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The art of Jasmine O'Shea

by Tonia Haynes

Throughout January, the Nimbin Artists Gallery has the privilege of showing the watercolours of Jasmine O'Shea.

Originally from the west of Ireland, Jasmine is now a local, based near The Channon and in her own words, is a "lifelong water colourist".

She presents three bodies of work. The landscapes and seascapes of the Northern Rivers region, and personal pieces of a surreal nature.

When creating a landscape or seascape, she generally sets up her easel outside to paint the chosen view.

At times these small works are kept as finished pieces, at other times they become part of a larger expression of art.

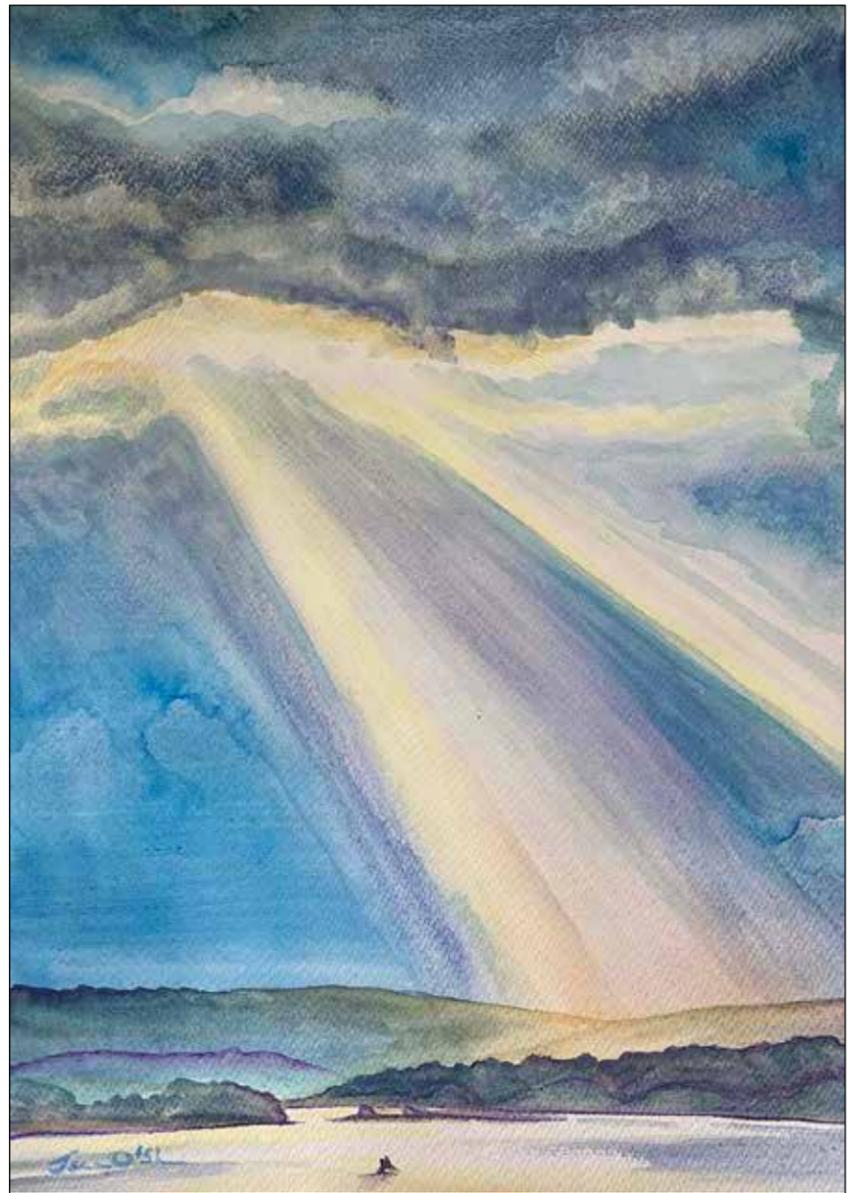
In her studio Jasmine uses an all-natural paint, which she makes from earth pigments. She also collects natural ochres and charcoal from the land she lives on.

These lightfast paints are then applied to high quality, acid free, cotton duck, water colour paper.

This collection of paintings is inspired by the clouds and storms of this region, where the subtle light and dramatic movement of clouds, whether they be swollen with puff, streaks across the sky, or dark and heavy with rain, and at times punctuated with the coloured ribbons of a rainbow.

Pop into the gallery at 49 Cullen Street and view Jasmine's work. It will float you away.

'Evans Head'



Nathaniel Harvey exhibits at Serpentine



by Artis Tree

The first solo installation for 2024 at the Serpentine Gallery is 'Flux Automation', the collected works of Nathaniel Harvey (pictured), which will delight audiences in this immersive multi-disciplinary exhibition.

"I needed to make something that was positive out of my own struggles. I need to be creative to make myself happy. Making Art makes me feel really happy," Nathaniel Harvey said.

Nathaniel Harvey's creative practice seeks to pursue happiness; despite the challenges and obstacles one can face in everyday life. His rich collection of works celebrates the cracks in the surface where light escapes and illuminates the pathways of an individual seeking meaningful engagement with the world.

Nathaniel's latest solo exhibition, is an immersive sensory space where Nathaniel is showcasing his extensive body of work, produced tirelessly over the last five years.

Nathaniel identifies as a young Northern Rivers man on the Autism Spectrum, based in Kyogle. His work utilises varying mediums (painting, film, sound, photography, sculpture and installation) to capture his creative vision.

Drawing influence from film, Pop culture and a plethora of artists such as Jackson Pollock, Quentin Tarantino, Wassily Kandinsky, Stanley Kubrick, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Alfred Hitchcock and Ed Wood, Nathaniel's art reflects genuine, emotionally energetic, action-based responses to the world.

His work embodies rich narratives that are complex, abstracted and uncompromisingly unique. When assembled en masse, his body of work provides nothing less than an experiential journey that honours the paradoxical shades of life in a manner that is explorative, accessible, performative and fun.

The exhibition, of over 100 paintings on canvas, will be running from 25th January until 5th February.



There will be a closing night gathering on 2nd February from 6 to 8pm.

Be sure not to miss out on this event, as Nathaniel will be demonstrating his action based painting process as a live performance for the first time.

He will also be joined by his friends, Lorentz and the Follicles, who will be playing their genre-bending instrumental Post Punk.

You'll find Serpentine Gallery at 3/104 Conway Street, Lismore. Parking via Ewing street. Phone 0429-964-819. Serpentine re-opens on 20th January.

Gallery gives thanks to volunteers and patrons



'Tree of Reflection'
by Lessi Rees

Blue Knob Hall, Gallery, Cafe and Ceramic Studio is having a much-needed break for the volunteers, and will be re-opening on Thursday 18th January.

There will still be time to see 'The Artist's Choice' exhibition, as it continues until Saturday 27th January.

If you didn't get out to the Gallery before Christmas, it's a bright and colourful exhibition with everything from paintings, ceramics to fibre and much more.

It was a busy time leading up to the end of the year as gifts were purchased from

the Centre Stage area and artworks went home for Christmas presents.

Farewell Paul

Cafe co-ordinator Paul Scott retired to a standing ovation on Saturday 23rd December, on the cafe veranda.

Andy Walker and Dave Davies played music during the morning for patrons and visitors.

It was a spontaneous moment and a lovely atmosphere for the many who dropped by to wish him all the best on his last morning in the kitchen.

We thank Paul for his tireless voluntary contribution to the Café, Gallery and Ceramic Studio.

Paul would like to thank all the patrons and volunteers who have helped make the cafe a great success over the last eight years.

He hopes you will continue to support the Cafe and Gallery when we re-open in the New Year.

Graham Ferguson Memorial Seat

Blue Knob Hall has a stunning new acquisition in the garden: a unique sandstone seat which is dedicated to the memory

of Graham Ferguson who passed away in 2021.

Graham loved to come to Blue Knob Hall Gallery and Cafe every week for coffee.

He was an integral part of the exhibition hanging team and his family commissioned local artist Rebekah Webster, assisted by Jen Harkness, to create this beautiful seat.

People can sit and drink coffee, contemplate and gaze upon Blue Knob Mountain, where Graham had made his home.

Blue Knob Writers Group

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

We look forward to bringing you more art, food and friendship in 2024.

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

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Western desert art echoes



Ronnie Tjampitjinpa, Untitled (detail), 1996, acrylic on linen

In the 1970s, Aboriginal people from the desert began talking to the world through art, transferring their creation stories of the land and people to canvas.

Now in the 2020s, this foundational echo is going back and forth. No longer a one-sided, outward calling, it reverberates multi-dimensionally within wider Australian and global communities.

The travelling exhibition 'Three Echoes - Western Desert Art' showcases works by 57 acclaimed artists from Ikuntji (Haasts Bluff), Papunya and Utopia Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

The exhibition of paintings, prints and batiks communicates important stories of tjukurpa (Dreaming) and Country.

The collection explores the poetic notion of echoes - how metaphorically and metaphonically we can echo a thought, a sentiment or a consciousness.

'Three Echoes - Western Desert Art' is on show at Tweed Regional Gallery until 25th February.

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After the flood

Ben Roche, Southern Cross University

Interview by Yagia Gentle

My role at Southern Cross University is external engagement – how we engage with positive change in our communities. The role is part of the executive team of the University.

In the period leading up to the flood, everyone had been working and studying from home in those incredibly bizarre and challenging Covid years. We had reached a point that we were really excited to be welcoming staff and students physically back to the campus.

Then that Sunday it poured down and, on Monday morning, we woke to a crisis. After experiencing the 2017 flood, I thought I had a sense of what would be coming. Then we had by far the biggest flood in the region's history.

That Monday a meeting of the University Council, our governing body, was scheduled in Coffs Harbour. So, the Vice-Chancellor and some other members of the Executive were there preparing for it. Of course, the flood cut the highway and they were stranded. So I found myself as the first member of the executive team to be on campus, and then I was given the authority to manage our response to it.

It was very challenging for everyone. It was seven days a week for six months. It was a furious amount of work. We had to figure out what was required, what services did we have that we could put into place, and what can we do for the community.

It was a remarkable effort by so many university staff and students. Of course, many of them were also impacted, so we had a duty of care around how we support them as well.

After the 2017 flood I was surprised at how many of the same challenges existed in 2022; how little had been learnt and enacted as a result of the lessons from the previous floods. I was shocked at the lack of preparedness. I felt a real sense of obligation, I've lived here for 14 years and feel I'm deeply connected. I felt deeply concerned about the ability of our town to recover.

It was in those days that we saw a huge number of staff, students and volunteers from the community descend on the campus. It was just remarkable.

The sense of responsibility was overarching for me. We were conscious of the fact that the university had an opportunity to deliver a level of care that it had never done before. I remember that evening walking down to the campus carpark in a complete blackout, and there were people starting to set up tents on any green patch they could find. They were around campfires trying to dry gear. It felt a little bit like I'm sure many would've felt in New Orleans, post Hurricane Katrina.

It felt that the fabric of civilisation itself was torn a little bit, and I have to say that sensation grew over the next few days, because we had deeply traumatised and vulnerable people arriving. They were either finding their way over land, or literally coming out of the air by helicopter drops from the Australian Defence Force.

They would arrive in groups. There was little co-ordination then, we didn't know how many, and when they were coming. And over time, when it swelled to 2000 or 3000 people, we were opening up classrooms, trying to give them some sense of sheltered safety.

The scale of trauma from this event was quite confronting. Often the staff or volunteers were the ones to greet people arriving from the helicopters or at the donation centres. Many were disoriented. Many were unable to speak, they were in

such deep shock and trauma.

Up to then, our concept of values was fairly abstract. Through this event, our values became the basis for our decisions. This experience forced us to chart a new strategy for the university, that centres on a core purpose of being an organisation that changes people's lives.

We arranged food to go back into the communities and the villages. In those days after the flood, few were receiving big donations. Storage was a real issue. We were also aware that there was little food, especially fresh food, so we set up distribution networks to help get food into villages and communities.

We set up a food and clothing system so that we could get dry clothing into the communities, and we started to see ourselves as a hub, not only for safety, but now for distribution and regeneration.

One Saturday, I got a phone call at about 6am. It was a really well-intentioned truck driver who was driving a semi-trailer from the Harris Farm markets in Sydney. He was offering a donation of 22 pallets of fresh fruit and vegetables. At that stage we hadn't seen fresh food for weeks. It was due to arrive at ten o'clock and we got ready to unload and store it. We put out a call on Facebook and all the media sites.

People started turning up and getting the word out. Communities like Cabbage Tree Island, Woodburn, Wyrallah, and Coraki had really suffered and felt like they had been overlooked. They started to feel supported. As we were unloading the truck, my 11-year old son Miles said to me, "Dad, there's people crying when they take their first bite of a plum." It was pretty emotional. Fresh fruit symbolised care.

That was the kind of community building that we suddenly found ourselves in, and that became self-sustaining. I think most people derived great motivation, and I think joy, from the help that they could provide. So many people involved in the mud clean-ups and helping others found purpose in their lives over that time.

In the weeks after, we had two police stations on campus. The ambulance station was operating out of here. The fire station was here. All the community and business recovery hubs were here. The town had no functioning financial and banking system for a while, until we created that with our fabulous credit unions in the plaza; and of course, there was the evacuation centre, with all its complexities.

So we found ourselves right in the centre of it all, and not really by choice, but by moral obligation and an opportunity to act. Then we had to strategise around what recovery looks like.

I wasn't personally affected by the floodwater, and that's an important part of the story. My circumstances allowed me



to invest fully in the work, whereas others were both part of the effort to respond and dealing with their own flood impacts.

On the second day we gathered as the university leadership group together and had a short discussion. We agreed that we needed to say "Yes" to anything and figure out the implications later. My role was the lead in terms of the external dealings of university, and my colleague Allan Morris ran the internal operations. I would find the need, and then it fell to Allan to implement.

That was how we took on the evacuation centre, and accommodation of TAFE, Richmond River High School, The Living School, and Trinity Catholic College. We were particularly concerned for the welfare of our region's young people, after so much dislocation during Covid, that we decided to prioritise the education system and our young people first and foremost as part of the recovery.

The scale was huge. There was so much happening. We had all of those services happening, and we were aware that the business community was struggling to function. How would people get paid?

We needed to create a banking system, as well as a business recovery system. Then there was the health service. Not a single medical centre was operating in Lismore, and there was, and still is, a huge level of trauma.

So, by the third week we worked with the primary health network to set up Head to Health, a mental health service. Then there was also another response we needed to look at. We were concerned about the level of resilience of young people on the region.

I think the response to Covid had been pretty disruptive for us all, but particularly difficult on high school kids. Then to see that slam into the flood event, we got really concerned. We felt a deep sense of obligation to support our school students and the education system.

After the flood, many schools were unable to operate, so we went out of our way to contact all of the leads of all of those schools and said, "We are here for you, and will do whatever you need." The schools relocated to our Lismore campus and they are still here, two years later.

Now we're starting to think about what all of this looks like for our region going forward. How do we build a much better education system that is stronger and better able to support the kind of potential that we have here in our region?



Photos courtesy Southern Cross University

Very quickly we realised that we can't go back into a scenario where people face this kind of risk. We're not saying that we shouldn't allow people to have choice. We do think, however, that the housing system shouldn't result in the most vulnerable living in the most at-risk parts of our community. In the recovery we've got every opportunity to change that, and every minute that I invest in this flood recovery is focused on seizing this opportunity for renewal and change.

We quickly saw our role to help equip individuals and organisations to make informed choices. This relates to the complex decision-making of the reconstruction agencies, but also to individual community members grappling with their options, such as house-raising. So we developed the Living Lab: Northern Rivers (LL:NR).

The expertise in recovery from disasters is scattered over the world, so we have been bringing it under one network that can provide support for those complex choices that communities and government are going to have to make.

Community connection to the LLNR is important, so it has a shopfront at 11 Woodlark Street. We set it up so that we can have informal conversations with the public around key recovery and resilience issues, like housing. What types of housing exist, and what does density look like in other countries? We haven't seen great examples in Australia of really innovative housing solutions.

There are really great examples all around the world, so we want to bring those ideas to the community here, to say, "Look, there's heaps of ideas. Don't think that housing density equals skyscrapers. It can also be sustainable, regenerative, and provide great social connectedness." We're not trying to put a solution forward. We're at the stage of supporting conversation with good information to help realise our potential as a region.

The University is at a stage now where the journey has moved on from being personal and individualistic, to an obligation for our community. It's kind of emblematic of the flood experience. That started as an intensely personal step into a harrowing experience, and is evolving into a long vision that sees the university as an asset for the region's future.

We naturally reacted to the flood by building a broader community-based response. Now we're moving into a more contemplative yet strategic state, and the role of the University now is to continue to be that platform for community support and change.

Indeed, if the community needs something, come and ask, and we'll work out how we can be supportive.

We are big enough that government will listen, yet small enough to listen to our community.

Our role in the response to the floods really changed how we think about ourselves as a university. It's a profound element of institutional change, and we became a different kind of university as a result.

Now my view on universities has become really simple. We are public institutions with a societal purpose, and this is the time to express that intent.

Meet your new pet!

by Scott O'Keefe, ecologist

It's quiet, has beautiful plumage, it's cheap to feed and it won't run away!

But don't expect it to fetch a stick. It's *Fuligo septica*, or as its usually known, Dog Vomit Slime Mould. This colorful, conspicuous organism is not a plant, animal, or fungus. It's more closely related to microscopic single-celled amoebas.

Like other slime moulds, Fuligos are composed of huge numbers of simple undifferentiated cells. This aggregate, called a *plasmodium* (see photos) slowly creeps along, consuming plant material such as wood chips, pine bark and dead wood, although it is sometimes seen on live grass or leaves.

This mobile blob replicates by creating reproductive structures called *aethelium*. In this organism, these are bright yellow. You can see

the *aethelium* starting to develop on the *Fuligo* in photo 1. The *aethelium* release spores which disperse, aided by small Fungus Beetles, water, wind, gravity and possibly other passing animals. The spores eventually 'hatch' and grow into new Fuligos.

Fuligo septica is found worldwide where there is dead or decaying vegetation and adequate moisture. *The Atlas of Living Australia* has about 1900 records for this species in coastal and sub-coastal areas, and a handful from the arid interior. In Australia they are present in all months, but they are most commonly seen between October and April.

Fuligo septica produces some remarkable substances. The yellow pigment in the *Fuligo aethelium* is thought to be involved in using light to power biological processes in the organism. *Fuligo* also produces

several compounds with antibiotic properties and another that is toxic (cytotoxic) to one type of human carcinoma. Most remarkable of all is the ability of *Fuligo* to tolerate levels of metals toxic to other organisms. *Fuligo*, for example, can tolerate levels of zinc thousands of times greater than what other organisms can withstand. In fact, the yellow pigment in *Fuligo*, 'fuligorubin', is able to convert metals into inactive, benign forms. This discovery might have some uses in remediating contaminated sites or materials.

As you might expect, such a weird organism has been given many unflattering names and is associated with all sorts of cautionary tales. These warn of its supposed relationship with devils, witches and mostly unspecified other-worldly dangers. In Latvia and Netherlands, for example, *Fuligo* was referred to as 'witches' butter' or 'witches' spit',



A *Fuligo septica* plasmodium with yellow reproductive structures (*aethelium*) starting to form.



A *Fuligo septica* plasmodium on a typical substrate of decomposing wood chips Photos: the author

and in Finland it was thought that witches used *Fuligo* to spoil their neighbours' milk.

These days our knowledge has improved, and we are better disposed towards this benign organism. Which brings me back to the title and opening paragraph of this article. It was inspired by an article in the *The Spruce*, a web page that discusses everything

from tortes to tapestries. A recent entry instructs the reader in how to encourage, grow and look after your slow-moving *Fuligo* slime mould: www.thespruce.com/identifying-and-controlling-dog-vomit-fungus-2539510 There seems to be considerable interest in quiet, undemanding pets. This could really catch on, given the price of dog food. When the wet weather starts, watch for *Fuligo septica*. It is conspicuous and often seen in our region.

The rattle returns

by Scott O'Keefe ecologist

As this year's wet season commences, I've heard many people commenting that they are seeing and hearing more Cane Toads (*Rhinella marina*) than they have for many years.

I have also noticed this. As soon as the spring nights began warming I heard their familiar rattling call from around the dam and in moist areas in the paddock. In recent years, I've heard single animals vocalising sporadically, and seen the odd individual. But I haven't heard the nightly choruses or seen the moving toad masses of decades ago.

If toad populations are increasing and becoming more obvious, there will be more discussion about how to 'control' them. Maybe it's also time to refresh our thinking about toads considering all the new information we have



This might be a big Cane Toad breeding season. It's time we caught up with the latest ecological research before we consider going "toad-busting".

about them

A quick recap. Cane Toads are native to South and Central America. They were brought to Australia from Hawaii in 1935 to control Cane Beetles that were serious pests in cane crops in northern Queensland. It was hoped that Cane Toads would control the beetles and replace the highly toxic, non-specific pesticides that were being used against the beetles.

The species was bred and released in Gordonvale, Cairns, Innisfail, and other locations on Queensland's east coast. They rapidly colonised the coast, reaching the NSW border in 1978 and the Northern Territory/Queensland border in 2001. In 2001 toads appeared in Kakadu. By 2011 they were established in northern Western Australia. Recently they have established in the Torres Strait Islands.

Hundreds of studies have been carried out on the ecological impacts of Cane Toads. The findings of some of these are known to most of us with an interest in conservation. We know something about their impacts on large mammalian carnivores, for example.

Less widely known is that predatory reptiles are most at risk from the presence of Cane Toads. Crocodiles, snakes, turtles, monitors, and dragon lizards are

critical components of our ecosystems and many, if not most, are susceptible to toad toxins. High rates of mortality in reptiles that consume toads are now well documented.

With predatory mammals and reptiles as examples, we can see that the greatest threats from toads to whole ecosystems are where toads affect apex predators. It is typical for apex predator populations to crash when toads first turn up. This usually has broad impacts that affect whole ecosystems including species not anticipated to be adversely affected. But ecosystems are not static, and with time, the unanticipated effects can be beneficial for some native species.

Research in northern tropical savannahs has shown the decline in monitor lizards that ingest toads results in an increase in the native Crimson Finch (*Neochmia phaeton*), a monitor lizard prey species. When monitor populations decreased by 50% after the introduction of toads, Crimson Finch fledgling success increased by between about 50% and 80%. Ecology cannot be used to judge whether this is 'good' or 'bad'. But it does give us insights that might have important applications in conservation, where 'good' and 'bad' are relevant

concepts.

Long-term research shows us how such ecological dramas play out over time. With toads it shows that after an initial crash in predators, some species recover, at least partly. This is the result of learning or evolutionary pressure. The loss of individual animals is often conspicuous, but a longer look may reveal how whole populations change, often in surprising ways.

For example, who could have foreseen an increase in Saltwater Crocodiles (*Crocodylus porosus*) because goannas eat Cane Toads? This happens where monitors and crocodiles co-occur. The monitors consume crocodile eggs, but since they have also begun eating Cane Toads their populations have diminished. This results in larger clutches of Saltwater Crocodile eggs and greater rates of survival.



Saw-shelled Turtles are a local native species that preys upon Cane Toads without ill effect. Look for them in billabongs, creeks and farm dams, where they may easily be seen basking on logs.

Some Freshwater Crocodiles (*Crocodylus johnstonii*) have learned to consume just the legs of toads, which contain less toxins. A new resource for them, and perhaps a survival advantage. Saw-shelled Turtles (*Elseyia latisternum*), widespread in Australia, including our region, consume Cane Toads without apparent adverse effect. Similar examples from a variety of taxa have been found.

Red-bellied Black Snakes (*Pseudechis porphyriacus*) are subject to evolutionary pressure that favours individuals that are unable to consume toads, as their jaws are too small to accommodate the prey. They also appear to have increased their tolerance to toad toxins and display some tendency to avoid toads. Birds such as Torresian Crows (*Corvus orru*), Black Kites (*Milvus migrans*) and Butcherbirds (*Cracticus sp.*) have learnt to make incisions in toads and eat the innards, while leaving the toxic skins.

Meat Ants (*Iridomyrmex purpureus*) are not affected by toad poison. Toads, which rely on their toxic skins to protect themselves against predatory ants, stay still when encountering the toxins to affect the ants. That doesn't happen. The ecological term for the result is "another one bites the dust".

Let's not forget that toads, as part of a changing landscape, also adapt. Evidently, toads in tropical areas are increasing in size. Could this allow them to endure longer periods of adverse conditions? Cane Toads have also evolved larger legs, allowing them to move further with greater speed; a concern since it is occurring where the toads are 'advancing' into new areas.

So, what's new here? We were right to anticipate some serious ecological impacts from toad introductions. However, the impacts have not been entirely as predicted. Cane Toads are here to stay. Eradication is magical thinking, and its tools are ineffective blunt instruments.

We can't eliminate the impacts that toads have on ecosystems, but using what ecology can tell us, we can dampen their impacts and have ripples in ecosystems with the possibility of recovery, rather than collapse (see: www.ecolsoc.org.au/?hottopic-entry=ecological-impacts-of-invasive-cane-toads).

See also: www.ecolsoc.org.au/?hottopic-entry=ecological-impacts-of-invasive-cane-toads New ecological insights should force us to see toads as something more than cartoonish villains and realise that our response to their impacts needs to be more sophisticated than cricket bats, golf clubs and bottles of Dettol.

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Nimbin Garden Club notes



by Peter Brooker

And so, another year has drawn to a close. A year when the Nimbin Garden Club went from strength to strength and culminated in a gathering and a feast worthy of the Emperor Constantine who, in 336AD decreed 25th December Christmas Day, a day previously celebrated by Pagans as the birthday of the sun, Dies Solis Invicti Nati

where Pagans feasted and exchanged gifts. And feast we did, with the club supplying the wine and members supplying ham, chicken, eggs, salads, rice dishes and more, to feed 50 people with a hearty meal catering for all tastes from vegans to coeliacs.

How I wish I had thought to take a photo before diving in. I did however, after Kerry's prompting, take one of the desserts.

The Club would like to thank Kerry, our president, for her efforts during the year and the provision of her amazing home as a venue.

We would also like to thank the Nimbin Apothecary, Nimbin Herbs, Mended Drum, the Emporium, the Hemp Embassy, Nimbin Building Materials, the Bush Theatre Cafe, Nimbin Haberdashery, Les Rees and Pauline Ahern for their generous donation of prizes for our Christmas raffle and their unfailing community spirit.

We shall all meet again very soon, I hope you all had a Merry Christmas, happy holiday, happy Saturnalia, a pleasant Yule or simply enjoyed a day off with friends.

In these days of diversity, the choice was yours.

Bushwalkers plan Sunday walks

by Peter Moyle
Nimbin Bushwalkers Club

The Club has a break over December and January: it normally gets a bit warm, and with family and festivities a bit disjointed.

Planning is underway for the year's walks and each month there will be an update on our activities in the *Nimbin GoodTimes*.

A very successful AGM and Xmas get-together was held at Ken and Shar's home at Newrybar with 32 members attending – thanks for the generous lunch. That's a way to get numbers at your AGM: put on a fabulous meal at a great location and they will come.

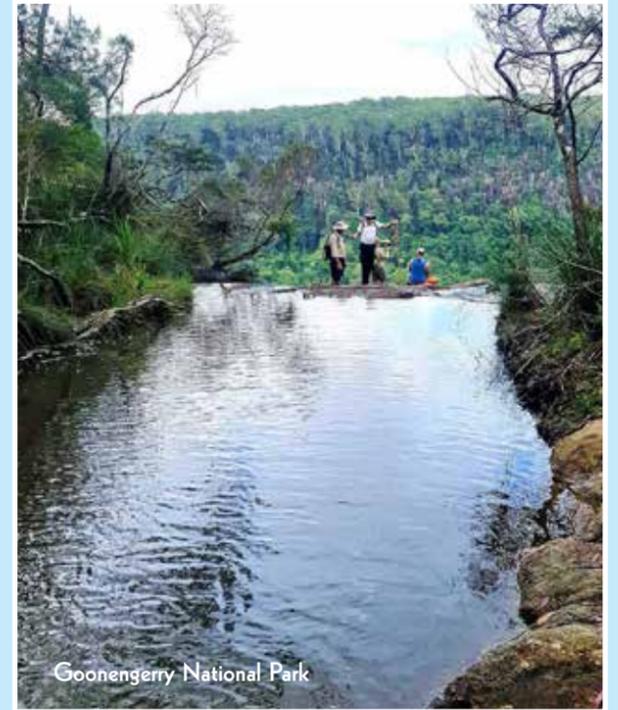
The Committee was re-elected and, as we have for the last few years, we will be complementing our monthly walks with weekends away at some of our beautiful National Park campgrounds.

We had some great suggestions for walks, and we will endeavour to work some into our schedule.

Walks programme

Sunday 19th February – 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: 9.30am 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 takes about 1.5 hours.

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

Sunday 10th March – Minyon Falls, Nightcap National Park

Leader: Sha East 0421-653-201. Please ring to book in.
Grade: 3. Some rocks and tree roots to walk over and track can be slippery, care needed at drop-offs. It's been a few years since we have been here; there should be plenty of water on the falls and it's always an enjoyable walk.

Meet: 9am Minyon Falls Picnic Area. Comfortable but appropriate footwear for bushwalking required. **Bring:** the usual, hat, lunch, water.

BOWEN THERAPY

Pain Relief... at last! What the clients say...

"I suffered from a frozen shoulder which impacted my way of living daily. Some days even getting dressed was next to impossible.

I'd been considering my options when one day I spotted Norm's ad, and since I felt I had nothing left to lose, I decided to take the plunge and book my first appointment.

The nerves I felt initially were totally unfounded – Norm's quiet studio had a deep sense of calm that immediately put my mind at ease. The fact that I did not have to disrobe also helped me relax and feel completely safe.

Norm's Bowen therapy treatment is very gentle, but the effects for me were

immediate. After just one treatment I was able to dry myself after a shower and brush my hair – things I'd been struggling to do up until that moment.

Norm gave me a very simple exercise to do at home which complemented the treatment and continued to improve my pain and mobility.

Initially my sessions were weekly, and I noticed gradual improvement in my range of motion to the point where less frequent treatment was required.

I couldn't recommend Bowen Therapy highly enough – it is magic. Norm is a fantastic, sincere and gently practitioner."

Louise Burgett, Lismore Heights



"I had a number of back issues over many years, and had tried many different practitioners and treatments with little success.

So it was with some trepidation that I decided to try the Bowen technique with Norm.

To my surprise and relief, my back issues were literally resolved within hours.

Three days before heading off on a holiday, I felt my back "pop".

I spent the whole three weeks of my holiday in agony, and hardly slept at all.

When I got back, I booked an appointment with Norm straight away.

He worked on me for about 40 minutes and fixed my back – it really is extraordinary.

So much so that I've actually looked into learning the technique myself.

It is the concept of coaching your body to heal itself that I find most interesting.

The Bowen technique is very gentle and non-invasive. I would recommend it to anyone."

Mike Foster, Lennox Head



Norm Smith, Member B.T.A.A., Cert IV Bowen Therapy, 29 years Experience

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Dynamics within a herd

by Suzy Maloney



Within each horse herd, a fascinating social structure exists, with roles and responsibilities that each member fulfills.

Distinctive roles can be observed, each contributing to the harmony, safety, and well-being of the collective.

At times, several roles will be fulfilled by one horse, especially in small herds such as in domesticity. Below is an outline of those I have observed; I would love to hear from any who know of others.

Support Horse – the nurturer

At the heart of every herd, there's a horse that epitomises compassion and empathy. They have a remarkable ability to soothe anxious or troubled members, offering comfort through gentle nudges, mutual grooming, or simply by standing steadfastly by their side.

When one of my horses was lame, the support horse in my herd stood by him while he rested, when the others left to graze.

Alarm Horse – sentinel/guard

Ever vigilant and perceptive, the alarm horse stands as the herd's watchtower. Their acute senses detect the faintest signs of danger, swiftly alerting the others with cues – flared nostrils, raised head, or a sudden change in posture. Their alertness is crucial in safeguarding the herd against potential threats.

When my sentinel passed away, another in the herd stepped up to this position, when in the past he'd been a calm, non-reactive horse. This change highlighted how essential these roles are to herd health.

Calm Horse – the stabiliser

The calm horse embodies serenity and composure, and their stabilising presence diffuses tension. They serve as a beacon

of tranquillity, promoting harmony and emotional equilibrium within the group.

My stabiliser keeps grazing while the rest have their heads up and nostrils flaring. If it's something serious he joins in, but for everyday disturbances he shows the herd how to let go and return to grazing.

Protector Horse – herd security

Protectors exhibit a keen sense of responsibility towards the safety of fellow herd members, especially the young and vulnerable.

In the wild this is the stallion. When danger threatens, he positions himself at the back of the herd, ready to fend off potential threats and safeguard the weaker individuals. If necessary, losing his life to give the mares and foals time to escape.

In domesticity, I have seen this role taken by a lead mare. She's aggressively defended both older herd members and me, from what she perceived as a threat. She'd position herself as a shield, circling the protected one, kicking, and attacking the perceived threat.

The Stirrer – playful and energetic

Injecting exuberance and playfulness into the herd, the stirrer serves as an agent of joy and energy. They often spark playful interactions among members, fostering social cohesion and physical activity.

I have two of these in my herd, making for hilarious cavorting at times. I've noticed how good they are for the older members, stirring them up to run and play, improving overall health and wellbeing.

Leader – the wise elder

The leader has a culmination of experience, wisdom, and earned respect. Their decisions guide the group, choosing grazing grounds, leading herd movement, or settling disputes. This horse embodies leadership through a balanced blend of authority and empathy, maintaining order while considering the needs of the collective.

Previously my mare fulfilled this role, but with her passing the role was taken up by the eldest gelding. He is proving to be a wonderful new leader. The herd follow him calmly and willingly, respecting his decisions.

These roles are not fixed or exclusive. Horses might transition between them based on circumstances, individual temperament, changes in environment or needs of the group. The cohesion of a herd relies on the constructive collaboration among these diverse roles.

These roles create a social fabric that ensures the collective's survival and well-being.

Understanding these roles not only provides insight into the rich social lives of horses but also offers valuable parallels to human social structures. The capacity for empathy, leadership, protection, and the fostering of harmony within a community are universal qualities, transcending the boundaries between species.

The roles horses assume within a herd are a testament to the depth of their social intelligence, highlighting a remarkable ability to establish a cohesive society that prioritises collective welfare – a lesson from which humans can undoubtedly draw inspiration.

The consequences of fear-driven behaviour

by Les Rees

In recent times, the horse fraternity is beginning to get the idea that we need to be conscious of the way in which we engage with our horses. The internet is full of gurus touting their versions of how to connect and gain trust, which is admirable, but we still have a long way to go if we are to get the message across to everyone.

Problems often arise out of fear driven attitudes associated with lack of knowledge and control. Unfortunately, those fears are often connected with egocentric angry outbursts that are directed at their horses.

A horse can respond in several different ways, none of which have a desirable outcome. It pays to remember that a horse's reaction to threatening behaviour will generally evoke a flight response and if you restrict its path, it will defend itself, and you don't want to be on the receiving end of its actions.

For horses, anxiety and stress form part of the symptoms that awaken the flight response.

The nervous system is a complex control mechanism that has a profound connection with the entire body and plays an important role between the external and internal environments in the form of sensory perception and psychological interpretation of the external world and the body's physical reaction to it.

The nervous system has the ability to store and associate sensory stimuli in the memory for future use, enabling it to react quickly to changes in the two

environments affecting changes in both the physical and mental states of the body.

The ability to react to this information is highly sophisticated in horses as is demonstrated by their remarkable motor coordination skills which are even more enhanced by the fact that horses are equipped with highly sensitive and acute perception, all of which can have profound effects on the physical and mental well-being of the body.

Because the horse is essentially a flight animal, it has a high dependence on the nervous system to interpret incoming stimuli and co-ordinate the functioning of the body to enable fast reactions to potential threatening situations.

Unfortunately, the two environments are often at odds with each other as mental interpretation of external stimuli can become clouded by conflicting information causing mental and physical exhaustion.

Horses are very good at making associations and because they have an excellent memory, they sometimes cause difficulties for their trainers and riders. They make these associations by the linking of two external events. Learning by forming associations between actions and events, prepares the horse for survival in a world of constantly changing situations.

In a herd this is very beneficial for the horse but when it is in a domestic environment, these associations can be the cause of a lot of problems for trainers, riders and the horse, as bad responses are formed through associations initiated by a combination of a lack of understanding of how horses learn and bad training



techniques.

For example, if the horse has been whipped for failing to comply with a rider's demands, it will respond with a fear response every time a whip is produced. This experience is stored in the memory together with a set of behavioral responses that not only affect the mental wellbeing of the horse, but also the physical wellbeing causing anxiety for both the horse and any future owners.

It is easy to see how behavioral problems manifest a lifetime of unhappiness as the horse is passed from owner to owner and the physiological state of the horse becomes more and more fragile.

We all need to be thoughtful and gentle with our horses and remember that trust can only be gained via kindness towards these magnificent beings.

Happy New Year!

Les Rees is an equine naturopath and sports therapist. Phone 0437-586-705.
www.horsetailherbs.com.au

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