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ARTISTS
GALLERY**

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Images that touch the heart

by Tonia Haynes

As is the case with many artists in the Northern Rivers, Johanna May's *Wired* expresses her multi-talents in artistic expression.

Her expression of the mythical in all her art, whether it be wire sculpture or acrylic on canvas has the ability to touch the inner child we all carry in our hearts.

The latest reflection on her inner journey manifests in fine wire images behind glass in a two-dimensional box, which like any painting can be hung on a wall.

Johanna says: "I have had a life-long passion for creativity, especially drawing and painting. I enjoy the journey, a peaceful space, where I can immerse myself and play, free from the distractions of daily life."

"I have been inspired by teachers of Abstract Expressionism, which has inspired a journey of visualisation.

"During the challenges of the 2022 floods, the wet and muddy conditions made painting a little difficult at the time, I embraced wire sculpting as another medium of artistic expression."

Johanna May is Artist of the Month for May at Nimbin Artists Gallery, open 10am to 4pm daily, next to the Town Hall.



'The Beat Goes On'
Right: 'Sunburst'



Contemporary First Nations art



'Timeless' by Kay Williams

In recognition of the diverse and talented local First Nations Artists, Serpentine Gallery is hosting an exhibition *This Place*, a powerful exhibition celebrating culture and community. This exhibition runs from Friday 10th May until Friday 24th May.

It will showcase over 30 artists from across the Northern Rivers with traditional and contemporary artworks, including paintings, printmaking, digital art, ceramics, woodwork, weaving and sculpture.

Please join us at the official opening on Saturday 11th May, from 3pm until 7pm.

The celebration will start with music by Billy Smith and friends. A Welcome to Country will take place at 4pm, including dance featuring Nini Nahri Gali Dance Troup.

There will be activities for the kids, a fire, and snacks and refreshments will be available.

The featured work, 'Timeless' was created by

Val Smith, a local teacher, mother and accomplished local artist, who wrote:

*Timeless
We won't fade in time.
Our connections to Country
will live on in everything
that surrounds us.
Earth or sky, my spirit will
always be.*

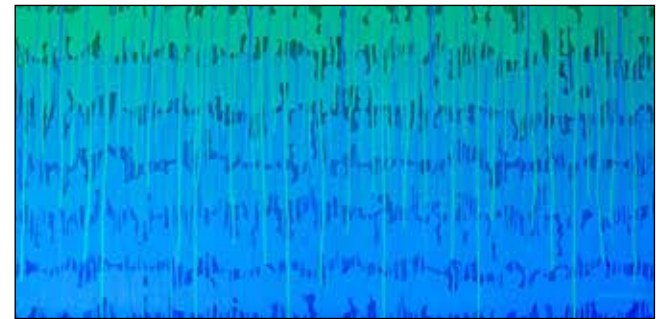
Other exhibitors include: Jennifer Smith, Nunja Caldwell, Peter Faulkner, Eric Ferguson, Naomi Moran, Penina Welsch, Kiefer Patch, Maurita Moran, LeTeisha Gallagher.

Each artwork is a testament to the resilience, cultural pride, and artistic talent of Indigenous artists in the Northern Rivers.

Dreamscapes

Serpentine Community Gallery's next show, *Dreamscapes* commences on Friday 31st May at 6pm and runs until Friday 14th June, and we invite all members to exhibit.

Join us in an immersive experience that challenges the boundaries of reality and invites our viewers to



'Turquoise Deeps 3' by Josephine Window



'Commence Dream Transfer' by Robert Maddox-Harle

step into a world of endless possibilities. Members' artworks will reflect people's innermost dreams and desires inviting audiences to embark on a journey of self-discovery and wonder.

Dreamscapes include whimsical landscapes, surreal portraits or creative ideas that appeared to you in dreams. *Dreamscapes* will tell a story that transcends the confines of the everyday world.

Serpentine Community Gallery is located at 3/104 Conway Street Lismore and is open Monday to Friday between 10am-4pm and



'Kookaburra' by Steven West

Saturday 10am-2pm. The Gallery is an inclusive space that welcomes new members and artists to exhibit in group shows, or to hire the gallery for solo exhibitions.

If you would like to be part of our member shows, please contact the gallery for instructions on how to apply.

For more information, or to become involved with the Gallery please contact us at: gallery@serpentinearts.org or phone 0492-964-819.

Serpentine Community Gallery acknowledges that we are located on the lands of the Bundjalung Nation and pays respect to all Aboriginal people past, present and emerging.

Local landscapes and the Wild West



'Deep in the Forest #2' by Bev Leggett-Simmons



'When I was a boy' by Jennifer Edwards



'Nature's Mosaic' by Amanda Doran

visitor. Both these exhibitions will run through to Saturday 11th May.

The Wild West, Through My Eyes, by local artist Jennifer Edwards, is the upcoming exhibition with an Opening event on Sunday 19th May, 2-4pm.

"This collection is a culmination of my own journey of discovery – a reflection of the Wild West as I see it, feel it and experience it," says Jennifer Edwards.

"I'm thrilled to share this deeply personal exploration with the community and welcome everyone to join me on a voyage of self-discovery through art."

A sneak peek of the collection is available on Facebook: [jennifer.edwards.wildwest](https://www.facebook.com/jennifer.edwards.wildwest)

This exhibition in The Solo Space, a rich tapestry of stories, memories, and inspiring experiences, will continue through to Saturday 29th June.

Blue Knob Cafe

In April Mick Toner ceased operating the Cafe at Blue Knob Hall. He has been very much appreciated for stepping up and supporting this community space for an interim period. We wish him all the best in his new job. Adam Ginger will take on the cafe with a smaller menu

Blue Knob Writers Group

Meets weekly at Blue Knob Cafe on Sundays. For more information, contact Alex on 02 6689-7268, or Helen on 0487-385-134.

Currently in The Solo Space at Blue Knob Hall Gallery:

A Landscape Medley – triptychs of small paintings by Bev Leggett-Simmons – is inspired by Australia.

She is constantly fascinated by the sky, in particular sunsets and ever-changing cloud formations, and the light and colours these reflect.

This exhibition focuses on the local landscape of the Northern Rivers. Some landscapes may be

recognisable, others are imaginary.

From Earth We Come by artists and members is a range of artistic interpretations that is inspired by images of nature and its interconnectedness with humanity.

These include images of the landscapes around us, the objects we use that come from the materials of the earth. There is much to impress and delight the

A focus on threatened wildlife



Dallas Rae (pictured), an up-and-coming Northern Rivers artist, is having her first solo exhibition this month.

The Show Must Go On contains a collection of paintings, sculptures and prints focussing on endangered and extinct Australian wildlife.

It explores the emotional impact of the loss of wildlife and the historic lack of care regarding our native animals.

It is a must-see exhibition for all who are interested in our environmental issues.

This exhibition showcases the brightness and colour of our wildlife along with the movement and the excitement of the circus.

The choice is yours, whether you view the surface level colour and joy of the circus, or look at the underlying tragedy contained in both stories.

She uses a macabre humour in some of her work, particularly those pieces reflecting the 'circus'.

The aspects of other pieces are more serious, directly referencing the sheer number of Australian



'Cockatoo'



'I'm No Hunter'

'Extinction Carousel (3)'



animals lost in the past 200 years.

The inherent humour, along with dark tragedy encourages a deep and thoughtful response to the plight of Australia's wonderful creatures.

The Show Must Go On will be on display at Flourish Gallery, 23 Casino Street, South Lismore, from Friday 3rd to Friday 24th May, Wednesday to Friday 10am to 4pm, Saturdays 10am to 2pm.

The artist will be on site at the gallery every Saturday for discussion.

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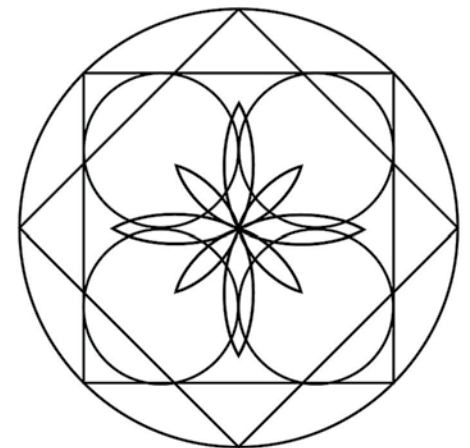
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Growing: Food resilience neighbourhood connections

by Betti Wille

Would you like to grow delicious fresh food at home but don't know how to start?

Maybe you have tried some knock out of 'Gardening Australia' and gotten frustrated because it didn't work that well at all? Most people I have met in my life were not gardeners.

We do live in the countryside though, and the new buzz word is resilience. There's talk about preparedness. Maybe you have put in another water tank recently, stocked up your batteries or invested in a power bank. Mass produced food is getting dearer while quality is fading. What's your take on food security?

Let's consider for a moment the possibility of shared gardens and produce in our direct neighbourhood. Small clusters of neighbours co-operate while planting and maintaining orchards and small crops like corn, beans,

pumpkins, sweet potatoes, taro, yacon, cassava, okra, garlic, ginger, etc. Just to name some of the crops that grow real well in our subtropical climate.

We have plenty of warmth, sunshine and water in our region. The soil may be leached of nutrients. Soil is made up of organic matter, living organisms, minerals, gas and water. Good soil is a great wealth indeed.

In 2019, when the fires were blazing across the country, I saw that most of the fuel we were gathering away from our houses could be used to make soil. Also the burn pile in your backyard with a little care, could grow millions of worms, those guys that work relentlessly to turn organic matter into soil.

Using tin sheets, pallets, bed frames, doors, rocks or whatever becomes available to contain a pile of organic matter we can watch it turn into soil and have it contained at the same time. The seed planted in 2019 took a while to mature

but now we have two such piles in our garden. One is half a round water tank and the other a large rectangle made of tin, bed frames and metal pickets. I already see the pumpkins growing over it, shading out weeds and keeping the moisture in – a perfect first crop for a new fat compost pile.

To make that reality, the pile needs frequent stocking up with material from the garden, twigs and branches, palm fronds, leaf litter, trimmings, cardboard, the odd road kill if you are game.

I think it's good to keep plants that propagate through their wood and keep certain weeds like the 'Trads' or 'Wandering Dews' out. What you do want is a lot of branches and twigs for aeration. Composting needs oxygen. Some moisture is essential, too. Do not add any soil at this stage.

The process takes a bit of time but it's a way to start; a way to turn all those palm fronds into fertile soil; a way of connecting with the cycle of life rather than burning

and sending the carbon into the atmosphere.

Now, some of us have more energy than others, while others may have more land, manure, tools, water, knowledge, preserving and cooking skills or those social skills that we need as much as anything else: an open heart and patience.

Imagine a boundary area. Neighbour A has a pile of tin sheets, neighbour B has a huge pile of organic matter while neighbour C has access to a reliable fresh water spring and a tank on the hill – BINGO!

Another win/win could arise from mixing older generations who have land with younger people (in tiny homes for example) who are willing to work the land.

Maybe we are still too well off for that kind of cooperation. We also harbour first world fears around sharing. Most of us grew up with a drive of acquiring more and more rather than celebrating what we have with a sense of 'enough'.



I am finding more and more that less is more. Daily fresh greens out of the garden, still brimming with life - that is a rare and very real wealth.

Being part of a kind community and growing my community skills for a happy healthy heart, how much better can it get?

I reckon a community garden is best planted within a neighbourhood. Close to home, just a small bunch of people, maybe some room for guests or WOOFers. And after a shared workday there could be story telling around a cooking fire.

I would love to see your stories in this paper on how to grow more self sufficient with local tucker.

Tuntable Creek Landcare grant

by Vanessa Pelly

Tuntable Creek Landcare have been successful in receiving funding from the NSW Environmental Trust in their latest round of restoration and rehabilitation grants.

This follows on from the work the Landcare group did in 2020-2021 on riparian areas in the Nimbin and Channon valleys.

The project is known as the Nightcap Connector and over two stages the project has included riparian works on Websters Creek, Coal Creek, Calico Creek, Mulgum Creek, Goolmangar Creek, as well as Gungas Road, Rose Road and Falls Road.

The Landcare group applied for this grant before the devastating February 2022 floods, which meant so many priorities had changed when we received the funds.

The recent works have been very successful and have rehabilitated about 10 hectares and planted over 1200 subtropical rainforest trees.

The main success of the Nightcap Connector (other than increased area of habitat and riparian restoration) is the mitigation of the effects of Bell Miner Associated Dieback



(BMAD) that was starting to occur at Blue-Knob.

Motorists will notice you no longer hear those tell-tale "ping, ping, pings" as you drive down Blue Knob Road approaching the Murwillumbah-Kyogle turn-off.

Tuntable Creek Landcare meet on the first Sunday of every month. If you would like to join or just participate, please contact: lina.geoff@bigpond.com

Websters Creek Landcare

Websters Creek Landcare received flood mitigation funding from the NSW government to repair the

Websters Creek at Blue Knob

significant damage done to Calico Creek in the 2022 floods.

The site on Calico Creek is now looking fantastic, with lots of subtropical rainforest trees planted and hundreds of *Lomandra hystrix* planted among them to stabilise the banks for future flooding.

Coir logs were also installed with future flooding in mind and have worked well in subsequent weather events.

If you are interested in joining Websters Creek Catchment Landcare please contact: lcotterell58@cloud.com

Why shop local? Why not?

by Nerelle Draisma

Could you imagine no local shops in Nimbin?

Many towns and villages throughout the country have faced the lure of big chain stores only to find they destroy local businesses and the spirit of the place. Most people think it won't happen here in our alternative little village.

There are many reasons why we shop out of town. The cost of living is high, the big chains are cheap, families with lots of kids spend big bucks on groceries, there is more variety, you get more plants for your dollar... I get it, we all get it.

In the nursery industry, the reason why the big chains are cheap is that they absorb the cost of freight. They also price fix, which puts an enormous amount of pressure on growers. If they can't meet the demands of the big chain they go broke, lose their marriages, lose their farms, lose their minds.

To sum it up, they are forced to wholesale a plant below what it costs to grow it, pot it, present it and ship it. In the end, who's really winning when your plant that's grown 1000km away dies five days after you got it?

Your local nursery in Nimbin, Greenthumb Nursery stocks locally-grown plants and those suited to this environment. We also understand and continually research the potential of invasive species.

Our growers are within a 60km range; they employ so many folk of the area, and set the pace for the industry. My suppliers and I spend time openly sharing knowledge and experience with each other.

We give you awesome customer service and dedicate time sharing knowledge about soils, aspects, styles of gardening, seasonal variances and generally nutting out garden problems



for you. If you really think about it, that extra you pay saves you in the long run, as you get gardening success and the right plant in the right location. This is called real value for money.

Greenthumb Nursery is a part of Nimbin Building Materials. We are currently located at 50 Gungas Road. Open 8am until 4pm six days a week, Saturdays we close at noon.

Be proud to shop local. It helps everyone, including our precious Mother Earth.

Flowers, foliage and fairies at Kyogle Garden Club's Spectacular



by Mary Constable

The Garden Club is very lucky to have such talented people: the ladies who turn bunches of various flowers and greenery into eye catching flower arrangements; the men and ladies who spend time bringing plants for and putting together the main display.

Over 700 visitors enjoyed the wonderful flower display, including Marg Mitchell's inspiring Ikebana.

Special mention to Garry Hafey for his artwork, the fairy tree stump and the vibrant mushrooms and the rocks hidden in the greenery, and also to Peter Constable who comes up with the vision each year and adds the special effects like the pond, etc.

The event would not happen without the dedication of the Flower and Foliage Committee, the members who help with the bringing of the plants to the hall, those who volunteer to work on the door and the plant stall and the setting and

cleaning up. A massive thank you to all of you.

There were extra Stall Holders this year and the variety of plants was just amazing – everything from the smallest cacti and succulents to the largest of indoor plants. The inside stalls were packed with fresh flowers, art and craft, something for everyone.

Thank you to those that came along and enjoyed the displays, the wonderful sunshine and the beautiful food served with a smile from the St Brigid's parents forum.

Nature abhors a vacuum

by Scott O’Keeffe, ecologist

Imagine what happens when a whole new landscape appears suddenly. A lava field cools or a huge landslide fills a valley.

Suddenly the landscape is a clean slate. Seemingly empty. But not for long. It will be rapidly colonised by organisms taking advantage of unoccupied spaces, and new resources. The process begins immediately and continues until available niches are filled. Nature abhors a vacuum.

The process by which new landscapes are colonised and new ecosystems develop is complex. However, the process can be understood by looking at a specific example. One species familiar to many of us is very instructive. It wasn’t so long ago that to see Eastern Cattle Egrets (hereafter Cattle Egrets), you had to travel to tropical Queensland or the Northern Territory. Prior to 1920 you would have had to look for them in Asia.

Now they are found throughout eastern Australia, including Tasmania and the interior, apart from the most arid areas. There are also new populations in Western Australia. Their spread has shadowed the conversion of ancient ecosystems to agriculture.

The first record of Cattle Egrets breeding in Australia is from 1948, yet only 76 years later they breed everywhere north of Victoria. You can now see them in pretty much

any agricultural landscape in eastern Australia. Northern Rivers is full of them. To explain how this rapid colonisation happened, we need to understand the bird’s biology and ecological relationship to its environment. A quick trip along a timeline is the best place to start.

The ancestors of Cattle Egrets appeared in Africa millions of years ago during the Miocene when grasslands expanded, and large gregarious grazing mammals began to dominate the landscape. Over millennia these Egrets developed an affinity for the large herbivores which created unique feeding opportunities for the Egret. The activities of large grazing animals allowed Egrets to become less dependent on wholly aquatic environments. Egrets were then able to occupy a much wider area.

The modern form of the Cattle Egret spread through Africa to Southern Portugal and Spain. The spread continued in modern times reaching France and the Volga Delta of Russia by the 1950s. Sometime in the late 1800s Cattle Egrets, which are capable of very long flights, dispersed across the Atlantic to northeast South America. They spread through South America rapidly reaching the southern tip by 1977; the most rapid spread of any bird species. The species also moved north without human

“assistance”, reaching North America by about 1920.

All of these colonised landscapes have something in common. They are landscapes dramatically altered by humans practising broadscale agriculture with large areas under crops and grazed by large domestic gregarious herbivores. Cattle, sheep, goats, horses and others. As the Egrets dispersed, landscapes were continually being converted to grazing and crops. The populations of the Egret’s ecological partners grew exponentially. The Egrets followed.

Cattle Egrets also spread to Asia. From 1943 they spread very rapidly, self-introducing in the Malay Archipelago and New Guinea. During this phase of their spread, they became resident pretty much everywhere south of the Himalayas. They also began to breed in Korea and Japan but are not resident there. Again, the Egrets occupied agricultural landscapes, especially but not exclusively, those in which livestock are integral. Their ability to fly very long distances allowed them to rapidly spread to these new landscapes, wherever they were.

Prior to agricultural conversion natural landscapes will contain a suite of native animals. The abundance and distribution of these may be reduced after conversion and some species may remain confined to remnants of the original landscape. Some may

also be able to adapt and make use of agricultural land.

Research shows that Cattle Egrets don’t necessarily feed only on invertebrates that are agricultural pests. In some circumstances they consume these pre-existing native species. Cattle Egrets may also increase the proportion of small vertebrates such as reptiles and amphibians in their diet. This could be a problem in fragmented landscapes where potential prey species are vulnerable to decline. That raises the question of how to respond to the arrival of Cattle Egrets.

At this point, the usual response is to ask whether Cattle Egrets are a native or an exotic species. This question is inevitable whenever a new plant or animal turns up. The evidence shows that Cattle Egrets are largely self-introduced in Australia, with some small deliberate introductions making, at best, a very minor contribution to their spread.

So, are Cattle Egrets native or exotic? Would they be “more native” if humans had not contributed to their spread by releasing captive birds? Why would we place any emphasis on the release of birds from captivity in our definition of native if we don’t regard conversion of land agriculture as a form of assistance?

How long must a self-introduced organism reside in a new location before it becomes native? What about animals



Cattle Egrets have only been breeding in Australia since 1948. They are now common over most of Eastern Australia. They’re abundant in the Northern Rivers. Photo by the author



Cattle Egrets have spread over much of the planet, following the conversion of landscapes to cropping and grazing ecosystems. Photo: Kenneth Cole Schneider

deliberately introduced by humans? Do they ever become native? If so, how long before we regard them as native? The answers to these questions seem rather banal.

As an ecologist I think these are the wrong questions to ask. I think we should be more interested in what the function of an organism

like the cattle egret is in a landscape. The science of ecology can explain how nature’s voids are filled with new organisms. Ecology can’t tell us if this is good or bad.

As an ecologist, I’m still studying the birds. Apart from that, my aesthetic judgement is to sit in the paddock and enjoy them.

Cone crackers

by Scott O’Keeffe, ecologist

About this time every year in Northern Rivers, flocks of big black noisy birds cascade onto the crowns of exotic pine trees.

They’re after the cones. They deftly break these apart and extract the small nutritious seeds. With pines widely planted for forestry and amenity, the cones have become an abundant seasonal resource. Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos (*Zanda funerea*) aka YTB’s, are one of only a few native animal species that have been able to exploit this bounty.

YTB’s are found in open forests, shrubland and pine plantations on the east coast and ranges south from Rockhampton to Victoria, the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia, and in Tasmania.

Little is known of their long-distance movements (if any). They wander in search of food, but as far as we know, they undertake no large-scale migrations.

The Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo is the largest of Australia’s five species of black cockatoos and is probably the most abundant. They are black or grey-black with a yellow patch on the cheek. This yellow patch is brighter on females.

Females are also distinguished by their ivory-coloured beaks. The beaks of male birds are dull black. YTB’s have long black tails with a broad yellow band, especially obvious when the birds are flying. Adults can weigh almost a kilogram.

The only other similar local bird is the much smaller, very rare Glossy-black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*). These have a much

more restricted diet, feeding exclusively on the seeds of She-oaks (*Allocasuarina sp.*). YTB’s feed on a broader range of seeds, and also consume insects.

YTB’S use their powerful beaks to prise insects such as moth larvae from live and dead trees. Locally they can be observed breaking open dead or decrepit Blackwood Trees (*Acacia melanoxylon*) to extract moth and cicada larvae.

In northern NSW, YTB’s breed between January and May. YTB’s nest in large tree hollows. The females lay two eggs and do all the incubation. Usually only one chick survives. Young birds are fed by both adults and remain with the parent birds until the next breeding season.

As the breeding season finishes in autumn, YTB’s form large flocks that wander the landscape taking advantage of the seasonal production of pine cones. Towards the end of winter, the flocks break up, and the cockatoos become less conspicuous.



In autumn, after the breeding season finishes, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos form flocks. They move through the district feeding on maturing crops of seed cones on exotic pine trees. Photos by the author

Like all Australian cockatoos, YTB’s depend upon large tree cavities for nesting. So, although YTB’s have successfully managed to adapt to a profoundly altered landscape by changing their diet, they are still vulnerable to population decline because of a shortage of breeding sites.



These cockatoos have found new sources of food, but a lack of tree hollows for nests puts them at risk.

Related species such as the Carnaby’s Black Cockatoo and Baudin’s Black Cockatoo, both West Australian species, are in serious decline substantially due to the loss of large trees that provide breeding hollows.

YTB’s are a delight. We can keep it that way by retaining mature trees and deadwood and by providing YTB’s with new nest hollows. Put up some nest boxes!

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Nimbin Garden Club notes



by Peter Brooker

There is a Spanish proverb that says "More grows in the garden than the gardener sows" and at Sammi and Paul's place the meaning of that proverb becomes clear.

At first glance the garden appears chaotic, a tangle of ideas entwined with a wildness, which alarmingly, Sammi says mirrors her mind.

But it isn't chaotic, it isn't tangled, and the wildness lay beyond the acre of garden amid the scattered trees they

buy from Land Care; those given to them by guests or the ones planted in memory of those who are gone.

What they actually planted in the garden were a myriad of herbs, an orchard of fruit trees amongst the swales and three trees that hold a deeper meaning for them, but what grew, was an idyllic lifestyle, a tighter bond and an escape from the travails of corporate life.

Sammi and Paul came to Australia from Singapore on their honeymoon. Sammi is Australian but Paul is

a Singaporean and he had never been here before. They did a permaculture course at The Channon and their lives changed.

They came back ten years ago with a very young daughter, the first of three children, and based on Paul's intuition, his love of the view and Sammi's willingness to trust, they bought the 132 acres with its home, its Pecan tree, a Frangipani, a *Pleroma Urvilleanum* (you might know it as a Tibouchina,) a Gardenia and a Port Wine Magnolia that obstructed a window and only had its death sentence repealed once it flowered. Then they added four dogs into the mix.

Sammi, a herbalist, uses the scientific method of "buying a whole heap of stuff and putting it in the ground."

To the side of the house stands one of those trees with deeper meaning, a Poinsettia, given to them by Sammi's mother. It is there to accept the ashes of family members but at the moment,



there is a child's slide under it, which seems to represent the slippery slope we are all on.

There are two Moreton Bay Figs at the edge of the lawn, a short distance from the back verandah. They are the other deeper meaning trees planted by Paul on the occasion of their 11th anniversary. The plan is that they will grow and become entwined much as Sammi and Paul have done.

There are Chinese geese, beautiful but apparently useless; chickens, mildly attractive but very useful; 25 different fruit trees including mangoes, apricots, apples, figs, plums, grapefruit and all the citrus.



Further along we find the Mandala garden (Mandala means round in Sanskrit) and it not only helps feed the family but contains 15 herbs from which five litres of tinctures are made each month and used to supply the Nimbin Apothecary.

There are also 15 different roses used for medicine, one appropriately called Abracadabra, and blue lilies growing wild. But it was the Helena Olive tree that interested many because it produced litres of olive oil.

The Helena Olive tree, not to be confused with the extinct St Helena olive tree from the Island where Napoleon died, had been

planted by prisoners on Helena Island in Moreton Bay in the late 1800s. The oil from these trees was at one point exported to Italy and its fruit is believed to have been the winner of Australia's first international agricultural award.

Another point of interest was farmer's friend; don't despair if you are overrun with it, apparently you can stir fry it instead and always remember the Garden Shawl crochet pattern by Cheryl Chow: "Some gardens are an ordered affair, with precise rows of flowers there. I don't prescribe to this ideal but find beauty in what's raw and real."

"A garden should be wild and free, A place for every bird and bee. A dance of flowers, a tangle of vines, freedom!"

There was much more to this garden but I have already used more than my space, so go to the Apothecary, get well, speak with Sammi and we'll see you all on Saturday 18th May at Pam Craven's place, corner of Newton Drive and Upper Tunttable Falls Road at 2pm.

Bring a cup, a chair and something to share.

Rubbish GPT



View from the loo
by Stuart McConville

The long, wet summer is finally drawing to a close with the onset of some cooler (hopefully), drier weather.

A vast amount of water has found its way down to recharge the water tables, some of which will stay deep for thousands of years to come. Yet another part of it will fill up the aquifers closer to the surface, bringing life to country.

Still more flows off into the gullies, creeks then rivers and oceans. Our hard, human-made surfaces shed this last part as a cocktail of our existence. Nature should not have to bear the fruits of our poisonous lives, flushed into its arteries.

Back in the late 90's, I was fortunate enough to get a government grant to educate the residents of Byron Bay about stormwater pollution and its impact on sensitive receiving wetlands such as the Wallum Swamp west of Byron.

The Drainwatch Project was a multi-pronged approach at community education, with business auditing, street theatre and the inception of Binya Butts portable ashtrays, which we made very popular by spreading the very plausible

rumour that there MAY have been buds in some of the film canisters we had labelled and distributed throughout Byron. Smokers therefore partook in a lucky dip getting their education with their highs.

We dressed up as Wallum Frog, Butt Monster, and other creatures of the swamp and got out and about with some pretty crazy antics. There was a fantastic community reaction to our stencilled "Only rain down the drain" graffiti at every stormwater grate.

We lobbied hard to have a Gross Pollutant Trap (GPT) installed on the Butler Street drain which drains out into Belongil Creek, but to my knowledge this never happened.

Gross pollutant traps are usually installed at the inlet or outlet of a stormwater drain to trap debris, sediments, and other 'gross pollutants' before they get into the environment. There are various designs, but generally GPTs incorporate a system of screens, bars, grates, screening baskets or baffles, designed to capture the debris as the water flows through.

I believe Nimbin community should investigate the need for a GPT at the stormwater outfall down at the Bowlo. I have heard from long-time locals that all sorts of unsavory items end up in the gully there.

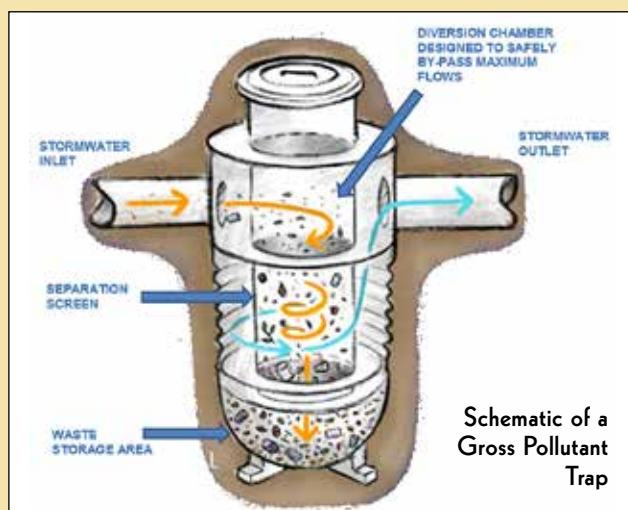
With a new walking track planned for the area, every effort should be made to protect the waterway from our pollution. Even with the wonderful job the Nimbin Street clean-up crew do in the wee hours every day, they cannot beat the rain.

I will take on some monitoring of the site at different periods, especially after rainfall and big events like MardiGrass, to photograph the extent to which this is needed.

The Nimbin Advisory Group could take on the challenge of getting Council to fund something, or perhaps we can build one and install it ourselves.

If anyone would like to help me with this project please let me know.

Stuart McConville runs Pooh Solutions Compost Toilet and Waste Water Services
Phone 0427-897-496
<https://poohsolutions.com>



Billinudgel Nature Reserve presents its beauty



by Peter Moyle, Nimbin Bushwalkers Club

Well, the hot humid weather had to end, and it did with the heavy rains that caused minor havoc again.

Only a minor inconvenience for the walkers, as we rescheduled our Billinudgel Nature Reserve walk for seven days and were rewarded with dry tracks and a couple of shallow creek crossings that a shoe-off wade saw us through.

Another gorgeous bit of local scrub with the lovely coastal walk that runs parallel with the beach, and after four km, a rest on the beach with a drink and entertainment from Beau the assistance dog who started digging to China (pictured). Moving inland, the beautiful paperbark and pine forest with its ferns and hoop pines were admired by the 13 hikers before heading back for refreshments and a get-together by Marshals Creek.

We had the company of a couple of visitors and after the day they joined up. Keep in mind that visitors and new members are always welcome.

Walks programme Sunday 12th May Goonengerry National Park

Leader: Ron Smith 0497-792-789. You must register with Ron as numbers are limited.

Grade: 3-4. 10km approximately four

hours. There are some off track sections that may be slippery. Good walking shoes/boots needed. We will be walking into an area with some nice waterfalls; Ron guarantees plenty of water. This is a great walk even in the wet, as it is on top of the ridge so not boggy.

Meet: 9am at the Goonengerry NP at the end of Mill Road. Bring: the usual including hat, water, and lunch.

Saturday 25th May Springbrook National Park

Leader: Peter Moyle 0412-656-498. We are doing this as a day walk.

Grade: 3-4. The plan is to do the Warrie Circuit, about 14km, 4.5 hour with rest stop. We have done parts of this before, but now will do the whole loop. Care is needed at drop-offs, as it can be slippery after rain and some rough tracks. Stunning views, clear running streams, spectacular waterfalls. We descend into the valley and rainforest before a climb out. This is a bit harder than our normal walks, but with rest stops and a bit more time, doable. Leeches can be a problem, but with plenty of spray and some salt to remove, not too bad.

If you prefer you can stay a couple of days, at the Settlement camping area. Camping fees of \$7.25 per person/night. See: <https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/parks/springbrook>
Meet: in Brunswick Heads at 8am to carpool or along the way pickups. The drive is less than 90 minutes.

Stopping a horse in a bitless bridle

by Suzy Maloney

One of the first things people will say to you when they find out you ride without a bit is "How do you stop them?"

I understand this comment because I too grew up in the traditional horse world and was indoctrinated with the idea that you had to have a bit to stop your horse and be safe.

These days, I would never get on a horse that required a bit in order to stop. To me it sounds incredibly dangerous to sit on a large flight animal that doesn't know how to stop.

Back then it was normal, in fact I, and many of my fellow equestrians spent a lot of time fighting our horses in order to stop them. What we were doing obviously wasn't working, but we kept using the bits in the belief that it was the only way to ride a horse safely. Then if the bit we were using wasn't stopping the horse effectively, it was time to change to a stronger one.

When I first transitioned to bit-free I still had this little voice in my head saying, 'It's not safe', 'How will you stop', 'You're crazy' etc. But luckily the louder voice was saying it was safe,

I could stop my horse, and that it was a better form of communication than a bit, so I kept going. Then one day I was at work at a trailriding establishment, and I was taking out a group of experienced riders. This was always fun as we could go faster, and I didn't need to help the riders as much.

I was riding a thoroughbred and so was one of the male clients. I was riding bit-free, and he had a bit. We were cantering up a hill when the two thoroughbreds decided they were back at the racetrack and started galloping, trying to go faster than the other and win. I was able to stop my horse in a bitless bridle, before the client. He did stop further on and was OK, so it had



a happy ending, but this experience completely changed me internally.

All those little doubting voices went away instantly. There could never be a better test of whether you can stop a horse in a bitless bridle or not. I can state absolutely that you can. So why and how does it work?

One of the primary advantages of stopping a horse in a bitless bridle is the absence of discomfort or pain often associated with traditional bits. I know most people will say they are gentle with their hands so don't cause mouth pain. However, that is how a bit works, by causing pain, so it's not possible to completely avoid it. I challenge any equestrian to say they have never once gotten stronger with their hands. We have all at some point used a stronger rein aid when a horse suddenly shies, takes off, or some other unexpected event. It's human nature to want to take control in these situations to ensure our own survival.

In a bitless bridle we can still take control, without causing pain. By eliminating the risk of causing discomfort to the horse's mouth, teeth, or jaw, we can avoid creating resistance or evasion resulting from

the horse's reaction to pain. Instead, the pressure exerted by a bitless bridle is distributed around the horse's head, providing clear and gentle cues without causing physical discomfort.

Horses become more relaxed and willing to respond to their rider's cues. This can lead to improved performance, as the horse is better able to focus on the task at hand without the distraction of pain or discomfort.

Riding with a bitless bridle can foster a stronger bond between horse and rider. Without the barrier of a bit between them, riders must rely more on their communication skills, body language, and understanding of the horse's natural responses. This increased reliance on non-verbal cues encourages a deeper level of trust and partnership between horse and rider.

Without the distraction of the bit, horses communicate better. We as the riders can then feel and see the smallest nuances of communication from the horse, resulting in smoother transitions and more responsive stops as the conversation between rider and horse reaches new levels.

Stopping a horse in a bitless bridle can be both easy and effective when approached with the right mindset and technique. By prioritising communication, comfort, and trust, we can achieve smooth and responsive stops without the need for traditional bits.

After over 20 years of riding numerous horses in a bitless bridle both at work and for pleasure, I could never feel safe using pain in the mouth to stop a horse again. I'm sure the horses are as happy about this as I am.

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What horse behaviour is an absolute non-negotiable NO?

by Les Rees

Recently I found this question: "As a horse person, what is a horse behaviour that is an absolute non-negotiable NO for you?" posed by a well-known equestrian Facebook site.

The words 'non-negotiable' are the ones that really challenge my thinking because they represent an inflexibility and refusal to view life from their horse's point of view.

There were pages of replies, including the following:

- When a horse deliberately kicks or bites you
- When a horse is **rubbing on me**
- When a horse **has no respect**
- When a horse is **aggressive**
- When a horse **bucks or rears**
- When a horse **cribs**
- When a horse **won't be caught**

There were many more that went on for pages in much the same vein and some stating that if they encountered these bad behaviours they would get rid of the horse!

It's such a sad thing for me to hear when I know that these horses are trying to communicate with their owners. Reading some of these comments suggest that horses are being judged from their inability to please their owner's demands. They are not machines; they are living animals and are not actually designed to be ridden.

Given what they have to put up with, it's hardly surprising that they have so



many behavioural problems.

My experience of working with damaged horses suggests that they do not make deliberate decisions to threaten people. They are responding in 'defence mode', something that all animals do to protect themselves from harm to their wellbeing.

Being ridden by someone who pushes a horse beyond its capabilities, or the lack of rider balance can put stress on the horse causing muscle soreness and subsequent compensations. Badly fitted saddles, bits and bridles can cause even more stress to the body causing considerable pain. Bad feeding can lead to painful ulceration of the gut. These are only a few things that can cause behavioural symptoms. Just imagine what life is like when you cannot manage to make yourself understood. I am pretty sure that a human would implode far sooner than a horse would!

One of the problems for horses stems

from their instinct to remain stoic within the herd. If they show weakness they can be singled out by prey animals. This means that they can endure a lot of pain without showing any obvious signs of discomfort. However, there is a limit to what horses can cope with and they have to get your attention somehow. This is often seen as undesirable changes in their behaviour, directed towards an owner who isn't listening to them.

I would like to pose another question for you. Can you imagine the changes if you were to learn their language rather than depending on them to learn yours? Those who make the effort to delve into learning from them can achieve a much deeper relationship based on mutual understanding because you will recognise the subtle signs of body language long before they become behavioural issues.

My own horses always tell me if they're not happy or unwell which is very special for us all. Their world is in fact very interesting because their senses are more acute than mine. This helps to draw my attention to things that are happening within our environment, and they're often amusing antics of other animals they are aware of. They always tell me if our resident dingo is around as well.

Their language is full of constant chatter and I feel privileged that they share so much with me.

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