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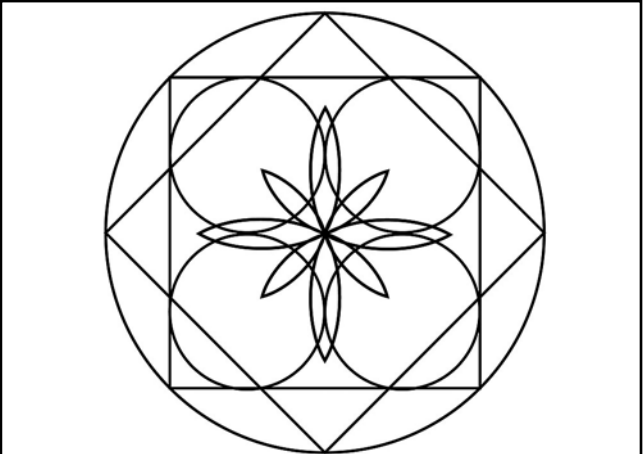
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Wiradjuri sisters exhibition



Monochrome images by Krishna Heffernan

by Suzie Coulston

Roxy Gallery is hosting the Wiradjuri Sisters exhibition in February, an exciting collection of works in acrylics, collage and printmaking by Indigenous artists Naomi Grant and Krishna Heffernan.

The show is a combination of the creative passion of sisters who live on opposite sides of the country.

Life and distance have kept them geographically separated, but they share their love and enthusiasm for each other and the creative arts, by teaching and helping the other to develop their skills.

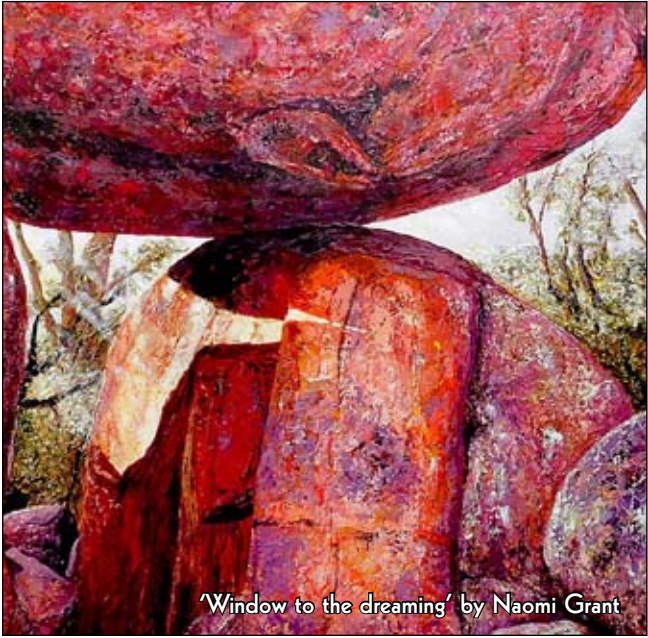
Naomi is a professional artist with over 40 years' experience, and Krishna

has been developing her art practice for the last 10 years. Both work in collage and acrylic techniques to develop layers of colours, pattern and design with paper and paint.

The landscape creates endless inspiration for them. Both are passionate about process and bringing to life the endless beauty and design they see around them.

Krishna has also been expanding her art work to include printmaking. Her black and white prints are highly decorative and reflect the Granite Belt region where she lives.

The exhibition runs until 6th March at the Roxy Gallery, Kyogle.



'Window to the dreaming' by Naomi Grant

Big variety of artworks

The current two exhibitions – 'Everything Blue' by Lorraine Lintern and Elsbeth Gartly-Strassmann in The Solo Space and 'The Wild Side' in the Gallery/Café space – are both up and running at Blue Knob Hall Gallery.

'Everything Blue' features Lorraine Lintern's ceramic pieces which are mesmerising in their quality, texture and colouring. Looking closely, one is also fascinated by what the years of experience and experimenting with colour and glazes has produced. These are practical pieces as well as sculptural, and they call out to be touched, viewed and placed in any home.

Elsbeth Gartly-Strassmann's delicate artworks, rendered in a variety of mediums including pastels, sit beautifully alongside the ceramic pieces. One of the artworks 'Magic Boulders', and her overall sense of colour hints to her background as a Steiner teacher with its strength and softness.

These two women have put together a lovely exhibition that Blue Knob Hall Gallery is delighted to have.

In 'The Wild Side', first time exhibiting artist, Milly De Zwart, has wowed us all with her piece 'Untitled'. In her words, "Using the metaphor of two male deer fighting for dominance, it represents two worlds colliding – one deer being earth and nature, the other corrupted by pollution."

This piece puts us into 'The Wild Side' in no uncertain terms; it is an imaginative and thought-provoking work by this young artist.

At first glance Bob Bishell's 'Memory Urns' might not seem 'wild' but they come out of the wild, from nature.



Untitled by Milly De Zwart



'Magic Boulders' by Elsbeth Gartly-Strassmann



'Memory Urn' by Bob Bishell

He transforms different woods into beautiful pieces that can hold memories of every kind. There is big variety of artworks in these two exhibitions, which will run until Saturday 5th March.



Bottle Vase by Lorraine Lintern

Blue Knob Hall Gallery & Café

The café is up and running too, and looking forward to seeing you all. For updates you can check Blue Knob Café on Facebook or contact the Café directly at: bkgcafe@gmail.com

Blue Knob Hall Gallery & Café are open Thursday, Friday and Sunday, 10am to 3pm, and Saturday 8.30am to 3pm.

You can also contact Blue Knob Hall Gallery 02 6689-7449 or email: bkhgallery@harbourisp.net.au for any information about these events.



Nothing is as it seems

by Anne Cook

The Nimbin Artists Gallery artist of the month for February is Claire L'Arriveé.

Claire was born in Quebec, Canada. Her curiosity and love of travel have taken her around the world, acquiring knowledge and experiences in a large variety of cultures.

Claire completed a painting/ceramics degree at the Canberra School of Arts and has used that experience as a means of connecting with the Australian artistic community.

During the 80's she travelled extensively in some of Australia's most remote areas teaching pottery, ceramics mural-making and printing on fabric.

Being an artist-in-residence for extended period of times in Lajamanu NT and the Cobar Shire gave her some insights into First Nations Peoples' remarkable and complex cultural depth, as well as being a unique chance to take the pulse of a mining town.

Claire has called Nimbin home for nearly 32 years where she lives peacefully and creatively.

Over the years her surroundings

have inspired multiple collections of art works, which evolved from the energy of the transitory nature of life.

As she noticed the number of birds, butterflies and other insects decreasing, in some cases altogether vanishing, her canvases evolved into gorgeous translucent lacy creatures in various states of transition.

Her paintings of landscape transitioned from abstract, to semi-abstract, and today they are often whimsical.

Claire has a long history of experimenting with felt, originally concentrating on wearable art, and in the recent past evolving into felted sculptures that reflect the natural world.

Felted dried branches and bark became a hanging forest, while imaginary felted wildflowers and

birds were suspended in mid-air awaiting discovery.

In Claire's view, continuing to develop a body of work is an adventure worth spreading over a period of time.

Other influences on her art come from a range of experiences and reflections – the practical wisdom and extraordinary sensitivity offered from a long time reading the Tao, her excitement of scientific discovery, the awareness of the breath, the general anxiety we all share about climate change, the planetary loss of biodiversity, the melting of the Arctic and Antarctic.

Claire says: "My needs for stability and happiness direct me to an exploration of feelings connected to nature. 'Silent Whisper' is an "exploration" into where the unexpected defies the

ordinary through daily encounters with nature's awesomeness and the unlimited inventiveness of life; it is an awareness of what is.

"The basis of these works is the merging of "gut feeling" with the energy of nature's generous offerings which become the guiding force to the inner spirit."

The playfulness and diverse insights of 'Silent Whisper' are contained within the unspoken words, lines and colours of the paintings to remind us that "Nothing is as it seems".

If you would like to experience these ethereal works in person, visit the Nimbin Artists Gallery on Cullen Street, we are open seven days a week from 10am 'til 4pm.

Phone 02 6689-1444 or visit: www.nimbinartistsgallery.org

Art, fire, metal, connection and peace

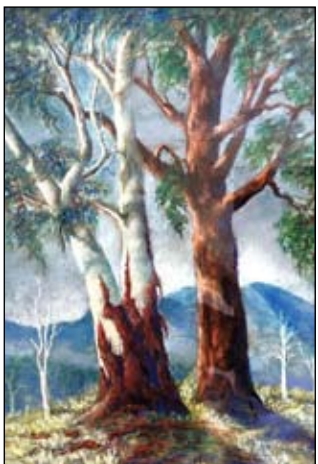
by Corinne Batt-Rawden

Serpentine Gallery has a strong line-up for February. Our first solo exhibition in our new venue is Art Fire Metal by Vivian Esther Johnston, followed by a retrospective of great works by the late Janet Hassall.

Vivian Esther Johnston is a Lismore-based multidisciplinary artist with ten years' experience in community arts projects with Lightn Up Inc specialising in fire sculptures.

Vivian's practice is defined as Art Fire Metal and consists of mixed medium artworks from seared woodworks that Vivian illustrates with power tools; jewellery of precious metals created via lost wax casting techniques; and a collection of sheet steel artworks with a rusty Rorschach aesthetic.

These exquisite rust paintings were derived by chance after Cyclone Debbie came to visit in 2017.



'White & Brown' by Janet Hassall



'Metal Work 2' by Vivian Esther Johnston

The process of trying to salvage the metal brought to life the beauty through chance and chaos, during environmental and emotional distress. Given the nature of the process, each work is reflective of the elemental influence of its seasonal period. The exhibition runs until 14th February.

A Retrospective is being held in honour of the great Janet Hassall, 14th February 1937 – 12th December 2021.

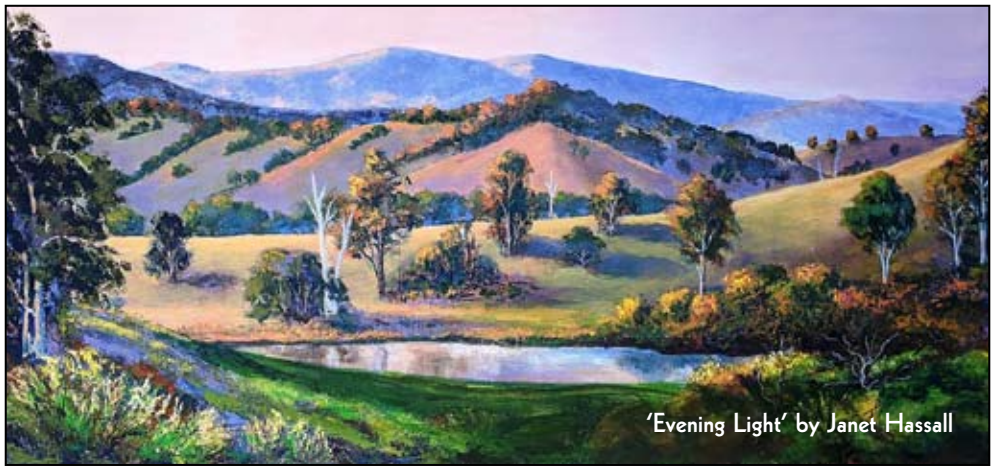
Many in our local arts community will have been blessed to meet Janet Hassall or have her regional landscapes adorning your walls. A prolific accomplished artist and gentle soul who was as sweet as pie, Janet passed away in December last year and she wished to

have an art exhibition instead of a wake.

Serpentine is honoured to host Janet's Retrospective of nearly 100 paintings and ceramics.

"Janet Hassall had a deep respect and connection for the Earth we live on. Janet radiated a calmness that made you feel at peace when you were in her presence; a time when you could be with her and understand the beauty she saw in the surrounds where you stood. Her peace and connection to the Earth was transformed into colour and life through the many forms of artwork that she created throughout her life." – from Janet's family.

Come and find your connection and moment of peace at the Janet Hassall



'Evening Light' by Janet Hassall

Retrospective Art Exhibition opening 5pm 'til 9pm on Friday 18th February. The exhibition runs from 17th to 27th February.

IWD exhibition

March of course brings us to International Women's Day. Serpentine annually hosts a women's exhibition open to all artists residing in the Northern Rivers. No membership is required to participate in this exhibition. Please email the gallery if you

would like to participate.

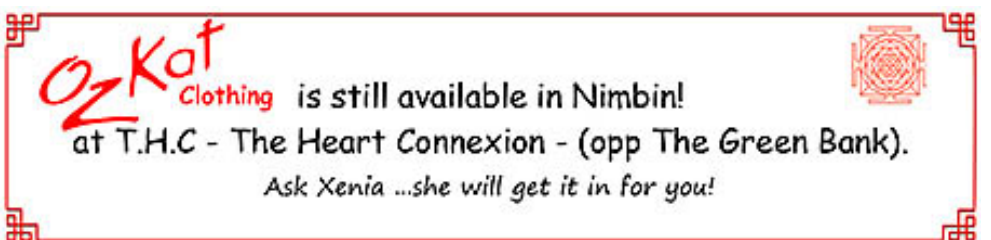
The theme at Serpentine this year is 'Strength of She' What is strength inside the Feminine? Who is she and what are her many aspects? Female strength is a kaleidoscope of variations. There is no lineal definition as the feminine is a shape shifter and can adapt strength to fit any need. She can stand and fight. She can surrender and compromise. Her multi-faceted strength can whisper as many different interpretations as there are women in the world.

It's time to share our voices and our visions. Join the exciting exhibition, celebrating women's perspectives and life experiences through art.

Serpentine Gallery is now located at 104 Conway Street, Lismore. The new venue is open and airy. Check in, sanitiser and fresh air available.

Open Monday to Friday 10am 'til 4pm, and Saturdays 10am 'til 2pm.

Phone 0492-964-819 or email: gallery@serpentinearts.org



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Plant of the month

by Richard Burer

Yellow Mangosteen is a tropical fruit tree of North and South East Asia. Each year a corner of the garden bears me more and more fruits, with this current wet season producing clusters of these highly attractive healthy fruits.

It is a beautiful tree growing to 8-15m, with attractive new red leaf growth on its oblong leaves and clusters of yellow fruits making this a top tree for the subtropical garden.

It is a tart fruit, and I guess not as highly regarded as the king of fruits purple mangosteen, but it's tasty, highly nutritious and beneficial for a range of health disorders, including the possibility of having anti-inflammatory properties. It

is anti-microbial, supporting blood sugar control and promoting a healthy immune system, among a host of many beneficial properties.

Growing from seed is how I grow this tree, but it's long term in regards to seed to fruit. It's very hardy and can tolerate shady as well as sunny places. Probably best to grow on rich, free-draining volcanic or alluvial soils.

Considered rare in the sub-tropics, yellow mangosteen can be found in horticultural production in plant nurseries in the area, or ask around for friends who might have some seed from this year's fruit harvest.

Richard Burer is a Nimbin-based local natural area restoration contractor and consultant: richard.burer@gmail.com

Yellow mangosteen
Garcinia zanthochymus

Hosts and guests

by Scott O'Keeffe

From seashores to mountains and arid zones to rainforest, mistletoes have established themselves across most Australian landscapes. Despite their abundance, most people know only the fallacies and not the facts about these important and fascinating plants.

There are 93 species of mistletoe in Australia, belonging to two plant families. Mistletoes attach themselves to the branches, twigs and roots of woody trees, shrubs and vines. There are even a few species that live only on other mistletoes. Some grow only on a small range of native plant hosts while others are able to use many species of native and exotic plants.

Mistletoes are common in Australian forests, woodlands and shrubland. However, they are not always easy to see as they may grow well out of sight in the tree canopy, or because their foliage often mimics that of the host plant. This mimicry is a peculiarly Australian phenomenon.

Let's set the record straight! Mistletoes are not parasites that kill their host plants. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise, no matter how "bush savvy" they are. Most mistletoes are hemiparasites. This means that they obtain water and some nutrients from the host's vascular system. A small number of species, called holoparasites, also extract some minerals from their hosts.

But it's not a one-way street. Mistletoes are thought to contribute beneficial compounds to the host plant. This makes sense, since mistletoes have co-evolved with their hosts over a very long time. There is an equilibrium between host and guest and is not in the interests of the mistletoe to kill its host. If you see a dead tree with a mistletoe on it, the mistletoe will also be dead.

Large dead trees covered with mistletoe skeletons are a common site in agricultural

landscapes. This is probably the origin of the killer mistletoe myth. The cause of death for the trees and their guest mistletoes in these landscapes is likely to be the result of poor land management practices. Large isolated trees in agricultural landscapes decline as a consequence of increased salinity, soil compaction, grazing and dieback.

Host plants, of course, die in bushland and take their mistletoes with them, but the causes are usually different. But in a healthy system it is less frequent and the results are less conspicuous. In a forest the host (and the mistletoe) may be killed or badly damaged by fire. Sometimes only the mistletoe will die while the tree recovers. But just as in an altered landscape, the death of the host will kill the mistletoe.

Mistletoes are important components of ecosystems. They add a layer of structure (call it furniture, if you like) that provides food and living space for other organisms. A whole range of fauna depend upon mistletoe – birds, reptiles, mammals, butterflies, moths and other insects. Some of Australia's most colourful butterflies, the Jezabels (*Delias* species), depend upon mistletoe for food.

Many of the organisms that use mistletoe help pollinate the plants and disperse their seeds. Examples are fruit-eating doves and some honeyeaters, but there is one bird that has a special relationship with these plants. Unsurprisingly, it is called a Mistletoebird – a tiny bird with shiny blue and pink plumage. It has evolved alongside mistletoes, which are a large part of the bird's diet.

Mistletoebirds eat the nutritious fleshy, sticky covering on the seed and discard the seed by wiping it off on the branches or twigs of trees. The seeds have a mucosal thread by which they adhere to the branches. If the species and site are suitable, the seed will germinate, a small shoot will penetrate the plant's bark and the mistletoe



Mistletoe flowers

will begin to grow.

Mistletoebirds have been found to discard seeds in this way up to half a kilometre from the feeding site. If Mistletoebirds were humans, we'd call them gardeners. Actually, that's not a bad idea... in fact you don't even need a garden, just the right trees or shrubs to serve as hosts. Street and park plantings usually have some appropriate hosts where you could "plant" some mistletoe seeds.

This is exactly what botanists have done in Melbourne, where many of the inner city street trees are exotics that support very little wildlife. European Plane Trees, in particular, provide welcome shade but no food or shelter for native fauna. Botanists have been planting mistletoe seeds on the limbs of plane trees which now sport succulent fruits and bright flower clusters that attract birds and butterflies. Apparently you can have your shade and eat it too.

Why not try this yourself? You'll need quite a few mistletoe seeds because only about 8% of them will germinate. You will increase your success if you plant seeds on hosts of the same species that the donor mistletoe was growing on. Planting on the undersides of

branches also improves the chance of success.

Squeeze the seed from the ripe fruit and onto the bark of the host. The mucous-like thread exuded with the seed will help it adhere to the branch. That's it. Easy. I grew the mistletoe in the photograph this way. I planted onto a lily-pilly, a known host. The seed germinated quickly and in 18 months it flowered and produced fruit. That's a quicker result than I would get planting another lily-pilly.

Search carefully for plants. They are often well up into the tree canopy and their foliage may resemble that of the host plant. This mimicry may have evolved to allow mistletoes to blend with the host's foliage to avoid herbivore predation. If this is the case, butterflies are one jump ahead. It seems that some have stopped eating the foliage of the host and switched to the more succulent, less toxic foliage of the mistletoe.

Mistletoes are a group of plants that have not received enough attention. Because they are little studied, anyone with an interest in them can make simple observations that will increase our understanding of these fascinating parts of Australian ecosystems.



Good omens for Garden Club

by Peter Brooker



Photos: Olof Jonnerstig

Well, the New Year has started, and from the NGC's point of view that means it's February.

Let's hope that the Turkish playwright and novelist Mehmet Murat Idan is correct when he says, "Sometimes a year has been so disastrous and so terrible that entering a new year will automatically mean entering a wonderful year."

So, February is our first garden for this wonderful year. February, from the Roman month Februarius comes from the Latin term 'februum' meaning purification which, in turn, came from the purification ritual held in ancient Rome on 15th February to purify the city.

This ritual was called Lupercalia, a pastoral festival, also known as Des Februatus after the purification instruments called Februa, the basis for the name February. So, the good news is, February is pure.

February started life under Nuna Pompilius as the last month of the year in 713BC and remained so until Decembris 450BC. Its birth flowers are Violets, Primrose and Iris, and interestingly February has seven meteor showers, one of which is called Delta Cancrids and one is called Omicron Centaurids.

An omen I think, that all will be well, but in any event as Ivan Turgenev says, "If we wait for the moment when everything, absolutely everything is ready, we will never begin."

So where shall we meet? Our first garden for the year will be held at Angela's at 2pm on Saturday 19th February at the corner of Koonorigan Road and Gordon Road, Koonorigan, look for the signs.

We welcome club members, their guests and any newcomers to Nimbin who want to attend. Bring a plate to share and a cup for afternoon tea and come see the garden and the work put in for yourselves.

As Chekhov put it, "Don't tell me the moon is shining, show me the glint of light on broken glass."

Pretty invasive

Weed Words
by Triny Roe

Why continue to propagate and plant environmental weed species?

Learning from experience is a true expression of intelligence. In the 21st century it is hoped that we've moved beyond 'isn't it pretty' and make environmentally responsible choices when creating gardens, especially in rural areas where our ornamental and food species can easily spread to the bush.

Since 1788, settlers from Europe, Asia and elsewhere brought with them plants, known and familiar, from their home countries, when they came to Australia. Prickly Pear came in on the First Fleet, along with other plants like apples and oranges. Subsequent voyages brought more exotic botanical species so the newcomers could continue to live the lifestyles they were accustomed to.

Botanic gardens were established in the early days of the new colony to trial a range of species for food, fibre and fun. Not all survived in the new soils, often low in fertility and a climate different whence they'd come. Many did okay. Others flourished extremely well and some of these fled the confines of their cultivations and made

themselves at home in the bush, by the roadsides and along creeks and rivers.

Jacaranda, *Jacaranda mimosifolia* is celebrated for the glorious purple carpet it lays down in late Spring. Jacaranda festivals bring visitors every year from afar to Grafton and Goodna in Brisbane. Though not the worst weed around, it is listed in the top 200 environmental weeds in Queensland. So why plant more when a native species could do a better job?

Byron, Lismore and Tweed Shires also consider Jacarandas an invasive environmental weed species, as it has already spread into bush, along roadsides and infested creek banks across the Northern Rivers.

A native of South America, it was introduced to South Africa in the 1880s and widely planted as street trees in Johannesburg and Pretoria. Hardy in dry areas, it thrives in warm temperate to sub-tropical climate. Spreading far and wide, Jacaranda became naturalised across the country. Today it is illegal to plant new Jacarandas in South Africa due to the threat it poses to native woodland and forest areas. It has also naturalised in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Hawaii and parts of southern USA.

The first Jacarandas in



Jacarandas should not be planted as street trees

Australia were grown in Brisbane in 1864 in the city botanic garden after the curator obtained seeds from a South American ship captain. As was the custom, plants that did well were propagated and disseminated around the country. Brisbane itself and the nearby metropolis of Ipswich were extensively landscaped with this hardy, attractive species.

In 1987 Jacarandas were officially recorded as being naturalised in south-east Queensland, forming thick groves in some areas, excluding all other vegetation. Today it's considered an environmental weed, but people continue to propagate and plant Jacarandas because 'they're so pretty'.

Plenty of environmental weeds are readily available in the nursery industry. Just because you can buy one

doesn't mean it's a good idea. Do some research and make educated choices.

Many Australian natives have spectacular floral displays. Lacebark, *Brachychiton discolor* and its cousin the Illawarra flame tree, *Brachychiton acerifolius*, are splendid in full flower. Firewheel tree, *Stenocarpus sinuatus* has striking bright red blooms as well as a distinctive lobed leaf.

The Golden Penda *Xanthostemon chrysanthus*, is a magnificent tree. It will take a prune and make a good solid hedge. Mock orange, *Murraya paniculata* shouldn't be the go-to for a hedge when there are plenty of native alternatives. Lilly pillies, *Syzygium spp.* or cut leaf mint bush *Prostanthera incisa* could do the job.

Native species will provide better food and habitat for wildlife.



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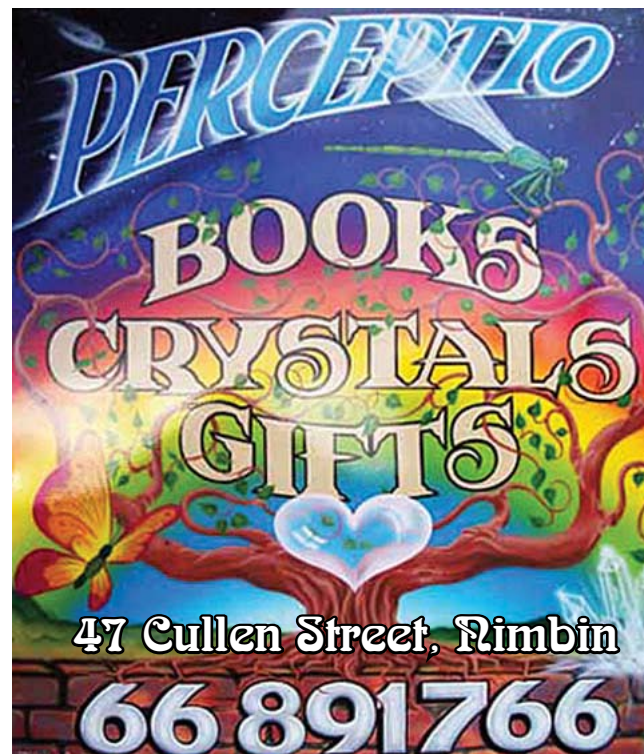
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Intuition: the ultimate life skill

by Donna Connolly

Developing our intuition can assist us in every area of our lives. We all have it, and like any other part of ourselves it can be strengthened and encouraged to be more present in our daily encounters.

If embraced and followed, intuition can be an accurate force that permeates all facets of life. You can tap your innate inner knowledge and use it to enhance your life and attain goals, including health, creativity, work, and prosperity.

I'm sure that you have experienced a "gut feeling", "knowing" or just a strong feeling to follow your instincts on an issue. No rhyme or reason, or tangible evidence. Purely a deep-seated soul awareness.

Each time we follow this insight, our "intuition" muscle grows stronger. Not to mention we start to become aware of what a "yes" and "no"

actually feels like in our body.

Of course, I am sure that you will have encountered what ignoring this valuable information feels like too!

Every day there are decisions to be made, some small and some life-changing. Wouldn't it be great if we could be certain of our choices, in that moment?

There is no doubt that some life lessons will be learnt along the way, which may make us question our original plan. However, our higher awareness guides, soul-selves always have our highest good and purpose in the forefront of all decision making processes.

Sometimes the easy way isn't necessarily the best way for our soul's evolution. We have to trust our instincts and learn to be confident with our choices. Of course keeping an open mind is also key as more information comes to hand, and situations unfold.

We are all created from energy and matter, therefore it makes sense that we feel

things first. Here are some tips to strengthen your intuition:

- First of all having a clear mind and feeling centred is hugely important, take a moment to breathe deeply into your choices;
- Sometimes even thinking of the options gives you an instant yes or no;
- What was your first thought/image feeling? Go with that! This is not the time for rational thought. Do not get your mind involved!
- Were you already feeling a sensation in your body, even before the person spoke to you or before the situation occurred;
- Have an open mind with no attachment to the outcome, in fact; all the better if the choice seems unusual or different to what you were considering.

Learning how to understand our intuition puts us on a better life trajectory, as knowing what we truly want will open us up to more



possibilities and live a life full of joy and no regrets. Listening to and utilising our intuition is one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves, our animals and those who are near and dear to us.

Animal Communication course

Would you like to tap back into your inner knowing, while developing and

deepening your connection with your animal friends? We have a five-week on-line Practical Animal Communication course coming up, starting on the 22/2/22, each Tuesday 7-8.30pm AEST, plus a bonus 60-minute individual mentoring session and weekly emails with tips and fun interactive exercises to strengthen your intuition.

Participants will be tuning into animal guest speakers each week, and will have their own pets read by the group. The course numbers are capped, so that it will be a wonderful chance to explore and experience your own intuition while connecting with like-minded souls.

Contact us today if you would like more information: www.rivergem.com.au

Bushwalkers getting out and about again

by Peter Moyle

A new year and a great year in store for the Nimbin Bushwalkers Club. After a two-month break, we are out and about. First up back to the Whian Whian SCA, an area with a great variety of terrain and walks of different difficulties.

We mainly stay on-track as this suits our membership, but some of our walks need to be a bit more adventurous to get to those gorgeous natural spots.

Minyon Falls presents a lovely walk, and the adventurous will have a dip at the base of the Falls, a nice way to start the year.

The first camp/walk weekend will see us back at Binna Burra. A few years since we have been here, and again plenty of great walking and at a bit of altitude keeps the daytime temperatures lower than the coast and the milder nights are great for relaxing and sleeping.

There are walks on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Walks program

Sunday 13th February

Minyon Falls, Whian Whian State Conservation Area

Leader: Mark Osburg 0408-113-125, contact to register

Meet: 9.30am at Minyon Falls main carpark/picnic area at the top of the falls, not to be confused with the lookout car park.

Grade: 3-4. Mostly on formed tracks, will be some slippery rocks and tracks particularly



after rain, caution needed at drop offs and cliff faces. About four hours and 11 km. The best time of year to see the falls and the beautiful rainforest at the base.

Bring the usual: hat, drinking water, lunch, and good bush walking boots/shoes, a poncho a good idea if showery. Insect protection recommended.

25th to 27th February

Binna Burra, Lamington NP behind the Gold Coast

Leader: Peter Moyle 0412-656-498

Grade: 3-4. There are varied walks of different lengths.

Meet: at the campground, contact Peter to



register your interest. We have not been to Binna Burra for a few years and only parts were in the bushfire. The campground and safari tents were not affected.

Walks: Russell has organised walks each day Friday at 12 noon, Saturday from 10am and the Sunday from 9am. All NSW times.

Camping: If you decide to overnight, the club has reserved some nice sites, some of us are staying Thursday to Sunday so choices are available. Confirm with Peter if you want to share, otherwise book your own. The campground caters for tents, campervans, and motorhomes as well as Safari tents. Bookings are essential as weekends are always busy and need to be made well in advance.



Sunday 13th March

Goanna Headland at Evans Head

Leader: Ron Smith 0497-792-789, please ring to register your interest.

Grade: 2-3. Some rocks to walk and track can be slippery, care needed at drop-offs.

Meet: 10am at Chinaman's Beach car park.

Two beautiful coastal walks: each year we come here, and we never tire of this wonderful spot and a nice coffee after. A walk to Goanna Headland followed – after lunch at the beach – by a walk through Dirrawong Reserve. Each walk is about 1.5 hours.

Bring: water, lunch, and a hat. Good sturdy footwear needed. A swim afterwards is always refreshing.

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The dream that many will not understand

by Les Rees

I thought that this might resonate with some of the horse fraternity:

My horse is my personal dream. One day when I am very old and when I cannot walk anymore, it will be in my heart as a trophy of my memories.

I met people who taught me something and have the same spirit and I met others that I'm glad I forgot.

I got wet, I felt cold, And I felt warm, I was afraid, I fell, And I stood up, I even hurt myself, I have been broken, But also, I laughed out loud inside.

I spoke a thousand times with myself.

I sang and shouted with joy like a madman,

And yes... sometimes I cried.

I have seen wonderful places and lived unforgettable experiences.

I often made unplanned jumps, other times I made jumps full of terror.

I stopped a thousand times to see a landscape.

I spoke with perfect strangers, and I forgot the people I see every day.

I went out with my demons



inside and returned home with a feeling of absolute peace in my heart.

I always thought how dangerous it is, knowing that the meaning of courage is to advance even feeling fear.

Every time I go up to my horse I think about how wonderful he is.

I stopped talking about it to those who do not understand, and I learned to communicate with other riders.

I have met some amazing people I now call friends because of my horse.

I spent money that I did not have, giving up many things, but all these things are not worth even one special moment with my horse.

He is not a means of transport, a piece of iron with wheels, he is the lost part of my soul and my spirit.

And when someone says to me:

"You have to sell the horse and you have to be a more sensible" I do not answer. I just turn my head and smile, thinking that only the people who love their horses can understand this. And the adventure continues.

I have to say that this unknown author really understood the essence of being around horses. Their exceptional willingness to please has no boundaries. It makes all those early mornings, even after a late night, worth getting out of our beds for. To hear the whinnies of welcome when they're waiting patiently for us to arrive at some ungodly hour to feed them and begin the day.

I'm at my happiest when they're munching contentedly. It's a happy sound for me knowing that they're safe,

healthy, loved and cared for.


I've always loved riding on my own because it's a time of sharing mutual enjoyment with my horse. Many problems can be solved as we investigate new paths of investigation, each of us having equal input in our conversations together.

I firmly believe that riding through the bush trails should be about enjoyment. Schooling can be done elsewhere unless necessity requires. In these cases it's often about sight and sound distractions, but if you're inventive, you can create ways to turn sessions into games that create a relaxed atmosphere for both you and your horse helping to build trust between you.

I believe that you have to allow time for your horses to be horses. It's unfair to expect them to continually comply with our demands without concern for their personal welfare. True happiness is achieved when both their and your needs are catered for.

So next time you stop to look at an amazing view with your horse, I hope you remember to thank him for sharing the moment with you.

Les Rees is an equine naturopath and sports therapist, email: horsetailherbs@bigpond.com



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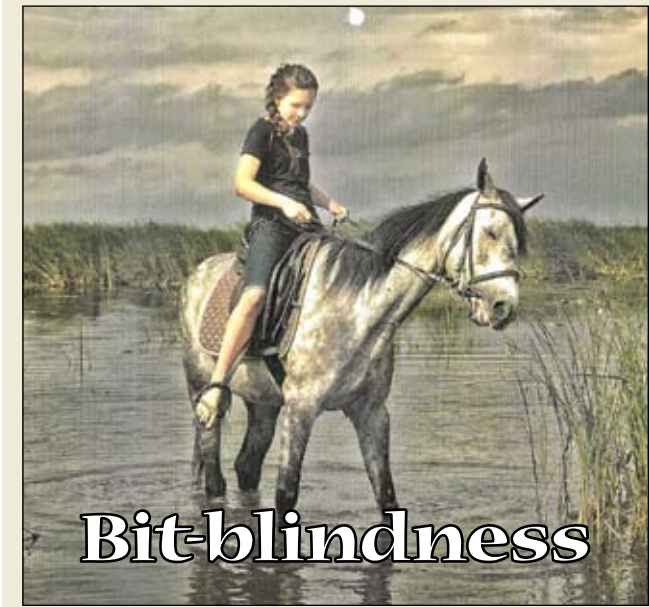


Photo: D. Mellor, in VetScript, Sept 2020, New Zealand Veterinary Association

by Suzy Maloney

Bit-blindness is a huge problem for animal welfare on a global scale. The included photo is a great example of it.

The photographer has set up a professional shoot, and the final photo chosen for a calendar was this one. No doubt it was seen as beautiful, and the girl and environment certainly are, but it shows a complete blindness to what is happening for the horse.

The horse has the head tilted to the side, the eye closed and the mouth gaping wide open as the bit is pulled hard enough for it to come out the side of the horse's mouth. The horse's position, facial expression and open

mouth are all indicators of pain in the horse.

Bits have been around for so long now, more than 5000 years, and a horse with its mouth open while ridden is now seen as 'normal'. But in reality, horses don't go around with their mouths open, in fact there are few situations where a horse will naturally open their mouth. And especially when exercising, they need the mouth closed to create a vacuum to allow for proper breathing.

But this event is seen everywhere. Why? The horse is opening the mouth to try and relieve the pain from the bit. When I look at this photo, I see a horse in pain. There are numerous examples of this in the

media, at the races and other horse events. It's just a matter of opening our eyes to it.

I could have included an image showing the damage inside the horses' mouth or other gruesome bit effects. The real problems are happening inside the mouth where people can't see it. The tissues of the mouth (gums, tongue, teeth, buccal mucosa, and lips) are extremely sensitive to pain caused by compression, laceration, inflammation, impeded blood flow and/or stretching, all of which the bit can do. But this picture is a better example of the everyday Bit-blindness that is happening everywhere.

So why would people cause pain to an animal they love? I feel the main reasons are tradition and fear, with perhaps a few lost souls who don't care about causing pain if they get what they want. As I said before, it's been around for a long time, and despite all our other advances, the design of the bit has remained pretty much the same. Traditionalists in the equine world insist on its use in competitions and other equine events, further 'proving' its necessity.

Because humans have used pain in the form of bits, whips, spurs, tongue-ties, tie-downs and other mechanical devices to 'control' horses for so long, we have convinced ourselves that we cannot be safe on a horse without it. The Catch 22 is that the pain is what is causing the

issues that make the horse dangerous, so we feel the need to use a bit, which causes the pain and so on. It's a cyclic process and I believe it's time we break out of it and give the horse a fair go, and ourselves.

Bit-induced mouth pain is clearly a problem for the horse. Inaction is excusable when pain is unrecognised, but today we have so much research that has measured and demonstrated the pain. Starting and transitioning horses to bit-free bridles is one solution. Many riders worry that without bits horses would be uncontrollable and a danger to themselves and others and they would not be able to give the precision or agility required for competition. These are genuine concerns that need to be addressed. However, we are now in the lucky position of having a burgeoning population of riders worldwide in the last two decades who have addressed these worries and successfully transitioned horses to safe and effective bit-free riding. We can look to a supportive community to help us break out of this destructive cycle.

Happy Horses Bitless – Considerate Horsemanship, phone 0401-249-263 Email: suzy@happyhorsesbitless.com Web: www.happyhorsesbitless.com Facebook: Happy Horses Bitless Bridles

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