

A TASTE OF ART

blueknob hall
gallery

Blue Knob Ceramic Studio
Blue Knob Cafe

Gallery & Cafe hours:
Thurs 10am - 3pm, Fri 10am - 3pm
Sat 8:30am - 3pm, Sun 10am - 3pm

Ceramic Studio: Thurs - Sat 10am - 3pm
Ph: 0266897449 www.blueknobgallery.com

Nimbin artists display diversity in Gunnedah

NIMBIN ARTISTS GALLERY

OPEN DAILY
10am - 4 pm

49 Cullen St, Nimbin

CONTACT: PH 02 6689 1444
www.nimbinartistsgallery.org
nimbinartistsgallery@gmail.com



Above: Woodworker Paul Rodjuska among the artworks on show. Right: The Nimbin artists whose works were taken to the exhibition curated by the Gunnedah Bicentennial Regional Gallery.



by Karen Welsh

The Nimbin Diversity exhibition, held at the invitation of the Gunnedah Bicentennial Regional Gallery, has been a new and interesting experience for both the Nimbin Artists Gallery and many of our local artists.

Gunnedah could be considered to have many different values to our local region – a hot dry climate, large monoculture agriculture and a vast coal mining industry across the scenic Liverpool Plains.

These differences brought forth our

invitation – to showcase our local artists diversity in colour, form and artistic expression.

Gunnedah has an excellent art space, provided by the council, and co-located with the tourist information centre. Volunteer staff are the backbone of the art space.

We were all warmly welcomed and supported with good Opening Night attendance, and we received great feedback to Donna Sharam's artist talk and workshop.

While we had some good sales, overall, they reflected a general

downturn from everyone's rising costs, leaving even less for the joy and beauty of artworks.

The Gunnedah 'market' highlighted that Nimbin is fortunate to tap into that additional market of tourism, a bonus added to our solid loyal locals.

December is a great time to visit your local gallery, come in and enjoy a visual treat and consider your gift-giving options.

Nimbin Artists Gallery closes only on 25th December; all other days we open 10 to 4-ish, in the heart of the village on Cullen Street, or see us on FB.



The fibre of nature on show

In the exhibition 'Rooted', outsider artist Lae Oldmeadow taps into the primal wisdom embedded in plants and trees such as the mighty hoop pine bark.

Perched high on a hilltop near Blue Knob in the massive Tweed Shield Caldera, Oldmeadow's studio is surrounded by such remnant Gondwanan plants.

Lae said, "My sculptural works are odes to the very fibre of nature. Using discarded organic material, I reveal the miraculous patterns and textures embedded in leaves, roots and bark."

Born at Ipswich, Queensland in 1956, Oldmeadow trained as an upholsterer in Emerald, Central Queensland and set up a showroom on the Gold Coast which he ran until 1991.

He then moved to the Northern Rivers where he began his artistic practice working exclusively with local native fibres, effectively upholstering nature.

'Rooted' features highlights from his entire body of work, alongside new sculptural hanging works which continue his three decade-old fascination with the possibilities of coir thread unravelled from an old carpet.

Using a solar-powered domestic sewing machine, Oldmeadow fashions the thread into intricate forms, then painstakingly hand-stitches them into what appear to be living beings that speak to our essential connection to Earth.

His exhibition will run from 12th December – 12th January at the Roxy Gallery, 131 Summerland Way, Kyogle.



'Rooted' 2024, sisal twine sewn to canvas padded with organic cotton

"Oh most noble greenness, rooted in the sun, and who shines in bright serenity upon the wheel, nothing on Earth can comprehend you." – Hildegard of Bingen (1098 – 1179)

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Christmas at my place with Cherie

by Cherie Pugh

After six years of painting the views from the community of Jarlanbah, just outside Nimbin, I am opening my alternative home as an art gallery over the Christmas holidays.

If you are interested in large acrylic landscapes of eagles soaring over our dramatic mountains, or egrets knee-deep in waterlilies, please feel

welcome to drop by on Saturday afternoons between 2-4pm, through the school holidays.

Over the last year I have also been inspired to depict my Maori and Viking gods, in ink and watercolour.

My artworks are for sale. Prices vary, bargains are available, and cash gets you a 10 percent discount.

I am located at Jarlanbah, Lot 6/78 Cecil Street, first on the right. It's a five-

minute drive from Nimbin.

Please leave your dogs at home. Jarlanbah's 'No Dogs' policy is strictly followed, as my garden is a successful refuge for rare and vulnerable wildlife, including long-nosed bandicoots, nightjars, and quail thrush.

Please also note that the Jarlanbah community has a speed limit of 25kph, and come quietly.

Hope to see you at my place!

Get ready to celebrate the season artistically



by Stefanie Bassett

After opening earlier this year, the Converge studio has become a vibrant hub where 11 talented local artists have channelled their passions and creativity into a stunning array of artwork.

Join us at the Converge Xmas Bazaar on Friday 13th December, 5-9pm and Saturday, 14th December, 10am-3pm at the old Dulux paint shopfront at 123 Woodlark Street in Lismore, as these artists showcase their

unique creations.

From ceramics and screen-printed wares to paintings, film and dance, there's something unexpected and exciting for everyone!

Expect a lively atmosphere with music, surprises and plenty of spontaneous frivolity. Don't miss out on this festive celebration of art, creativity, and community on Bundjalung Country.

Mark your calendars for the Converge Xmas Bazaar – art, trash and treasures await!

The Artist's Choice & Blue Knob Ceramic Studio



The Artist's Choice exhibition is the current show at Blue Knob Hall Gallery.

This exhibition frees the artists from the constraints of a theme and allows for a wider variety of work. This show has a different feel, and the work that has come in from the artists is diverse, interesting and playful.

Jenny Blow's hand-painted rocks, and Susan McGeever's ceramic girl in a 'Butterfly Garden' would fit any child's dream of creating a fairy garden.

There are colourful, exuberant paintings such as Linda Frylink Anderson's 'China

'Forest Bathing' by Lessi Rees

Cats in the Garden', and the cool and calming works by Lessi Rees and Helen Douglas.

Blue Knob Ceramic Studio-teachers and students also present their work in this exhibition. Since its inception, the ceramic studio space has become an incredibly popular, creative space for the novice and the experienced potter/artists who continue to dive in and explore the medium.

Over the last eight years, this studio and



'Rock Your House' by Jenny Blow



'China Cats in the Garden' by Linda Frylink Anderson

the volunteer teachers have made a huge contribution to the arts and fuelled the creative juices of many people who have come through the door.

Blue Knob Cafe has great gourmet toasties freshly made, pies, savoury pastries, specials, cakes, coffee and drinks. We look forward to seeing you on the cafe veranda for food, art and a great view of Blue Knob. See our Facebook page for more info about the Café.

Blue Knob Writers Group meet weekly at Blue Knob Cafe on Sundays. For more info, contact Alex 02 6689-7268 or Helen 0487-385-134.

Blue Knob Vocal & Instrumental Group meet on Thursdays from 3.45pm at Blue

Knob Hall. Everyone is welcome, just turn up, or for more info call Peter 0458-487-865.

A huge thank-you to all the volunteers, artists and members who keep this great community arts space going. A thank you to the greater community who continue to visit, enjoy the café, and participate in events at the Hall.

Blue Knob Hall Gallery, Café & Ceramic studio volunteers are taking their annual break from Monday 23rd December and re-opening on Thursday 16th January.

We wish you all a great Festive Season and look forward to seeing you again in the New Year.

Group ceramics exhibition

HELD 2024 is the end of year group exhibition by first year Lismore TAFE Diploma of Ceramics students, curated by the Creative Arts department.

The works range from wheel-thrown functional wares to hand-built sculptural works.

Teapots, lighting,

embossed bowls, wall pieces, sculptural creatures, ocean-inspired vessels, pots, vases and more.

Opening night: Friday 6th December, 5pm – 8pm with drinks and nibbles.

The venue is TAFE NSW Lismore Campus, room V1-22, V Block at Southern Cross University, Military

Road, East Lismore.

The exhibition will be open on Saturday 7th, Monday 9th, Tuesday 10th and Wednesday 11th December, 10am – 3pm.

Held in our hands,
Held in our hearts,
Held in creativity,
Held intention.



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What's on at Flourish Sanctuary

by Jagad Samuel

Another milestone

We're thrilled to announce that Flourish has been recognised by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) as a registered not-for-profit charity.

This milestone reflects our dedication to creating a space for personal growth, spiritual exploration, community building and environmental care. A heartfelt thank you to the more than 100 people who have supported Flourish reaching this point to date.

Thanks WWOOFers

A big shout out to Katie from Adelaide, Kanami from Japan, and Aalok from India for their invaluable contributions as WWOOFers in November.

Thanks to their hard work, the veggie garden is now planted with a variety of summer crops, and several important upgrades and repairs have been completed around the property.

There is an interesting synchronicity between where these WWOOFers are from and the countries that Jagad has visited this year. While we can't explain this, it is interesting and just a little bit eerie.

Special Satsangs

Jagad's Satsangs this month have focused on the non-dual nature of reality. His teachings have emphasised that enlightenment is not achieved through adopting new practices but rather by



letting go of everything. This perspective offers participants the opportunity to step beyond conditioned habits.

The final two Satsangs of the year with Jagad will take place on: 8th December, 1 – 3pm at Mullumbimby; and 15th December, 1 – 3pm at Flourish Sanctuary, followed by a potluck meal.

Don't miss these opportunities to reflect and connect before the year ends.

Upcoming special events

- The Spirit of Water – 7th December. Join us for a transformative gathering centred on connecting with the Spirit of Water. This day-long event will include meditation, sound healing, and ceremonial practices designed to cleanse emotional blockages, activate intuition, and rejuvenate the soul.
- Natural Awareness Day – 8th December. This day offers a unique opportunity to deepen your connection to nature through guided meditation, mindful

movement, and discussions about living harmoniously with the natural world.

• World Peace Festival – 31st December to 4th January. A drug- and alcohol-free festival celebrating unity, creativity, and shared aspirations for a better world. With a diverse line-up of performances, workshops, and meditations, the festival promises something for everyone.

Early bird tickets are available now through: www.worldpeacefestival.com.au We encourage you to secure yours early. Flourish has some on-site accommodation, camping, and delicious food from local food vendors to ensure an immersive experience. Calling for volunteers now.

Weekly activities

- Monday Meditations (10.45am – 12pm): Ease into the week with a grounding meditation session. Contact Jagad at 0433-173-508 if you need assistance getting from

- town to Flourish.
- Tuesday Men's Group (6 – 8pm): A safe and supportive space for men to connect and grow.
- Thursday Sound Healing (9.30 – 10.30am): Experience the therapeutic sounds of Michael Deanshaw as he facilitates deep relaxation and healing.

Radio and retreats

Don't forget to tune into Jagad's weekly radio show on NimFM 102.3, every Monday from 7.30 to 9am, for inspiring conversations and updates from the Sanctuary.

Meanwhile, preparations are underway for a Tai Chi retreat in January. This retreat promises to be a serene and rejuvenating way to kickstart the year. Stay tuned for more details!

Looking ahead to 2025

As we prepare for the new year, Flourish Sanctuary is calling for facilitators and event organisers to host retreats and workshops in 2025.

Our beautiful venue, nestled in the heart of Nimbin, offers the perfect setting for transformative gatherings. If you're interested, please reach out via our website.

Flourish Sanctuary is buzzing with activity this December, and we hope you'll join us in celebrating community, growth, and peace. Visit us on-line at: www.flourishsanctuary.com.au for more information.

We look forward to welcoming you to Flourish!

Christmas fears and loneliness

by Julia Lincoln,
Kinesiologist

My thoughts leading up to Christmas are more to do with emotional trauma and loneliness. Depending on your point of view or religious beliefs, if any, many dread Christmas for fear of being excluded and isolated.

I am offering a reduced price during December for a one-hour session to anyone who may need some help for any type of emotional trauma, or need to talk and offload the stress.

I always give people a choice of how a session proceeds and I don't expect people to relate all their personal details.

For some people being coerced into talking may re-traumatise them; and often, by the time someone comes to me, by verbally speaking of their experiences with different people they have relived the situation many times over.

Everything depends on the individual and what they can



and can't cope with and how comfortable they feel.

I also find it interesting how the mind can play tricks with you, including myself.

Despite feeling lonely, traumatised or isolated, the mind may come up with visual images of happy families celebrating with great joy, many presents, kids having a great time, and here you are all alone and feeling like nobody cares.

Paying attention to what the mind is filtering through is good self-awareness.

The best thing is to always seek the company of other like-minded people and not allow yourself to be left alone if it's causing grief or other types of stress, and keep busy.

This one-day-a-year event, for many, is best when it's over, at least in my opinion.

For an appointment, contact me on 0434-919-172.

Growing together: Aquarius Park Landcare



by Rain Wickham, Nimbin Community Centre

The Aquarius Park Landcare Group is making a difference in our community, one plant at a time.

This dedicated team of volunteers meets every third Saturday of the month at 7.30am to care for and regenerate Aquarius Park, creating a thriving green space down at the Nimbin Rainbow Walk.

We welcome new faces to join us! So come along, bring your gloves and be part of the change!

To stay connected or to get involved, join our Friends of Aquarius Park Facebook group or email us at: landcare@nimbincommunity.org.au to join our emailing list.

Skeletons on the Hill

by Scott O’Keeffe, ecologist

Last month I wrote about a spectacularly coloured bug attacking the citrus trees in my orchard.

The fun continues this month as native trees on the edge of the orchard are stripped by clouds of metallic leaf beetles.

Leaf beetles are a family of insects (*Chrysomelidae*) that contains around 50,000 species. This is probably an underestimate. Most of the world’s insects have not been studied and loads have not yet even been noticed.

They are called ‘leaf beetles’ since many species are conspicuous when they are feeding on plant foliage.

As far as we know, all *Chrysomelidae* consume plant material. The adults of most species feed only on the living foliage of flowering plants (angiosperms).

The diets of larva and adults are sometimes the same or very similar, but larva often consume a much

wider variety of plant tissues.

This includes seeds, pollen, flowers, bark, leaves, and roots depending upon the species. The larva of some semi-aquatic species feed on the submerged roots of aquatic plants.

The *Metallic* leaf beetles are iridescent or have a metallic sheen. Many of the species are in the genus *Callidemum*, which is well represented in Australia. Members of this genus have a wide range of host plants.

Australia’s most common metallic leaf beetle species is said to be *Callidemum hypochalcca*, and that might be the beetle that is stripping my Brown Kurrajong trees (*Commersonia bartramia*) of their leaves.

The adults of these colourful beetles first appeared at my place in early November. I didn’t see any larva, only a few adults feeding on the Kurrajong leaves.

The insect’s bright metallic colours immediately caught my

attention. I didn’t touch them though. My experiences in last month’s story has made me wary of brightly coloured insects.

Two weeks later I visited the tree where I first saw the beetles. Half the foliage had been consumed! There were large aggregations of beetles on the leaves and flowers.

They’re good flyers and I saw many flying off towards other trees. I followed them and discovered that other trees, including some White Ash (*Alphitonia petrei*), had been similarly trimmed.

I pulled out my camera to photograph the big brightly coloured clusters of beetles, but as soon as I came within about a metre of any of the clusters the beetles responded to the movement by simultaneously dropping straight to the ground.

This was so precisely coordinated, it was as if someone had flipped a switch.

Another week passed. By then most of the soft parts of the foliage on the host plants were eaten. Small sections of uneaten tissue had withered leaving only the harder vascular tissue in the foliage.



So, the trees that had fed the beetles now looked like skeletons. They’ll survive though. I’ve seen this happen several years ago, and affected trees regrow their foliage in a few months.

I wonder how many of these

Metallic leaf beetles dining on brown kurrajong tree. Photo by the author

beetles fed other animals. Perhaps nothing touched them – bright colours in insects are often meant as a warning to predators.

Zombie trees

by Scott O’Keeffe, ecologist

Around 15 years ago, people living in the Maleny area of Southeast Queensland noticed a decline in the health of some large mature bunya pines (*Araucaria bidwillii*). The crowns of the trees began turning brown, quickly followed by foliage well below the crown.

Within a short time, all foliage would be shed, branches cast, and the affected tree would be dead. At the time nobody reported the problem.

Years passed and more trees died until the deaths became too obvious to ignore. Concerns grew about how the disease might affect the region’s National Parks where ancient Araucarian forests of bunya and hoop pines (*Araucaria cunninghamii*) still exist, as well as the closely related Australian kauri pines (*Agathis robusta*).

An investigation took place after the realisation that the condition might threaten the native softwood forestry industry: 40,000 hectares of commercial hoop and bunya pine plantations are managed by the Queensland state with smaller areas in NSW.

The investigation showed that dead and dying bunya pines in the Bunya Mountains near Dalby are infected with a water mould, *Phytophthora multivora*, a pathogen that attacks the feeder roots of trees, making it impossible for them to transport water and nutrients.

Hoop and bunya pines in the Maleny and Landsborough areas showed symptoms of infection from the closely related *Phytophthora cinnamomii*. This organism also affects the extremely rare Wollemi pine (*Wollemia nobilis*) in the Blue Mountains, New Zealand kauri pines (*Agathis australis*) and a variety of other plants including avocados.

Araucarian Dieback (AD) is on the move. The pathogens can be spread by flowing water, or the movement of infected soil and plant material. Forestry operations, mountain bikes, bushwalkers, feral pigs – all of these are known vectors of the fatal disease. Aerial surveys in 2019 showed that AD had spread throughout the Bunya Mountains.

Sanitising stations at the entrance to national parks where Araucarians are found were among the preventative measures taken to prevent spread of AD. Visitors are required to step through a tray of disinfectant to kill any pathogens on their footwear. But people, this didn’t work. As a result, authorities decided to keep the location of the Wollemi pine a secret from the public, but bushwalkers managed to find the conservation area, bringing *Phytophthora* with them.

Containing the pathogen has been beneficial and has bought time while research is done to find treatments for AD. One treatment shows promise. Phosphite injected into the tree’s trunk can boost its immune response. Healthy trees can be protected and those in the early stages of infection can recover. This is good news, but can we afford to inject all at-risk trees with phosphite?

In the Bunya Mountains where the landscape has had minimal human impacts, the pattern of infection differs from that in highly modified environments such as Maleny



These local hoop pines appear to be healthy
Photos by the author

and Landsborough. Dieback is always fatal but in the Bunya Mountains not all trees are affected. In Landsborough and Maleny all trees in the affected areas die. In heavily modified environments soils lose their structure and condition and become less able to support healthy plant growth. Now there is the added stress of changes to climate.

Since more than one Araucarian species is associated with ‘Araucarian dieback’ is it really a specific disease? Dr. Louise Shoey, a plant pathologist and leading researcher into AD suggests that although the cause of dieback is phytophthora organisms, the condition is analogous to coral bleaching.

In other words, AD is a syndrome rather than a specific disease, which explains why two pathogens are associated with Araucarian dieback in Australia, New Zealand, South and Central America. Therefore, we may need to address AD’s pathogens as well as land degradation.

Although progress has been made to find treatments, this takes time, and we also need to take serious preventative action to protect healthy populations of Araucarians. Recognising the presence of the condition is necessary if you want to slow its spread. We also need to make biosecurity as high a priority as halting logging in native forests. The CSIRO points out that, among the many threats to biodiversity, invasive organisms are probably the greatest.

The Northern Rivers region supports important areas of largely intact Araucarian forest, remnant patches of hoop pine regrowth, and planted hoop, bunya and other Araucarian pines.

Over recent years, I have seen an increase in the number of trees in the modified landscape that show symptoms of decline like those in trees affected by AD. I do not want to see a repeat of the mistake that was made in Queensland. It would be foolish to ignore that what I am seeing is nothing out of the ordinary. Hoop pines are dying, and we should be finding out why. It may not be AD, but we might find it’s a problem we can solve.

I’ve reported what I’ve seen to the appropriate authority, the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). Their first response was not encouraging. From the desktop they



Local hoop pines. One tree is diseased and shows symptoms similar to those associated with Araucarian dieback. One of these local hoop pines has foliage that looks similar to trees affected by Araucarian dieback.

declared that there was a low risk of dieback affecting local Araucarians.

As a former biosecurity officer who has worked on containing the spread of myrtle rust, yellow crazy ants, and fire ants among other things, I pointed out how easily the die-back organisms are spread, especially when there are so many potential vectors.

Risks include equipment carrying infected soil moved between Queensland and New South Wales. The same thing could happen with livestock. Visitors to the Northern Rivers travelling from infected areas in Queensland could bring the organism with them when they visit the world Heritage areas on the border where we have substantial Araucaria forests.

After I expressed these concerns, I was pleased when the DPI got back to me to arrange a visit to the Northern Rivers in the new year. An investigation into the apparent decline in our local Araucaria trees will be made. That does not just mean hoop pines. I have also seen symptoms in Norfolk Island pines and bunya pines that have been planted in the region.

I hope that this investigation will be directed at finding out what is causing this problem rather than just trying to disprove the theory that the dead trees are affected by the same condition that is killing trees in Queensland. Something out of the ordinary seems to be happening.

We should try to find the cause and fix the problem whatever its origin. Expect good news, but prepare for more preaching...



Nimbin Garden Club notes

by Peter Brooker

Jarlanbah community ranges over 55 acres, divided into 33 acres of community land, and 43 residential lots of approximately half an acre.

For the curious, or the pedant, I can only guess that the missing half-acre is taken up by the internal road system.

It began life as an idea in 1991, based around creating a permaculture hamlet, and greeted its first residents in 1994.

Twenty-four years later it greeted Russell and Cherie and they, in turn, welcomed us on a pleasant Saturday afternoon to complete yet another year of Garden Club.

This was our last garden meeting for 2024 but Christmas lunch is still waiting.

We gathered in the cool shade of the back verandah to listen to Russell tell of their journey. The verandah where we now sat was once a heat sink. Blue metal had been spread on the ground and its dark colour drew the heat in, absorbed it, then radiated it back out.

Now a water feature stands where the gravel had been; its gentle trickle of water and all the surrounding dense shrubbery – much

apparently from NGC raffles – cooling the air, and giving sanctuary to lizards, and nectar to bees.

From here paths lead off to the various sections of the garden or, as Cherie puts it, the different “rooms”.

When they arrived six years ago the property had been virtually denuded. From their house they could see the road below and hear the passing cars. Many trees had been taken down and, as they had arrived during a drought, the ground was dry and cracked and little would grow.

Once the drought lifted, Russell, who had always intended to grow their own food, discovered the clay soil was bone hard in the dry and almost unworkable when the rains returned.

To solve this, they bought raised corrugated garden beds and filled them with good soil and vegetables grown from seedlings, except the open leafed continuity lettuce which Russell grows from harvested seed.

These beds made it much easier to achieve the dream of self-sufficiency and, combined with the agricultural plot, which provides four families with potatoes for six months, they have mostly accomplished that end. There is a greywater system that

once hosted lomandra but they grew too large, so they will be replaced by the shallow-rooted, anti-bacterial tea tree to remove the pathogens.

On the roadside a line of *chrysopogon zizanioides* or vetiver grass, and salvia wait to mop up any excess water not absorbed by evaporation trenches.

With the rain came new plantings and new growth, or more accurately, regrowth. Plantings thought to have been destroyed during the denuding, sprung up and thrived, such as coleus.

A lemon myrtle that has grown as if touched by Sylvanus or Phaunus, stands near the orchard where the three chickens rescued from a battery farm, and once as naked as the block they live on, are moved around the citrus orchard in their protective cage.

Further along the path that runs parallel to the road, now shielded from view by hibiscus, bamboo and other bushes replanted for that purpose, there is a pond once



ear, Cherie’s turmeric and Krishna’s favourite tree, the kadamba with its pin-cushion flowering fruit, and beyond the carport a nesting box where a pair of night jays live with their two chicks.

The remaining room is situated on the high side from the house, and it is a place of meditation.

There is a place to sit, the sound of water and silence, a place to dwell a moment and consider the words of Marcus Tullius Cicero 106-43BC: “Those things are better which are perfected by nature than those which are finished in art,” or those

simple words of Voltaire 1694-1778: “Men argue, nature acts.”

We thank Cherie and Russell for an interesting stroll through their lovely garden to bring our NGC year to a close – almost.

Before you make your way to Kerry’s home at 336 Stony Chute Road on Saturday 7th December for a midday start, don’t forget to pick up the plates brimming with good food and good cheer that you had prepared and left waiting on the kitchen bench.

The club will supply red, white and bubbles, so we hope to see you all there.



Aetaomah is a small school nestled in the foothills of Wollumbin, a short bus ride from Murwillumbah and Uki.

We offer Kindergarten to Year 8 education based on the principles of Rudolf Steiner.

We are currently accepting enrolment applications for Classes K-8 in 2024 and beyond.

Please contact the school for more information:
contact@aetaomah.nsw.edu.au www.aetaomah.nsw.edu.au
Phone: 0266 797 255

Address: 2486 Kyogle Road, Terragon via Uki, NSW 2484



Bushwalkers plan for 2025



Brunswick Heads walkers

by Peter Moyle
Nimbin Bushwalkers Club

Only last month I raved about the great weather for out and about walking, spring moving into summer – normally excellent conditions before things heat up a bit and make walking uncomfortable.

Usually, a few thunderstorms will keep things green and lift the humidity but this year we had persistent rain and below average temperatures. Luckily, we have had a couple of walks at the beach with good drainage and dry feet and on the ridgeline with little low-lying mud.

The club finishes walking at the end of November and starts again at the beginning of February. This is to avoid the holiday times and the worst of the summer heat. Over the last couple of years after the floods, with National Parks and access roads reopening we will once again be able to return to some of our favourite spots.

Each month in the *Nimbin GoodTimes* we announce the upcoming activities for members and visitors to peruse and if interested book in.

Visitors are asked for a small payment to help cover our insurance costs.



Tiger or spotted tail quoll, Gibraltar Range NP

Once again, we will be scheduling two walks a month; about six times a year we arrange a weekend walk where we set up generally in a National Park, or on private property and spend two or three days getting out and about. This works well, and these are very popular as it makes some of the travelling a lot more worth it if you get a few day walks in.

This year we made trips a few hours’ drive to Girraween, Gibraltar Range, Yuraygir and Border Ranges. These walks were well supported and they were great walking.

The year finishes off with the Annual General Meeting in early December where we review the year and plan next year’s program. We have a healthy membership of almost 50 and we generally have 12 to 15 people on the walks – a good social and manageable number.

Next month look out for the 2025 walks.

How horses perceive the world

by Suzy Maloney

There's the old saying, 'You don't really know someone until you've walked a mile in their shoes'. I was sitting in the paddock with the horses the other day trying to imagine what the world is like from their perspective.

As all horse people will testify, horses regularly perceive something in the environment and, try as hard as we can, we can't see, hear, smell or feel it, but the horses do. By trying to understand how horses perceive their surroundings we can deepen our understanding and enhance our interactions with them.

One of the most striking aspects of how horses perceive the world is their vision. Horses have large lateral eyes on the sides of the head that provide them with a wide field of view, approximately 350°. This allows them to detect predators and other threats from nearly all directions.

They have two types of vision, binocular to the front and monocular to the sides, with blind spots immediately in front and behind. These blind spots are why horses sometimes startle if something suddenly appears in one of these areas. Monocular vision is 80% where a horse views both sides separately with either eye. This allows horses to keep an eye on approaching threats.

The remaining 20% is binocular vision, which provides a rather narrow zone, roughly 65° of the view directly ahead of them while using both eyes.

Binocular vision enables horses to accurately judge distance and aids with depth perception. Horses can switch between monocular vision and binocular vision, depending on the situation in which they find themselves. This ability is one of the many things that make equine eyesight so unique.

Horses' eyes are more sensitive to movement than detail, making them adept at spotting potential dangers

but not as skilled at focusing on finer details. Their eyes are dichromatic, meaning they see two primary colours, blue and yellow. They are less sensitive to red, which makes their world appear somewhat different from ours. For instance, a vibrant red shirt might not stand out as much to a horse as it would to a human. All these components together shape how horses view the environment.

Horses have an acute sense of hearing, with ears that can rotate independently to pinpoint sounds from various directions. This ability allows them to detect even the slightest noises, making them alert to potential dangers.

The conical shape of the outer ear, like an old-fashioned gramophone speaker, captures even the softest sounds. This shape shields the sound the horse is trying to focus on, fading out other noises around them. There are ten muscles in a horse's ear, compared to three in a human's, which control movement. Horses' ears can move 180°.

Their hearing range extends to frequencies outside what humans can perceive, enabling them to hear sounds that might go unnoticed by us. People can hear sounds from 20 hertz up to 20 kilohertz. A horse's range is far wider, from 14 hertz up to 35 kilohertz, another two-thirds of an octave. With all this ability, horses can detect sounds up to 4 km away!

Horses only breathe through their noses; they can't breathe through their mouths and are called obligate nose breathers. They have an exceptional sense of smell, which plays a crucial role in their ability to navigate their environment and for survival. Smell helps them locate food, water, other horses, detect predators, and sense subtle environmental cues that humans cannot detect.

Horses can differentiate between members of the herd by scent alone.

They also navigate based on scent, picking up on subtle environmental cues

that we can't detect. Horses' olfactory abilities are so great that they can detect certain smells from up to 16 km away!

When a horse curls back the upper lip and exposes the teeth (the Flehmen Response), they can better analyse a scent, particularly those related to pheromones. This is due to a vomeronasal organ positioned at the base of the nasal cavity, within the roof of the mouth that detects scent.

Genetically speaking, humans have 350 olfactory receptor genes, while horses have 1,066! Their large, flexible nostrils flare to pull in as much air as possible when faced with a potentially significant scent.

Horses are highly social animals, and their perception of the world is heavily influenced by their interactions with other horses. They are prey animals, which means they are naturally attuned to the movements and behaviours of their herd members.

Horses communicate primarily through body language, using their posture, ear position, and facial expressions to convey emotions and intentions. Horses can read each other's body language and respond appropriately, whether it's in the context of play, grooming, establishing dominance or alerting to danger.

This keen perception extends to their relationships with humans as well, where horses pick up on subtle cues in our body language and emotional states.

Understanding how horses perceive the world provides invaluable insights into their behaviour and needs. Their unique visual, auditory, and olfactory capabilities, combined with their social structures, shape their interactions with both the environment, each other and with us.

By recognising these aspects of equine perception, we can deepen our understanding of them, fostering better relationships with our horses, and enhancing our shared experiences.

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Rational thought and compassion in animals

by Les Rees

It's quite common to read statements suggesting that nonhuman animals aren't capable of rational thought, but as far as I'm concerned, it's like a red rag to the bull in me because I constantly see otherwise.

The reason I believe this is because rational thought involves using reasoning in order to make decisions about the things that affect our lives.

These decisions can be based on trial and error experiences, learning from others with whom we share our environment, and from being protected during the early stages of life.

If animals couldn't make associations with those things that help them to live safely, they wouldn't last long in a world full of predators waiting for their next meal.

Friendships and symbiotic relationships help to mould the thought processes, and help the formulation of connection and compassion for family members, friends and other animal species. These associations help protect us both mentally and physically.

Animals in the wild will often sound an alert if danger is approaching and it is beneficial to make use of these signals. Those that live in the trees have a good view below and will often sound their alarm calls which activate others into action. If animals weren't capable of rational thinking, how could they keep safe?



I have seen many occasions where my horses work together. Some time ago our neighbour's pigs escaped and came over to our place and were out to cause trouble. Watching the herd dynamics astounded me because it was obvious that my horses were making decisions together.

They split up to form two distinct lines. The two in front were not much bigger than the pigs but the smallest one marched forward to confront them. The second pony waited until the pigs became agitated and galloped through the middle separating them so that they ran in different directions. Several of the bigger pigs headed on a course taking them toward the big horses who were waiting for them at the back of the herd ready to send them on their way.

I was astounded by the execution of these tactics, as they would have taken a lot of rational thinking and communication. The whole manoeuvre was executed with military precision!

There are lots of instances where nonhuman animals show compassion, especially for young animals belonging to a different species. Horses are particularly careful with young children, allowing them to move into their space without reprimand.

This is a huge ask for a horse because being flight animals, a large portion of their language is based around protection of personal space. They need open space to use as an escape route, enabling them to move quickly.

Domestic cats, dogs and horses often show compassion if a member of the family is sick or unhappy by licking or simply being gentle and attentive.

People who have helped wild animals often find that those animals return with their families. There has to be rational thought processes and compassion for this to happen.

Everything is connected in the natural world. Even the forests have mycelium equivalent to our fascia system below the ground creating a network for information and nourishment that helps feed the health of the forest which in turn provides nourishment for the system to exist.

It seems to me that there is a lot of rational thought and compassion in nonhuman animals and we should acknowledge this by respecting and learning from them.

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