

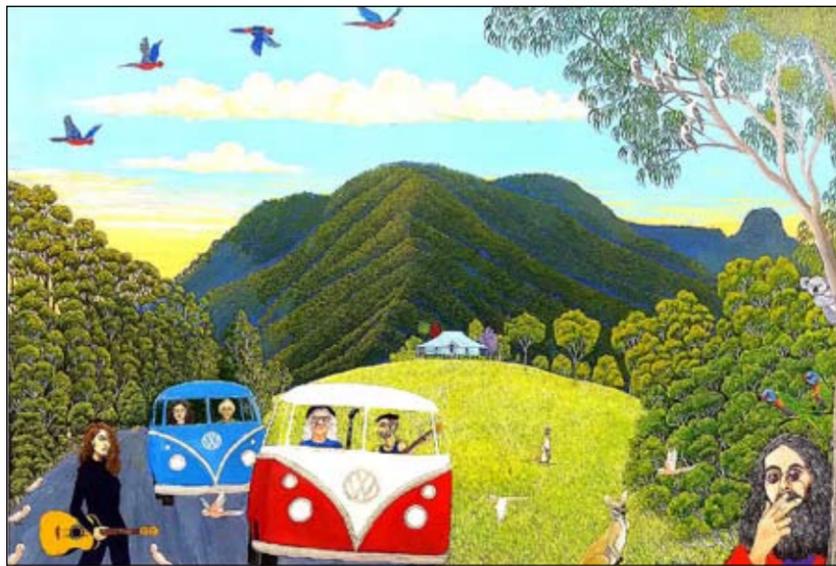
NIMBIN ARTISTS GALLERY
presents

NIMBIN ART FAIR 2023

Sat 8th April - Tues 25th April
10AM to 5PM DAILY
NIMBIN SCHOOL OF ARTS

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

Elegance, charm, quality



by Tonia Haynes

The Nimbin Art Fair exposes the extraordinary creative talents that are encased in a small, but unique part of NSW and reminds us that charm, elegance and quality of human spirit are still alive and strong in today's turbulent world.

Hosted by the Nimbin Artists Gallery, a not-for-profit organisation that passionately supports the efforts and dreams of the clever creative, the Fair is a visual feast of Northern NSW talent in a small town where music, performance, the arts and a strong

belief in a better tomorrow permeate the thoughts of many.

An integral part of this cultural circuit are small shows that support locals, because community support is the only stability that can deflect a maelstrom of turbulence and Nimbin Artists Gallery has been providing support for local artists for many years.

Works from local and internationally renowned artists through to emerging practitioners will be on view. There will be something to love for all, be they seasoned collectors or first-time art buyers.

A few of the artists shown will be



'Witty Rabbit' by Donna Sharam
'Heading into Nimbin' by Denis Meagher

Denis Meagher, Donna Sharam, Katka Adams, Katherine Castle, Jenni Rogers, Amanda Bragg, Maureen Whittaker and John Story.

There will be two prizes allotted: \$3000 will be available for the artist chosen to win the Margaret McLaren Art Prize, and \$2000 will be awarded to the best Emerging Artist.

Proceeds from art sales are primarily distributed to the artists, while the Gallery retains a small percentage.

Nimbin Art Fair opens on Saturday 8th April until Tuesday 25th April, 10am - 4pm.

In the interim, visit and browse Nimbin Artists Gallery at your leisure. We are open daily 10am - 4pm at 47 Cullen Street Nimbin (next to the Nimbin Town Hall), phone 02 6689-1444.

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Earth and sea: Visual & subconscious



Theresa Mason

'Earth and Sea: Visual & Subconscious' is the title of the Serpentine Community Gallery exhibition showcasing the work of Jane Hewetson and Dianne Ingram, two friends who share a passion for the natural world and a desire to protect it.

Opening Event Friday 21st April at 6pm, the works present a powerful reminder of the interconnectedness of all things and the importance of preserving our natural resources.

Their shared concern for the human condition in relation to the environment highlights the urgency of addressing environmental issues and protecting our planet.

Jane's vivid colours and bold brushwork captures the harsh beauty of the Australian outback as well as the lush verdant beauty of our local environs, urging us to appreciate and protect the natural world.

Dianne uses acrylics and mixed media to portray the sea through intricate mark-making and expressive line work to evoke movement and vitality. Dianne's work explores the beauty of the natural environment while drawing attention to the fragility of natural ecosystems.

'Earth and Sea: Visual and Subconscious' is a testament to the power of nature and the human spirit and the cycles of life that enlighten our

existence. Through their art, these two artists showcase the beauty and fragility of the natural world, urging us to appreciate and protect it.

'Earth and Sea' is on show until 8th May, and is a must-see for anyone concerned about our natural environment and the need to take action.

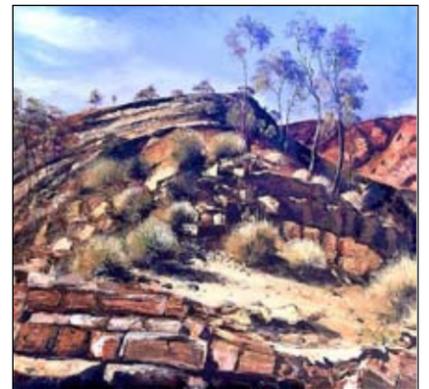
Currently, Serpentine Gallery is pushing boundaries with their latest themed group show by local artists called 'Bold' which opened last Friday night to a great crowd. This beautifully diverse range of artworks from 30 local artists is bold in colour, concept and content.

From cheeky miniature dioramas, through colourful pop art, to sensual figurative works and sculptures, and a haunting tribute to victims and the realities of domestic violence. This 'Bold' exhibition explores and celebrates layered artistic expressions of the notion of BOLD.

Gallery Director, Corinne Batt-Rawden says, "'Bold' has been well received by audiences, bringing a sense of fun, exhilaration and excitement to the gallery space. Our artist community has put forward a very diverse and dynamic exhibition for you to enjoy."

'Bold' runs until 14th April.

For more information or to be on the mailing list, volunteer, or exhibit in 2024, contact the gallery at: gallery@serpentinearts.org Art is... for everyone!



'An Eye on Trepina' (above) and
'Glowing Rocks - Mparntwe' (left)
by Jane Hewetson



'Hero Picture' (above)
and untitled (below) by Dianne Ingram



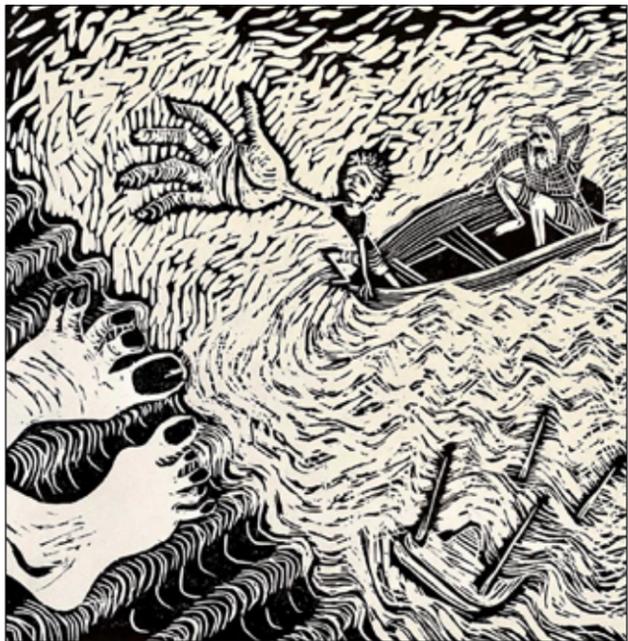
Serpentine Gallery is at 104 Conway Street, Lismore; 10am-4pm Monday - Friday; 10am-2pm Saturday.

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Mud and Ink comes to Kyogle



'Lifeline' by Louise Goggin

by Ruth Tsimbinis

Beginning on 13th April, the Roxy Gallery will change exhibitions from a focus on ceramics to the techniques of printmaking in an exhibition titled 'Mud and Ink – A Celebration of Post-Flood Printmaking from the Northern Rivers'.

This exhibition is a tribute to all the printmakers who were affected in the floods of 2022. The body of works on show will highlight the determination and talents of over 20 regional printmakers who have had to get up and

start it all over again exploring the chaos of Mud and Ink.

Locally-known artist Steve Giese experienced great loss to his life's work and home in this disaster event, so he decided to curate this collection of works from printmakers from this region to respond with ink to the enormous unresolved flood stories.

This exhibition was first shown at the Serpentine Community Gallery in Lismore as an opening exhibition for their gallery space that was completely inundated by floodwaters and gratefully assisted by the arts



'The conversation at Bosches Waterhole' by Steve Giese

community to undertake a massive flood clean-up in order to re-open its doors to support local creatives.

Exhibitor Penelope Sienna acknowledges, "During times of hardship, it is the generosity and kindness of friends and strangers alike that give me the hope and will I need to carry on until things are better. The wings of kindness will carry us through."

Through printmaking and collectively exhibiting, this group of artists is providing dialogue to some of the untold stories and acts of kindness and support to so many through their art. 'Mud and Ink' is a healing for both the

artists and the viewers, as it shares in telling stories of a time so many people experienced.

Officially opening on Friday 14th April from 6pm, people are encouraged to come along to meet with the artists and view this varied and fascinating collection of prints.

At different moments this exhibition will exude a sense of discovery,

contemplation and optimism, engaging viewers in works which express the lives in limbo moving forward once again.



'Mud Army' by Rhonda Armistead

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Anything goes at BKH Gallery



Hats by Nadine Ruhr

The next exhibition at the Blue Knob Hall Gallery will be 'Anything Goes'. This exhibition is open to any artwork that artists and members wish to bring in. It's always a treat to see what arrives.

The exhibition opens on Sunday 9th April at 2.30pm with a performance by the Blue Knob Choir. Refreshments provided by the cafe.

Meanwhile the BKHG is more than just an exhibition space. There is a centre stage area where members can sell their arts and crafts.

These include prints and cards by local artists Oral Roberts and Denis Meagher, beautiful fabric hats by Nadine Ruhe and much more.

'After Morning Mist', a framed print by Hans Heysen, has been donated by friends of the Gallery as a fundraiser. Tickets (or a donation) can be purchased at the Gallery.

Blue Knob Café

With a covered cafe verandah looking out to beautiful Blue Knob, it's worth a visit to enjoy the ambience. Live music will be held once a month, details on the Facebook page.

The 'Back Yarders at Blue Knob' tables continue to supply fabulous local produce from 9am – 12.30pm Saturdays. Members are invited to drop off surplus homegrown produce to sell.

We are also excited to be hosting some events for the Aquarius 50th Gathering, so watch this space in the future.

For more info or enquiries on what's happening at Blue Knob, email: bkhgallery@iinet.net.au phone 02 6689-7449, go to Blue Knob Gallery, Cafe & Ceramic Studio Facebook page or our website: www.blueknobgallery.com



'Kangaroo' by Oral Roberts

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A WtE plant for Northern Rivers: Why and how

by Kitty van Vuuren

In 2017 when China decided to stop importing waste from foreign countries, Australian waste exports to China – 619,000 tonnes per year worth \$525 million – now needed to find new markets.

Waste is serious business. Following the China ban a 2017 Senate Committee inquiry examined the problem. In 2018, the Federal Government announced its National Waste Policy Action Plan, which sets targets for reaching a 'circular' economy based on reusing, repairing, and recycling materials and products for as long as possible.

The Federal plan requires state participation, but in 2023, NSW hasn't come up to scratch says CEO of the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia, Gayle Sloan: "NSW talks about moving towards a circular economy but all we are doing is going in circles with little meaningful progress, while our resource recovery rate continues to stagnate."

Down at the grassroots there's not much happening either. Supermarkets have banned free plastic bags at the checkout, meanwhile more stuff comes wrapped in plastic, and there aren't enough return points for recyclables. We're generating more waste, not less –76 million tonnes in 2018-19, up 10% from 2016-17 (ABS 2020).

The solution seems to be the least preferable in the waste hierarchy – Waste to Energy (WtE) technology. This uses household garbage as fuel to generate electricity, just like power stations use coal, gas or oil. Burning waste at 850degrees C or higher generates heat that boils water producing steam to drive a turbine that generates electricity.

The proposal has ignited fierce public resistance, including in the Northern Rivers where a WtE incinerator for Casino is on the Richmond Valley Council (RVC) agenda.

Who decided where to put WtE incinerators in NSW, and what are the risks?

In 2018, the NSW Government sold its share in Snowy Hydro Limited to the Federal Government for \$4.2 billion. The money was earmarked to develop 'Special Activation' and 'Regional Job' Precincts.

Expected infrastructure developments, to be fast-tracked, include roads, utilities, waste management and digital connectivity.



Casino: proposed Waste to Energy site (orange), Northern Rivers Livestock Exchange (yellow)

Governments wasted little time to explore opportunities to establish WtE plants. In July 2018, a proposal to build a WtE plant in Western Sydney attracted nearly 1000 objections and was knocked back by the Independent Planning Commission on the grounds that it was a risk to human health.

Transnational company, Pacific Consultants visited Richmond Valley Council (RVC) in August 2018. With the help of a Japanese Government grant they invited an RVC delegation – including the Mayor Robert Mustow, the Deputy Mayor, General Manager, and four staff – to visit their WtE plants in Japan, in 2019.

In July 2020, RVC with other North Coast Region Councils published a stocktake of their waste services. Landfill sites are approaching capacity, and the stocktake identified alternative waste management solutions, including WtE.

Meanwhile, the State government identified suitable sites to build WtE plants, and looked at technical processes and health risks.

The NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer released the final Energy from Waste study in November 2020. It concluded that "plants using best available technology air emissions controls generally perform well, including capture of ultrafine particles." It also recommended that WtE's not be built near food production areas.

Residents at Casino perhaps wondered why you'd put an incinerator in an agricultural region with a meat processor. They probably sighed with relief when the Chief Scientist recommended "avoidance of proximity to food

production."

But in September 2021, Deputy Premier, and Minister for Regional NSW, John Barilaro, announced the EPA's Energy from Waste Infrastructure Plan, which identified four 'priority' precincts at West Lithgow, Parkes, Southern Goulburn-Mulwaree, and the Richmond Valley. The plan asserted that WtE incinerators can only be built in these precincts.

Residents in affected communities objected to the announcement and voiced their concerns. At Tarago, near Goulburn, citizens organised a website to voice their objections to French transnational, Veolia, building a WtE plant. A proposal by Greenspot investment company to build one at Lithgow was opposed by the community. At Casino, Residents Against Richmond Valley Incinerator held public meetings, set up a Facebook account and are organising a campaign that is gaining traction around the region.

The NSW Environmental Protection Authority eventually held a public consultation. Their timing was unfortunate. The on-line consultation took place between February and March 2022, coinciding with the flood catastrophe. RVC acknowledged that the floods prevented most people from participating, if they were even aware of it. No alternative consultation dates have been proposed.

RVC continued to push ahead with the project. In April 2022, RVC with nine other councils called for expressions of interest for "Alternate Waste Solutions", which attracted "strong interest." No further details have been made public.

That same year Cr Patrick Deegan (ALP) sought clarity about the Chief Scientist's definition of 'food production' and this applied to the region's agricultural sector. Citing the Chief Scientist's report, RVC argued that NSW emission controls are more prescriptive than European standards, that there is no causal evidence suggesting incinerators have adverse health effects, and that the report cited just one paper about the health impacts of WtE's on food production.

RVC did not consider emissions from WtE plants to be high enough to rule out the Casino location. But if it is safe enough to put in a primary production area, then why wasn't it safe enough for Western Sydney?

Also, the "single" study (Tait et al, 2020), published in the Australia and New Zealand

Journal of Public Health is a review of 93 studies published since 2002 that examined the impacts of waste incineration on health. From these studies the authors concluded that "ingestion is considered the primary route to chemical exposure from waste incinerators for nearby and distant residents," compared to inhalation or through the skin. They considered the risks associated with waste incineration to be significant and recommended that "new incinerators should be located away from areas of food production."

Another study in the Chief Scientist's report commissioned by the Victorian EPA also reviewed pre-existing research but narrowed this down to ten papers published since 2002. This found there was no causal evidence between emissions and health risks, but recognised difficulties with finding a causal link in health risk studies. (This is no surprise: cause/effect studies often require controlled experiments, which is possible with lab rats, but not pregnant mothers.)

It identified alternative sources of the same pollutants emitted from WtE incinerators, including vehicles, wood fires, and bushfires. It also pointed out that British and US governments agencies considered that adverse health effects from modern, well-regulated municipal waste incinerators are likely to be very small, if detectable.

In that case, why prohibit them anywhere in the State except in four rural precincts?

To date, there are no concrete plans for a WtE facility at Casino, but subsequent government announcements did little to allay residents' worst fears. In July 2022 a WtE proposal was knocked back at Matraville, in Sydney's east, just as the NSW government introduced a regulation banning these plants from the greater Sydney region; and in December the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) announced amended legislation banning WtE developments from across Greater Sydney.

Also in December, the DPE published its *North Coast Regional Plan 2041*, where it identified the Richmond Valley Regional Job Precinct as a hub for high-value agriculture, food processing, manufacturing, distribution, and renewable energy.

There's no mention of an incinerator, but it does have a map identifying much "important farmland" in our region. Why would you risk that?

The Aquarian Archive at Aquarius50

by Greg Bork

The Aquarian Archive was initiated in 2004 as part of efforts to preserve the unique history of the 'Rainbow Region', which flourished after the 1973 Nimbin Aquarius Festival.

It began as a collection at Southern Cross University in temporary storage, and it is now kept in similar rudimentary storage at Richmond Tweed Regional Library where it remains "unavailable" at the time of writing.

The incorporated not-for-profit association set up at the inception of the Aquarian Archives has since lapsed. Re-invigorating commitment to look after this Archive is a huge challenge, especially with partner cultural institutions in Lismore in slow recovery from the floods.

I've become familiar with the Aquarian Archive since beginning research about the legacy of Aquarius with Southern Cross University in 2017, which continues as part of a PhD there. Coming together for Aquarius50 is an

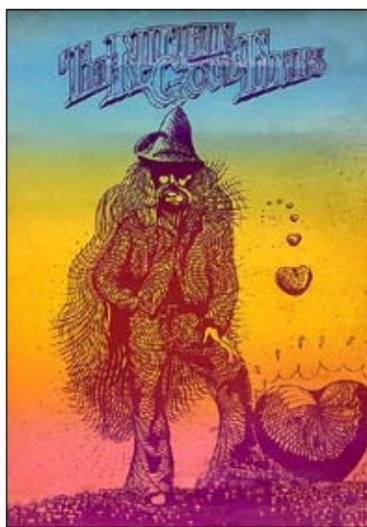
opportunity for discussion with the community about how to look after stories about all facets of Aquarius together.

During the Nimbin Art Fair on April 9-25, I'll co-create a small space with the Nimbin Artists Gallery in the foyer of the Town Hall to both present and collect archives about Aquarius.

During Aquarius 50, this will move to the Comskool space at the Nimbin Community Centre from May 12 to 21.

It will partner with the curators of the wonderful Rainbow Dreaming exhibition about the legacy of Aquarius that will run concurrently in the adjacent Dance Studio. We are currently seeking to loan or hire some exhibition display screens to set up together.

This collaborative archiving project for Aquarius 50 will begin by bringing together existing collections from the National Library, the Rainbow Archives at the State Library of NSW, the Nimbin Aquarius Foundation Inc,



Poster by Vernon Treweweke

the Aquarian Archives, and others.

There are extensive additional important archives in the community with no long-term home or plan of care. Please bring along your own records of Nimbin Aquarius and beyond so that we can talk about the process of accession

and looking after your records in an archive, and maybe make a scan and include a copy in a display. If you've never recorded your own story for safe keeping, let's do it.

As I see it, an Aquarian Archive never was and can never be confined to a crusty, dusty old institution. The manifesto of the 1973 Festival was that "the festival itself be an art form" and "total cultural experience", so how can an archive of that total experience and its legacy be imagined?

While there are the practicalities of a climate-controlled long term archival repository to consider, there is also the question of the way it is accessed, shared and kept alive with the community.

Aquarius continues to refuse and protest the dominant paradigm and its structures, including those owned and controlled by government, corporations and vested interests. How can counterculture stories continue to thrive with and against the mainstream?

How is Aquarius itself sometimes complicit in a story that is too often told from a white, straight, male point of view? How do we glean diverse stories from Aquarian archives, and make sure collections policy affirms alliance with a diversity of counter/cultures?

Attending to Aquarian stories shared by, and with First Nations people requires ongoing commitment and attention to the principles and protocols of working with Indigenous Knowledge in a collaborative and respectful side-by-side relationship.

With these questions in mind at Aquarius50 we can support the original intention to find a permanent home for the Aquarian Archives in Nimbin.

Looking after and exploring the archives is an exciting part of understanding the depth and breadth of Aquarian stories, and in sharing that legacy together with the next generation and beyond.

aquarianarchive@yahoo.com

IMAGINE: A Nimbin Aquarius Festival chronicle

Text and photos by Paul White

Australia's own mini-Woodstock, the '73 Aquarius Festival was not your regular pop festival but a remarkable exercise in group dreaming. Mobilised by a small group of artists and visionaries, it occurred at the peak of Australia's brief but colourful psychedelic years and mushroomed into a magical event engendered by high consciousness states.

Promoted by word-of-mouth and grassroots media, Aquarius was a beacon to all those who turned on, tuned in and dropped out. Young people across Australia answered the call and arrived in droves. Perhaps it was the timing, perhaps the name, representing the celebration of a perceived cultural revolution rippling through the ranks of the rock & roll generation. It was recognition of a new cultural identity, people seeking a new peace-loving, earth-friendly lifestyle.

The post-war baby-boomers found themselves born into a highly industrialised world of smoke blanketing the cities and toxic rubbish clogging the waterways. Plastic achieved a god-like status and petrol-burning engines prowled an asphalt-covered landscape denuded of flora and fauna. Although greatly misunderstood and demonised by politicians and lawmakers of the day, psychedelics swept through the ranks of disaffected youth like a psychic vacuum cleaner producing a legion of travelling mystics a perplexed media labelled as "hippies."

True to the claims of Tim Leary, Aldous Huxley and others, psychedelics have a curious way of opening people's minds beyond current belief systems and reconnecting them with their ancient selves. Sensitive, new, earth-loving humans emerge, with strange nostalgic memories of previous times, telling tales of lost Atlantis and speaking in hushed whispers of environmental Armageddon. This was a new kind of revolution, with an avowed ethic of love and peace that was beautifully exemplified by press photographs of hippies placing flowers in the rifle barrels of National Guardsmen at the famous Pentagon anti-Vietnam march of 1967.

A world-wide phenomenon urged on by global music, large numbers of young people began deserting the industrial wasteland to escape to the country. In previous years, radicals spoke of subverting the dominant paradigm. Reverting to an ancient lifestyle in the natural environment seemed a good way of doing that. People began to wonder, instead of "fighting" for peace why couldn't they simply create paradise instead?

The NSW north coast was the perfect candidate, a unique forested volcanic caldera just below the Queensland border that includes a coastal strip of golden beaches. To the denizens of Sydney and Melbourne it was the romantic get-away zone. For Brisbane dwellers it was the nearest accessible patch of roaming countryside beyond the glitzy maze of the Gold Coast.

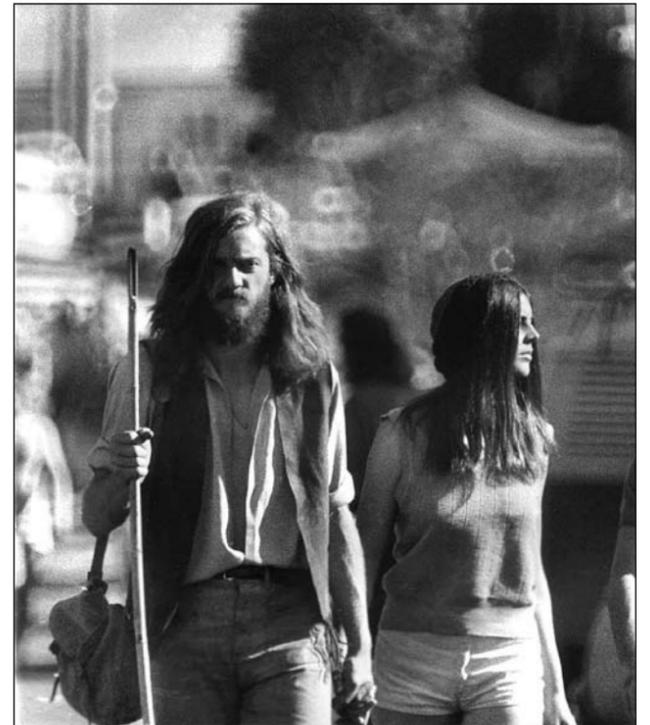
In the last days of 1972, there was talk of a group of uni students with an Arts Council grant touring the area in search of a festival site. In the wake of seminal events like Sunbury and Ourimbah Festival, this stirred significant excitement and speculation. Many thought Mullumbimby a likely location, the area's first commune was established there in 1971 but 30 km beyond Lismore, the once-thriving dairy town of Nimbin came up as the best candidate.

Of particular appeal were the many vacant buildings that could be deployed into service, including the huge, vacant buttery on the edge of town with surrounding areas of open countryside. This semi-deserted ghost town was prime for a take-over and lively face-lift. Life was returning to the old village, although some of the locals were not too sure. Long-haired newcomers accompanied by scantily-clad women said to practice "free-love" did not epitomise the values they grew up with.

As 1973 dawned, plans for the festival gathered pace and a significant influx of colourful visitors began trickling into Nimbin. Numerous locals and itinerant travellers were conscripted into the event. As with fetes and festivals of old, building excitement for the coming celebration gradually infected all who heard of it. No regular music fest, people were told to expect a program of artistic events. Students, artists, actors, musicians and young people across Australia were openly invited. Given the iconic name, it projected itself as a celebration of the dawning of the Age of Aquarius.

Fresh from singing the Aquarius refrain in Sydney's staging of the hit musical *Hair*, a young Paul Josephs emerged as one of the perfect troubadours to herald the occasion. Having worked previously with festival organisers Johnny Allen and Graham Dunstan, he formed the White Company in early '73 and a wild and hairy group of eclectic actors and musicians became the Australian version of Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters. They carried news of the Aquarius Festival to whatever far-flung corners their psychedelic bus could navigate.

Word of the festival reached every part of the country. All those under the sway of rock & roll, who tripped or turned on (or wished they did) were determined to be there. As the time drew nigh, all kinds of festival stories came into play. Young



girls in capital cities quit school to hitch-hike to the event, some from as far away as Perth. People quit their jobs, left their parents, deserted their squats, fitted out vans, grabbed partners and friends and made a bee line for Aquarius. This was a rare opportunity to merge with the love generation and celebrate the Aquarian dream.

When the Aquarius Festival target date of May 12 finally rolled around, Nimbin was already bustling with people and creative activity, a spontaneous parody of a Medieval village rising on the fields outside the town. A formidable line of cars snaked down the dusty dirt road into town. People visibly exchanged joints between the slow-moving cars in a general sense of truancy and shared adventure.

Festivals, any festival, are notorious for folks letting their hair down and there was plenty of hair to let down. At least half of the new arrivals were hitch-hiking or on foot. Numerous seasoned hippies walked in with a single bag or sack over the shoulder and sometimes, grasping a wooden staff in one hand. Probably all they possessed. These were the travelling mystics, the archetypal Fools of the Tarot, Jack Kerouac's wandering yogis.

The main street of town was converted into a colourful juxtaposition of psychedelic art. There was something going on in every building. Huge pop-art murals on shop fronts stood framed against the sky, multiple art installations seemed to emerge from another reality, teams of women worked on wooden spinning wheels. It resembled something from a Freak Brother's comic or perhaps, a remote village in the hills of Nepal. It felt welcoming and oddly *deja vu*, as if from another time. Here's what a hip town of peace-loving artists and dreamers might look like.

Birds-of-a-feather were coming together. People winked and smiled at each other on the street, as if they all shared a secret joke, lured by the music, pageantry and tell-tale aroma of marijuana drifting in the air. The paddocks below the town were dotted with a haphazard array of vans, tents, domes, tipis and home-made humpies. Larger structures of wood and bamboo, meeting areas and a performance stage, completed the illusion of a primitive village.

People streamed into this Wild West setting, some arriving with barely a sleeping bag. Others erected large tents or cleverly strung tarpaulins between available trees and vehicles. The luckiest, were the workers or those who came days earlier and constructed rough bungalows, gnome homes, domes and other interesting arrangements. Of course, many were content to sleep in the vans and cars they arrived in.

Mothers with young children could be seen laying in the shade beneath old Holdens while numerous children frolicked on the hillside, some with painted faces and elfin costumes. Medieval maypoles topped with paper spirals rippled in the breeze, clowns, minstrels and mock wizards in tall hats wandered randomly through the crowd. The unmistakable sound of electric guitar twanged in the distance as people snaked around the sprawling campsite in every direction. On yonder hillside, silhouetted figures carried wood and large bundles to makeshift camps.

Multiple events proved confusing for many who grew up with a festival format based around a central stage. It was physically demanding to navigate the large open space between events whilst entrenched in party mode and various altered states. It was more a case of magical synchronicity from day to day. Each newly-met group of friends engendered a fresh adventure into the colourful life of this strange village of past and future. If in doubt, follow the music. This was a live expression of how life could be in a given week on the surface of the planet. The uncanny resemblance to an archaic tribal

settlement vividly recalled the nostalgic world of the ancestors, before the dreadful nightmare of industrialisation swept it all away.

The vibe was telepathic, grinning trippers cruised around bumping into each other, often in bizarre costumes dressed as their ancient or future selves. In many ways, the festival might easily have been mistaken for a time traveller's convention. Further accentuated at night, the circus folk in music alley donned their freakiest garb and played archaic instruments by firelight. The haunting flute and mandolin-playing denizens of some lost Medieval world sprang to life. For many who were there, such mystical nights roaming the glowing campfires for adventure seemed like lucid dreams.

The bright sunlit days were filled with all manner of art and craft, horticulture, alternative healing, bamboo building demonstrations and visiting gurus. Even some hot rock & roll, as evidenced by writhing crowds of semi-naked people in the warm afternoons. Needless to say, nakedness itself was a popular theme, the ultimate expression of freedom in a sexually repressed culture. With the brazen curiosity of visiting a foreign land, local farmers and old-time residents stood agape at the ongoing parade of young women who went native within the safety of the festival. The media loved it and rushed to publish "shocking photos" of the so-called Woodstock Generation. Bare bosom dancing was a hot favourite or big surprise, skinny-dipping in the creek.

Most of all, the Aquarius Festival was about imagining, everyone came together to celebrate the Aquarian dream. It was a group dreaming exercise of how the world could be. A collective act of imagination. It is fitting that Nimbin sits astride a legendary Dreaming Site of Aboriginal tradition. Nestled in the Mt Warning volcanic caldera, in direct line with Byron Bay, the local Githabul elders considered Nimbin to be the most powerful Dreaming Place on the NSW coast. Unbeknownst to many, the ageing Githabul elder, Uncle Lyle Roberts took it upon himself to initiate Australia's first Welcome-to-Country at the Nimbin festival, performing the traditional Fire Ceremony dance and greeting all those who found their way to his circle.

Twenty years later, Uncle Lyle revisited some of these same people in their forest camps defending the sacred site of Mt Nardi (behind Nimbin) against voracious loggers. A fight they won by the way, resulting in present-day World Heritage listing as a unique refugia of living prehistoric flora and fauna from ancient Gondwanaland. An act of collective imagination can pack quite a punch. After all, how do we create reality anyway?

Pivotal to the art of manifestation, the famous 100th Monkey experiment a decade later demonstrates how a dedicated group of individuals can trigger ideological breakthroughs. The data from this well-known behavioural study, implies that when a certain critical mass reaches a new awareness or practise a new behaviour, that new behaviour is somehow spontaneously transmitted from mind to mind. The Aquarius Festival was a rare and very public, collective dreaming. Exactly as it was done so long ago. In the immortal words of our lost hero, St John, who taught us how to imagine...

*"You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one."*

Paul White is former editor of *Maggie's Farm*, the alternative network magazine that circulated the East Coast during the 1980s.
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Gonadal determinism

Eugenics and other unsophisticated ideologies like white supremacy and patriarchal religions are all under-pinned by some form of half-baked biological determinism.

These groups hold it to be true that the ideas you hold and the behaviours you express are controlled by the apparatus between your legs.

Women they say are by their very nature nurturing, sensitive, supportive, gentle, passive and cooperative; and they belong in the home bringing up children. Men they say are by nature strong, independent, courageous and assertive; and they should go to work, to war, into business and provide political leadership.

But we all know men whose nature is gentle, passive and supportive and we all know women who are fiercely independent, courageous and great leaders. And this is because yin and yang characteristics aren't the sole propriety of a specific gonadal arrangement.

Two significant factors are at work varying how we believe and behave – firstly epigenetics (the turning off and on of specific genes that happens both before we are born in the bodies of our sperm and ova donors and in-utero), and secondly by how we are nurtured an educated during our lives.

We all know people who go through phases during their lives where their characteristics vary – girls who want to be called boy's names; boys who splash on perfume. In some, a very few, these variances are so profound they make the gut-wrenching and unenviable decision to transition.

Make no bones – transitioning is tough on their bodies and on their social lives – I have a few who come to my practice. And I have found each of them to be particularly courageous, honest and full of integrity.

So if first they come for the 'trannies' I will not desert them, and not just because the 'loons' will be next in line in the cancel-culture of gonadal determinism; but because they're my friends and I honour them as individuals.

At the moment the world is awash with the war on the transitioners. One story I was told in shocked disgust, was how 40 men in men's prisons in America successful petitioned to go to women's prisons because they identify as women.

Well if they are effeminate men in a men's prison they will be at great risk of sexual assault and should be able to escape that environment; and if they are faking it as perpetrators then sending them to a women's prison full of women perpetrators may well earn them their just desserts. Either way a win-win situation.

Every person deserves to be treated as the individual they are, and the crunching jack boot of genetic determinism has no place in a real community where we know everyone and treat each of them the way each deserves.



Revenge of the Loon

by Laurie Axtens

A moment

by S Sorrensen

I think I'm becoming straight. I don't want to be straight. I got nothing against straight people except it seems to be an inappropriate response to the current reality. But what if I've gradually become straight, and didn't realise.

This thought makes me lose my rhythm. I breathe in before my body has rotated on the fourth stroke and before my mouth has cleared the waterline. I suck in chlorinated water.

Though the water molecule has oxygen atoms in it, those oxygen atoms are not accessible to me. Unless I'm a fish. My convulsive gasping shows I am not.

I blame my new alcohol-free lifestyle. (Well, free-ish.) It made me want to get healthier and fitter, despite the pointlessness of it all with, you know, ecological crises looming.

I'm working a lot too. A proper job, five days a week mostly. Can you imagine that? Five days a week? And weeks in a row! Who does that?

I do, but right now, I'm choking to death. It's not a pretty sight: middle-age man



splashing about in a swimming pool noisily coughing out the offending pool water – as well as remnants of his 'Healthy & Tasty' lunch from the cafeteria.

I'm struggling for air. I pull off my goggles. That doesn't help the choking, and the goggles' elastic headband shoots them up into the air and over into the next swimming lane.

This is not like the fun pool of my childhood memories, with floaties and dive-bombing and screaming kids and spunky people in sunglasses lounging on floating lounges drinking margaritas – no, this is a lap pool.

Serious straight people come here to swim up and down, and down, up and down...

I'm having difficulty staying

afloat (this is my first week), so I dog paddle to the lane rope which has floats strung all along it. But the lane rope offers little support. It sinks as I desperately wrestle for some buoyancy.

Eventually, I'm pretty much standing on it. Someone from poolside calls out something, but I haven't got my hearing aids on. (I've learnt.) My gasping reduces to panting.

So, evening soda waters, a regular job and laps after work – I'm becoming straighter than a Perrottot hair part. What next? A lawn? A fridge with a TV?

My goggles are floating in the neighbouring lane. Lacing the lane rope under my arms, I paddle hard towards the goggles, stretching the lane rope

out into the next lane. But I can't reach them. Someone yells something again.

The lane has a swimmer. He's on his, like, 20th lap. We're about the same age. He looks like chiselled stone. I look like melting ice-cream. I hate him. I bet he has a neat lawn and a robot mower that tells him when 'Survivor' is on.

Does he know the impending global disaster may make swimming a form of transport? Right now, he's freestyling easily and quickly towards my goggles.

Yesterday, I did half a lap. Pathetic. Speedo bloke does half a lap just pushing off the wall. Today, I'm drowning on the first lap with 15 metres to go. I'll never have a fridge with a TV.

That's it. I give up straight. I'll haul myself out, put on my sarong, and head to the hills for a perky little Beaujolais while I wait for the tsunami.

The swimmer collides with my goggles. He stops and floats effortlessly, not even moving his arms. He scoops up my goggles and throws them to me (perfect throw).

"You can make it, mate," he says, smiling (perfect teeth). I love this guy. Straight is okay.

I'll finish the lap. A whole lap! Tomorrow, maybe two.

Are timelines infinite or finite?

by Doug Moffett

In the double slit and Schrodinger's cat experiments, all timeline realities collapse into one upon observation.

Alternatively, infinite timelines, existing in a non-linear, simultaneous ocean of past, present and future, would foresee and accommodate all time-travel conundrums if each timeline was unique.

A timeline is like a movie. Whatever happens in that movie stays in that movie, even if the same actors appear in other movies with similar storylines.

The realisation that all time, including the present and future exist simultaneously means that the future cannot be changed.

Every choice we make has already been made with our free will, which, because of the simultaneous nature of time creates a future that always was and always will be.

The past, present and



future are occurring concurrently, thus allowing spontaneous actions to connect with a future already written, without the constraints of a pre-determined fate.

Free will and fate cannot exist in the same reality, as they counter each other. If our lives consisted of a pre-determined fate guiding our destiny, free will would have no role to play.

Destiny is the result of chaos and choices but neither are written in stone. Fate suggests that your destiny is detached from chaos and choices, as though neither have the power to set the course and ultimate destination of your pre-determined fate.

The future cannot be changed, as it has already happened, yet we are creating it as we go because of the simultaneous nature of time. Once a movie has finished filming, it cannot be altered.

Yet a fictional character within that movie believes they are creating their future in the present, when, in fact, that future has already been written, much like the past has, with only the present creating the destiny that will eventually become the past and future, as the present is the only perspective reality we can have as we move through time.

The present not only creates the past and future, it is our only awareness of time that is not a cerebral function of the brain. Past is memory, future is imagination.

Chaos and choices determine our reality. Infinite possible choices create infinite possible timelines yet one unique choice creates one unique timeline.

Progress

by Alex Manzi Fe, Blue Knob Writers Group

Moving forward, moving along, towards a better state. That is progress. But as far as humanity is concerned it is questionable whether we are indeed moving towards a better state.

These days, progress seems to be measured in technological advances, as if the state of mind of humans was an unimportant issue.

We are making rapid 'progress' in the world of AI. AI is cleverer than humans. In fact, it is moving towards making you and me obsolete.

For the vast majority of the population it is probable that education will become pointless – a waste of time – when we can get all the information we need from Google.

So, will this free up the left side of our brains? The side that is so involved working things out logically may find it can take a rest and, maybe, just maybe we'll start developing the right side of our brains, the side that AI wants nothing to do with. It consumes algorithms.

But our right side, our intuitive, feeling nature might start taking itself more seriously. If we could start to see, really see and feel, the incredible web of connection with the rest of the Universe, with Nature, with each other, we can literally move into another dimension of reality.

We can leave the solid, testable physical world to the machines. We can open our minds and hearts to the much greater reality of fifth dimensional frequency.

Now, that would be progress.

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Visiting Hells Hole, Whiskey Creek and Unicorn Falls

by Peter Moyle
Nimbin Bushwalkers Club

What a difference a year makes! Last year we had the devastating floods and damage including most of our National Parks restricting our access to some of our favourite walks. There are still a lot of areas closed or restricted but gradually they are being opened as National Parks work their way through the backlog.

Currently the weather has been very warm with limited rain, this has enabled us to get out and about and plan a good schedule resulting in excellent attendances with regular and new members.

An area badly affected by the floods was the Mount Jerusalem National Park, between Mullumbimby and Uki. Still with roadworks repairing the damage, but with caution travel is OK.

The club ventured here for a walk from Hells Hole to Unicorn Falls. The bridge before Hells Hole is closed due to flood damage, but a scramble around is available to access this very pretty area with its falls and waterholes, an ideal spot for a refreshing swim, which we took advantage of.

Partially back-tracking, we then headed off to Whiskey Creek, another gorgeous location with small waterfalls, abundant ferns and cool water – an ideal spot for a rest and to



Peter Moyle at Unicorn Falls

take in the natural beauty.

After a scramble up the eroded track from the creek, we made our way to join the new Unicorn Falls track that leads from Manns Road down to the Falls. This track-work by National Parks is a great addition to the area, and well worth a walk in its own right, about 4km return.

At Unicorn Falls the usual: lunch, refreshments and a swim, and all up a lovely shady walk taking in three locations and thoroughly enjoyed by the 14 members and visitors. More adventures coming up.

Walks programme

Friday 21st to Monday 24th April – Bill and Marsha Williams' property at Green Pigeon, via Kyogle

Leader: Bill Williams 0427-159-811
Grade: 2-4. Bill has invited the Nimbin Bushwalkers to spend the weekend pre-ANZAC Day on his property. Camping in the front paddock at minimal cost and some nice off-track walks that back onto the Border Ranges National Park. Some walks will be easier than others, but you can relax at camp if you want to miss the more adventurous walks. Last year the creeks and waterfalls were WOW. Bill has guaranteed decent firewood, maybe a group meal.

Bring: Usual camping gear, walking footwear and a hat. There will be slippery sections and some rock scrambling. You are welcome to come out Friday and camp 'til Monday. We will be walking on Saturday and Sunday from 9.30am; come for a day walk if it suits, or stay.

Sunday 7th May Burringbar on the Rail Trail heading North

Leader: Peter Moyle 0412-656-498
Meet: Burringbar Rail Station at 9am. The North Coast Rail trail opened in March. Recommended for bikes and walkers. We will be walking, on flat terrain obviously. This will be the flattest walk in the club's history. This section goes through some beautiful terrain and a 500m tunnel with glow worms. Cafes are open at each village, so arrive early for breakfast or lunch when finished if interested.

Nimbin Garden Club notes



by Russell Pugh

Recently, the Nimbin Garden Club had the pleasure of visiting the stunning property of long-time members, Nana and Hendrik De Vries in Stony Chute Road.

The garden spans three acres and has been lovingly created over the past 30 years from what was once a cow paddock.

Unfortunately, a land slip in 2022 resulted in the loss of half of the original six acres, but what remains is an impressive collection of native and species trees, shrubs and palms, including a wonderful example of a North American Swamp Cypress.

As we made our way through the garden, we were welcomed by cool, meandering, shady paths that provided a welcome respite from the afternoon heat. Tall native trees and shrubs were abundant, creating a serene atmosphere.

Nana and Hendrik have made the most of the breathtaking views from the rear of the property, which showcase an awe-inspiring view of Mount Warning and the Border Ranges.

We were impressed by the variety of fruit trees planted in the garden, including Citrus, Jaboticaba, Grumichama, Carambola and an unusual tasty Orange Berry tree, *Glycosmis trifoliata*.

It was evident that they had put in a lot of hard work and love to create this magnificent garden, and we were all grateful for the opportunity to experience it firsthand.

Our next meeting will be held at the property of Sam and Diana Roberts at 89 Cecil Street, Nimbin (second driveway on the right past Jarlanbah) on Saturday, 15th April.

As always, visitors and guests are welcome to join us. Please bring a cup, a chair, and a plate to share as we enjoy the pleasure of another member's garden.

WEEDING IS GOOD FOR YOU AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Weed Words

by Triny Roe

The Autumn Equinox has passed and the days are getting cooler. It's a great time to get out into the bush or the garden and do some weeding.

Weeds, exotic opportunistic aggressively-growing plant species, are a huge threat to biodiversity and many areas need help to return to a more varied and desirable ecosystem. Weeding is one way to make a difference, and is also an excellent treatment for depression, anxiety, OCD and many other health issues.

Physical exercise is essential for a healthy body and mind, but there's also a bacterium found in soil, *Mycobacterium vaccae*, which can boost serotonin production. This brain chemical makes people more relaxed and happy. Ever seen a child playing in a mud puddle? Tests carried out on rats showed they were smarter, less stressed and could concentrate better after ingesting or being injected with the bacterium.

The benefit to weeding comes not just from the soil. Plants help too. They exude volatile chemicals called phytoncides which protect them from fungal and bacterial diseases.

Phytoncides have also been shown to boost human immunity. Exposure to these compounds, which are released into the air around the plants, increases levels of natural killer cells in the blood stream. NK cells fight viruses and tumours. Forest bathing to improve health has long been a thing in many countries around the world. If you are benefitting the environment as well as yourself, that's twice the gain.

Last year's floods reached areas that have not seen floodwaters before. The



Madeira vine can sprout in the fork of a tree

swollen creeks and rivers will have carried propagation material far and wide, depositing it in fresh locations. Be on the lookout for anything new popping up, especially creepers.

Cat's claw, *Dolichandra unguis-cati*; madeira vine, *Anredera cordifolia*; balloon vine, *Cardiospermum grandiflorum*; and morning glory, *Ipomoea indica* can colonise a new site depressingly quickly. These creepers have been around for a long time and many know them well.

Newer weeds on the block include seeded bananas, *Musa spp.* They look like normal bananas but, producing hundreds of seeds per plant, can spread rapidly. The seeds are rock hard and can last 25 years. With hotspot heavy infestations in the upper reaches of Mulgum Creek, plenty of seeds and even whole plants will have washed downstream with the landslips, storm surges and the raging torrents that characterised the Big Flood of 22.

This plant could turn up anywhere along the long meandering water course and the associated flood plains. Mulgum Creek flows to Goolmangar Creek joining it in Nimbin.

Goolmangar joins Terania Creek at Blakebrook then runs into Leicester Creek before merging with the Wilson River at Lismore. From there the river flows to Coraki where it joins the Richmond River and then all the way to Ballina where it meets the sea.

Seeded bananas are on the eradication list, so report occurrences to Rous County Council for advice and assistance. Birds and bats also transport banana seed so expect to find it anywhere. Able to grow in 80% shade it is a threat to the rainforest and readily establishes on creek banks.

'Weeds' is a broad term, and different weeds require different management strategies. Aim to reduce your workload by acting quickly. A 30cm giant devil fig, *Solanum chrysotrichum*, is a lot easier to deal with than a thorny three-metre one. Welding gloves are good protection when handling this prickly pest plant.

Triage weeds and identify the worst ones – the fast growers and rapid spreaders. Prioritise species that need immediate attention. And follow up. Follow up. Follow up. Many species can mimic death, only to re-shoot the following year. Happy weeding.



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The Field Zoologist

by Scott O'Keeffe ecologist

White-headed Pigeon

As we move into autumn, native fruit doves will form flocks and become obvious throughout the Northern Rivers.

The White-headed Pigeons (*Columba leucomela*) will be obvious since they are large and strikingly patterned. Flocks, sometimes quite large, streak past in acrobatic flight. If they are close enough, you will hear the whirr of their wings.

Their aerobatics make it harder for predators to catch them, because pigeons are... well, plump and quite tasty.



The White-headed Pigeon becomes conspicuous in autumn and winter when they form large wandering flocks.

Photo courtesy Russell Street

White-headed Pigeons (WhP) are white underneath. Their wings and tail are dark slate grey. The similar Topknot Pigeon with which they are easily confused, is larger and mostly grey. Its flight is more rapid, and they often occur in large very large flocks. Both species are quite timid, but WhP seem to habituate to people more readily and can become quite tame.

White-headed Pigeons are present in this district all year, but they are

particularly obvious when Camphor Laurels begin to fruit. Flocks form and these move between groves of camphor as the fruits ripen.

Camphor Laurels are not native of course, and are highly invasive. But from the pigeon's perspective, thank goodness they are here. White-headed Pigeons suffered serious population declines following European settlement when large tracts of wet forest were cleared and the pigeons were heavily hunted for food.

By the 1940's, the birds began to recover. This was partly because of a ban on hunting, but also because camphor had become widespread and White-headed Pigeons adapted to the lack of native plant fruits and began feeding on camphor. Not just the fruits, either. They also consume buds and flowers in addition to the ripe and unripe fruits.

Camphor now makes up a significant part of WhP's diet. They have also been able to adapt to more open environments, and move across the cleared parts of the landscape to take advantage of isolated groves or strips of camphor and other fruiting trees. Try looking for them along creek lines, especially where camphor or privet are fruiting.

Topknot Pigeon

You might see them with flocks of Topknot Pigeons (*Lopholaimus antarctica*). These form flocks in the autumn. The flocks move out of densely forested areas to take advantage of the autumn and winter crops of camphor and privet. The flocks screech past- their flight being even more dramatic than that of the WhPs. Although Topknots feed on camphor, unlike the WhP, it is a smaller part of their overall diet that includes many fleshy rainforest tree



Topknot Pigeons also form flocks in autumn and winter. They are similar to WhP but feed on a wider range of fruits.

Photo courtesy Kai Boesen

fruits. Historically, WhPs also had a broader diet, but they become more specialised, taking advantage of the hyper-abundance of camphor.

There are other species of fruit doves in the region, and these together with topknots and WhP, form an ecological guild. Guilds are made up of similar species that use the same resources (in this case food), but are able to divide the resource by specialising.

In the case of fruit doves, some specialise in either small or large fruits, others use very fleshy fruits such as figs. WhPs have a very strong crop, so they are able to specialise in hard seeds with a thin coating of flesh. Exactly the type of seed camphor trees produce.

Despite the tragic conversion of the region from a forested landscape to a one of a mosaic of open country and forest remnants dominated by exotic trees, White-headed Pigeons demonstrate that the simplified landscape also creates new opportunities for adaptable organisms.

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How to assist dying animals



Dora and her best friend Pearly

by Donna Connolly

I get to work with a lot of animals that are severely ill or in the process of actively dying.

Their humans are often in a position of having to make a choice: whether or not to help the animal cross over, or let them pass on their own time with palliative care, or pursue more invasive options for treatment.

There is no one-size-fits-all answer: it's going to be very individual what's right for the individual situation. But I want to share my experience in talking to animals who are in this situation.

They are usually extremely understanding about the decisions you make and the reasons you make them. Remember, they are very in-tune with you and your thoughts, and they often know more of what's going on than you think. They are not mad at you for your choices.

In animal communication sessions they show that they understand you're doing your best to help them. In a lot of cases, that means helping them cross over through euthanasia. In other cases, the animal is on board with trying out different treatment options. Others feel like they have a lot of energy left to give.

Again, it's very individual, and I can't speak for all animals just through this one post. But should you decide to help them cross over through euthanasia, know that they understand their circumstances (being in pain or too ill, their quality of life being severely lowered etc.) There is often a lot of gratitude for the difficult choice to help them cross over through euthanasia.

Animals are not afraid to die. They have a much bigger understanding of life/death/afterlife than we do (often already being aware of spirits on the other side). They might worry about you and how you'll do when they're gone. Or they might get unsettled or worried due to the strong emotions you are going through around all of this.

They might worry because you are worried, but not because they're worried about death in and of itself. They're not mad at you. Towards the end of a sick animal's life, they might change their behaviour, and sometimes we take that to mean they're mad at us, but that's usually not the case. They might be feeling so ill they can't interact in their normal loving way. I have never talked to an animal that was mad at their human companions for how they passed.

We often worry about the timing of our animal companion's death. Is it too early? Are they

ready? Have I waited too long? Should I have helped them cross over sooner? Which day is best to schedule the euthanasia?

In my experience there is no one second that is the exact right timing for their passing. It's more like a window of time: sometimes that window of time is months long, and anywhere within that window of time is an appropriate time.

One thing about euthanasia, is that you and the animal get to prepare in a conscious way for their passing. You can plan where you want it to be done (you can have a vet come to your home, so you don't have the stress of travel). You can plan meaningful activities and create a type of ceremony around it if that feels right.

If you are in the situation where your animal companion is close to passing, whether with help or on their own time, here are some things you can do to make it the best experience possible for everyone involved:

- Be present with them
 - Talk out loud to them (they will understand the gist of what you're saying)
 - Tell them what's going on and why
 - Tell them how much you love them and appreciate them
 - Reminisce out loud about all the good times you've had together
 - Try to keep the energy uplifted and loving and calm. (Again, think about the wonderful things you've done together, and the wonderful things they'll get to do on the other side) It's also 100% OK if you're doing this all through tears and heartbreak.
 - Do their fave activities, with them if possible
 - Give them their favorite treats and junk foods
 - Bring them to their favorite spot (if it can be done in a way where they're still comfortable)
- Think of this as an opportunity to help them have a little more joy and a little more ease before they go. And know that they hear and understand what you're trying to tell them.

A question I get a lot is: "Do they know how much I love them?" And the answer to that is always 100% of course they do. You do not need an animal communicator to tell them that for you. They know.

Feel free to connect if you would like to co-create an amazing bucket list of your animals' favorite things or just gain some clarity and answers, "straight from the horse's mouth."

Sending lots of love to those who are going through this with their own animal companions.

www.rivergem.com.au

Plant of the month

by Richard Burer

Foam bark, sometimes known as Pink Tamarind, is stunning in autumn, flowering and setting the landscape alight with a pink maroon display which rivals many of our iconic local rainforest species.

It's a very strong tree and grows straight – even the tractors and bulldozers won't kill it.

I mean I'm surprised I don't hear children in the area called Jagera, it's a good name, probably better than Richard!

Growing to 30 metres, Foam bark is a beautiful tree especially when open-grown on forest edges or a remnant in the paddock. Its dense crown is green, shady and inviting, and in the forest its trunk is often fluted.

This species fruits pretty much each year with large amounts of hairy pinkish purple fruits containing black seeds, which are best extracted for propagation with tweezers.

This tree's habitat is mostly subtropical rainforest, but I find it in all forests including dry rainforest and other local plant communities.

At home in Nimbin, it's the most common tree regenerating in our forest and at work it's usually present on most sites, so it's very common.

Foam bark is a cultural asset and is highly regarded by indigenous Australians who used the plant as an intoxicant for fishing, among other cultural uses.

Richard Burer is a Nimbin-based natural area restoration contractor and consultant:
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Foam bark
Jagera pseudorhus

Putting love in the hands

by Suzy Maloney

Every time we touch a horse, we are communicating. One of the best things an instructor ever said to me was, "Put love in your hands."

I have never forgotten these powerful words. At first, I didn't really know what she meant or how to do this, but over time it became clear. I also discovered that one of the points of the heart chakra is in the centre of the palm.

Riders frequently communicate with horses by applying rein pressure with the hands. The way we do this affects the response from the horse enormously. If we suddenly apply pressure, the horse has no idea that it's coming, so has had no time to prepare for it mentally. The horse can feel suddenly jolted.

By considering making the beginning and end of our rein aids a smooth squeeze feel, the horse will respond easier, faster, softer and more willingly. By softly coming into the rein pressure, the horse has time to prepare, and by doing the same when taking it off ensures the horse doesn't feel suddenly dropped. This is only a few seconds, but it makes all the difference in the world to the horse.

Once we have squeezed into a rein aid, the idea is to stop when a contact is felt. This is the point where we can feel the horse at the other end of the reins. If we continue taking rein it is pulling. I have yet to meet a horse that doesn't brace against a rider who pulls on the reins. It's so important to stop once the contact is felt.

We can increase this contact if needed, but if we do, again it stops at some point, we never keep on pulling. The contact is essential, without it we are just squeezing a rein, the horse will not feel it.

Then once we have a contact, we can squeeze into that. The feel in the rider's hands is like squeezing water from a sponge. A pulsing on and off, again with a sliding in and out of the squeeze, not a sudden jerking on and off.

The squeeze needs to be enough to squeeze the water from the sponge bit by bit. If it's too light no water will come out, and if it's too strong all the water will come out at once. Developing sensitivity in the hands allows us to feel exactly how much squeeze a horse requires to understand what we are asking.

The aim is to give the smallest, lightest rein aid to receive the greatest possible response. In this situation less is more. To achieve this, every single time we apply an aid we start with the smallest effective aid possible. If the horse doesn't respond we can increase the strength of the aid or add something on, like a voice cue.

I like to imagine three steps, number one is: "Excuse me, can you do this please?" number two is a bit louder: "Hey did you hear me?" and number three is "OK, we're doing it." Then the very next time I ask, I use the number one aid again.

I may need to repeat this pattern a few times, but quickly the horse responds to a number two, then after that the number one. Once this is established, I can just ask with a



number one from then on. This is now a situation where I can use the lightest possible rein aid and get a full response from the horse.

By really looking at what we do with our hands, and adopting the stance of asking rather than telling, every horse can be soft and responsive to light aids. Each horse is different, and the same horse is different each day.

Being able to turn the mind off and really feel the horse with the hands, allows us to tune in to what the horse requires on that day. And if we have love in our hands, the horse will feel this.

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Horses: The spaces in between



by Les Rees

As I'm aging, I've become aware of the importance of spaces. The spaces in art and in music especially because it allows me time to slip into the creative process.

Someone recently commented on a painting I'd done, he said that he particularly liked it because it was understated.

I suspect that he meant that art is a means of creating an illusion and anyone viewing is spurred to fill in those understated spaces engaging their own stamp onto what they are viewing.

For me, it's the same with music. I often notice that the truly great musicians are those who can leave time spaces allowing the notes to linger rather than being over-clever just because they can.

The understatement in music comes from musicians who are so comfortable in their abilities that they can allow their music to speak for itself as it

allows time to linger in the ears of the listener.

I see spaces as moments in the time continuum that allow us to use our imagination and in doing so we create our own sense of the world.

Where am I going with this, I hear you say! Well it got me thinking about the way we interact on other levels of understanding and interpretation between the animal species.

Humans have created an alien world full of chaos that arises from the rapid speed of invention. Many people seem to have little time left for engaging with nature and the animals that live with them.

There's so much information being fired at us every moment of the day, stealing away those valuable moments when we allow ourselves time for understanding, reflection and creativity

I find myself wondering how this reflects on our relationships with our horses, because we are preoccupied with massive amounts of incoming information that require a need for

quick reactions to it.

It really isn't surprising why so many people have difficulties being present in the world in which our animals live, when the human fails to slow down to a pace that our horses can relate to.

We need to break things down into bite-size chunks and leave space in which our animals can discover and engage with us. It's far better to create smaller tasks that are easily understood than setting yourself and your horse up for failure.

I also prefer to slow things down a bit to allow time for digestion of the thought processes. I never attempt to teach too much in a single training session. If your horse seems to be struggling, it's more likely to be your fault.

Maybe you're not being clear in what you're asking. There's nothing to be gained in getting frustrated, as it will set the horse up to react with unwanted fear responses.

It's better to take a break and go back to the lesson later. You may need to change your method by being inventive by making your training sessions fun for your horse.

It may seem as if you're taking longer to train your horse. However, in reality the extra time taken will not only build a positive trusting relationship between you and your horse but the lessons will be remembered as being fun for the horse rather than something to be feared; both of which lead to a positive outcome.

The more I'm around horses, I'm sure that they also need and use those spaces in time, allowing the brain to process new information.

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