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Pretty in a pot, but don't let them escape

by Triny Roe

Ground covers have a important role in the ecosystem and native species can be overtaken and replaced by vigorous exotics.

While larger woody weed species are easy to see and can be dealt with early, little ones can be overlooked. The new arrivals lie low and unnoticed while they settle in. Ere long, they are entrenched.

Some exotic ground covers are well known. *Tradescantia* species such *T. fluminensis* (previously *T. albiflora*) is widely naturalised in NSW and Queensland.

Sometimes known as wandering jew (not 'dew'), creeping Christian or wandering willie, among many other monikers, this creeper has slightly fleshy leaves and three petaled white flowers. It has invaded bush, creek banks, roadsides as well as being weedy in the domestic garden.

Another pest species sometimes called wandering jew, is *Commelina benghalensis*, or hairy commelina. This plant has established in a number of locations around Australia and is considered naturalised in Northern NSW.

Easily confused with native species, *C. cyanea*, *C. diffusa*, or *C. ensifolia* found west of the Great Divide,



Basket grass on the left and Commelina species on the right

C. benghalensis has russet hairs on the leaf sheaths. All these *Commelinas* have blue flowers though the leaves on the native species are longer and thinner than those of the import.

Oplismenus aemulus, or basket grass, another native ground cover, looks similar but this plant has crinkly leaves. (See photo).

Other ground covers do not yet have a reputation as bad guys. Perhaps because they are new kids on the block and haven't had the chance to escape.

Baby Sun Rose, *Aptenia cordifolia*, sounds fairly benign. This attractive creeper with edible leaves propagates readily via cuttings or even a single leaf.

When there is rain it can grow very quickly but it is also drought tolerant. These

characteristics will ensure its survival in the wild.

Another species, marketed as Golden Globes or Gold Coin, looks like a lovely addition to the garden or a gift for a friend. *Lysimachia procumbens* is a sweet and hardy pot plant readily available from nurseries and market stalls.

Described as a 'mat-forming herbaceous perennial' it also has major environmental weed potential if it gets into the bush.

Eight years ago a small patch of this plant was noticed growing on a road side bank several metres below the house. How did it get there? My guess is a 'dead' pot plant was hoicked off the verandah by a previous – "I'm not really a gardener" – resident into the bush below. Six months

later, the patch was three times the size.

Identification was quickly made. This exotic species was spreading with alacrity. The creek was not far away and the pretty plant also likes moist damp areas.

A heavy duty mechanical removal technique which involved removing soil as well as all vegetative matter dealt with the initial infestation. Vigilant follow-up over the following year ensured none was left to spread further, and the area was deemed clear.

Six years passed. Last week two new flowering plants were spotted. One year's weed, seven years' seed.

It is important to dispose of garden waste appropriately. Chucking over a bank or into a gully can cause future problems.

Roadside and bushland dumping is also not acceptable. Out of sight is out of mind until the weed is well established and intractable.

The potential for spread is high as seed or vegetative material is washed further down the gully and into the bush or waterways.

Deal with prunings at home in controlled compost heaps, rot in compost tea or take to the council tip for processing.

Happy weeding.

A call for help

At present, Friends of the Koala's Care Centre is at full capacity. For the first time we have 24 koalas in care with no spare runs to take new koalas, which continue to arrive each day.

We're releasing as many as we can, and there are many trips to Currumbin Wildlife Hospital, which, as well as Australian Zoo Wildlife Hospital, is also at capacity. When people ask us why this is happening, all we can say is that it's probably a combination of factors.

Thanks partly to our Koala Watch project, which has been rolling out workshops across the Region, and to our campaign to prevent a local extinction, members in our communities are now more aware of when to report a koala.

Pleasingly, if last year's figures continue, we're releasing more koalas than we have in the past, which is directly related to members of the community reporting incidents as soon as they occur.

However, other factors are that we're in breeding season, which always results in more koalas being injured either on the roads or by dogs or cattle. Another factor we're sure is contributing to our higher numbers at present is climate change, which constitutes a threat to koalas. As temperatures rise and weather patterns change, the nutritional value of Eucalypt koala food trees is likely to change, putting additional stress on koalas by altering their diet.

Whilst we're managing the situation carefully, the number of koalas in care is having a significant impact on all our volunteers, from rescuers, 24/7 rescue hotline monitors, leafers, who are having to spend more time sourcing their leaf, and carers who have to spend more hours attending to their needs while

in care. So if you have even several hours a week that you could contribute to helping to save our koalas, give us a call on 6621-4664.

We're also looking for a treasurer, as Manuela had to resign due to ill-health, so if anyone who is familiar with QuickBooks would be prepared to consider this, call me on 6621-5906 for more information.

The adventures of Shazza

Back in October 2016, we had the pleasure of looking after a beautiful mum and bub from just up the road from the Care Centre in East Lismore.

The Mum, six year old Shazza, had mild conjunctivitis and a joey, who Marley named Reecey, was healthy and just over one kg. Both were very attractive and chilled out in care making them volunteer favourites very quickly.

Shazza only needed a short term of antibiotics and after six weeks in care, she and her little fella were back in the wild.

Fast forward to October 2018 and guess who is back into care? Shazza and her new back young were found trapped underneath a home, again, not far from the Care Centre.

The home owner was a kindergarten teacher, so she asked her class which name we should use for the mum and bub (we didn't know it was a tagged female at this point) and the names agreed on were Rain for the mum and Bow for the joey, which is a beautiful pair of names.

It wasn't long before we identified Shazza by her ear tag, so Shazza and



Koala Kolumn

by Ros Irwin, president

Bow (a little girl) were put into an enclosure to await their vet check-up. Not only good news, but the best news!

Both Shazza and Bow were in perfect health and for a very special treat, Vet Ray from Keen Street and Marley were able to see the tiny little life growing inside of Shazza – she was pregnant.

With koala females only being pregnant for 35 days, it is a rare treat indeed to see them on ultrasound and the fluttering heartbeat had everyone very emotional – such a special moment.

The three of them were in care for a few weeks while tests were run, and I think it is fair to say, every single volunteer fell madly in love with Bow.

A huge personality and a very pretty face, Bow was always up to mischief and loved to pose for her fans. After all the test results came back negative, we were able to release Shazza, Bow and Jellybean back into the trees nearby the care centre.

It would seem that poor Shazza hasn't had much of a break when it comes to raising young, but she is such a great mum, we hope she has many more in the years to come.

Animals essential to sustainable food production

by Matt Downie

Just as animals inhabit all natural ecosystems, fulfilling unique mobile niches amongst the plants and contributing to the ongoing fertility, seed dispersal, vegetation management and overall species balance.

Animals have also been essential components of integrated food production systems until the advent of industrial-chemical agri-business, when the wholeness of natural production was replaced by growing singular bulk commodities requiring a growing list of expensive and artificial inputs.

The nutrient recycling and maintenance of fertility that animals provide, requires very little expense or maintenance to perform, as their natural actions of harvesting vegetation and lower trophic food sources are returned as manure.

Within the manure of free-range animals in particular, are beneficial microbial populations via gut bacteria that assist in promoting natural decomposition and preparing the material for soil born microbes and fungi to colonise and complete the cycle back to bio-available nutrient-rich humus.

When preparing the ground for planting, instead of ploughing the soil and laying waste to the entire soil ecology, animals can do an exceptional job of eating and trampling down vegetation, adding their manure, and in the case of pigs and to a lesser degree hoofed animals and scratching poultry, open the soil to allow their recycled nutrients to permeate deeper.

Through establishing seasonal rotation of animal self-feeding production systems to strategically incorporate the widest available range of easy to grow staple food crops plus specific animal forage and browse species, ease of organic production can be achieved.

Leguminous shrubs – such as leuceana, icecream bean, honey locust, pigeon pea – and ground covers of pinto peanut, clover and lucerne can provide high protein animal foods. Hedge rows of animal-browse crops of mulberry, willow, saba nut, bana grass and sugar cane and other easy to grow foods such as cassava, arrowroot, sweet potato, taro, choko, perennial squash, yam bean and



sunroot plus many so-called weeds are also readily useful as animal feed.

When production is returned to such an integrated whole, there is very minimal need for machinery beyond the initial earth works of creating strategic dams and connecting contour channels, grow beds below the channels, roadways and level pads for buildings. There should be no need to slash and mow, plough or attempt to control pests and weeds with broad scale spraying.

Any healthy ecological system harbours a great diversity of species, interacting and bringing dynamic balance to the overall system. Sporadic insect, invertebrate and other small fauna population spikes are quickly responded to by their natural predators that gravitate to the food source and build up in numbers, only to disperse again when the situation has found equilibrium.

With water being the essential ingredient of biological life, it is naturally the backbone of production systems planning. From rainwater harvesting and storage dams, to contour channels that direct the flows evenly across the landscape through production areas with the ease and assurance of gravity. Within this water network, aquatic animals are employed in similar fashion to their terrestrial counterparts.

Aquatic poultry such as muscovie ducks and geese can also be managed in seasonal forage areas that include parts of dams and contour channels, where they can both feed themselves and enhance the fertility of the overall ecology.

In summary, managing food production areas with animals will greatly reduce, if not completely eliminate, input expenses for fertilisers.

Ground preparation before planting, vegetation management, mulching, insect and pest control, natural animal feeds and herbal medications, can be designed and planted well enough to produce organic free range animals at no expense and in perfect symbiosis with human food production.

Scientific specialisation has created great advances in certain technological areas, but care for the planet, wholesome food production, humane treatment of animals and promoting healthy human beings are all part of holistic interconnected dynamic living systems.

The grassroots localised return to healthy organic food production and responsible care for the environment is inevitable as we choose well-being for ourselves and the planet.

We can choose as individuals and communities to tune into the rhythms and lessons of the natural world and become the caretakers of the Earth, and promoters of well-being that truly intelligent beings would surely be.

Matt Downie is a Horticultural scientist and ecologist with over 25 years' research and study of natural farming, permaculture and biodynamics. He has distilled his practical food production philosophy to Zen-Farming, optimising the conditions for nature to thrive, incorporate maximum diversity and produce reliable abundance with ease.

He offers consultancy in the local area, integrated holistic property design, a vast range of edible plants and is about to launch his first book on Zen-farming. For further information, you can email him at: matt@Zen-farming.com or visit his website: www.Zen-farming.com

Plant of the month



Native Gardenia *Randia fitzlandii*

by Richard Burer,
Bush regenerator

I like to throw a summer tropical into the mix sometimes, and I don't think I've introduced you to this species in the past.

This small Australian tree is native to North Queensland, but is an excellent species for the garden in the Northern Rivers.

Growing to about five metres, this glossy evergreen small tree is highly ornamental and

very hardy.

It can make an excellent specimen tree or a tree in the edge of the garden or in the more forgotten-about places on the farm.

With highly fragrant and masses of white flowers, *Randia* is having a great old show as we enter December.

We have one next the path as we enter the house. It's a real treat at the moment.

It's been a real great small tree and never requires any maintenance except for a bit of mulch.

Ticks and wildlife

This Galah looks a very happy chappy today but the picture was very different a few days ago.

The bird was found in North Lismore by a very caring member of the public who saw him/her on the ground, unable to fly. Patricia carefully placed a box over the bird, provided an umbrella for shade and promptly called WIRES.

The WIRES rescuer found that the bird was unable to move its wings, had difficulty walking and was not blinking. The reason soon became obvious when a large paralysis tick was discovered under the bird's left eye.

Staff at the Keen Street Vet Clinic removed the tick, treated the bird with serum and it was taken to WIRES carer Julie to recover. After three days in care, including hydration and eye drops every three hours, it was soon perching strongly. On the fourth day it was able to be released where it was found.

WIRES has had a number of similar calls lately regarding birds being affected by ticks. It does appear that ticks are particularly prevalent at the moment.

Most of our ground-dwelling wildlife are somewhat resistant to the effects of ticks, having evolved alongside them. Sometimes a sick or injured animal may



Photo courtesy WIRES
Northern Rivers

have an overburden of ticks. Rarely, however, is this the cause of the illness but rather the ticks taking advantage of a compromised animal. Any bird with a tick is in trouble, and needs assistance.

If you do see wildlife in distress call WIRES immediately on 6628-1898.

It is a timely reminder to also protect your pets from ticks. Keeping them indoors will minimise exposure and has the added advantage of preventing them from coming in contact with native wildlife.

If you are keen to make a difference for the wildlife in our area, consider joining WIRES. For more information about how you can join and contribute, call 6628-1898.

Creating what you want for yourself and the world

Within every struggle is gold. A little digging reveals your unconscious beliefs that you can then clear out from the very roots.

At Vision Infinity, we encourage people to keep two books – your Process Book or your 'Book of Crap' and 'The Good Book' – where you keep track of what is good and working in your life, what brings you joy.

At Connecting In we use a variety of processes and questioning to facilitate a deep understanding, that actually rewires your brain to experience more joy and fulfillment.

When you are struggling with an issue, you can open your Book of Crap and let loose with:

1. What the situation or issue is.
2. How you feel about it.
- What feelings are you experiencing? Write it all down. Keep feeling deeper as more feelings are



by Catherine Watt

uncovered and articulated, writing all that comes. You may find yourself thinking, 'That's ridiculous, I don't feel that!' but just keep going and let it out onto the page.

3. Ask yourself, 'What beliefs must I have to be feeling this way?' Keep asking this question to yourself. Stop. Breathe. Let the answer arise. You may find yourself thinking, 'I don't believe that', but don't censor yourself, just let it out onto the page. You will begin to realise where the beliefs have come from – how they have been passed down

through generations of suffering and pain, and you, yourself have likely passed them on too.

4. Ask yourself, 'If there were some foundational belief(s), or deeper belief(s), upon which all these depended, 'What might that be?' And just pause and allow the answer to surface.
5. Ask yourself, 'How have these beliefs served me? What benefit do they give me?' Allow the answer to come and write it down.
6. There are a few things you can do from here. You can ask the Universal Consciousness, or your higher self (whatever you like to call it) to clear the beliefs. At 'Connecting In' we do a powerful process around clearing and forgiving. On your own, you can 'ask' for it to be cleared from your cells and cleared from your very DNA. Feel and see as the consciousness of these beliefs are removed

from your body.

7. Ask yourself for the formation of healthy beliefs that express who and how you want to be, that give you the benefits of the old beliefs, but in a way that supports who you want to be.
 8. Revisit the situation and see and feel how it is with these new beliefs.
- If you benefit from exercise, we'd love to hear from you. Comment on Facebook: Vision Infinity Workshops or email: catherinewatt@hotmail.com

Cat draws on over 25 years of experience in well-being, healing. She also offers one-on-one sessions of The Journey method and life transformation. Currently Connecting In is running on Tuesdays at Hanging Rock Hall (11am-2pm) and costs only \$25 per session, bookings essential. For information, see Facebook: Vision Infinity Workshops or phone 0432-546-238.



by Neil Amor

You've made it to the end of the year and it's time to indulge. Julie from 'Nimbin Lovebites' (pictured) can help you with that. Keen for chocolate products that were both guilt free and nutritious, Julie began developing a range that were good for the body, inside and out. Drawing on her background in the food industry, and incorporating aromatherapy principles and cooking with essential oils, Julie started with several varieties of hand-made chocolates. Finding herself surrounded by cacao (as opposed to cocoa, which is chemically processed), the natural next step in the business was to wear it. Chocolate body butter is a great natural lubricant and moisturiser for the skin. Next came sun protection (chocolate based, of course) with 20% zinc. Also ready for summer is a lip balm made with local honey and beeswax. All packaging is compostable or re-usable, and make great gifts. To temp you further, all chocolates are available in bulk, exclusively, at the Nimbin Organic Food Co-op. Here's one of Julie's favourite recipes:

Raw vegan cheesecake
High in calcium, magnesium, copper, protein
2 cups macadamia nuts
1½ cups cashew nuts
½ cup pitted fresh dates
¼ cup dried coconut
6 tbsp coconut oil melted
¼ cup lime juice
¼ cup honey or preferred sweetener
1 vanilla bean
1 tbsp vanilla extract
3 cups mixed berries
Soak nuts (in separate bowls) in water for at least 5 hours then drain. Pulse macadamia nuts with dates in a food processor 'til it resembles sticky crumbs. Sprinkle coconut on bottom of 8-inch pie dish and press macca mix onto it to make a crust. Place cashews, coconut oil, lime juice, honey, vanilla and 6 tbsp water in food processor and process till smooth, fluffy puree. Pour onto crust and freeze for 2 hours or until firm. Remove from freezer and slice while frozen. Serve with berries. Lastly, thank you to all our members, local growers and the Nimbin community for your support this year. But most of all a BIG thanks to all our volunteers who give their time week after week. If you're thinking of joining the team, contact Nina, our Volunteer Co-ordinator on 0497-833-717. Until next year, eat well.

Vinnies Christmas Appeal
Money donated to Vinnies Christmas Appeal on the North Coast will be used to help local families. Donations are tax deductible and can be made at any of the Vinnies shops, or by calling the Lismore office on (02) 6621-5835.



Festive treats for pets

As we head into the silly season, I thought it very timely to check in with my animal friends to offer some holiday reminders, to keep your fur babies safe and honour your sanity. Here's a list we compiled:

- You may have some extra time available, consider going on some adventures, to the creek, ocean, bush walk. Or just snuggled up. They love it when you hang out together (and it can be hugely beneficial for you too, as a stress reliever);
- It's going to get hot, really hot. Make sure you exercise them in the coolest part of the day. Dawn and dusk are perfect. Also, please don't leave them in the car too long. It can be disastrous;
- Boundaries and limits. I know they look super cute in that outfit. But some just don't like it. (My Dora loves a good frock-up, however, her brother hated it. So I never tried it again, on him. Animals are not here for our amusement);
- It can be a wonderful magical time of year for some. And others worst nightmare. Please have a contingency plan if your fur friends are afraid of crowds or fireworks. Anxious animals need preparation and some reassurance, allow time for this;
- Ahem. Food. Some animals and people would like me to skip this point. However, it is important. Don't feed animals table scraps. Not only does it create undesirable behaviors, it just isn't good for them. Just a couple of examples: Onions are poisonous to them. Cooked bones can splinter and perforate their systems. Even though we love them very much and especially when they are working their "best ever puppy dog eyes". Please be strong;
- Be aware. This is the time of year to be vigilant about checking our mates for ticks, even if they are using protection. And snakes, keep your property tidy and clean as possible. If you are surrounded by snake havens expect to see them; and
- Last but not least, please don't buy animals as gifts. It is not a spur of the moment decision. You have just locked that person into a potential 10+ year commitment. A financial and emotional investment that they may not be ready for. Not to mention it can perpetuate the puppy mill industry. The statistics surrounding animals that are dropped off to shelters after Xmas are staggering. And heart breaking. How can we help the animals in shelters? It's okay if you can't guarantee ten years. There are some other options available that have just as much impact in their lives:
- By donating time or money. This can help considerably. Volunteering at a shelter can be mutually beneficial. Walking the animals, engaging with them. Showing them unconditional love;
- Fostering. Opening up your heart and home. Helping them adjust to the next chapter. Hopefully in their forever home. Please understand, this can have its pitfalls. I know many a "foster-fail". Who couldn't imagine life without these beautiful souls;
- Adopting a senior animal can be hugely rewarding and fulfilling. They need more love



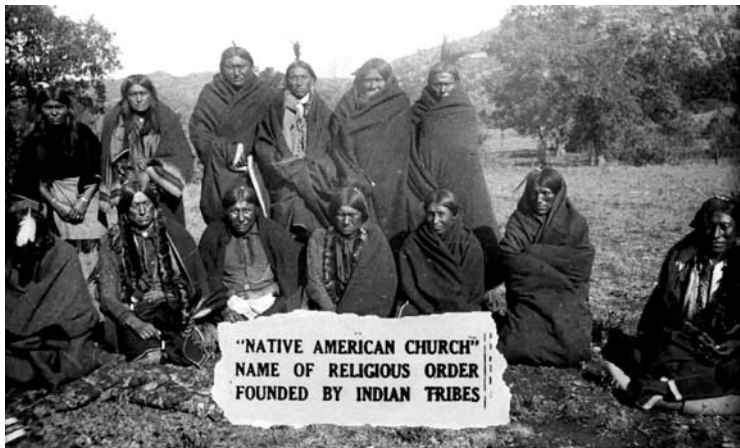
Animal Talk
by Donna Connolly

and kindness now than ever before. It takes a special person who can journey with an animal in their twilight years. It is a huge honour. I would love to go and send a heartfelt thanks to all the beautiful creatures and guardians I have had the privilege of meeting. It has been a huge year and the memories will remain forever in my heart. Stay safe and enjoy one another. I look forward to connecting in the New Year. I have gift vouchers available from \$60 (give the gift of understanding and connection), a great option for the people in your life that have everything and to answer the perplexing questions from your fur friends. Email: rivergem88@gmail.com Web: www.rivergem.com.au

Taking back our Indigenous medicines

by Cameron Storey

For thousands of years Indigenous peoples have been using plant medicines to bring about physical and mental healing and establish a connection to nature, the community and to the divine. As each country was invaded and occupied by violent, greedy and manipulating foreigners the Indigenous practices were systematically outlawed and plant medicines ignorantly prohibited. Slowly Indigenous people from across the globe are uniting to reclaim their inalienable rights to plant medicines which coincides with what author James Oroc calls the new psychedelic revolution and the Genesis of the Visionary Age. **The Native American Church (NAC) in the US**, aka Peyotism or the Peyote Religion, is a Native American religion that teaches a combination of traditional Native American beliefs and Christianity, with sacramental use of the entheogen peyote. The religion originated in the State of Oklahoma in the late nineteenth century after peyote was introduced to the southern Great Plains from Mexico. Today it is the most widespread Indigenous religion among Native Americans in the US, Canada, and Mexico. The tenets of the Native American Church regard "peyote" as a sacred and holy sacrament and use it as a means to communicate with the Great Spirit (God). As the United States government became more obsessed with the control of drugs, the Native American Church faced possible legal issues regarding their use of peyote. The Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 was passed to provide legal protection for the Church's use of peyote. Only card-carrying members of the NAC are allowed to transport, possess, and use entheogens for religious purposes. **Santo Daime Church in the US and the Netherlands.** In September 2008/2009, the three Oregon Santo Daime churches commenced legal proceedings to gain an exemption to use the entheogen ayahuasca. The case, *Church of the Holy Light of the Queen v. Mukasey*, presided over by Judge Panner, ruled in favour of the Santo Daime church. Judge Panner found that the use of entheogenic tea (Ayahuasca) by members of such churches was legal, issuing an injunction barring the government from penalising them for its consumption. In the Netherlands, Santo Daime won a court case in 2001 which allowed them to continue their ceremonial use of ayahuasca. **Santo Daime Church and UDV in the Brazil.** The Federal Drug Council has consistently upheld the right of the Santo Daime Church and the UDV (Union Do Vegetal) to practise their religious and healing practices using entheogenic ayahuasca. A study was made of ayahuasca by the Federal Drug Council in 1987 which included visits to the churches, Santo Daime and UDV, and making observations of the making of the ayahuasca. The conclusion of the study was that ayahuasca was a very positive influence in the community, encouraging social harmony and personal integration. The study noted that, rather than simply considering the pharmacological analysis of the plants, it was essential to consider the whole context of the use of the tea—religious, social, and cultural. **UDV in the US and Beyond.** The UDV has established itself in the US, Canada, Peru, Spain, Portugal, UK, Switzerland, Holland, Italy, and in Australia and has over 18,000 members world-wide. In 2000, the UDV filed a lawsuit against certain agencies of the federal government for violations of the First Amendment to the US Constitution and the



Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). RFRA requires that the government not interfere with religious conduct unless it can demonstrate to a court that it has a "compelling interest" in doing so. If it is unable to do so, RFRA requires the government to allow people to practise their religion. On February 21st, 2006 the United States Supreme Court issued a unanimous decision affirming Religious Liberty in the case of *Gonzales vs. O Centro Espirita Beneficente União do Vegetal*. The landmark court rulings that allowed ayahuasca to be used by these churches in their ceremonies has huge implications – and it might not be long before we see similar 'religious freedom' rulings in many other countries. At present there are ayahuasca churches in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Rep, the UK, France, Japan, Italy, Ireland, Mexico, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. It's quite likely that you could get involved with your local church and help out to get ayahuasca use recognised as a religious right. It would be possible to start an "Australian Indigenous Church" which should be granted legal access to all medicinal plants, under Section 116 of the Constitution of Australia which precludes the Commonwealth of Australia (the federal parliament) from making laws prohibiting the free exercise of any religion. *The Dharma Centre and Medicinal Gardens is available on AirBnB (Nimbin Eco-Retreat with Yoga/ Meditation Studio). (02) 6689-7120 or Facebook "Dharma Centre – Lillifield".*

Core training for horses

by Les Rees,
Equine naturopath

Many riders are familiar with the concept of yoga and attend regular classes in to order gain the strength and flexibility needed to be in balance on their horses.

Yoga teaches us to calm the mind and gain body awareness aiding us to maintain inner harmony. It frees us up to make the connection with our horses when we ride them and also helps us to identify any performance issues that may be interfering with that connection.

Most riders can relate to the feeling that their horse doesn't feel right because it isn't moving as well as it normally does, but how many of us actually ask the question why? It's often easier to say that the horse is out of sorts today, or I'll ride him through it to see what happens, but a lot of these issues can be avoided if we use some of the yoga techniques on our horses: after all, it's just as important for our horses to be balanced as it is for us.

Given that horses didn't evolve to carry humans on their backs, it isn't surprising that they suffer from so many issues, particularly with back and sacro-iliac related problems. However, we can help them by using a number



of stretching techniques that include both riding exercises and techniques that initiate suppleness and flexibility.

The weight and balance of a rider makes the horse vulnerable to back related issues. This is where core training is particularly important as it will target the joints and muscles in the horse's neck and back. This helps to increase flexibility of the joints between the vertebrae and to strengthen muscles, particularly those that hold the horse's back in a rounded position when being ridden.

Young horses are particularly vulnerable when they are first ridden because the weight of the rider can cause a narrowing of the gaps between the vertical spinous

processes of the thoracic vertebrae in the back. This can irritate and pinch the nerves running between them, causing the muscles to lock in order to limit further damage. It can also lead to habitual defense patterns inducing loss of natural flexion and stiffness of the spine, leading to over-dependence on the lower limbs in order to compensate for the inability to flex in its back. Given that the natural flexibility of a horse's spine is the key to an elastic connection throughout the body, it pays to take action when things don't feel right!

A complex system of muscles runs under the spine, these include the psoas, multifidus and abdominal muscles. These are the body's 'core' muscles that need to

be strong in order to keep the gaps between the spinal processes open when carrying the rider. A lot of people ask their horses for more impulsion when they feel that the horse isn't moving the way it normally does. This can actually make things worse, especially if the horse has already gone into defense mode.

There are a lot of horses that perform at more advanced levels which have tension in their backs from muscular contraction caused by the impact of an active gait, while the increased impulsion and muscular tension leads to further compressions of the spinal processes. Some horses learn to overcome this by becoming sufficiently supple in the limb joints, but this can affect their gaits. Sadly, in some cases it can lead to severe behavioral and riding resistances.

There are a lot of information videos available on the use of yoga styled exercises for horses that will help to keep them flexible and happy. These range from ground work to straightness training. Give it a go and enjoy the journey with your horses.

Les Rees, Equine Naturopath
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Considerate horsemanship

For quite a while I have been trying to work out exactly what it is that I do with horses.

I have called it natural horsemanship, and in the past I have studied Parelli, Monty Roberts and other advocates of natural horsemanship. I have definitely incorporated many valuable tools into my kit from this source but I don't follow any particular method and do not only do natural horsemanship.

I have called it science-based 'equitation' because I have a degree in equine science and completed three behavioural subjects within my degree. I am fascinated by animal behaviour and equine behaviour in particular and there is a large part of me that is an animal behaviourist, but that's not all I do.

I have called it riding instruction as I spent years doing Equestrian Australia Coach training and have been teaching horse riding for over 25 years. I don't ever do a lesson where I only instruct the rider, as it always includes horse training as well. While I love a balanced position and light aids I am not stuck with the classical method of horse riding but also embrace other modalities.

For a while I thought it was animal communication. I studied animal communication using a variety of methods and learned the valuable lesson of trusting my intuition. I am open to messages from horses all the time I am with them, trust them to communicate their needs to me, and they do. But again this is not all I do.

Then it came to me: considerate horsemanship. In everything I do I am



by Suzy Maloney B.Eq.Sc.

considering the horse. I ask the horse questions and learn from the answers. I change everything I am doing if that is what the horse requires. I never have a fixed plan of how a lesson is going to go. I follow my intuition and what the horse is telling me.

Every horse is different and every horse on a different day is different. I try not to hold on to what the horse did in the past. Each time I see a horse I ask them how they are feeling about things. What do they understand? What do they not understand? What is scaring them? How can I help them? What's the next step? I constantly

check in with the horse and consider how it is for them at every stage.

I endeavour to not impose or force things on a horse against their will, as I believe it results in resistance and unhappiness. If a horse does not understand what I am asking then it's up to me to look for a different way to explain it. When I see that first moment of comprehension, I lavish on the praise.

I believe that treating horses with respect and considering their point of view results in a level of understanding and friendship between human and horse that can never be achieved when forcing things upon them. Horses can be made into automatons, machines that bend to our will and do as we order, but there is no love in that. A horse treated like that wants to leave you as soon as it can, not stay and share more moments with you.

Some people only want an obedient machine that can win ribbons and bring them glory. When that horse is no longer achieving that they sell them and get a new one. This is not relationship, this is not friendship, this is not love, it is using sentient beings to satisfy our own egos. This is not considering the horse, only ourselves.

So now I am a bit closer to knowing who I am and what I do. Life is a journey and I choose to live mine walking alongside horses.

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A therapeutic conversation

In September this year I travelled to Germany and then to Scotland, particularly around the Isle of Mull.

In Germany I met with a couple of Facebook friends for the first time, one of whom is a psychotherapist like myself, the other an artist, like my otherwise self. We talked for hours in a little café called *La Boheme* in the old town of Heidelberg.

This was, for me, a turning point in life and work. I remain in conversational contact with my colleague and he encourages me to new understandings and new readings and has enlivened how I work. I'm delighted by all this, and have been mulling on things ever since.

In a non-direct way, through talking about Psychodynamic-interpersonal Psychotherapy, which both of us practise, I've been introduced to Conversational Psychotherapy, or simply the Conversation Model. It's filling in my intuitive sense about how I work and how I've come to understand the self, and myself.

This concept of self, which is a kind of consciousness, has been there all along, largely unarticulated, prompted by my early readings (in the 1970s) of William James and other relational-humanistic psychologists, but the clear

statements of the Australian psychiatrist Russell Meares, b. 1936 (son of Ainslie Meares, psychiatrist, hypnotherapist and writer on meditation) has brought it into the clear light for me.

The self, seen as a dynamical interrelational process, is not an abstract entity somehow separated from environmental encounter, nor known through the immersion of arcane texts; it is a dual process of felt bodily reaction and a dynamic play with inner events that bring about reflective awareness.

The self is ecological and relational and involves a sense of aliveness, of vitality, of well-being, positive feeling (warmth and intimacy), non-linearity, coherence, continuity, temporarily, spatiality, content beyond the immediate present (that is of the possible, the imagined, the remembered), with a sense of ownership, boundedness, agency and duality.

The self, according to William James (1842-1910) is a duplex of one pole of awareness and another pole of inner events in a dance of self-reflectivity. Consciousness doesn't always take this form. When we are alarmed or annoyed, reflective awareness is lost.

Meares identifies the characteristic consciousness of those damaged by the impacts of the social environment



by Dr Elizabeth McCardell
M. Couns., PhD

as adualistic. It is reactive and responsive to the brain's interplay with the environment, without self-reflectiveness. The aim of therapy is to restore, generate, and potentiate that dualistic kind of consciousness that is the self.

But this pole of awareness plus a reflective pole of inner events cannot happen by itself. It has to be met, connected with, related to, for the self is part of an ecology. As a part of an ecology, any change in one part, affects everything.

Trauma plays a big part in this disturbance and interruption of the dual process, for it locks the person into reactivity, dullness, and a sense of stuckness.

Psychotherapy then becomes very useful in creating a close, safe and supportive environment of reciprocity and engagement as it reconnects a person to themselves and the social environment.

Conversation, as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary,

is "the action of living, or having one's being in a place or among persons". It isn't just about talk; it's engagement and focus upon the shifts, the movements, the waxings, and wanings of this experience, and it is this that lies at the core of the interpersonal therapeutic approach.

It is in conversation (in its style, content, context) that we come, not only to express what we know, but come to know what we don't yet know.

Conversational Psychotherapy is directed towards the restoration of a disrupted sense of personal being, or self. It's interested in the inner life as well as emotions of reaction and building a capacity for self-awareness.

An old mentor of mine used to ask me, "And how is the inner life?" It is such a very good question for therapists to ask. We should not ignore a person's perception of their inner life for herein lies tools for healing and strengthening their capacity for self-reflection and not getting caught up in reactions and adualistic looping, that won't go away in isolation from conversation.

So, talking with my friends in the little café near the old bridge of the city of thinkers was not only great fun, but is bringing a greater awareness to my psychotherapeutic practice. Thank you, Jürgen and Aksel.

Becoming a mother – why the Dutch do it better

Doula Wisdom

by Kirrah Stewart

You may know that the Dutch have a reputation for being among the happiest people alive. According to the 2018 UN World Happiness Report, The Netherlands is ranked as the 6th happiest country in the world.

After a recent visit to the Netherlands, I have some more understanding of their culture and what contributes to their positivity. Everyone I met was so incredibly friendly.

In particular, I was most interested in their support network in maternity care. The Dutch have a unique approach towards care during birth and postpartum. For a start, the Dutch have the highest homebirth rate in the world!

I was privileged to visit a beautiful birth centre in Amsterdam (Het Geboortecentrum) and to also see the postpartum hotel. I met with a friendly midwife, Rachel, who showed me the homely birth rooms with big birthing tubs and comfy beds.

At the birth/postpartum hotel, there is a midwife available at all times so that new parents can have help with their new baby at any time of the day or night.

Many women choose to birth at home or the birth centre and the local hospital also has nice birthing rooms if women prefer to birth there.

We are starting to understand how significant the transition from pregnancy to birth and postpartum is, and why it's important to have the right support during this life-changing experience. New mothers need all the support they can get, especially in the



Kirrah and Rachel at the Amsterdam Birth Centre

early days postpartum.

There should be more of a reverence and respect for the postpartum time. We need to acknowledge that the time after birth is a time of recuperation and regeneration.

Postpartum is a huge transition for the mother and her family. Having guidance and support helps everyone to feel calmer and happier.

In the Netherlands, they recognise how profound this time is and they have a system in place to support families. The best bit? This special postnatal service is available to everyone as part

of their standard health care. It is the norm to have extra care after you have a baby. On a societal level, there is an acknowledgment that the birth of a baby is a significant event.

In Dutch, 'Kraamzorg' refers to the postpartum time. In the Netherlands a postpartum service allows families dedicated support during the first eight days after they have their baby.

A Kraamverzorgster is a maternity nurse that visits the new family in their home and helps with caring for the mother and baby, doing checks, providing breastfeeding support, cleaning and meal preparation.

She typically visits the family every day for three to eight hours a day. This makes the transition during the first week so much more gentle.

This extra support allows the mother more time for rest and recovery and also gives her time to adjust to her new role. This in-home support also helps the family to feel more knowledgeable and empowered to parent the way they feel is best.

It seems that the Dutch are adjusting to parenthood better than many.

Honouring the journey that the mother is on goes a long way to helping create healthier societies. When lovingly supported, this transformation is a positive experience which effects not only the children, but the society as a whole.

If you want to feel more confident about birth and postpartum, please get in contact to receive your natural birth checklist which will help you feel more prepared. Visit: www.doulawisdom.com/natural-birth-checklist or contact Kirrah on 0429-308-851, or email: kirrah@doulawisdom.com

We are again back to Christmas, New Year and the Summer Solstice, a time of potentially resting and taking stock, but also a time that can be quite the opposite.

In Chinese cosmology the time around the solstice is the fifth Lunar month, the associated element is fire and the organ the heart. The heart is critically important in the continuation of physical life as well as being the seat of emotional, mental and spiritual life. Physical as well as mental, spiritual and emotional health depends on the heart ruling and allowing the knowledge of our interconnection. Looking at the season of Christmas and New Year it is a good time to strengthen connections or reconnect with people, also to take a break from routine to spend time with what is most important to us.

The fire animal is the horse, a creature that is spirited and charismatic.

Fire personalities are also charming, lively and spirited. They are imaginative, curious and inventive and pleasant to be around. They are not “driven” or particularly focussed, and may be quite changeable in their preoccupations and interests. If

A time of potentially resting

the fire element is unbalanced or disrupted people may become scattered and anxious. Symptoms can include nightmares, insomnia, palpitations, painful urination, mouth ulcers, skin problems and blood pressure irregularities. Fire type people can have a tendency to heat and inflammatory conditions.

The shen which is the most rarified form of qi resides in the heart. It is vitally important in spiritual and intellectual aspects of consciousness. A healthy grounded shen is needed to perceive and interact with the world clearly. A healthy shen gives rise to clear eyes with the sparkle of light.

The shen is disturbed by any emotional turmoil as well as other imbalances. Conditions that produce heat or yin and blood deficiencies can disturb the shen. At the extreme, shen disturbance can cause



by Brigid Beckett

manic behaviour and delusions. More commonly it results in anxiety, palpitations and insomnia.

The heart is regarded as the ruler of sleep. Sleep disturbances are caused by shen instability.

Deficiency of the blood or yin will result in the shen not being anchored so it dissipates rather than residing in the heart, resulting in dream disturbed sleep, anxiety, palpitations,

sometimes phobias or disorientation. Excess patterns of the heart causing insomnia involve heat and phlegm. They will usually produce serious agitation, sometimes mania and delusions. The problem is that the insomnia that these patterns produce, also make recovery more difficult, so it is emphasised to prioritise good sleep in any treatment regime.

The emotion associated with the heart is joy. Considering this it is an appropriate

time of year to appreciate heart energy, including the positive associations of creativity, connection and celebration. While at the same time protecting the heart energy. Burning the candle at both ends and overstimulation will injure the heart. This time of year can also raise problems with family issues which often lie at the root of emotional problems. The Daoist practices of meditation cared for the heart and shen, taking time for quietly addressing deeper issues in whatever way is useful is important.

I would like to wish everyone a very happy festive season where there is as much peace and solitude or happy connection with others as you want and need. Thank you for your valued support all year and very best wishes for the New Year.

Brigid Beckett is a registered acupuncturist working at Lismore Community Acupuncture. She can be contacted on 0431-702-560.

Peacocks and water



by Tonia Haynes
Bowen therapist, masseuse,
pranic healer



I was told a story, the other day, about a water dragon who fell in love with a male peacock on the wooden tables of the Bush Factory in Nimbin.

There they sat side by side for hours at a time, much to the amusement of the human on lookers. One might say it was an impossible union and when he finally flicked the dragon off with his new tail feathers for a most handsome of replacements, everyone probably shrugged their smug shoulders in resignation of what they already knew. ‘It had to happen.’ Nevertheless the water dragon waited for him for another two years before he disappeared.

I wonder with melancholy, if in his future, regrowing his tail became unexpectedly, less important.

Life, as we all know is filled with regrets, but that water dragon and that peacock created a tale worthy of telling twenty years after the event. And what’s more? It’s a tale with the potential to touch the hearts of those who still choose to have one.

Last week a neighbour and myself were faced with a pea hen, who literally fell out of her tree. The neighbour picked her up and cared for her with me helping occasionally. It was discovered she was suffering from heavy metal poisoning

and despite the neighbour’s best efforts, she died. Perhaps, it was because her foraging place was next to a long retired service station, where for many years they served leaded petrol.

I can see a few raised eyebrows and screwed cynical mouths at that one. Heavy metal poisoning from a long gone service station? Next thing they will be proving that the mercury in our amalgam dental fillings makes us sick.

Interestingly enough, even Lewis Carroll thought that mercury could make one doolally. Remember the mad hatter? He came from a time when they used mercury to cure the felt in their hats.

So, as I cried over the death of the pea hen I made a chicken curry. I excused my dichotomy of sanity/insanity by blaming the dental nurses, who, when I was a sprogling used to pacify my painful dental experiences by gifting me a ball of mercury to take home for play.

Being that I am a romantic, I think peacocks are a great asset to a town. They are excellent at keeping ticks and snakes at bay, look gorgeous and like the roosters, who also make the town extra cute, quickly learn the traffic rules while delighting the tourists. They, similar to the roosters give the impression that the people who live

among them prefer to be tolerant and kind. Something that is sadly lacking in most places.

I remember listening to a group of men, (most were new to the area) discoursing on the best way to kill and dispose of peacocks. Apparently they are not tasty eating, but they sound dreadful and poo on the roof, which ends up contaminating the water tanks.

The men were sitting on the verandah of a friend’s farmhouse on a farm that supports many peacocks. In all my thirty odd years of visits, I am still yet to see any of those exotic birds sitting on, or pooing on the roof. They are discouraged from doing so from the beginning and quickly learn their place. The friends are still happily free of any bacterial or viral disease and their only source of drinking water (which tastes delicious) comes from their own tanks.

This is unlike the tap water where I live. It may be free of disease, but it tastes as though it has been filtered through the dirty socks of a retired council worker. I understand that the council does its best to recycle whatever it can, but there is a limit.

Nevertheless, one must drink water. We are close to 80 percent water and dehydration can cause all

sorts of problems, including doolallyness.

The return argument of “drinking water makes me go to the toilet in the night” holds little water. It’s better to put those toxins into the loo than hold them in the blood stream where they can do extreme damage. And if drinking water becomes part of one’s regime, the night trips become less, due to there being less toxins to excrete. That info comes from my own experience and I’ve been practising for a very long time.

Water is, or was, in everything on this planet. Perhaps it’s the essence of water that makes us all one.

This hypothesis does not include the water barons, who have recently moved to this fine and special part of the world to suck the Earth’s life blood in order to sell it back to us, so that we can maintain our own life blood. I wonder which planet they come from?

Ya gotta laugh. After all, if we don’t stay aware, watery tears might well become an unaffordable luxury that only belongs to the very few.

Back, neck, shoulder, limb or digestive problems? I may well be able to help with a mix of Bowen therapy, remedial massage and spinal realignment.

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NATURAL LAW

by Helene Collard

For all Beings to survive and thrive in this world, the human species will expand their mind beyond the linear concepts of time and space – essentially, we must move beyond the physical.

With meditation, we train our mind to be still, we become master of the mind. With mindfulness, we focus in the present moment and increase connection with life around us. Both of these practices act like vehicles to the interdimensional highway that we humans are wired for.

When we expand beyond the physical, we fuel and nourish our Being with energy that activates our unique wisdom and knowledge. We find we flow with life more easily.

In addition, creativity in all its forms, and when done mindfully, will get your inner ‘juices’ flowing. When we find ways to express ourselves, what we feel, think and know, we tap into an under-used language that feeds our spirit and nourishes our soul.

Creativity holds the energy that will shift us from surviving to thriving. Neuroscience indicates that creativity is positively connected to healthy relationships – with ourselves and with others (i.e. wellbeing for all).

This December, be creative every-day. Write a poem over breakfast, a story after dinner. Let your feelings and ideas flow, no rules! Do some colouring-in, doodle on a notepad. Sing and dance. Notice how it feels to provide a creative outlet for your thoughts and feelings.

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Reiki treatment, I channel this ‘white light’ for the recipient, and Reiki works to restore the healthy flow of life energy.

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I also have a Level 2 Reiki course coming up in December, and many feel learning Reiki can be likened to a spiritual path, with a strong focus on personal development.

If you are after a Reiki treatment or thinking about learning Reiki, I’d love to hear from you. Contact Helene 0405-656-797 or: yemayacentre@gmail.com

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Helene has a Bachelor of Trauma & Healing (Law & Justice), is a Reiki master and the founder of the Yemaya Centre for Reiki & Wellbeing. She currently practices and teaches Reiki in Lismore. Helene is also a facilitator with We Al-li, delivering their Culturally Informed Trauma Integrated Healing Approach (CITIHA) around Australia. For information, enquiries and bookings visit: www.yemayacentre.com.au or phone 0405-656-797.