

Koala Kolumn



Woodenbong Drive

Connectivity Conservation will help koalas

by Sonya Nourse

Adapting to future environmental threats such as climate change is increasingly on everyone's mind. There are some great initiatives being developed nationally with opportunities for local communities to get involved.

In the Rainbow Region we have some of the best diversity of wildlife and native plants at our back door with several beautiful national parks within easy travelling distance. The Border Ranges National Park is one of these great spots of biodiversity and is home to a population of koalas. It has recently been identified as one of five priority areas in NSW for establishing conservation partnerships under the Department of Environment and Climate Change's 'Great Eastern Ranges Corridor Initiative'.

In NSW the koala is listed as a vulnerable species that is likely to become endangered unless the circumstances and factors threatening its survival change. Some of the important strategies that have been identified to assist the recovery of the koala include revegetation of their natural habitat with suitable feed tree species and the development of habitat corridors between populations. The latter is exactly what the 'Great Eastern Ranges Corridor Initiative' is about.

Whilst it is heartening to know that much of the 2800 kilometres of the Great Eastern Ranges (stretching from the Australian

Alps north of Melbourne in Victoria to the Atherton Tablelands north of Cairns in Far North Queensland) is protected by significant national parks there is much biodiversity in the forests and waterways of private land that is equally significant. The 'Great Eastern Ranges Corridor Initiative' aims to join these islands of habitat by forming partnerships with local organisations already active in land management through retaining existing native vegetation, restoring degraded areas or those wanting to join in voluntary conservation agreements.

Having a long chain of interconnected areas with high conservation value will help native animals and plants to move to more suitable areas in these ranges as their normal habitats become less viable due to changing rainfall, competing species and food availability (just some of the potential threats of climate change).

Over the years many of you have been busy planting koala feed tree species, either as individual landholders or as part of community and environmental groups such as Landcare and Friends of the Koala. It is really exciting that everyone's efforts can be doubled by being able to participate in this national program.

The Great Eastern Ranges (of which the Border Ranges is a part) is considered by many to be the land based equivalent of the Great Barrier Reef in as much as it contributes significantly to the economic, social, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of many communities up and down the eastern states of Australia, as well as to the native animals and plants which the ranges encompass.

If you want to learn more about the Great Eastern Ranges Corridor Initiative see the DECC website at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/a2a/index.htm>

Maintaining the biodiversity of our native fauna and flora by helping vulnerable and threatened species to adapt to the future may (in part at least) be as simple as 'working together'.

Information about koalas, koala food trees and Friends of the Koala is available at www.friendsofthekoala.org or email info@friendsofthekoala.org or phone Friends of the Koala's (24/7) Rescue Hotline: 6622-1233

Until next time, happy koala spotting!



Protecting Forests: the first step in a credible climate change policy

Groundbreaking new Australian National University research on the importance of protecting forests for climate change mitigation will be presented at a series of public forums in NSW and Queensland over the next weeks.

The research has found that Australia's native forests can play a very important role in the fight against global warming and that unlogged native forests store at least three times more carbon than both the Australian Government and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have estimated.

The research, by Brendan Mackey, Heather Keith, Sandra Berry and David Lindenmayer at The Fenner School of Environment & Society, Australian National University, revealed that the average amount of carbon stored in unlogged natural forests in south-eastern Australia is about 640 tonnes per hectare. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimate for temperate forests is only around 217 tonnes of carbon per hectare.

Coordinator of the forums, and Wilderness Society spokesperson Gemma Tillack said protecting these carbon banks is urgently needed in government policy responses to the climate challenge.

"The ANU research findings should prompt governments to take a fresh and un-biased look at the



Forest and Climate Change Action Forums

- Friday 5th September, 7-9pm, Byron Bay Railway park, next to Byron Bay Environment Centre's rotunda.
 - Saturday 6th September, 10am-2pm, Mullumbimby Heart Space, Santos Centre, 51-53 Burringbar Street.
 - Sunday 7th September, 5-6pm, Upstairs at The Winsome Hotel, Lismore
- Free Entry, Organised by The Wilderness Society.

role protecting and restoring native forests could play in helping Australia make the deep cuts to greenhouse gas emissions needed within the next 10 years," she said.

"State and federal governments have to date failed to examine two critical issues: how much carbon dioxide could be prevented from entering the atmosphere if logging of native forests is stopped, and how much carbon dioxide could be pulled out of the atmosphere if native forests are allowed to recover from logging."

The research shows that native forests could store very large amounts of carbon if they were allowed to recover their 'natural carbon carrying capacity'. Recovering forests could pull up to 136 million tonnes of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere each year for the next 100 years if logging and other human disturbances ceased immediately.

"It is now time to examine the role protecting and restoring our native forests could play in mitigating climate change, especially as Australia has enough plantation timber to meet all our timber needs," said Ms Tillack.

"It is clear from the ANU research that government policies on native forest management should focus on protection and restoration to make a major contribution to Australia's yet to be determined greenhouse gas reduction targets."

"Any credible government policy response to climate change must include forest protection as a key area for urgent action," concluded Ms Tillack.

Soil Health Field Day

Saturday 13th September
9am at Jiggi Hall

Program includes morning talks by Dave Forrest, TAFE Wollongbar biological and organic farming teacher; Merv Dudgeon will talk about sweetmother grass; Dave Forrest will introduce the Northern Rivers Soil Health Cards and Soil Best Management Practice Guides.

David Von Pein, The Metre Man, will talk about a range of agricultural metres, probes, tools and instruments for plant and soil health testing, and Graham Lancaster, Environmental Analysis



Laboratory, will talk about soil tests and 'locked up' nutrients.

After lunch Paul Pont, Enviropower Australia, will talk about liquid worm cast, live compost worms, domestic and commercial worm farms; and Mike McCosker, Ausmin Australia, will talk about sustainable soil management,

mineral balances, application of fertilizers and sleeping teas.

Exhibits will be provided by Environmental Analysis Labs, Australian Woodchippers and Compost Turners, and SoilCare Inc.

Door Prizes include one EAL soil analysis.

A charge of \$10.00 per head will cover morning tea and lunch. Tea/Coffee supplied, cold drinks can be purchased. Bookings required for catering purposes.

For more information and to make bookings: Grant 6688-8332, Andrew 6688-8304, Shaun 6688-8263, or email info@soilcare.org

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Bowlo saves water

Nimbin Bowling Club prides itself on keeping its green in great condition, but wanted to save on its big town water bill, and not have to worry about any level of water restrictions.

The problem? Nowhere on the small site to put water tanks. But with the help of contractors from AquaReuse Pty Ltd, an ingenious solution was found: store the water under the building.

Assisted by a Community

Water Grant from the (then) federal Dept of Environment and Heritage, the Club has installed three watertight inflatable bladders in between the building's foundations.

Pictured installing the system is plumbing team (left to right) Craig Finch, Glen Scaysbrook and Peter Bampton.

The high-tech bladders are guaranteed for 25 years.

Now they just need rain.

Comment sought on hemp industry

The public is invited to make written submissions on the proposed Hemp Industry Regulation 2008, to be made under the Hemp Industry Act 2008.

The object of the proposed Regulation is to make provision for the following matters under the Act:

- a. further particulars that are to be included in an application for a licence to cultivate or supply low-THC hemp,
- b. applications for the renewal or transfer of a licence,
- c. further grounds on which the Director-General of the Department of Primary Industries may refuse to grant, or revoke, a licence,
- d. further licence conditions (including conditions requiring licensees to pay an annual licence fee, to keep a register and to report to

the Director-General on an annual basis),
e. prescribing the maximum amount of the fees that may be approved by the Director-General in relation to licence applications,

f. prescribing the offence under section 6 of the Act of not complying with a licence (including the conditions of the licence) as an offence that may be dealt with by way of a penalty notice.

All submissions should be directed, by mail, facsimile or email, to: Hemp Industry Regulation 2008, Attn: Ms Bev Zurbo, Wagga Wagga Agricultural Institute, PMB Pine Gully Rd, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

Fax: (02) 6938 1995, email: beverley.zurbo@dpi.nsw.gov.au
Submissions close at 5pm on Friday, 19th September.

Website www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

Electro-Magnetic Radiation action group forming

by an ElectroWatch correspondent

In the last century, the amount of Electro-magnetic radiation (EMR) in the air has risen to many thousands of times higher than it was. This is due to radion broadcasts, telephones, electric powerlines, aircraft, spacecraft, mobile phones, electric appliances, microwave cookers, computer systems, wireless high-speed broadband, military signals, communications and weapons.

At first, only those working in x-ray labs and power stations were getting ill, but now 2-5% or more of people in the Western world are being affected. Many symptoms, such as chronic headache, sore throat, ringing in the ears (tinitis), bad nerves, allergies, poor memory, tiredness, are not recognised as Electro-Sensitivity (ES).

A scientist has suggested that EMR could be the greatest menace of the 21st century. Over 285,000 people are recognised by the Swedish government as having an EMR disability, and an area has been set aside as an EMR-free haven.

Crystals are said to give protection against EMR, and once again the hippies turn out to be not so foolish. Black tourmaline, amazonite, selenite and barite are mentioned. Double terminator quartz crystals can be wound with copper wire and set up in a sequence in a circle. Some bury a circle of magnets.

When an electric device is switched off, but still attached to the powerpoint, an electric field is still being generated. EMR passes through a wall without difficulty. What is on the other side of

the wall from your bed, desk, etc?

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency run an EMR Health Complaints Register. If their register gets bigger, more attention might be paid to it.

We wish to form an Electro-Magnetic Action Group. Publicity is needed, and we hope to raise money to combat this Goliath. Scientists and lawyers are required to help establish an Australian EMR-free zone.

You are invited to be in touch, and your support is welcomed. Contact V. Stott, PO Box 1234, Lismore 2480.



Camouflage - Concealed Cell Sites

Larson Utility advertises disguises for mobile phone towers - you won't even know they are there! Pictured are their 3-Carrier Pine (above) and Mexican Fan Palm (left) models. See more at www.utilitycamo.com/sites.html

The American FCC has declared the health hazards of phone towers an invalid reason to block them from going up, so the most effective argument has been devaluation of property because of a large, ugly tower. These disguises could negate this argument.

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Taste Makes Waste

We waste a lot of food and a lot of water, says report

The world grows more than enough food to sustain the global population, but half of that food is wasted -- and thus half of the water used in food production is wasted as well, says a new report from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, International Water Management Institute, and Stockholm Water Management Institute. In developing countries, food spoils or is damaged by insects; in developed countries, it's more often just tossed out. The United States and other industrialized countries throw out some 30 percent of their food each year, says the report: "That corresponds to [10.6 trillion gallons] of irrigation water, enough water to meet the household needs of 500 million people." The organizations call for a 50 percent reduction in global food waste by 2025, pointing out that 1 billion people already live with insufficient water. "Unless we change our practices," says the FAO's Pasquale Steduto, "water will be a key constraint to food production in the future."

Takin' a Shine to You

Ginormous solar plants to be built in California

Two gigantic solar plants will be built in California under deals announced Thursday between utility Pacific Gas & Electric and companies OptiSolar and Sun Power. Together, the plants could generate 800 megawatts of electricity at peak capacity, enough to power 239,000 homes. (Perspective: The total peak capacity of every photovoltaic panel in the U.S. as of last year was 750 MW.) The largest plant will cover nine square miles with solar panels, but it will be "very visually unobtrusive," says OptiSolar CEO Randy Goldstein; with panels only three feet high, "It almost looks like a lake." Both plants aim to be up and running by 2011, dependent on state and local approval and a renewal of tax credits currently stalled in Congress. Photovoltaic power has until now been constrained to rooftops, considered too inefficient for utility-scale use; the PG&E deals are "monumental," says Julia Hamm of the Solar Electric Power Association. "I really think it demonstrates that the time for solar has come."

NOAA's Arctic

U.S. scouts out territory in Arctic; ice-cover loss could be worst ever

U.S. scientists will head to the Arctic this week on a quest to map the ocean floor, and will collaborate with Canada on a surveying trip in September. The two nations -- and their Arctic-bordering compatriots Russia, Denmark, and Norway -- are scrambling to measure their respective continental shelves, with an eye to claiming as much as they can of the estimated 90 billion barrels of oil that could potentially become accessible if the Arctic gets melty enough. So how's the northern region doing these days? "We thought Arctic ice cover might recover after last year's unprecedented melting," says Mark Serreze of the National Snow and Ice Data Center, but, "it now looks as if it will be a very close call indeed whether 2007 or 2008 is the worst year on record for ice cover over the Arctic." Such conditions are, notes oceanographer Larry Mayer, "bad for the Arctic, but very, very good for mapping."

Biden: His Time

How green is Joe Biden, Barack Obama's running mate?

Major enviro groups have given a thumbs-up to Joe Biden, Barack Obama's pick for VP candidate. "Biden has a really strong environmental record," said Sierra Club spokesperson David Willett. "He has been outspoken about global warming for a long time." Biden, who's represented Delaware in the U.S. Senate for more than 35 years, has earned an 83 percent lifetime score from the League of Conservation Voters. In 2007, while running for president himself, he said "energy security" was his top priority, and argued that he was well-suited to deal with the challenge thanks to years of experience on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which he now chairs. Check out our 2007 interview with Biden at www.grist.org, in which he disses "clean coal," calls for new cars to get 40 miles per gallon by 2017, and recounts a memorable trip into Alaskan wilderness.

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Lunar Phase & US Stock Market Highs

by David McMinn

If you list Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) market highs in order of the year, they will not correlate with lunar phase. However, if you list the highs by month – day (year ignored) excellent relationships can be established. When the peaks occur at a certain time of year, the Moon and Sun will be in similar ecliptical segments, giving rise to similar lunar phases (see Table 1).

There were 16 highs from January 15 to October 15, all of which had lunar phase between 230 and 015 Ao, a range of 145o (highly significant $p < 10^{-5}$). Remarkably, the only anomalous period was between September 25 and December 15, when no overall pattern could be determined. For the remainder of the year, the connection between lunar phase and seasonal stock market highs held up very well.

Background

The annual one day (AOD) fall is the biggest one day percentage DJIA fall in the year beginning March 1. A bear market is a market decline over -20%. The degree on the ecliptical circle has been abbreviated to Eo, while the angular degree between the Moon and Sun (lunar phase) has been given as Ao.

Market Highs	Number of Highs	Sun E°	Moon E°	Phase A°
Jan 16 – Feb 28	2	295 - 325	195 - 235	235 - 295
Mar 01 – Aug 14	7	330 - 115	310 - 055	270 - 335
Aug 15 – Sep 10	3	150 - 165	140 - 180	000 - 015
Sep 11 – Sep 25	2	165 - 180	150 - 160	330 - 350
Sep 25 – Dec 15	7	No overall pattern		
Dec 16 – Jan 15	4	240 - 295	335 - 030	075 - 095

Raw Data: DJIA market highs sourced from fiendbear.com

If two or more DJIA highs occur near the same date, then remarkable parallels can arise on how the ensuing market unfolds. A good example of this effect were the September 3, 1929 and August 25, 1987 peaks, both of which took place just after the new Moon and both were followed 55 days later by massive October panics. The violent market decline lasted only a few months with the DJIA hitting bottom on November 13, 1929 and December 4, 1987.

Other examples may be given. The July 16, 1990 and July 17, 1998 peaks happened just prior to the third quarter Moon and were followed by AOD falls in August. Both markets declined by around -20% and the financial distress was brief with DJIA lows on October 11, 1990 and August 31, 1998.

The highs in November 19, 1909 and November 21, 1916 were followed by AOD falls a few months later on February 7, 1910 and February 1, 1917 respectively. The market slump extended well after the peaks, with the lows being reached on September 25, 1911 and November 19, 1917.

Where are we now?

The 2007 - 2008 market situation has historical parallels. The record high occurred on October 9, 2007, which was close to September highs in 1895, 1899 and 1912. Each of the four highs was followed by a major crash 104 to 112 days later (see Table 2) and a protracted market decline. We are currently going through the long bear market period - when it will bottom remains to be seen. Unfortunately, timing the lows is difficult to determine and there are no simple rules to follow. However, picking the market low in the current year will have immense financial rewards. All the best on that one.

Market High	Interval	AOD Fall > -4.50%	Interval	BM Low
1895 (a)	107 days	1895 (a)	232 days	1896
Sep 04 1899	104 days	Dec 20 1899	280 days	Aug 08 1900
Sep 05 1912	112 days	Dec 18 1912	556 days	Sep 24 1914
Sep 30 2007	104 days	Jan 20 2008 (b)	????	July 14 2008
Oct 09		Jan 21		????

(a) Based on the 12 Stock Average index.

(b) The date witnessed worldwide stock market panics, although the US market was closed on the day due to the Martin Luther King Jr holiday. January 21, 2008 has been taken as the AOD fall for the DJIA.

Switched Yet?

If not, download Firefox today, block the ads, and clean up your browsing

by Jay Stephens

Firefox 3 was released this month. For anyone who's putting off switching from Internet Explorer (IE), now is the right time.

Why should you use Firefox instead of IE? There are several good reasons: Firefox downloads web pages faster; Firefox is the target for far fewer exploits (hacker attacks); if a file download is interrupted, then when your connection is working again, Firefox 3 will resume downloading, whereas IE has to start over from the beginning; Firefox is easily the more secure browser with sites that ask for personal information.

All these are good reasons, but there are two further differences – and in my book either would justify switching to Firefox.

The first killer reason is this: Firefox isn't Microsoft. When we use a Windows

PC, even if we don't use "legit" software, we nonetheless get subtly sucked in to the monopoly that Microsoft has created in our available ways of interacting with our computer hardware, the datasphere, and the interactions that those in turn permit with other computer users:

We may unconsciously accept that how Windows and Internet Explorer happen to work, is just "how the computer works". Installing Firefox is a painless first step to breaking that Microsoft illusion. If you haven't already done so, go to www.getfirefox.com and click download! The installer will even import your IE "Favorites" (note the American spelling IE users have learnt to accept).

Firefox is an eight Megabyte download, so if you are on dialup, download the file over lunch, or pop into the Nimbin CTC and download it there onto CD or USB stick.

The second killer reason is related to the first: Because Firefox is open source, thousands of people have written "add-ons" for it – small, free, bolt-on extras that can make web browsing more fun, or less painful.

There are thousands of add-ons available (to search for add-ons from within Firefox just click "Tools, Add-ons"). I suggest you install three simple Firefox add-ons that will improve your browsing experience (If you want to uninstall one afterwards, click "Tools, Add-ons", and then "Uninstall").

The first add-on is your "get out of jail" card – in case a favourite website is written for IE, this little add-on, called "IE Tab" will allow Firefox to masquerade as IE for the duration – get it from www.tinyurl.com/27zzqt. Once you have installed IE Tab, to view a web page in IE, right-click on the background of the page and choose "View in IE Tab".

The other two add-ons protect you from advertising and save bandwidth.

First, Flashblock – you can get this from <http://flashblock.mozdev.org>.

Once you have installed this little beauty, any flash movies on web pages you visit will display as tame grey arrows in a box. To play the Flash movie, simply click the arrow.

Second, AdblockPlus – you can get this from <http://adblockplus.org>. This widget allows your browser to distinguish innocent content from adverts – and then not show the adverts! You'll also need to tell AdblockPlus what to block. A good starting point is a (free) list called EasyList. On the Firefox menu, choose "Tools, Adblock Plus...", then on the "Adblock Plus Preferences" window, click "Filters, Add Filter Subscription..." and choose EasyList from the box labelled "Subscription Title". Now surf your regular web pages – if adverts are still displayed, right-click on them and choose "Adblock Image!".

Firefox plus these add-ons will save bandwidth, load pages faster, spare you from the ad-attack, and leave more room for websites' actual content! It's free, takes 15 minutes, and if you miss the adverts – go back to IE!

Commonsense Human Values

Seventeenth in a series by Laurie Stubbs



Last article looked at the question "How do we make a set of human values that use the Life Develops Itself (LDI) principle"? We looked first at the trap of seeking ultimate answers so as to understand why the big picture of LDI has never been seen. For the same reason now we check on the built in code in our genetic plan, because that too may have diverted attention from LDI.

The start point about genes is that killing, inflicting pain, shedding blood is a total NoNo to most people. It's another piece of species specific behaviour that crosses all race, and locality boundaries. To break this prohibition, soldiers and others whose business it is to do these things to other humans have to be "de-humanised" by very special teaching. (Lt Col Dave Grossman's book "On Killing" tells this horrific tale.) But even when brutalized in this way people suffer great stress. Tensions enough to create major personality disorders, if not destructive psychotic behaviour – because the genetic behaviour's baseline rules have been broken.

It is said that men are about action

whereas women are about relationships. Hence within the tribal or family group primitive men work as groups hunting, where the women forage as a group, or for example, both work co-operatively in gardens. But let a strange male appear and instant wariness and possible aggression are the norm. Fear, anger, rage may flow and when these are present normal behaviour is out the window. Actions can be drastic – and afterwards lead to self-justification. Out of this pattern comes the ancient "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth".

Conflicting behaviours like these are – at bottom – survival mechanisms, built in over many thousands of generations. An element of choice has always existed between acceptance and aggression, between flight and fight, love and hate. Emotion is the on/off switch for these doings and emotion more often than not arises and moves us before we are aware it's happening.

Prehistoric value systems would have grown out of our gene structure. People using such a group of values would not have been aware of its origins. The ideas would have just been there – and made sense to most people. Along the way, Moses and the Ten Commandments happened, adding a few more sophisticated requirements, like "honour your father and mother" and "you shall not commit adultery" as part of a vast system (Exodus 20 etc; interesting for it's reflection of society standards of the time.)

At extremes of behaviour the effect

of the gene code is very strong, but for ordinary daily doings society values overcome the built in plan. Suppose you pick up a \$100 note on the sidewalk – a few would look around them for someone who might have dropped it. But most people's reaction will be to stuff it into a purse/pocket and walk on; "Finders – Keepers" as the old saying has it. If you see a person lying in a heap on the footpath – Do you stop and try to help? Or you see a fight between two men on the street corner – Do you try to stop the brawl? If you answered NO to these question they are examples of where society values over-ride the genetic value structure.

Remember? -- a man got shot and killed for trying to stop a Melbourne fracas, and another was seriously wounded. If the person lying in a heap on the footpath was outside a pub – it might be a very fair bet that the problem was alcohol induced – and so best left lying. Right or wrong, these are the sorts of ways society values change both human sympathy and commonsense.

Many more traditions and customs no doubt have hindered human understanding of the whole sweep of history from our origins to today. Those we've looked at make the point that despite the LDI principle's truth and force, we've "not seen the wood for the trees". Next article will look at how to use LDI to develop a self consistent and (relatively) complete set of human values.

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Rainbows and Second Life

by Rob Harle

In the Azalea Edition of NGT (July) I wrote about the virtual world know as Second Life. For those who missed it (naughty, naughty), Second Life (SL) (www.secondlife.com) is a virtual cyber world, created by Linden Labs, which is very similar to our own so called, real life (RL) world. You may buy or rent land, build buildings, create artworks, animals, speedboats and clothes or dance the night away at hippy-happenings or discos. Everything we do in RL has its own virtual counterpart in SL. The realism, diversity and "weirdness" of SL is astonishing.

Further in the article I presented the idea that perhaps Nimbin could have a presence in SL. People could hang out at the virtual Rainbow Café, visit the Hemp Embassy or listen to streaming reggae from Peace Park. A few people contacted me and thought it was a great idea, one of these, Jay, is prepared to put some energy into the project to build a virtual Nimbin under a rainbow in SL.

This article is a call for feedback from Nimbin locals, as to the desirability of such a thing, and an invitation to an informal commitment to support the virtual village financially. The cost we think would be \$1 or less per week each. We would need to buy our own land in SL and this has the requirement to pay a "tier" (basically rates). Jay and others with SL building skills will lay the groundwork, and can assist with resources and links for those keen to develop their own space within Nimbin2.

Imagine a virtual Rainbow Cafe? Benny Zable liked the idea of having some of his murals virtually on SL. The costs to make this happen are firstly, to purchase SL land, this is generally not that expensive. Secondly to cover the monthly "tier" which depending on land size, zoning and so on varies considerably.

To express your desire to be part of this project either send Jay an email at ... nimbin2@gmail.com or drop a note for his attention in the NGT drop-off-box at the Nimbin Community School.

For those with a



commercial orientation they could have an art gallery with art for sale, handmade clothes, "The Rainbow Collection" in a virtual boutique and so on. These places and items can direct visitors to actual world web sites if necessary.

As a generalization, SL is not very different to RL, in that everything that humans get up to in RL they do also in SL. There are scammers, priests, saints, sinners, rip-off-merchants, professors, prostitutes, healers and so on. If you want virtual sex you'll find it in SL, if you want art galleries, open university lectures or NASA displays you'll also find these. Studies have shown residents in SL are far more altruistic and ready to help other residents than people in RL! Also SL has been a great resource and help to disabled persons.

My personal interest in SL is the potential for creating new artforms; academic conferences, lectures and education (very little carbon footprint attending virtual seminars); and the immense potential for helping disabled people who have either physical or psychological issues. Just moving your avatar around apparently produces a bio-feedback loop which helps some individuals regain movement of paralysed limbs.

SL is based on creationist capitalism, however, Linden Labs is not an oligarchy! It set up and maintains the SL base and leaves the creation "inworld" to the residents. Anyone can open a basic account for free and do most things for free except own land. In 2008 there are roughly fifty thousand residents online at any one time. "By early 2007 there

was one petabyte (a million gigabytes) of data in SL. At that point, were all the books in the Library of Congress digitised (about 30 million volumes), it would have been equivalent to only about 2 percent of the data stored inside SL". (Boellstorff, 2008) By any criterion this is a massive amount of information. This is partly the reason Linden Labs must charge money for land and rates, to cover data storage and security.

On an entirely different note, last issue I wrote about robots and their plans for our future. I've just come across a fascinating document (via BBC News) which goes something like this. South Korea is drawing up an ethical code, The Robot Ethics Charter, to provide guidelines and set a standard for robot and artificial intelligence entities. This will be applicable to both users and manufactures of our silicone-electro-techno cousins.

South Korea is one of the world's most high-tech societies, they have the highest speed broadband in the world and access to mobile technology before we do in the West. The Ministry of Information and Communication predicts all South Korean households will have a robot by between 2015 and 2020. Robots will regularly carry out surgery by 2018. This poses an interesting question, if a robot is carrying out heart surgery will it find that organ an unnecessary appendage and replace it with a plastic pump from El Cheapo Mart?

I must go, my robot master is threatening to throw me out of the house if I don't get its dinner pronto.....

How to fail the Turing Test

by Warwick Fry

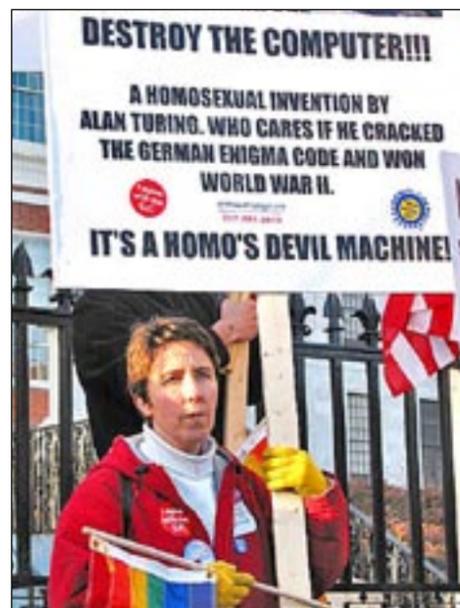
I failed the 'Turing Test' of artificial intelligence. We know about call centres, right? It occurred to me that the responses of the human beings on my favourite role-playing 'chat space' might be just 'bots' (as in pre-programmed responses hooked into a library database of pre-programmed phrases). You know how it goes. "Hi... How RU?... Where are you from?..."

I realised that paranoia was creeping in when I responded to a perfectly decent woman "are you a 'bot'?" She was appropriately offended. But it is a problem in my experience that communication skills are degenerating to the level of basic computer code. I didn't confuse a machine for a person; I confused a person with a machine.

Inexcusable. I have failed the 'Turing Test'. Alan Turing was a British mathematician. He was one of the key leaders of the 'Enigma project' in WWII that 'cracked' the German encryption sent out to the Nazi submarines and air fleets, from a few clues gathered from a specialised typewriter, that mechanically 'scrambled' the keystrokes of the captured Nazi machine. He was also gay, and after WWII and the rise of the US Industrial Military complex, and the McCarthyist witch-hunts (that devastated the intellectual cream of the US), and its influence on British government, he was viewed as a 'security risk'. A British court and Judge ordained that he be given Testosterone injections to 'cure' him of his homosexuality and thus reduce his ability to be a risk to National Security. Apparently the injections just made him hornier, but the homophobic Judge didn't know that at the time.

Alan, as a young mathematician, created the algorithm that led to the development of the early computer coding languages. During the 1950s he wrote a prophetic paper titled "Minds and Machines". (Whether he was still being forced to take testosterone injections at the time that he wrote this paper, is still not clear.)

He foresaw the amazing potential of IT, and the hyperbolic growth of processing power. People (mostly those who were into power and processing) were wondering if computers



Scientist, thinker and openly gay man Alan Turing is still vilified by US fundamentalists.



Bronze sculpture in Manchester of Alan Turing holding an apple, designed by Glyn Hughes and unveiled on 23 June 2001, the 89th anniversary of Turing's birth. On 7th June 1954 he committed suicide at his home in Wilmslow by eating an apple poisoned with cyanide.

could replace the average human being ... something that still worries the mechanically minded. Turing devised a 'test' (also known as a 'thought experiment') that was linguistically founded on a Victorian parlour game. It was based on asking questions to try and ascertain the gender of persons behind a curtain, through hand written notes. (A variation on this game is that one always lies, and the other has to tell the truth). Quite a fun game, in gay circles. Turing 'tweaked' the game as a criterion of 'computer intelligence'. He suggested that if a human could still ask questions of a computer whereby the human being could be 'fooled' into believing that what is behind the curtain is another human being, rather than a computer, then the 'machine' is, or might as well be, intelligent.

This criterion has been revised, but computer games and on line 'chat' spaces still play this and other identity and gender games. As do the human beings behind the keyboard of course. The fact that the US law, especially in the area of copyright, patent, and free speech assigns more rights to corporations (a corporation has the same rights as a citizen, in US Constitutional law) than a human citizen is disturbing in the context of cyberspace. Corporations can legally exist beyond the human lifetime and in that sense, has more rights than a living, breathing human being.

Since the Cold War era, most of the research and money into developing Artificial Intelligence has been diverted away from 'game theory' to mass marketing strategies. The survivors of the 'dotcom' crash, and venture capital, have invested in the artificial intelligence of analysis of the 'data warehouses' - banks of hard drives, storing data from supermarkets, etc. etc. which do not break any privacy laws, but can track consumer habits and identify your propensities. No personal details are required, if an 'AI' makes enough cross references, and has legal access to enough data warehouses. (Like Sherlock Holmes ... he could deduce, that because the dog did not bark, it must have been the dog's owner who was there on the night).

Apparently data warehouses are the growth industry of IT since the DotCom crash - as well as the Multiplayer online Mega Games (earning more revenue than Hollywood) that seem to be based on War games, and very Feudal concepts of social interaction, to maintain very successful sales figures.





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