring their future work in Argentina, Andrew and Maria recently spent time near the coastal city of Mar del Plata (400 km south of Buenos Aires). They visited Esteban Zugasti, who owns and runs an organic farm and the private Paititi Nature reserve. Esteban uses carefully managed grazing regimes to restore natural pastures associated with the hilly outcrops in this otherwise flat part of Argentina.

Esteban, who previously worked with indigenous peoples in the Chaco, is developing a fantastic environmental education initiative focused on schools. Over the past year, the reserve's education centre has hosted over 4000 schoolchildren for day-long field trips. We are exploring possibilities of linking into and supporting Esteban's environmental education work as the next step in our creation care work. One of the attractions for Andrew is that through his work, Esteban has good links with the local university, which is researching conservation biology.



Figure 3 Esteban and Maria in the Paititi Nature Reserve - Mar del Plata

Prayer pointers

- Join us in thanking God for our children and their progress in their respective careers and Maria's successful completion of her studies.
- Pray for Andrew and Maria as they seek to engage in environmental education work.
- Pray for Andrew's trip to Guatemala and a successful conference on creation care.

We love hearing from you, so don't hesitate to send us a line: andrewleake@gmail.com

Andrew & Maria Leake