

A TASTE OF ART

www.blueknobgallery.com

blueknob hall gallery

Open Thursday to Sunday 10am - 4pm
719 Blue Knob Road, Lillian Rock Ph: 6689 7449
GALLERY • CAFE

Bentley Art Prize

The 33rd Annual Bentley Art Prize will be held on 4th, 5th and 6th August 2017 at Bentley Public Hall.

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- Fostering cultural experiences for community and visitors to the area.

Email: roxygallery@kyogle.nsw.gov.au Web: www.kyogle.nsw.gov.au

Ancestry and stories alive at Blue Knob



Tomoko Nishi by Marie Cameron

'Ancestry' is the artwork created by the members and exhibitors of Blue Knob Hall Gallery and 'Stories Alive – Faces of Blue Knob' is the solo exhibition by Marie Cameron. Marie is a well known local identity and is known for her work as 'A Woman with a Camera'.

The sensitive photographic portraits of the local people who have lived, contributed to or travelled through the Blue Knob Community, brings alive a sense of history to the overall exhibition.

Holding these two exhibitions

concurrently has created a sense of time and place. Marie's photographs as a stand-alone show and the artists' exhibition express the diversity of interpretation that 'Ancestry' has inspired.

It shows us that ancestry is about more than human descent or family lineage, it can also be found in the history or origin of an object and how it comes into being.

The opening night was a huge success with Sue Stock opening the 'Ancestry' exhibition and Marie Cameron delighting everyone with a talk about her work and how these images came into being.

These two exhibitions run until Saturday 27th May.

The Fibre Show – 'Threads' is the next exhibition opening on Friday 2nd June. This is a very popular annual exhibition and gives fibre artists a chance to show the extremely diverse medium in an exhibition devoted to the art and craft of fibre. If you are a fibre artist and interested in exhibiting please call the Gallery 6689-7449 email: bkhgllery@aapt.net.au for more information.

Artists & Friends lunch

The next Artists & Friends lunch will be held on Thursday 25th May at 12.30pm with a set menu, \$20 per person for main and dessert. Bookings are essential, phone 6689-7449 if you would like to come along.



'Weetbix – A perfect new world' by Rebekah Seriah Webster

Blue Knob Cafe

Blue Knob Cafe and Blue Knob Hall Gallery will be open over Mardi Grass weekend, Thursday 4th, 10-4pm, Friday 5th 10-2pm, Saturday 6th 8:30-2pm, and Sunday 7th 10am-4pm. The cafe will be run by volunteers over this weekend as a fundraiser for the Hall, with Paul Scot managing the kitchen.

Our intrepid cafe operators, Bec and Simon can be found volunteering and managing the props-making at the 'Imagitorium', 7 Sibley Street, for the MardiGrass parade.

The art of creating colourful felt



A microscopic view of a wool fibre showing its surface scales

by Suzanne McGauley – Felt Artist

Australian Merino wool is the remarkable result of millions of years of evolution. It is rich in natural properties that inspire some of the world's leading clothing designers. And its unique benefits flow through to the luxuriously soft and stylish clothing crafted from it.

Wool fibres have a unique surface structure of overlapping scales called cuticle cells. The cuticle cells anchor the fibre in the sheep's skin. Wool's surface is very different to typical synthetic fibres, which have a very smooth surface.

Different sheep breeds produce different types of wool that make them suitable for different products.

Merino fibres are extremely fine, enabling them to bend far more than traditional, coarser wool fibres. This makes Merino wool feel soft and luxuriously gentle next to your skin.

Autumn Arts Extravaganza



'Eldorado' by Margaret Berry

by Karen Welsh, President

The gallery committee is both surprised and delighted with year's Autumn Arts event.

Flooded in, flooded out, black-outs and shocking roads didn't daunt our art world, and we are pleased it didn't daunt our visitors and buyers either. Visitor numbers were well up on last year, and our visitor's book attests to interest from many countries including New Zealand, USA, Germany, UK, Zambia, Italy, Russia, Spain, Brazil, Finland and Norway, along with lots of locals from The Channon, Cawongla, Nimbin and surrounds. No 'international incidents' were reported, peace and appreciation abounded.

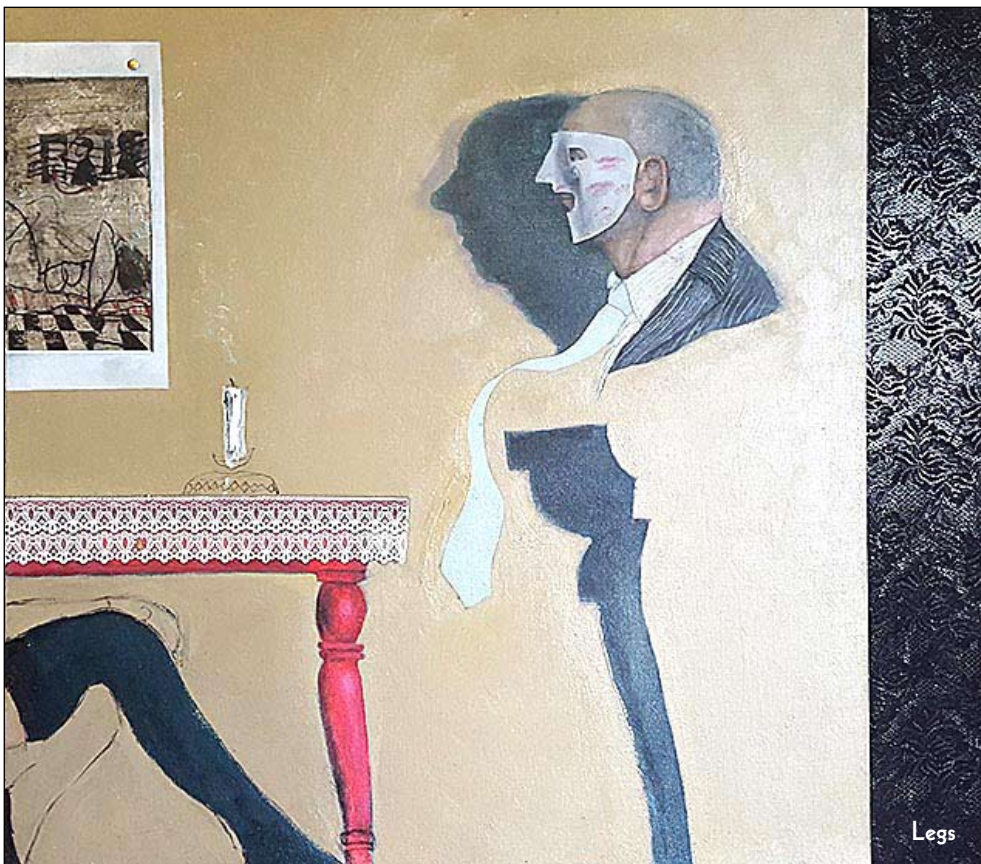
Large works are being shipped off to Germany and Melbourne, with other works finding homes in our capital cities and country towns. Plus, some fine works went up the hill to Tuntable, over the hill to Casino and Kyogle, and along the road to Blue Knob. The Gallery is currently undertaking a major re-hanging, with some wonderful unsold AAE entries being available in our Gallery space. (Please note, we are closing for the MardiGrass weekend.)

Local support of our local artists is a vital component of our community, and along with our team of volunteers that keep the Gallery open year round, the Gallery Committee extends a grateful and appreciative 'thank you' to everyone involved. A fine comment from 'Ellen', an Irish visitor: "Brilliant, such gifted artists – treasure them". I hope all of us continue to do so, and for those that have departed, may we hold them dear to our hearts for a very long time.



'On the bus' by Joan Carlini

'Good Friends' by June King



Legs

PROVOCATIVE

Provocative, skilled and thought provoking, Michael John Taylor's paintings will have you asking many questions of his pictures.

Intricate webs of mystery within each picture exploring themes of spirituality in a materialistic world. 'Now And Then' is a collection of old and new artworks diligently laboured over by Michael in his Railway Sidings Art Studio and Gallery space in Kyogle.

Michael came to Australia from Sunderland, North England after studying at the prestigious Chelsea

School of Art, London for five years culminating in his National Diploma of Drawing and Design award in 1962.

Michael has dedicated his life to his two great loves, painting and teaching, both of which he is highly regarded for. He taught Art at Lismore Secondary School for ten years until 1974, and in Technical Colleges and the Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education, along with conducting numerous art workshops throughout the Northern Rivers Region.

The Roxy Gallery is honoured to have his work on exhibit in 'Then And Now' until 3rd June.

Michael is considered one of our region's leading contemporary artists whose works take the viewer on a mysterious journey into dreams and desires, of poetry and passion, while painting an investigation into human emotions, Michael is the master.

With every image he captures and explores universal emotions of love and longing and that anticipation of things to come.

Serpentine submerged

Hopes of South Lismore's Serpentine Gallery reopening after the recent flood are no longer realistic, according to president Guy Ingram.

Mr Ingram expressed heartfelt thanks for all the help and support received from the community cleaning up after the flood, then helping to remove and store everything from the gallery to allow the plasterer to repair the walls, and for the donations received to replace some of the equipment lost in the flood.

"Bravo Lismore and friends! Your hearts are truly beautiful," he said.

However, the gallery has received a lease termination notice. The management

committee say they have no intention to close, despite this setback, and welcome any suggestions or offers from members and friends of the gallery regarding temporary (pop-up) or more permanent premises that might suit the gallery.

Members of the Serpentine management committee have tasked themselves to pursuing relocation possibilities, following the news of eviction, which came in the middle of a committee meeting. Anyone who can offer assistance finding a new suitable location is urged to contact the gallery.

Please email: gallery@serpentinearts.org if you are able to assist finding a new home.

Try your hand at art therapy

by Derek Tys

Art in and of itself is viewed as something beautiful to be admired; something that 'other people make'. When the word 'art' is paired with 'therapy' – as in 'art therapy' – the first response from people is, "I can't do art... that's something other people make." I wonder what is happening here?

Many people believe that they are not artistic, and certainly not creative. Is it shyness? Is it because we don't want to stand out from the crowd; a fear of being the 'tall poppy'? Some can be so quick to be critical, to judge and dismiss when it comes to the expressive arts.

Let me reassure you all that 'art therapy' is not about making a fancy piece of art: a product to put on show. It is about having a conversation with ourselves and our inner world, using creativity.

Art therapy is about



sessions provide an opportunity to go deeper in exploring issues.

If you would like support, understanding, and seek greater meaning in life, consider an art therapy session with Derek. As an introductory special, individual sessions are offered at \$60/hour until the end of June.

Coming Up

A group session 'Art Therapy as Inner Work' is to be held over five Saturdays, starting 20th May, 9-11.30am.

For information, enquires and bookings visit: www.derektys.com or phone 0429-191-656.

Derek has a Bachelor of Social Work, Advanced Diploma in Transpersonal Art Therapy, and Diploma in Transpersonal Counselling. He offers opportunities to engage in group and individual sessions at the Inner Sanctvm, 68 Magellan Street, Lismore.

giving voice to those parts of ourselves that we rarely let out. Through art therapy there will likely be an expression of both the 'problem at hand' and the 'solution', and thus a healing through the insight.

Art therapy can be facilitated with individuals and groups. Being in a group provides an opportunity to walk with and support others, grow closer, and to form friendships. Individual

Food matters

In South American mythology, the avocado is a potent aphrodisiac. Its Nahuatl name is "ahuacatl" meaning testicle.

During the avocado harvest, virgin daughters were forbidden to venture outside as it was believed the fruit inflamed the lust of the farmers who picked it.

Another tale concerns a farmer, his wife and a sly and wicked creature called a Tapu. After deceiving her husband and running off with the avocados and the Tapu to far off lands, they were eventually tracked down by the vengeful husband.

He continues to chase them through the night sky, for he became Orion, his wife the Pleiades and the sly wicked Tapu the Hyades.

All the ingredients for



this month's recipe are available from the Nimbin Organic Food Co-op, and fit snugly in our marvellous hessian bag, as used and recommended by Duvvy!

Avocado Choc Mousse
2 medium avocados, 1/2 cup maple syrup, 1/2 cup raw

cocoa pdr, 1 tblsp coconut oil, 1 tsp vanilla extract, pinch sea salt, fresh or frozen berries and shredded coconut for garnish.

Scoop out avocado into food processor, add the rest of ingredients and blend until smooth. Garnish with berries and shredded coconut. Until next month, eat well.

Flavour of the Month

The Saba nut *Pachira glaba*

by Thom Culpeper

"Vegetables for you, fruit trees for your kids, nuts for your grandkids."

So the old chestnut (no-pun) suggests, and it may be so, but from amid the less common fields of paleo-botany, some new light is being thrown on alternative crops that could be answers to the needs and realities of a warming Earth.

The Saba Nut, *Pachira glaba* and its close relative *P. aquatica*, are variously known as Malabar chestnut, Guiana, Provision Tree, Pumpo, Monguba, Mormorana (in Brazil), French Peanut and also more recently, the 'Money Tree', a Taiwanese stem-plaited, indoor potting.

Feng shui has much to say about this 'relational' plant. A wellbeing addendum.

The *Pachira* are related to the Australian Boab, *Andansonia greggii*, the swollen base of the trunk being an indicator of this sub-family Bambacoideae of the family Malvaceae. They are natives of Central and South America, *P. glaba* being an indigenous plant of Brazil, the Amazon basin with forms being found as far north as Mexico.

This plant can grow to 30metres, and has a green bark that is noticeably swollen at the base. The leaf is palmate/compound/evergreen on long stems 25-30cm in length, consisting of five to nine leaflets. The night-fragrant flowers are light yellow-green, the petals arching backwards to expose about 10 white paired stamen, forming 10 bunches fused around the pestil. The flowers are viable for only a day, falling in early morning. They are one of the plants that are Chiropterophilic, that is, they are pollinated by bats.

The fruit (pericarp) is the size and shape of a lemon with 4-5 openings that longitudinally split to expose some 15 or so coated seeds with a tin brown, mottled/veined/striped, paper-like coating in beds of kapok, separated by thin brown membranes.

Growing and yielding is better on upland sites, than, as is often seen, in waterside plantings. It is widely tolerant in its water requirements.

On ripening in the Northern Rivers (February), the fruit turns brown and the seeds shed. Harvesting immediately is imperative, as they are foraged soon after emission. They also germinate incredibly quickly if they are wet soon after fall.



It is a vigorous, deep tap-rooted plant with the added factor of having photosynthesising green, emerged secondary roots.

Most of the plant is edible, the leaves and young shoots can be stir-fried. The raw seed tastes like peanut, but cooking in oil produces a fine example of the Castania (chestnut) consistency and flavour. There is some edict about removing the seed embryo if eaten raw.

Saba seed contains 30% moisture and 56-60% oil, in a seed that is 90% kernel. The extracted oil/fat is white, edible with a perfumed odour redolent of mild liquorice with a melting point of 31°C.

This plant is, according to FAO Rome, an important future plant to alleviate malnutrition in the third world. In the first world, it could be a serious contender to the Macadamia Nut as a food and oil source.

Flowering in three years and economic production in four to five and being self husking, this plant is worthwhile considering as a low-energy-input, economic food stock. Wildlife, fish, birds and mammals all feed on the flowers, seeds and seedlings.

Closer work on selection or hybridising may lead to larger yields. Genetics may now lead a way forward with this rather beautiful under-utilised plant.

The NGT has 50 advanced seedlings, gratis, to distribute on a fair basis to readers who are interested in this lovely! Very advanced trees are becoming ready for distribution. To order, email: thewholeearthveg@gardener.com

Ethnobotany... YES!

Djanbung Gardens Open Day

The annual Permaculture Open Day at Djanbung Gardens will be held on Saturday 13th May, 10am-4pm.

Entry is by donation: \$5 or gold coin concession, Kids free.

With a theme of 'Beyond Sustainability - building resilience in a changing world', the day will include inspiring and informative workshops on diverse topics.

Participants can learn about using bamboo tools, building soil with compost and worms, growing food year-round, Permaculture gardens in schools, and beneficial fungi for healthy plants.

There will also be garden tours, information displays, plants, books and products for sale. Abundance Café



will be serving local coffee, refreshments and delicious lunches throughout the day.

In the evening, a special fundraising dinner will be held at 6.30pm featuring local food by permaculture chef Melian Fertl, plus entertainment and speakers. Bookings essential.

Permaculture Australia's AGM will be held on Sunday 14th May, with a visioning workshop and inaugural election of the Permaculture Australia Representative Council. Members need to register.

For more info and bookings visit: www.permaculture.com.au

The heart of fibre



Tell me a Story - Season II

by Marie Cameron

The April season of *Tell me a Story* touched the heart of many a Blue Knob story lover.

The floods swept away the first week: Gail M. Clarke will feature in the coming months. Daniel Soler, Vince Stead, Marion von Korff and Peter B filled the story-court and the audience loved it!

Simon from the Blue Knob Café added that extra touch with his personal coffee delivery service.

A special thank you is extended to Mistress of Ceremony, Gail Wallace. Thank you for creating such an elegant story-telling ambience.

Fibre Festival

The Blue Knob Fibre Festival will be held Saturday 3rd June, 9am - 1pm. Fibre stalls are available for weavers, designers and ideas. Mark this event into your June calendar. The Moore workshop space will host three speakers commencing at 9.30am.

Dressmaker Jennifer McLennan, renowned for her Miss Mildred label, loves classic design. Each garment captivates the feminine and each has a distinct personality. Her garments are widely recognised; be it a formal event or a hill-dwellers market, every woman loves to wear a Miss

Mildred. (www.missmildred.com.au)

Lae Oldmeadow. The hands of this gentle man are forever creating. Any piece of fibre from Australia's natural plant life can excite his imagination. Using a sewing machine and earth fibres this visual artist has developed a unique style.

With multiple exhibitions to his credit. Laes' work is collected around Australia and the world. (www.laeoldmeadow.com)



Lae Oldmeadow

This year, Hellena Post will be the festival's guest of honour. (www.hellenapost.com) Hellena is a fibre artist who had to temporarily relocate to Brisbane to care for her son. While there, she has opened the 'Spunout Post Studio'.

Hellena plans to return to her Blue Knob stomping grounds to interview her friend, Lae Oldmeadow.

Eric Smith is a renowned embroidery artist. Be it a regional show or a fibre exhibition, Eric's work

always attracts attention. His interest in classic stitch, fabric and patterns has been his forte.

For this festival he is bringing out his collection of ancient sewing machines. With names like Mr. Jones and Lucille Two, these machines will tell the secrets of their most engaging histories. (<https://open.abc.net.au>)

Granny Breathweaver and her baskets will inhabit the fibre stage. This popular fibre artist is set to teach how to replace plastic bags with usable fibre bags.

For more information, see our Facebook page: *Blue Knob Farmers Market Fibre Festival*.



Granny Breathweaver

Blue Knob Market is held every Saturday, 8.30am - midday at 719 Blue Knob Road, Blue Knob. Download the app: mrktapp.com.au to find us. For more information, phone Marie Cameron on 0448-685-925.

Kinesiology for stress issues



Kinesiology is a powerful healing discipline that combines ancient eastern energetic healing with western modalities. Although many have heard of kinesiology most are unfamiliar with what it involves.

A fundamental premise of kinesiology is that the body has innate healing abilities and is at all times doing it's best to care for itself – but sometimes it needs to be helped into a better position to achieve this care.

When this healing energy flow is interrupted – as the result of injury, emotional trauma, nutritional or other unresolved stress – the whole body is affected.

The main tool used in kinesiology is muscle bio-feedback which allows subconscious stressors within the body to be observable.

Kinesiology is inherently a client-based therapy, as it is totally reliant on identification of stress issues via bio-feedback from the client to direct the therapy.

The nature of the factor creating this stressor is then identified by further muscle monitoring and finally the actual therapy to be applied. The client totally



directs the therapy by the feedback they provide.

When a kinesiologist begins a session with a client they have the information the client has provided regarding their presenting issue, but they do not know the causal factors underlying this issue.

The clients muscle bio-feedback can quite quickly identify the type of stress involved and the therapeutic techniques required to effectively address the stressor. Thus each session is unique to the individual being balanced.

Kinesiology brings a person closer to achieving any goal of their choice — in sport, relationships, learning or coping with life generally.

Kinesiology may involve dealing with one or more stress factors such as identifying a nutritional lack or excess; clearing a negative emotional component; relieving pain; stimulating the integration

of muscle groups, or improving mental and physical coordination.

My passion is seeing people step forward in life. Being a kinesiology practitioner has provided a wonderful environment to observe and experience the unraveling of the convolutions of life.

I am currently completing the final stages of my diploma. I am looking for clients for case studies involving muscle issues and a person with learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

This is a great opportunity for someone who has not had a chance to try kinesiology. These case history sessions would be offered at a discount.

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Healing the effects of life-changing moments

by Robin Stein
Intuitive healer homeopath

We were all affected by the recent flooding, even if we were not personally affected.

Homeopathic Medicine works gently and successfully in any crisis or disaster. Create your own homeopathic kit to treat the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual effects of disaster so that next time, you can be ready to treat any problem.

Emotional shock

Emotional shock is the body's response to extreme fear, stress, pain or helplessness. The two remedies to deal with emotional shock are **Aconitum** and **Opium**. **Aconite** is used for agitation, restlessness, fearfulness, anxiety and a state of terror where the person is convinced they will die. And for the chest pains from an impending heart attack. **Opium** is useful when the person has a glazed look in their eyes and looks shell-shocked, responding poorly to what is happening around them. Give remedies as often as every 15 seconds, then slowly extend the time between doses if the person is improving. If there is no improvement after 3 doses, stop because it is the 'incorrect' remedy.

Hysteria and panic

These are the next most common reactions to emotional trauma following



shock. People may scream, sob convulsively, hyperventilate or clutch at others for help. The two remedies to help are **Aconitum** and **Ignatia**. As mentioned, those needing **Aconite** will be restless and agitated, fearing they are about to die. They may have palpitations or be hyperventilating, which produces pins and needles throughout the body. **Ignatia** is used for rapidly changing moods, sobbing, hyperventilation, twitching, jerking and cramps. They reject comfort and reassurance and their face may be sweating. Dosing is the same as above.

Injuries, wounds and hazardous effects

Allium Cepa is given when eyes and nose are streaming from an irritant. The discharge burns the nose but not the eyes. A good remedy to counter the effects of tear gas, along with **Euphrasia**. **Arnica** is given for damage to soft

tissues like bruising to skin and muscles to reduce bleeding and swelling, promote healing, and reduce the risk of infection. The first remedy given for broken bones with bleeding and swelling into the tissues.

Bryonia is given for fractures, like of ribs when the pain is worse from the slightest movement or breathing and is better for being supported. After bleeding has slowed, **Sympytmum** is given for all fractures and breaks. **Calendula** is used for superficial wounds, grazes and lacerated skin. Cleanse wound then mix the remedy with water and put on the dressing. Keep moist to speed healing and stop infection.

Cantharis is the key remedy for second and third degree burns where there is extreme pain and blistering. **Urtica** is used for first degree burns, **Phosphorus** is used for electrical burns and **Causticum** for chemical and deep burns. **China**

relieves the exhaustion and debility that follows loss of body fluids such as blood, sweat and diarrhoea.

Carbo Veg treats many near death states of faintness, collapse, gasping for air, heart failure, blue or mottled skin, needing to be fanned, chilliness.

Gun Powder was used by soldiers and the London police force to fight infection in cuts and wounds and to prevent an abscess from forming.

Hypericum for injuries to nerves and nerve rich areas such as fingers, toes or spine. And grazes from rusty wire and farm equipment to prevent tetanus.

Ledum is used for mottled puncture wounds, and sprained and twisted joints.

Natrum Sulph for concussion, spinal and head injuries that involve brain damage or bleeding into the brain, along with **Arnica 10m**.

Staphysagria is useful for cuts and incisions with clean edges to promote healing and reduce infection. It also helps the person to process emotions following violation and rape.

Symphytum for all breaks after bleeding has subsided. And for all wounds to the eye-ball.

X-Ray minimises genetic damage following exposure to radiation. I have all the above remedies for those who'd like to make a kit.

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Weeding after the floods

Weed Words

by Triny Roe

Nothing like a good flood to flush out the creeks! Recent record rainfall during March in the Northern Rivers created new landscapes and transformed riparian zones along many of the local creeks.

The raging flood waters, higher than many had seen before, ripped out bridges, tore chunks off creek banks, carved new paths and removed huge swathes of weeds and other vegetation.

Unfortunately much of this plant material will be deposited further down stream, creating new infestations wherever they lodge. Look out for bana grass, madeira vine, coral tree, ornamental taro, to name just a few, finding new homes on the creek and river banks.

Inspect flood debris and remove clumps of weeds before they strike roots into the new ground. Pile under black plastic to rot down. This may take a while.

Where old weeds were washed away, expect them to quickly regrow unless the site is remediated and carefully managed. Now, while the river and creek banks are relatively clear, is a good time for regeneration activities. Plant mat rushes and sedges by the water's edge as well as bottlebrushes – *Callistomen spp*, scrub cherry – *Syzygium australe*, weeping lilli-pilly, *Waterhousea floribunda*, and river she-oak – *Casuarina cunninghamii*.

Weed and other seeds will also have been distributed to new locations via the floodwaters in the creeks and rivers as well as moving overland in heavy downpours. The intensity of the rainfall exceeds the infiltration rate of the soil, if not already waterlogged. When the soil is completely saturated the excess water flows along above the ground. If there is a hill or a slope behind you, expect new



Creek bank scoured by floodwater

seed to be carried in.

Another impact of the big wet was a number of small and large landslips which occurred on steep hillsides in Nimbin and surrounding valleys. Roads and driveways were blocked, some still. Now there are big patches of bare soil awaiting remediation. Solutions will depend on land use requirements and particular circumstances. Ideally, steep slopes should be planted with fast-growing, deep rooted trees such as hoop pine and *Eucalyptus spp*.

Weeds will quickly take advantage of the exposed soil. Look out for groundsel, *Baccharis halimifolia*, which is staging a comeback in the Nimbin valley. Just one neglected paddock will provide seed to dozens, if not more, of other nearby and distant paddocks. Easy to spot now that it is flowering with masses of fluffy white blossoms, this hardy woody shrub is classified noxious. This means "the plant must be fully and continuously suppressed and destroyed". Landholders have a responsibility to eradicate this plant

from their property and prevent it from spreading to their neighbours.

Groundsel will entrench in dense stands if left to flower. About half its seeds fall around the parent plant. It will also spread readily further afield. The downy seeds can float on the breeze for many kilometres. Often popping up on old cattle pastures, abandoned banana farms and disturbed ground such as around earthworks and landslips, groundsel is best handled while it is still small and manageable. Seedlings are easily hand pulled when soil is moist. Ensure all roots are removed.

Autumn is a great time for gardening. The weather is not too hot so it's pleasant to be working outdoors. Season tasks include treating the bindi-eyes, *Soliva sessilis*. Now is the time to pour boiling water on the bindis, well before they develop the sharp prickly seeds which cause huge problems in Summer. Bindi-eyes grow well in compacted soil so aerate the lawn, fertilise with iron sulphate and set the mower blades a bit higher to encourage a healthy sward.

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Weeds are not costs to agriculture

by Geoff Dawe

The insistence on seeing some plants as "weeds" without examination of native fauna, including insects using them, is pretence that flora is more important than fauna. One could see this flora-specific view originating in the short-termism of civilised humans easily recognising flora, which is more often in one's face, than fauna that is often illusive.

Short-termism can be seen as a habit based in survival of the individual, rather than an attempt to take on the human potential for holism. Short-termism can be seen as the primary reason why there is not the understanding that all "weeds" are beneficials.

Short-termism for example, sees weeds as being "costly to agriculture". They are not seen as costly to agriculture when more of the whole is taken into consideration. Organic agriculture is already there whenever it uses weeds as compost, liquid manures or mulch.

The industrialisation process itself creates weeds. Economically viable, industrially, organic agriculture is not immune to this. Ploughing or spraying the ground makes a weed seedbed. Both processes deteriorate soil and weeds can be seen as an emergency response to prevent continual degradation. Moreover, industrial agriculture's dependence on monoculture works against the

introduction of diversity, so almost anything other than the preferred crop, or that is not directly feeding domestic animals, immediately becomes a weed.

Industrialised agriculture has many problems. They include soil erosion, deterioration in soil structure and loss of soil organic matter, increasing soil acidification, and dry land salination, tree loss, pollution of watercourses and people, loss of diversity of food crops, loss of jobs and deterioration of the social fabric in rural areas and exacerbation of urban crowding. The costs of an industrial agriculture are related to its structural unsoundness.

Weeds are currently blamed as a cause of that unsoundness. In actuality, weeds serve as indicators to a direction of sustainability. Once they are accepted as being part of the life process and are used rather than eradicated, humans will notice their agriculture has moved toward sustainability. Weeds are not a cost to agriculture. Industrialised agriculture is the cost.

The costs of agriculture are not divorced from the way a society wholly uses land. When agriculture loses contact with wild flora and fauna for example, it obsessively uses land that in terms of combined environmental, social and economic cost would be best given solely to wild use.

An example of inefficient land-use causing perception of wild species being incorrectly placed can be seen of possums in New Zealand.

Humans did not arrive in New Zealand till approximately 1200 years ago so NZ evolved, in place of mammals, 35 flightless bird species that had no fear of humans. 31 species are extinct and the remainder are threatened by human activities.

When possums, deer and goats arrived, apparently to fulfil an ecological, mammalian quota because humans were obviously unimpressed by flightless birds, humans were largely offended at the mammalian arrival. Humans insist NZ is a mammalian-free ecology. Clearly, that ecology has largely passed.

To add fuel to the human venom, the possums were involved in reducing the bird population.

However, if one drives around the south island of NZ, one can see a lot of very steep slopes that are devoid of native trees, have very little economic potential for sheep grazing, yet have a few scattered sheep on them.

Bird populations will largely correspond to the amount of native trees occupying an area. The mammalian introduction, to reverse the possibility of ecological collapse, could proceed relatively smoothly if slopes were native tree covered, to increase bird populations, to balance those lost to possums.

There may not be a possum problem in NZ at all. As usual, there is a problem in the means by which industrialised humans get their food.

The perverse inversion of class and culture

Bob Brown once said, "The problem is that the stupid are full of arrogance, and the intelligent are full of doubt." In what is now being dubbed the post-truth era, or the age of the anti-expert, his words encapsulate both the swagger of our entitled, self-appointed leaders, as well as the crisis of the once-ruling Intelligentsia.

What a perverse inversion of class and culture: the intelligent have been overthrown, the distracting shout of "Look! Free iPhones!" still ringing in the air, and the dumb are now their leaders, in the same vein of someone who once took a selfie utterly convinced they are deserving of the Palme d'Or. (And since yes-men who affirm this notion surround them, no alternative case can be prosecuted).

It is the theme of our age. Read a couple of websites,

and you're suddenly an expert on any given subject, dispensing advice to the confused or flatulent. Scientific evidence is just an inconvenience, easily deleted by gutting or shutting down every scientific institution involved in the task of independent fact-finding.

Forty years of research into global warming is irrelevant to the new truth-makers. This is the age when the truth is whatever the latest Facebook meme says it is. The truth is something we make up ourselves, not something the planet dictates to us, with its seasons and species and starlight.

And what's more, real knowledge – for example, ecological knowledge – is not required to ensure that we are fed, dry, warm or comfortable. Any working class hero can buy a boat, or a jet ski, and every beach,

estuary and bay is his oyster. He learned no navigation; he earned no right to those fish and those waterways, and he does nothing to protect or maintain them.

The crux of it is this: we have given our leaders power without wisdom, and our ruling classes are filled with people with uncurtailed agency but no ethics.

How did we get here? How did these guys sift themselves out onto the top? The best of our democratic leaders were once people with genuine knowledge. We may well have forgotten it, but the act of holding public office was once viewed as an honour, a role that came with great responsibility to country and people (or to tribe and territory).

Now, the only expertise held by our politicians is in politics, the art of bluff, bluster, bribery and brown-nosing. Our political leaders



by Anastasia Guise

are most distinguished by miraculously maintaining upright positions in tailored suits despite their complete lack of vertebrae.

We can no longer tolerate a social system that grants structural advantages to the unethical and amoral among us. No longer can we favour those who, like our morally bankrupt leaders, stand for nothing, and grant them

the greatest share of socio-political power and material wealth.

At the same time, those of us thrown into doubt in light of what we know must remember that the planet doesn't lie. Ecological truth is ultimately egalitarian, in that no-one can get off (although Mars may well be an option quite soon). The fact that some people (or species) disproportionately bear the brunt of disrupted biological systems while others delay or deny discomfort is a seemingly-intolerable injustice.

Yet without righteousness, we must choose to be on the right side of history. Despite the extreme political bias which delegitimises ecological values and fails to prioritise ethical work over meaningless transaction, we must be creative and determined in carrying on a social and environmental

ethic regardless, and we must fight to have these values placed back where they belong – at the centre of all decision-making.

Perhaps the greatest failure of the intellectual Left is that we have believed what we have been told: that we will never lead; that we are unable to. Instead, we are endlessly relegated to the realm of extremism and fringe politics. It's time to call out our current leadership as the true extremists they are: hell-bent on ecocide, and unfit to lead.

The world needs green leaders and we need them now: those doubtful, curious, empathetic and humble intellects. But there's no time left to let doubt hold us back.

Anastasia is an author and environmentalist, writing on ecology, science and humanity. Facebook: [anastasiaguiseauthor](#)

Koala Kolumn

by Lorraine Vass

Koala good news stories are few and far between so the quiet (almost deafeningly quiet) announcement a couple of months ago by the Office of Environment and Heritage that the Southern Highlands is home to over 3,000 koalas, came as a fantastic surprise.

Of course the figure is an estimation but over the past 18 months a multi-disciplinary team involving scientists and community has been beavering away under the banner of the Southern Highlands Koala Conservation Project.

Funded by the NSW Government's *Saving Our Species* program and Wingecarribee Shire Council's Environment Levy, the work included 450 spotlight surveys and satellite tracking of 20 collared koalas as well as vegetation surveys and mapping of koala habitat and preferred tree use in order to identify essential koala corridors across the Shire. As a result six new tree species will be added to the expanded list of primary koala habitat trees proposed in the review of SEPP 44.

Over 150 koala sightings from the community have been reported through the Council's Koala Hotline and the Southern Highlands Koala Conservation Project Facebook page so that the well-established koala populations known in the Nattai and Yerrinbool areas are now augmented by populations in East Mittagong, Canyonleigh, Belanglo, East Kangaloon and Wingello.

From an historical perspective the story of the Southern Highlands koalas is one of hope, resilience and population recovery. The first koala ever spotted by a European was in the Southern Highlands. The first specimen sent away to a European museum was also collected there

– a couple of paws traded from some local Aboriginals and stored in a bottle of rum. Even the word 'koala' from Colo or Cola, is said to have originated in the Highlands.

Amazingly koalas had been largely overlooked since the 1930s when drought, fire and the fur trade decimated the population. Ever since, unbeknown to most residents, the koalas have been quietly rebuilding their number so that now they comprise the largest population in southern NSW and one of the most significant koala populations in the State.

Indeed, using the mean State estimate of 36,350 cited in the *Report of the Independent Review into the Decline of Koala Populations in Key Areas of NSW*, the Highlands' koalas represent just short of 10 per cent of the total number of NSW's remaining wild koalas.

The Project is set to expand over the next year, with the *Saving Our Species* program announcing a further \$95,000 to fund an additional 100 koala spotlight surveys in neighbouring Wollondilly Shire. Who knows what that may unearth?

Meanwhile, the Northern Rivers is still acknowledged as a stronghold for the species, containing significant areas of relatively intact habitat and supporting some populations of relatively high density. Koalas are caught up in the consequences of land-clearing for urban, infrastructure and agricultural expansion, not to mention practices such as windbreak and paddock tree removal, intensified logging and events such as bushfires and extreme weather, plus a whole lot more. Sadly, we know too well what they are – expedited mortality levels due to disease, inbreeding depression, starvation, roadkill, predation and so on.

Quite frankly, maintaining

optimism for our koalas' future (and why else would we do what we do) can be difficult.

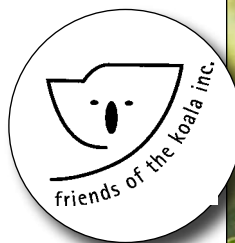
It's not that we don't have little wins from time to time. For example, Lismore City Council's decision to "start again" on the re-zoning proposal at Monaltrie, south of Lismore, which I wrote about last month, has been a welcome reprieve. We have no doubt that the proponents will be back and that the process will be protracted but perhaps not quite as protracted as other campaigns in which Friends of the Koala has been involved.

We question why the Monaltrie land was included as 'potential rural residential land' in the Lismore Growth Management Strategy in the first place. We find it hard to believe that its significance for the koala population was "overlooked", or worse simply unknown although it had been identified as long ago as 1995. We have to believe because several Councillors to whom we spoke volunteered the information, that robust lobbying for inclusion by the landowners played a part.

From the *North Coast Regional Plan 2036* released in March we know that urbanisation pressures on our koalas and biodiversity generally will increase, and that our community of koala and environmental protectors will have our work cut out for us.

This quote from Australian author and founding Governor, past Chair and a current Patron of the Taronga Foundation, Bradley Trevor Greive, in his 2002 book, *Priceless: the vanishing beauty of a fragile planet*, says it all really:

"If we just lie back and do nothing, then countless lives will be lost. Forever. For endangered species we are both



Juveniles Lolly (front) and Annie (back) were released on Anzac Day. We wish them well.

their greatest enemy and their only hope.

These wonderful creatures will not argue their case.

They will not put up a fight.

They will not beg for reprieve.

They will not say goodbye.

They will not cry out.

They will just vanish.

And after they are gone, there will be silence.

And there will be stillness.

And there will be empty places.

And nothing you can say will change this.

Nothing you can do will bring them back.

Their future is entirely in our hands."

To report a koala in trouble, or a sighting
(02) 6622-1233

For information about koalas and conservation, or to book a tour, please visit

www.friendsofthekoala.org
or email: info@friendsofthekoala.org

Follow us on Facebook.

To report environmental incidents, including removal of koala habitat, ring the 24/7 Office of Environment & Heritage
Enviro Line: 131-555.

Ayurveda – sister science of Yoga

by Cameron Storey

When I was in my second year of yoga training, my teacher Shandor Remete considered ayurveda an essential study for all yoga students and brought an ayurvedic doctor from India who proceeded to educate the entire Hatha Yoga Shala in the science of ayurveda: samkhya philosophy and the twenty-four principles of creation, prakruti, three doshas and their sub-types, three gunas and their actions, five elements and their subtle elements, agni, the nadis, the seven dhatus, ojas, tejas, prana and its sub-types, the six tastes and how to balance the twenty attributes of the doshas to maintain physical, emotional and mental balance. I have used ayurvedic principles ever since to bring better balance to my vata-pitta constitution.

Ayurveda is the sister science of yoga and one of immense value in attaining optimal physical and mental health which is tailored to the constitution (dosha) of each individual person. "Ayuh" means life and "veda" means knowledge so ayurveda is the Knowledge of Life – the nature, scope

and purpose of life, including all its physical and meta-physical aspects of health and disease, pleasure and pain, happiness and suffering.

Ayurveda defines life as the conjunction of the body, mind and spirit and states that the purpose of life is to realize its divine nature and express that nature in daily living.

As a medical science ayurveda, like yoga, is involved with the quality of life, healing of disease and longevity on each individual. Ayurveda makes use of herbal medicine as did western medicine before being hijacked by big pharma (patented drugs generate substantially larger profits than herbs).

Ayurvedic treatments are multifaceted (herbs, massage, meditation, surgery, retreats, yoga, lifestyle changes) and each practitioner looks at the holistic picture of a patient's life in order to bring about balance. This is an entirely different approach from the Western medicine reductionist/specialist approach which often fails to elicit lasting healthy outcomes in patients even by their own statistics.

The original knowledge of ayurveda was obtained by enlightened rishis (sages) from meditative revelations

and passed on orally and eventually written into Sanskrit sutras a few thousands years ago. All the six main systems of Indian philosophy, including Samkhya/sankhya, philosophy, are included within ayurveda.

Samkhya philosophy identifies the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. The five elements manifest/birth in the world evolutionarily starting with ether, then air, then fire, then water, then earth. The death process is just the reverse of this order. The entire universe is an interaction of the energies of the five elements.

These five elements manifest into three main functional principles or doshas: Vata, Pitta and Kapha which are present in everybody and everything. When the three doshas are in an appropriately balanced state there is harmonious psychophysiology. Vata is predominately air and ether, pitta is predominately fire and water and kapha is predominately water and earth. Each person's proportion of vata, pitta and kapha is dependant upon diet, lifestyle, genetics, time of conception and this is called prakruti.

While consulting an ayurvedic practitioner is ideal to determine your

| No. | | Vata | Pitta | Kapha |
|-----|------------------|---|--|---|
| 1 | Frame | I am thin, lanky, and slender with prominent joints and thin muscles. | I have a medium, symmetrical build with good muscle development. | I have a large, round or stocky build. My frame is broad, stout or thick. |
| 2 | Weight | Low; I may forget to eat or have a tendency to lose weight. | Moderate; it is easy for me to gain or lose weight if I put my mind to it. | Heavy; I gain weight easily and have difficulty losing it. |
| 3 | Eyes | My eyes are small and active. | I have a penetrating gaze. | I have large pleasant eyes. |
| 4 | Complexion | My skin is dry, rough or thin. | My skin is warm, reddish in color and prone to irritation. | My skin is, thick, moist and smooth. |
| 5 | Hair | My hair is dry, brittle or frizzy. | My hair is fine with a tendency towards early thinning or graying. | I have abundant, thick and oily hair. |
| 6 | Joints | My joints are thin and prominent and have a tendency to crack. | My joints are loose and flexible. | My joints are large, well knit and padded. |
| 7 | Sleep Pattern | I am a light sleeper with a tendency to awaken early. | I am a moderately sound sleeper, usually needing less than eight hours to feel rested. | My sleep is deep and long. I tend to awaken slowly in the morning. |
| 8 | Body Temperature | My hands and feet are usually cold and I prefer warm environments. | I am usually warm, regardless of the season, and prefer cooler environments. | I am adaptable to most temperatures but do not like cold, wet days. |
| 9 | Temperament | I am lively and enthusiastic by nature. I like to change. | I am purposeful and intense. I like to convince. | I am easy going and accepting. I like to support. |
| 10 | Under Stress | I become anxious and/or worried. | I become irritable and / or aggressive. | I become withdrawn and/or reclusive. |

prakruti a starting point can be total each score of the Vata/Pitta/Kapha chart and this will reveal your basic constitution.

The ancient scholar Charaka believed that all organic and non-organic substances had attributes which related to their actions. These attributes he placed in ten corresponding pairs. The twenty attributes may be attributed to the three doshas thus: Vata is dry, light, cold, rough, subtle, mobile and clear. Pitta is hot, sharp, light, liquid, mobile

and oily, and kapha is heavy, slow, cold, oily, liquid, smooth, dense, soft, static, cloudy, hard and gross. By increasing or decreasing attributes within ayurvedic pharmacology, therapeutics or food preparation, via a thorough understanding of the actions of said attributes, a tridoshic balance can be maintained.

The Dharma Centre on Lillifield Community has four yoga classes a week. Phone (02) 6689-7120 or check our Facebook page: Dharma Centre – Lillifield for more details and directions.

An alternative reality

The more I read about addiction, the science behind it, the various hypotheses about why we may have become addicted, the more I reflect on just how simple the process was that actually released me from dependence.

As fascinating as the whole story might be, all this speculation on the reasons why, played no real part in the granting of my freedom. After the fact, it has become a favourite topic of exploration. I love the sense when things fall into place, when a plausible explanation is presented as to why I may have been predisposed to addiction.

While delving into the science, learning about the various facets of our brains that play a role in the process, how drugs manipulate and stimulate dopamine, serotonin, adrenalin, endorphins and many other components, I had a profound realisation about the nature of my healing or transition.

The process that took place some 10 years ago through my chance encounter with Yoga, I could now see in a new light, with a deeper understanding and appreciation. Up until then I had been using my array of substances, my self-prescribed remedies, to correct various imbalances and deficits that the circumstances of my life had brought about.

Yoga, although highly addictive itself, was designed so perfectly that within a matter of a few weeks it was able to take over the job that five or more addictive elements had been doing over a period of approximately 40 years.

It was also able to do it in harmony with my body, far from damaging and depleting me it was rapidly



by David Ward, Vital Choices

rebuilding and rejuvenating me, obviously accelerating the cell replacement process in all the required areas, brain, lungs, heart, stomach, liver, the whole body.

Over the years as I sought out my various assigned substances one by one, sugar, nicotine, caffeine, cannabis and finally alcohol there was a growing comfort and a fulfilment of desires, a general relief. Alongside this there was also a lurking concern and discomfort about the unknown, an occasional urgency about not dwelling in this place for too long.

A recurring issue was the not knowing how to reverse the process, it had been comparatively easy to find my way in but finding the route out of this dependence was a mystery, and as far as I could see, it may well have been impossible. I also knew my lungs and various other organs were beginning to tire.

All this talk of cancer and cardio-vascular disease left me wondering how I would know when to be concerned. Would it happen suddenly, would there be fair warning, or was it a matter of luck? I felt powerless to do anything about this situation so it appeared pointless to be too distracted by it.

After watching *The Truth About Medical Marijuana*

recently, despite having no current need or desire, I was left feeling that maybe it mightn't be such a bad idea to get back on it. I was also left reflecting on my 35 years of regular use and it occurred to me that it had mostly been medicinal really, a kind of psychological adaptogen, allowing me to cope with emotional and physical pain.

There had certainly been a love for the stuff, in some ways there still is. An element of recreation, it also enhanced and facilitated many other things in my life. I used it to create an alternative reality, not quite a parallel universe, but definitely a safer place to be. It was one of the tools provided to me to use on this journey towards enlightenment.

I guess I overindulged a little, that period was like a lifetime in itself, the place where my children came into being. It's another way of interpreting this state we call addiction, just using the available aids to assist us in understanding this world, making the task more manageable at the same time. Some of us get stuck there, for as long as we need to perhaps.

Eventually it seems I achieved a certain state of wellness, suggesting that my medication was no longer required. A new tool had been made available to me in the form of Yoga, one dose in the morning keeps me going all day.

Looking back, the process I went through reminds me of the concept of handing over to a higher power, an alternative method to the 12- step approach.

The Vital Choices Program offers proven strategies to end all addictions. For a return to self-reliance and all that that brings, phone David on 0447-820-510.

Radical awareness

Every profound change requires a solid base – which is awareness.

After last month's topic of radical acceptance it seems inevitable to ponder the crucial skill of awareness. Radical awareness refers to genuine awareness, meaning it is concerned with nothing but truth all the way down to the root level.

Genuine awareness is mere observation of what is happening in the moment – here and now. Firstly, it always involves a direct experience. Secondly, this experience is factual; it is devoid of criticism or emotional reactions. And lastly, the emphasis on the present: We cannot be aware of things in the past and we cannot be aware of things in the future.

Mindfulness and awareness are booming topics these days. What looks like an excellent development on one hand is a prolific source of self-deception on the other. We tend to believe that we are aware. We say "Of course I am aware," or even, "I am aware of my jealousy," in an act of supreme 'self-awareness'.

But wait – are we really having a direct experience of jealousy? Maybe as a burning sensation in our intestines, palpitations or a sudden tension locking our jaw? Are we aware of that sinking feeling that gives us the creeps? Is our 'self-awareness' really rooted in observation of facts? Or are we just quoting a mental concept?

"Once you have had a glimpse of awareness or presence, you know it firsthand. It is no longer just a concept in your mind."

– Eckart Tolle
If you want to know awareness firsthand, here's a revealing little exercise: Set a timer for just one minute and focus on the movement of your natural breath as it comes in and as it goes out. Try not to miss a single inhale or exhale during this minute. Do not count – this is meant to be pure present moment awareness.

The breath is a wonderful object of awareness; it is tangible and definitely real. Even if you only try this once, it will demonstrate how knowing about awareness and having awareness are two very different things. As it takes one minute only this



by Betti Wille

could easily become a daily practice. Once you've mastered the minute, move on to two minutes and see the results for yourself.

Another fact about radical awareness is that it triggers transformation. If we have an unwelcome habit for example that we would like to overcome but so far couldn't find a successful strategy – genuine awareness alone could help.

It's not an easy exercise though: By bringing pure awareness to every moment, every thought or movement involved while indulging in our habit - without a trace of judgement, anger or frustration – we gradually develop an awareness that in itself becomes the cure.

Our awareness is usually fixed on things happening outside of us. We have not learned to be in touch with what is going on inside. No-one is to blame – it's a kind of cultural ignorance, especially within dominant western cultures.

Therefore I feel grateful that I came in touch with Vipassana meditation as taught by SN Goenka, a non-sectarian technique that teaches 'to see things as they are' through direct experience. Pure awareness of breath and body provide insights that ultimately lead to a balanced mind which translates into peace and happiness.

To learn this fruitful meditation one is required to spend 10 full days. The opportunity awaits those who sincerely wish to make the effort. To access more information visit: www.dhamma.org.au

"In meditation you withdraw from others and focus your attention inside to gain purity of mind and wisdom energy. When you take a long jump, you must first take some steps backward. Then you run, and make the jump. Like this, you first withdraw, observe yourself, develop clarity and unlock the wisdom. Then you make a long jump into society, to serve society. These two steps cannot be separated."

– SN Goenka.

May wisdom prevail.

Betti practices Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy and teaches body related community classes in Nimbin. Contact: biodynamic.touch@gmail.com or phone 0490-292-138.

Communicating with horses

by Les Rees

Animal communication isn't some magical power only available to the gifted few; it's available to us all providing we're prepared to open our mind to an awareness of the animals around us.

If we gain knowledge of their individual needs we have a better chance of understanding what they are trying to tell us, especially since their form of communication is mostly non-verbal, being based mostly on gestures.

Time spent watching them interact with others of their own species is time well spent as we begin to make sense of it all; if we're prepared to put in the effort it can free us from the constraints determined by our own selfish needs and desires and open up a new world as we learn to use their language and begin to communicate.

Once the communication begins you'll find that it builds a mutual respect and most of all, your efforts will be rewarded with trust.

Many years ago, I spent some time watching horses and other animals in the wild and began to appreciate the complexity of their language.

I also discovered that it was possible to communicate with them by learning to use their gestures. The interesting



Gypsy and Les

thing is that there was plenty of intercommunication between different species, the most obvious seen during dangerous situations.

There were also a lot of shared gestures between the grazing animals which poses the question that they may be learning from each other. Considering their shared interdependence, this would hardly be surprising.

Relationships with our animals are defined by the way in which we interact with them. Many people mistreat their animals through lack of understanding via acts of aggression as a means of control. This behaviour can send very mixed signals to an animal that cannot communicate with you!

Some people are just plain lacking in empathy while others are governed by their own inadequate nature, re-directing feelings

of frustration towards their animals. Many humans fail to recognise themselves as being part of the animal kingdom which may go some way to explain some of the atrocities propagated on social media.

We live in a verbal world of advanced communication because it suits the way we live. However, it's important to remember that other forms of communication are an adaptation to the circumstances surrounding the environment in which each animal lives. Having a gesture-based communication is extremely smart if you don't want to attract interest from predators!

I've worked primarily with horses and have been particularly involved with trauma victims, most of whom have had a background of fear from people who want to control

them. Being stoic animals by nature, it's easy for them to become victims of learned helplessness and they go into a shutdown mode becoming intensely unhappy and miserable, subsequently manifesting into a variety of more severe issues including both physical and psychological problems.

Unfortunately a huge number of people inflict all manner of gadgets that are designed to control by fear of pain. There's a massive difference between a horse that is governed by inflicted pain and one that is working with you by choice.

In my experience, most horses attempt to communicate with humans in many subtle ways and my horses constantly amaze me at how ingenious they can be to get their message across. This also extends to the other animals in our family and several wild ones who live on our property.

The take home message is to think before you act, take a breath and allow yourself time to examine what your animal is trying to communicate to you.

Imagine what it's like to be that animal and use kindness to reinforce your relationships with them.

Contact Horsetail Herbs
0437-580-705
www.horsetailherbs.com.au

Desensitisation

by Suzy Maloney B.Eq.Sc.

Sometimes the conditions are such that we can't do much with our horses. Between rain and boggy ground after rain, it can stretch into long periods of not being able to do anything at all. Then when it's all finally clear the horses can be full of beans and have challenging behaviours.

In order to reduce this, plus still be able to do things with our horses even when conditions aren't suitable for riding, we can do groundwork. However again if it's really muddy even that becomes difficult as it's impossible to do anything with movement. This is the time to pull out the toys and do some desensitisation with your horses, as it's mostly done at halt!

So what is it? Well the opposite of sensitisation! And that's the tricky bit, you must be very clear of what you're doing as you might accidentally do the opposite of what you want and sensitise your horse! To desensitise your horse to a stimulus means to reduce its response. So if you're working away and your horse becomes fearful, that is, increasing its response, stop, that is not the goal.

At no point should your horse feel fear. Your job is to be checking your horse all the time looking for signs of worry – the ears back, tail swishing, eyes bulging/black/fearful, frowning, lifting the head, bracing the neck etc. The moment you see signs of worry back off and repeat the previous step until your horse is happy before progressing again. Your job is to not push the horse over the line into fear.

If you do they will no longer learn as they can't think when they're afraid, plus that's where you can actually sensitise them instead of desensitising and that's not what we want. This is a great exercise in itself, as it really trains the human to feel and see what's happening for the horse.

Every horse is different so you need to know how your own horse expresses worry. One horse I work with always has a calm eye but his tail starts swishing like mad if he's worried, so I'm always looking there when introducing something new to him. But for the majority, it's the eye that shows how the horse is feeling, so start there.

Some ground rules – never tie your horse up when introducing a scary object and hold the lead rope yourself, so you can move with them if need be. Let them smell, lick and explore the scary object with their mouth. Touch the place where you're going to start with your hand first, giving it a rub and a few pats, this will make it less sensitive.

With most horses I find the shoulder the best place to start but this can vary. Then calmly but confidently touch with the scary object and try and remove it before the horse panics. If you watch your horses' signs you should be able to see this. Gradually extend the time you stay there and then start moving it over other parts of the body.

So, let's say you've introduced an object and didn't notice the worry signs and they start moving away. Safety first, so if it's dangerous get out of there. If it's safe try and stay with your horse while



Darcy and Suzy

they move, keeping the object touching them until they stop moving and then immediately remove it.

Sometimes you may need to show them the solution to the problem with a little stop pressure on the halter. Repeat, repeat, repeat and you'll find after a while you can touch them with the object and they'll stand still.

Once you've learnt these principles with an easy object, apply them to other situations. Hosing, spray bottles, plastic bags, tarps and umbrellas are some things you can use but it's really only limited by your imagination. Have fun, get creative and playful and reap the rewards of a happy horse.

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