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 49 Cullen St, Nimbin  
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[nimbinartistsgallery@gmail.com](mailto:nimbinartistsgallery@gmail.com)

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## Christmas presents

by Tonia Haynes

It is a good feeling when someone says, "You bought me this. It was a long time ago, but it always makes me think of you."

Articles bought from the Nimbin Artists Gallery are always memorable, because all are exclusive in that they are an original and created by the imagination of someone, who lives within the Northern Rivers region.

The Artists gallery

exhibits many genres, from paintings, prints, pottery and jewellery, to unusual bookmarks, pretty mobiles and unusual, one-off cards. And many of these original creations are priced to fit the pocket of the ordinary person, who desires to buy something special for that special other.

Because we have great regard for the artists, who trust us to look after the brain child that began in their heart, every article sold



is carefully wrapped against damage and gift wrapping and postage is available. We also have a lay-by policy.

We are usually open between 10am and 4pm,



seven days a week, except for Christmas Day. Although, due to the gallery being run by volunteers only, sometimes, if it is quiet, we may close a little earlier.

## Unbound creativity at Serpentine

by Artis Tree

What a fantastic year at Serpentine Gallery this year!

It's been a big year for the team hosting 16 exhibitions and events, some world class exhibitions and some moving community events as our communities come back together again.

Serpentine has one more exhibition for 2023 and that is Unbound Creativity. This is a group show by artist members of the Serpentine. Each year we end our annual calendar of events with this Artist's Choice exhibition. We've called it Unbound Creativity this year, so artists feel free to exhibit any works they would like to show to you.

Join us on Friday 8th December, 6 - 9pm for this end of year exhibition and festive celebration. There will be a party atmosphere as we celebrate a big but beautiful year in the gallery. There will be 30 practising artists showcasing pottery, paintings, sculpture, printmaking, photography and recycled materials. Something for everyone.

Northern Rivers artist Josephine Window is entering a few paintings from her Brightness series. Josephine explains, "In my paintings, Brightness is not just an eye-catching array of beautiful colours. Brightness is so much more: bright intellect, bright happy spirit, bright star to lead the way out of the darkness, warmth of bright sunshine, vibrance of bright colours, bright eyes shining with curiosity and excitement, or gleaming with tears."

"I am excited by the colours, patterns and flow of Nature. This is where I find on-going inspiration for my abstract paintings."

Also pictured is a digital work by Rob Harle which states "...my mind drifts



'Brightness 1' by Josephine Window

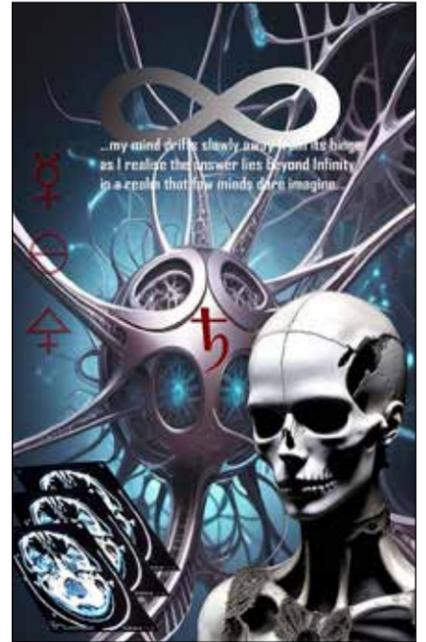
slowly away from its hinge as I realise the answer lies beyond Infinity in a realm that few minds dare imagine.

Rob is an accomplished digital artist, published poet, renowned sculptor and long-term exhibitor at Serpentine. Catch his and many other artists at the Unbound Creativity exhibition, which will run until we close for Christmas.

As we wind up the year we would like to thank all the artists who exhibited at Serpentine. We would like to congratulate all the people who bought artworks to take home or gift to others.

Supporting locally-made artworks puts money back in your community. Last but not least, take your hats off to our volunteer team. They cover every aspect of running a community gallery. They go above and beyond to provide something great for all of us.

Serpentine will be closed from 24th December to Monday 22nd January for some exciting renovations. We think



'Self Portrait #2' by Rob Harle

you will be pleasantly surprised.

We would like to wish you all the very best over the silly season and into the new year. From all of us at Serpentine, stay safe, play nice and feel free to create.

### Unbound Creativity – members show

Serpentine Community Gallery is winding up the year with its 17th exhibition and final members show with the theme 'Unbound Creativity', which is a broad theme, so pretty much anything goes.

This group show opens on Friday 8th December at 6pm and runs to Saturday 13th January at 2pm.

Serpentine Gallery is at 3/104 Conway Street, Lismore. Phone 0492-964-819.

## First annual Bangalow Ceramics Fair

Artist Collective Clay Northern Rivers (CNR) presents the first annual Bangalow Ceramic Fair.

Fifty local potters will showcase their works for sale across two days in an event designed for the whole family.

CNR organisers Trudy Gould and Brooke Jenkins say that the diversity and volume of work within the group means there is something to suit everyone's taste and a great way to support local artists, and meet the maker while Christmas shopping.

Seth and Lara from Sessle



Vases by Trudy Gould

B's Studio in Lismore will be performing live wheel throwing demonstrations to show you how pots are made on the potter's wheel. Emma Lang from The Maker Place has workshops running all weekend for both adults and

kids – decorate your very own piece of pottery on the breezy verandah!

The fair will be held at the Moller Pavilion, Bangalow Show grounds on Saturday

16th and Sunday 17th December, 8am to 3pm.

The leafy surrounds of the Pavilion are the perfect spot to take in the live music with coffee, pastries, gelato and food vans all on site. The artists have put together a huge lucky door prize so don't forget to get a ticket!

The Clay Northern Rivers collective comes together to support each other in their practices and hold community events to raise the profile of their members and engage with customers.

Makers of all skill levels are welcome Contact us at: [claynorthernrivers@gmail.com](mailto:claynorthernrivers@gmail.com)

# Final exhibition for 2023 at Blue Knob



'Black Cockatoos' by Gito von Schlippe



'Red Hat' by Peter Aland



Lamp Stand Bottle by Loraine Lintern

The Artist's Choice is the final exhibition for 2023, and with no designated theme the artists could bring in any works they wish to exhibit.

It's a bright and colourful exhibition with everything from paintings, ceramics to fibre and much more.

We have had a great year of exhibitions and this one has seen some artists exhibiting for the first time at the Gallery.

An opening event was held on Sunday, 19th November with local musician Andy Walker playing, and a wonderful array of nibbles provided by Blue Knob Cafe.

There is a great

opportunity to purchase a great piece of art or gifts for the holiday season. This exhibition will run through to Saturday, 27th January.

**Blue Knob Writers Group** meets weekly at Blue Knob Cafe on Sundays. For more info regarding the Writers Group, contact Alex 02 6689-7268 or Helen 0487-38-134.

**Paul Scott Retirement** – after nine years of dedication and volunteering as the manager of Blue Knob Café, Paul Scott will be retiring from Saturday, 23rd December, when the Gallery, Cafe and Ceramic Studio will take an annual break for three weeks.

Paul has been a tireless supporter of this community space and has grown the cafe to a place that has been appreciated by locals and visitors alike.

His support of volunteers at the Hall and his role on the management committee will be sorely missed.

**Blue Knob Cafe** – has an all-day breakfast menu, meals, specials, cake & coffee and will continue to run as usual until closing on Saturday, 23rd December.

**Holiday Closing Dates** – The Gallery/Cafe & Ceramic Studio will close after Saturday 23rd December, and re-open on Thursday, 18th

January. This is a slightly longer, but is a well-earned break for all the volunteers.

We couldn't do this without all those wonderful people and to all the locals, regulars and visitors who help keep this unique enterprise going.

On behalf of Blue Knob Hall Gallery, Cafe & Ceramic Studio we wish you all the best for the festive season, and look forward to bringing you more art, food and friendship in 2024.

For any enquiries please call 02-6689-7449, email: [bkhgallery@iinet.net.au](mailto:bkhgallery@iinet.net.au) or check Blue Knob Gallery, Cafe & Ceramic Studio Facebook page.

## Vibrant showcases

by Ruth Tsimbinis

Throughout November, visitors at the Roxy Gallery, Kyogle were captivated by the thought-provoking exhibition 'Return To Forever' by artist Charollette Sayer with accompanying wire sculptures by Ross Mathers.

This exhibition served as a poignant reflection on the critical issues of fauna extinction and the alarming impacts of climate change.

Sayer's evocative installations offered a dual perspective, delving into the sobering reality of society's role in planetary transformation while infusing elements of gentle humour, shedding light on the paradoxical ways humans contribute to these pressing concerns.

Sayer's powerful artistic vision not only sheds light on the urgency of these environmental issues but also encouraged a reflective and introspective experience, prompting viewers to contemplate their individual impact on the planet.

'Return To Forever' attracted an enthusiastic audience, drawing numerous individuals to the gallery who immersed themselves in the evocative works. Visitors engaged deeply with the artworks, sparking meaningful dialogues and contemplation around the pressing environmental challenges we face today.

### Tumbleweeds

This December marks a vibrant convergence of artistic expression as the Tumbleweed Artists, comprising of Gillian Day, Dilys Bond, Vickie Steward, Rebecca Hale, Linday Worgan, and Carol Horton gather for their inaugural group exhibition titled 'Blow-ins From A-far – But Here To Stay'.

The exhibition will run from 14th December to 14th January, with the official launch scheduled for Friday 15th from 6pm to 8pm, promising to be an evening of captivating artistry and shared experiences.

Drawing inspiration from the nomadic nature of tumbleweeds, each artist in this collective has embarked on a creative journey rolling into the art world with an eagerness to learn and grow.

Through mutual support and a shared passion for art, they have fostered an environment of encouragement, exchanging insights on mediums, techniques, and offering constructive feedback, nurturing a space where newfound friendships flourish.

The exhibition showcases the culmination of their collaborative efforts, where individual interests and talents have emerged from collective workshops and discussions. What began as a challenge to exhibit their works has evolved into a celebration of their artistic evolution.

The artworks on display and offered up for sale are a testament to their journey, evolving from shared activities to distinctive expressions, fuelled by a camaraderie that blossomed during their regular painting and drawing sessions.

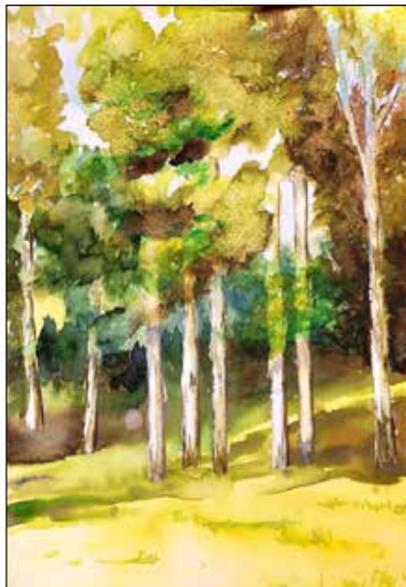
This unique exhibition invites the viewer to witness the collective spirit and creative synergy of the Tumbleweed Artists, captivating the essence of their collaborative exploration and the diverse paths each artist has embarked upon.

Join us as we celebrate this vibrant showcase of talent, unity and artistic growth.

Kyogle Council would like to acknowledge and thank all the volunteers



'End of the Road' by Gillian Day



'My backyard Cawongla' by Linday Worgan

who have willingly given their support to the Roxy Gallery during the 2023 year.

The Roxy Gallery will be closed on public holidays over the festive season.

## DIANBUNG GARDENS

Wed 20 December – Summer Solstice events:

**10am-3pm** Book Sale 10% off everything plus Cafe Refreshments

**4.30-5.30pm** Solstice Creatives and Traditions Workshop

**5.30-8pm** Celtic Solstice ceremony followed by sharing, music and food

**Gardens will be closed Dec 21-Jan 9**

**74 Cecil Street, Nimbin Phone 6689-1755**

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# Koalas losers in legal fight

by Dailan Pugh,  
North East Forest Alliance

Since July, legal action had stopped the Forestry Corporation logging nationally important Koala habitat in Braemar and Myrtle State Forests, south of Casino, though logging can now resume despite evidence of significant impacts on Koalas.

The stay on logging ended on 20th November when Justice Pritchard ruled as inadmissible the North East Forest Alliance's (NEFA's) expert evidence from Dr Steve Phillips that logging "will exacerbate koala population decline in these areas and, in the worst case scenario, could potentially lead to the extinction of local koala populations".

Justice Pritchard further ruled that there is no requirement for logging plans to account for site-

specific issues, such as the devastating impacts of the 2019/20 wildfires.

These forests are part of the State Government's Banyabba Area of Regional Koala Significance and identified by the Federal Government as Nationally Important Koala Areas.

In 2012, NEFA stopped logging in two of these forests after finding exceptional densities of koalas, which were verified by the EPA. Since then we have undertaken numerous searches to identify important koala habitat, though as the rules are progressively weakened it has been increasingly hard to protect it.

Most of the Banyabba koala population was killed in the 2019/20 fires, though NEFA surveys have found they are slowly recovering.

Soon after the Minns Government was elected with a promise to protect koalas, the Forestry Corporation



announced they intend to log known koala strongholds in Braemar and Myrtle State Forests.

The Minns Government should not be allowing the logging of most koala feed trees in identified strongholds, if it has any genuine intent to save them from extinction. Our attempts to get Penny Sharpe to intervene have been in vain. The NSW ALP are clearly

not fair dinkum.

NEFA have now assessed 56,000 ha of public forests in the southern Richmond, including Braemar and Myrtle State Forests, identifying that they:

- encompass 28,000ha of Nationally Important Koala Areas identified by the Commonwealth as a priority for reservation,
- provide habitat for 70 animal and 63 plant species threatened with extinction,
- contain 35,000ha of forest ecosystems that still fail to meet the 1997 national reserve targets,
- are within the NSW section of the South-East Queensland Bioregion, one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, which has only 14% in reserves, less than half the target of 30% reservation by 2030 that both State and Federal Governments have committed to,
- have the ability to regain in the order of 28 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> released into the atmosphere through past logging.

In the 2019/20 wildfires, 86% of these State Forests were burnt, with significant losses of trees and wildlife, including most Koalas. Now they are being logged, with the addition of some minor voluntary conditions, which allow over 70% of the large feed trees koalas depend upon to be cut down.

The world is overheating, droughts and fires are increasing and species retreating from rising temperatures. Meanwhile forestry is degrading wildlife habitat, bleeding taxpayer's money, increasing wildfire intensity, releasing stored carbon, and diminishing stream flows.

It's time for change. We have to hold our politicians to account. Make them honour their promises to save the koala and create a world class reserve system for this world biodiversity hotspot. See Protecting the Southern Richmond at: [www.nefa.org.au/koalas](http://www.nefa.org.au/koalas)

Please speak-up for the southern Richmond if you want to make a meaningful difference.

# Nimbin Hub up and running

The vision of Nimbin Hub and Storage was originally conceived in the late 1980's, with preparatory work commenced in the early 1990's.

It has certainly been a long journey, but the conception is to become a realisation. The initial self-storage spaces are now operational, and before this year is out, leasing of the first seven light industrial units will commence.

The main gates will then remain open during business hours. The community can expect exciting new businesses to emerge and be welcomed by customers.

The new light industrial spaces can already be previewed at: <https://nimbinhub.au/local-industry-arts/>

## New business and services

The Hub looks likely to contain:

- **Marley Designs** – Building design that redefines architecture by embracing the environment. Consult with Marley

Designs so that space utilisation, natural light, privacy, outdoor living spaces, environmental performance and spatial experience meets sustainability effortlessly! [www.marleydesigns.com.au](http://www.marleydesigns.com.au)

- **Om Alchemy** – Rooted in nature and handcrafted with love. Botanically infused skincare creations that aim to harmonise you with the Earth's rhythms. Intertwining love for oneself with love for the planet, Om Alchemy have created a range of earth-friendly skincare products that invite you to join a quiet dance with nature, to breathe, to embrace self-love, and to share in the harmony of an Earth-conscious lifestyle. [www.omalchemy.com.au](http://www.omalchemy.com.au)

- **Borg Labs** – A digital media studio, authoring, producing and providing post-production services over many of the creative disciplines, focused on video games, sound design and emerging digital content. Projects include Steam Games releases,

virtual instruments for music composers, simulator add-ons and more. [www.borglabs.net](http://www.borglabs.net)

- **Wild Dog MMA** – A mixed martial arts and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu academy. <https://wilddogmma.wixsite.com/wild-dog-mma>
- **Daily Printing Solutions** – A one-stop shop for all of your printing needs. <https://dailyprintingsolutions.com.au>

## Limited time and space to manifest your vision

Nimbin is geographically central to an extensive area, fast-growing population, and, after Lismore itself, it's the largest commercial centre in the Lismore LGA.

Nimbin Hub aims to assist new and existing businesses to provide services which may currently be inadequate or lacking. There's plenty of franchise opportunities and independent business models that would work.

There has been great interest in the new light industrial units. Renting the spaces is not too difficult but our on-going focus is to serve the overall community growth by selecting and

promoting dynamic business proposals that will flourish because they fill gaps in the local market.

For example, there is currently a profound need for automotive and mechanical services. One of the light industrial buildings has units with various features, including extra slab thicknessing for vehicle hoists and/or insertion of mezzanine levels. Up to four hoists could be installed in the larger unit, which also has graded trade waste capture for washdowns, oil separation etc.

The Hub still has capacity to accommodate these services but has received no serious applications for this sort of thing...

The sale and service of farm equipment, such as mowers, tractors, chainsaws, brush cutters, pumps and the like would also work really well and is currently lacking.

But with most of light industrial spaces taken up already, this rare opportunity won't last. If you're interested in establishing a business at Nimbin Hub, or you know of someone suitable, the time is now to make contact through the website: <https://nimbinhub.au>

## NIMBIN HUB



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# Visitors from Sakhalin

by Scott O'Keefe, ecologist

These visitors from Russia have just arrived; if you're lucky or persistent you might see one before they head back to Sakhalin or nearby Hokkaido in Japan in February.

The Latham's Snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*) is a wading bird that weighs a bit more than a lemon. They are brownish, with a mottled appearance, like many wading birds.

They have a long bill for probing in mud and shallow water for their food, chiefly insects and their larvae.

On their breeding grounds they inhabit shallow marshes, river flats, grassland and pastures – wherever there is shallow water or boggy ground.

As we've altered the natural

landscape, Latham Snipes have had to make more use of created habitat such as ditches, settling ponds, rice paddies and airfields.

Latham's Snipe arrive in Australia between August and October.

Almost all of the World's Latham's Snipes migrate to wintering grounds in Australia, mostly wetlands in Victoria and Tasmania, but also NSW.

They turn up in the Northern Rivers every year around this time, and if you are patient, you might see them around the edges of little-used farm dams or in boggy fields.

There's one outside my window as I write.

The current world population is estimated at about 36,000, of which about 500 pairs breed on Sakhalin Island, with possibly 12,000 pairs

breeding on Hokkaido. Although they've been saved from the pot by a ban on hunting in Japan, and Australia (in place since 1983) they're still at risk of decline because of habitat loss and degradation.

This is despite the RAMSAR Convention, which is supposed to oblige signatory states to ensure conservation of migratory species' habitat. It's no guarantee for the snipe though.

Urban development is eating away at the edges of snipe wetlands in the Eastern states. Goodness knows what the effects of our unbridled obsession with cats and dogs is having on snipe in these near-urban wetlands.

It's encouraging though, that snipe are able to make use of created habitats like farm dams. Yet another



Photo courtesy Queensland Dept of Environment and Science

reason to fence off farm dams and billabongs to keep cattle out.

It beggars belief that such a small bird flies 9000km from its breeding grounds on Sakhalin Island in Siberia, to spend its winters in

Australia.

In spring they all fly back, 9000 km, to Siberia, on wings that span 55cm.

Let that sink in as you appreciate their effort.

## A better housing policy: Good foundations

by Scott O'Keefe ecologist

The diversity of species and structures in the original ecosystems in the Northern Rivers is striking. It can be seen in the remnant undamaged ecosystems we still have.

Walk through any of the mountain parks and you'll notice the huge variety of plant species and physical structures. Tree hollows, fluted, tangled stems, rock outcrops, hollow logs, upturned roots, knotted vines, brush piles and diverse bark textures.

Contrast this variety with what you see in grazed paddocks, city parks or even a young revegetation area. These just don't have the diversity of structures that provide niches for biota-sleeping areas, breeding sites, refuges from predators and shelter against adversity.

Transformed landscapes and ecosystems that are degraded lose species and important physical structures that support varied and abundant fauna. The physical structures arise from vegetation and landforms that may be almost absent in new ecosystems, such as farm land and urban areas.

These structures are as important as floral variety in healthy ecosystems, but their importance is often overlooked. Artificial replacements for these structures often become

an end in themselves in a rush to quick solutions to complex problems. But they are just tools, so artificial habitat structures may end up mistakenly applied in conservation work.

Sadly, they are also cynically misused to greenwash destructive land use by inflating claims that they can offset large scale destruction. But nest boxes, roosts, wildlife overpasses, artificial islands or any of the various artificial habitat structures are not a panacea.

Promoting them with grandiose claims of effectiveness encourages the unscrupulous to continue destructive practices with the approval of the unsuspecting.

To solve a conservation problem, define it clearly and have well thought out objectives. Don't start by picking a tool and making your project revolve around it. Develop a plan that draws on science to formulate the best approach and materials to achieve your objectives.

So, when might artificial structures be appropriate? For starters they are most suited for use at small scales. If you are targeting a particular species or group, you need a thorough understanding of its life history and place in the ecosystem.

You need to understand its requirements and the processes that adversely affect it. This means using the best validated science, possibly with some



Squirrel Gliders at home in an artificial nest box.

Photo: Tony Marsh

additional research on your target species and the landscape where you are working. Unless you have the right information to develop a good plan, your efforts might be wasted.

Incorrectly used artificial structures can have serious adverse impacts on the species you are trying to assist. Your target species could suffer from increased predation, exposure to disease, threats from invasive species or exposure to dangerous adverse conditions. Even with the best of intentions, you might inadvertently be attracting wildlife to a conservation black hole.

If you are trying to increase the number of nesting cavities for a particular

species of bird that normally uses natural tree hollows for nesting and if these are missing in the area where you are working, you might decide to remedy the deficit by installing artificial hollows.

You build replacements from milled timber, then place them where you think they will attract occupants. But you have not designed the structures knowing the target species' needs. Maybe the materials used do not provide protection against extremes in temperature or humidity. This could adversely affect breeding.

Perhaps you install the structures in the wrong position or orientation. The size and shape of the structures might draw

predators that consume the occupants or they might suit invasive species or competitors more than your target species which might be driven out.

These very real problems can be addressed by researching the target species and monitoring your program so that improvements can be made. A real example of a failed project illustrates.

When the Hume Highway in NSW was widened, many old trees were removed. These provided nesting cavities for Superb Parrots, Brown Treecreepers, and Squirrel Gliders among others.

In an offset agreement, the contractor widening the road was to replace lost tree hollows, one for one. There was no obligation to prove their effectiveness. No monitoring was required and the contractor was under no obligation to find another remedy if the nest boxes failed.

When the program was independently assessed years after its completion it was declared an abject failure. From the outset it was prematurely assumed that the importance of old trees was only as a source of 'hollows' for three vertebrate species.

A simplistic proposal to mitigate impact, for three species only by replacing trees with artificial hollows was adopted. About 600 of them were installed with

little research on suitability, design or placement.

Four years later, of the 600 only seven were occupied by squirrel gliders, two by brown treecreepers, with none being taken up by superb parrots. 10% had fallen apart. The artificial hollows were readily occupied by predatory exotic black rats and feral honeybees to the detriment of other native animals.

The follow up study did not show that nest boxes are intrinsically useless. The researchers concluded that the project was not planned or informed by good science. The one-to-one replacement ratio was far too low, and there was no research demonstrating what designs would be accepted by the target species.

The researchers suggested that alternatives, including planting extensive woodlands in areas adjacent to the widened highway might have been more effective. Monitoring is critical if we want to improve our use of artificial structures in conservation.

In the right situation, when correctly used created structures can be useful conservation tools, but they can never address the cause of wildlife loss – broad scale ecosystem destruction.

In the thrilling sequel, I'll talk about how citizens have worked with scientists to implement some amazing conservation projects that use artificial structures.

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# Nimbin Garden Club notes



by Kerry Hagan

In November, the Garden Club visited the property of Carly and Scott in Robb Road.

Carly and Scott have only been here for 18 months on their seven-acre share on Robb Farm Hamlet.

Prior to coming here, Carly studied a system of agriculture called Syntropics, and they have tirelessly put this method in place.

Syntropics utilises a canopy of eucalypts under which fruit and nut trees as well as veggies are grown.

They initially planted around

200 tube stocks of mixed eucalypts which have now reached a height of about two metres. This provides shade and protection to the understory of food planting, as well as drawing water up into the gardens.

The idea is that it mimics natural rainforest, and as the trees

reach a certain height, they are pruned and the prunings are left as mulch.

It has certainly been very successful for Carly and Scott in a very short period of time. For anyone who is interested, ABC's *Gardening Australia* has a fairly detailed article on-line under the

topic 'Syntropics'.

Thanks Carly and Scott for a really fascinating afternoon.

## Christmas Party

Nimbin Garden Club is holding our Christmas party on Saturday 9th December at 12 noon at 336 Stony Chute Road.

Members are asked to bring mains, salads or dessert as a contribution to our feast. Guests are really welcome for a cost of \$10. Wine and bubbly are provided.

We will also be drawing our massive Christmas raffle.

## 60,000-year rule

Fire ants have made it as far south as Murwillumbah, Devils Fig is running rampant and there seem to be less and less people that are in the fight to stem the spread.

Sometimes I think this country was just never meant to be settled, (or perhaps tamed would be a better phrase).

Ice core records suggest that a 30-year drought is not uncommon in Australia. 60,000 years ago our whole community here would have just up and

left to go somewhere else, more productive, better hunting, probably the coast. 60,000 years ago we would have done things much differently, or would we?

I am slowly becoming aware that the many human behavioural traits that originated in the cave man era are still alive and well today. The more I apply this 60,000-year theory, the more truth it yields. Of course, this is only a theory, but one that is apparently gathering a lot of momentum amongst human behavioural psychologists.

The theory is this: That humans still exhibit the same behavioural patterns that evolved during the 60k years or so when we were living at the behest of the natural world, i.e. our population was kept in check by natural disasters, disease etc. Some examples of this might be:

- ♦ **Male mid-life crises:** Many men find it necessary to feel young again and look for the spice of life around age 45. For most of our time on earth, a 45-year old was an old man, and one successful to have lived that long. So we now experience a mid-life crisis that originally evolved to spend male seed quickly and send out a generation of hopefully more evolved offspring before death.
- ♦ **Children's evolving taste buds:** Kids will eat anything you give them up until a certain age. Usually about the same time they become independently mobile and can explore their worlds safely, they get fussy about the food they eat. This behaviour would have protected children in a hostile environment when not everything was safe to eat 60k years ago.
- ♦ **Greed:** Greedy behaviour can be translated as fear of not enough to go around and consequent hoarding of stuff, assets etc. It is easy to see that this sort of behaviour once may have been necessary for survival, especially in harsh climates where food and fire was scarce. Interestingly, it seems also obvious that cultures that did not evolve in harsh landscapes, or where evolutionary pressure was high, are less greedy than most white fellas.

Most of us quickly forget the fact that most of the world that we take for granted now has only been a reality for less than 200 years, so we are really playing catch-up on evolutionary terms.

Our social interactions, our sense of community, our instinctive behaviours that ensured our survival were all programmed in when the earth was still considered flat and the wheel was just a toy a kid was playing with.

Our challenge now is to transcend the primitive reality and become the enlightened conscious soul that our long-term path on Earth will require if we are not to become just another extinction statistic.

Stuart McConville runs Pooh Solutions, compost toilets and waste water services: [www.poohsolutions.com.au](http://www.poohsolutions.com.au) phone 0427-897-496



View from the loo  
by Stuart McConville

## Swift action after fire ants detected at South Murwillumbah

Tweed Shire Council is working closely with NSW and Federal government authorities after red imported fire ants were identified in South Murwillumbah – the first positive detection of the pests in the Tweed Shire.

The fire ant infestation was detected on a vacant block in the new industrial estate at Quarry Road, South Murwillumbah, owned by Tweed Shire Council.

Mayor of Tweed Shire Chris Cherry said, "We were very grateful to see such a swift response from the National Fire Ant Eradication Program inspectors and NSW DPI staff on the ground."

The NSW DPI is leading



NSW DPI Project Officer Invasive Invertebrates Pauline Lenancker and National Fire Ant Eradication Program Direct Nest Injection Technician Jarred Nielsen treat one of the fire ant nests.

the control, tracing, and communications by implementing an emergency

biosecurity order across a radius of 5 km from the site in South Murwillumbah.

All businesses and residents within that radius are restricted in how they can move potential fire ant carrier materials without permission.

The following types of materials are restricted: mulch, woodchips, compost, sand, gravel, soil, hay and other baled products.

Anyone who suspects fire ants on their property is urged not to disturb the nest but to report the activity to the NSW DPI by calling 1800 680 244 or visiting: [dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/forms/report-exotic-ants](http://dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/forms/report-exotic-ants)

More detail on the National Fire Ant Eradication Program can be found on-line at: [www.fireants.org.au](http://www.fireants.org.au)

## Bushwalkers descend on Iron Pot Creek

by Peter Moyle  
Nimbin Bushwalkers Club

The year is winding down for the Nimbin Bushwalkers. We do not walk in December and January; as the days warm up, we retire to cooler activities.

Our last weekend away and walk took us to the Toonumbar National Park and a camp at Iron Pot Creek campground.

This is a beautiful inland campground that does not get heavy usage and is one of our favourites and we highly recommend it – beautiful shady and wind-protected sites with a lovely creek running by. Ideal for a few days' getaway and not too far, about 40 minutes, west of Kyogle.

The Murray Scrub walk is a must-do while here. It is only a couple of minutes drive from the campground, but is popular for day visits as well.

As a remnant of the big scrub, it is the usual gorgeous rainforest with all the trees to go with it.

A bonus is a magnificent Red Cedar that survived the heavy logging of years gone by. The variety of fungi is a reward as well.

A couple of social events are planned, and over the last couple of years we have found paddling on some of our rivers and dams to our liking.

We have our AGM early in December, always well attended and usually a short



Leading the way on the Murray Scrub walk

meeting and then discussion on next year's walks.



As usual, all our walks were well attended with an average of 14 walkers, and the weekends away were also well supported and they will feature again in 2024.

In the January edition of NGT we will list our early year walks, and our Facebook page will also have details.

Until next year and a new variety of walks, Merry Xmas to all.



Above: Michelle with her favourite tree  
Below: Mark with the stunning fungi



# Behaviour is communication

by Suzy Maloney

Behaviour is a means of communication, and all behaviour has a functional element.

'Challenging' behaviour can be described as communicating unmet needs. When horses behave in a way that challenges us, we need to question why they're behaving in this way. If we consider the origins of the behaviour and what the message behind it might be, it may help us understand the meaning of it and avoid attaching labels or being judgemental.

It can be challenging to find effective strategies to address a horse's behaviour while managing the effect of that challenging behaviour on us. As humans we can have intense emotional responses when things 'go wrong' which clouds our ability to think clearly. We might feel anger, resentment, ineffectiveness, and frustration. Sometimes we can take it personally, thinking the horse is doing it deliberately to give us a tough time. We may react in a negative way toward the horse. As soon as our stress levels rise, it becomes difficult to think calmly and clearly about a situation.

When a horse is unwilling to participate in or cooperate with what we are asking or the situation at hand, we can see them as being 'resistant' and/or 'unmotivated'. However, we need to examine the possibility that the behaviours are the horse's way of expressing an unmet need or a communication of not understanding. Finding out what this unmet need is may help us respond to the behaviour in a more positive and productive way, resulting in a better outcome for both us, and the horse. Or if we determine

that the horse does not understand, then we have an opportunity to introduce them to the concept calmly and patiently.

Ideally, we want to separate the behaviours of concern from the horse, and just look at them objectively. Here are three ways to help us understand behaviour:

- The internal approach views the behaviour as originating from the horse and can include such things as temperament, emotional state, level of training, breed, character.
- The external approach views the behaviour as being a result of the environment. Examples are noise, novelty of a new location, other horses, and new people.
- The interactional approach considers the interaction of both internal and external factors, the interactions between us, the horse, others and the environment.

One good question we can ask ourselves is 'what's the function of the behaviour, what does the horse gain by expressing it?' This can help us see the situation through the horses' eyes and understand their point of view.

Primarily we want to bring awareness to our own tendencies to label horses as being bad, difficult, naughty or any other of the numerous names I've heard people call horses. When we slip into this labelling way of thinking we disempower the horse, ourselves, and our ability to look at the situation, in an open and constructive way.

I know that at times it can be difficult to retain our cool when horses seem to be pushing our buttons. But the thing to keep in mind is that it's not deliberate, it's not personal, it's not about us. It's just another species communicating with us in a way that's



Suzy and Rumpy the brumby

different to how people do.

At the end of the day, if we can't keep a cool head, the best thing is to walk away and chill for a while or try another day. If our stress levels rise and we feel triggered, we may later regret the interaction with the horse and set both our training and our relationship with them back.

The goal is to accept what's happening and open ourselves to helping the horse instead of trying to 'fix them' or make them do something. The horses pick up on this intention, they know when we're on their side. This perspective helps us deal with challenging behaviours more effectively and makes the time spent with horses far more pleasurable for both us, and them.

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# The flight response in horses

by Les Rees

Horses need to feel safe and like all animals it's part of all our genetic makeup.

The difference for our horses is that they are flight animals and they have a brain that has to make split second decisions concerning the need to flee from danger. This is often misunderstood in the belief that a horse has a behavioural problem.

I used to label it as the 'lights on, nobody in syndrome' as I had a horse that had a number of dangerous issues concerning his flight response. Bucking and rearing was a common event when this beautiful boy first came to live with our family. Not good for creating confidence when it happened on a daily basis while riding him.

He was a 16.3hh thoroughbred, bred for the racing industry and was an extreme athlete. It didn't help that he was also shut down, a horse that had been misunderstood and treated badly who had switched off from any relationships with humans whom he saw as the enemy.

The interesting point is that when he bucked me off, he seemed totally unaware of the event preceding it, genuinely seeming surprised that I was on the ground. After the first few times he stopped being afraid of coming back to me as he feared the treatment that he'd received from previous owners, which made me all the more determined to get to the bottom of this horse's problems.

There can be many reasons why these reactions occur, ranging from physical to psychological problems. This isn't helped by the fact that the safety of the horse is controlled by the unconscious part of the brain working in tandem with the sympathetic nervous system that controls reactions to flight responses. This would explain why my horse seemed perplexed by finding me on the ground when the last time he was aware of my presence I was sitting his back.

One of the first things I did was to look into his history and I discovered that he had been broken in by a notorious cruel man. This would explain his fear of humans. The next discovery was that he had been owned by a lady, who had decided that he was too dangerous to ride.

As a result he was left alone in a paddock for months, and eventually found with his leg trapped in a wire fence. These two events of his short life had caused so much damage both physically and psychologically.

The one thing I was sure of was that I wasn't going to give up on this poor beautiful boy. It took a huge amount of time to gain his trust and I began with creating a regimented system where there were precise times when things would happen during each day.

Traumatized horses soon get used to the regime and can relate to knowing what to expect at any time during the day. This in my view is when the horse can begin to build trust via positive expectations. He was always treated with care, respect, love and



understanding. I never once lost my temper with him!

Gradually the layers were peeled away and I had myself one amazingly beautiful horse that went on to teach me so much not only about him but also the other horses that came to join our family.

I cannot express strongly enough the importance of fully understanding the flight response in horses. If you increase your awareness of the way in which your horse reacts to stressful situations, you can always discover gentle ways to introduce them to their fears in a safe environment to enable you to reinforce positive outcomes.

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