

# Katie Lloyd: Images of Womanhood and the Divine

by Linda Frylink Anderson

Katie Lloyd's practice unfolds at the intersection of intuition, embodiment, and the natural world.

Working primarily with watercolour and ink on paper, alongside layered acrylic paintings on canvas, Lloyd approaches art making as a process-led, intuitive act rather than a predetermined concept.

Her works emerge slowly and attentively, guided by sensation, symbolism, and an inner sense of knowing that resists fixed narratives.

At the heart of Lloyd's imagery is an exploration of the divine feminine and lived experiences of womanhood.

Yoni symbolism appears as a recurring motif, not as provocation but as reverence – an assertion of bodily knowledge, creative power, and spiritual autonomy.

Botanical forms, particularly roses and bearded irises, intertwine

with celestial symbols and animal figures, creating compositions that feel both mythic and grounded.

These elements operate as visual languages for embodiment, personal empowerment, and the unseen emotional and spiritual strata that shape everyday life.

Animals frequently inhabit Lloyd's works as companions, guides, or reflective presences. Rather than functioning as decorative elements, they act as intermediaries mirroring human vulnerability, instinct, and resilience.

Lloyd's creative process begins with intuitive gathering. She collects images that resonate on an emotional or symbolic level, assembling them into collages that serve as loose foundations for her paintings.

From this point, control gives way to responsiveness. Paint is layered, adjusted, and reworked in dialogue with the collage and the artist's emotional responses, allowing each piece to arrive at its own resolution



without adherence to a fixed plan.

Based in Nimbin, Lloyd lives and works within a landscape and community known for its alternative spiritual culture and deep connection to place.

Her studio operates as both a working space and an open gallery, reinforcing the accessibility and openness that characterise her practice. The surrounding



environment, lush, communal, and spiritually attuned, permeates her work.

Alongside her visual art practice, Lloyd also works as an intuitive tarot reader. While distinct disciplines, both practices share a grounded, conversational, and empowering tone.

In both, she creates space for reflection rather than instruction, inviting viewers and participants to engage with their own



interpretations and inner truths.

Katie Lloyd's work will be on display during January and February.

Opening hours are 10am to 4pm, seven days a week. For more information contact Nimbin Artists Gallery, 49 Cullen Street, Nimbin; tel 02-6689-1444; [nimbinartistsgallery@gmail.com](mailto:nimbinartistsgallery@gmail.com)

# The year to come at Serpentine



by Corinne Batt-Rawden

The volunteer team at Serpentine would like to wish a Happy New Year with much joy, adventure and creativity for the year ahead.

We have an exciting calendar of events planned for you. Each year the gallery's curated annual program consists of featured artists, solo exhibitions, community events and themed group shows.

First up this year we kick off with a themed group show, *Grand Gestures*, a bold exhibition of large works that invites artists to step into a bigger arena.

With a minimum size of one metre and no maximum limit, this exhibition encourages artists to stretch their physical practice, take risks, and embrace the freedom and presence that scale allows.

*Grand Gestures* opens 5:30-8:30pm on Friday 23rd January and is on show until Saturday 7th February.

This is the first in our annual series of Members Shows. Each year, Serpentine

presents a program of themed group exhibitions, providing a curatorial framework that invites artists to interpret and respond to the theme.

This approach encourages the creation of new work that is thoughtful and responsive to the world around us, forming a collective narrative that offers audiences an immersive and engaging experience of the theme.

This year's group members' exhibition themes include *As I Am*, our annual Women's Exhibition in March, programmed in line with International Women's Day; *The Art of Sport in May*, celebrating recreational and professional sport through creative expression; and *Hello My Love – a Love Letter to the Planet* in June, aligned with World Environment Day and exploring care for land, oceans and natural habitats.

In July, the bi-annual political exhibition *What's On My Mind* provides space for artists to express their concerns and observations on contemporary political issues.



September features *We Are Country*, celebrating First Nations art by artists living in the Northern Rivers, followed by *Still Wet*, an exhibition of members' new works fresh off the easel.

The year concludes in December with *Lost and Found – The Art of Upcycling and Repurposing*.

Artists are encouraged to work with found objects, recycled materials, textiles, industrial remnants, natural debris, or anything that has been salvaged, gathered, or repurposed.

We hope you enjoy these themed exhibitions for 2026. Artists who are inspired by the themes and would like to participate just need to contact the gallery.

If you wish to have your own exhibition, just email the director at: [director@serpentinearts.org](mailto:director@serpentinearts.org) with your proposal.

Stay tuned for details of our solo and featured artists along with our other events such as book launches, community gatherings, and a monthly sketch club held on the first Saturday of each month.

Check out: [www.serpentinearts.org](http://www.serpentinearts.org) to view the exhibitions of 2025.

We warmly invite the community to join us in 2026 – to attend openings, visit exhibitions, support local artists, and be part of the conversations that unfold at Serpentine.

We look forward to another year of exhibitions, artists and art lovers and playing our part of our regional arts community.

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## Gallery celebrates volunteers, music and a creative year ahead



by Ali Walker

Blue Knob Hall enjoyed a wonderful afternoon on Saturday 20th December, celebrating the festive season with a volunteers' Christmas lunch, followed by a lively musical afternoon featuring local musicians and Peter Walker's Blue Knob Singers.

It was a joyful occasion, and we sincerely thank all our volunteers and supporters who joined us to share good food, great music, and community spirit.

Events like this remind us how special our creative community truly is. Volunteers are the heart of our gallery and ceramic studio.

Their generosity, care, and shared love of creativity keep the space welcoming, active, and alive, making it a place where people can connect, create, and feel part of something special.

We also acknowledge and thank Adam Ginger for his continued support as a committee member, and for

his dedication to keeping the café running over the past 18 months.

His commitment and hard work have been greatly appreciated, and we wish him all the very best for the future.

We are pleased to welcome Bronte Coleman, who will take over the running of the café in the New Year.

Please note that the Gallery and Café will re-open on Thursday 16th January.



**Next exhibitions**

Looking ahead, the first members' exhibition of 2026 will be entitled *Back to the Garden*.

Artists and creatives are invited to submit ideas responding to themes of nature, regeneration, and community.

The exhibition will be inspired by land, cycles, care, and connection, reflecting a return to nature, and to each other.

Work is due in on Sunday 25th January. Crystie Saulwick and Nuro Oliver will be exhibiting in the Solo Space.

As the year comes to a close, we would like to thank everyone for being part of our creative community.

Your support, ideas, and artistic spirit help keep Blue Knob Hall a vibrant and inspiring shared space.

We wish everyone a New Year that is safe, healthy,

and prosperous – filled with creativity, connection and new possibilities for art.

• **Blue Knob Singing Group** led by Peter Walker will start again on Thursday 22nd January at 4pm. All are welcome, for more info contact Peter on 0458-487-865.

• **The Blue Knob Writers Group** will meet again in the New Year. For more info contact Alex 6689-7268 or Helen 0487-385-134.

Blue Knob Hall Gallery – Blue Knob Café – Blue Knob Ceramic Studio is located at 719 Blue Knob Road, Lillian Rock.

After 16th January, the Gallery and Café are open Thursday-Sunday, 10am-3pm, Saturday 8.30am-3pm.

The Ceramic Studio is open Thursday to Saturday. Phone (02) 6689-7449 or email: [bkhgallery@iinet.net.au](mailto:bkhgallery@iinet.net.au) Web: [blueknobgallery.com](http://blueknobgallery.com)

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Come visit us at our new location and help us celebrate being back in the Lismore community — same heart, new home!

## Get crafty these school holidays

Jeht Burgoyne is offering a trio of school holiday workshops for kids aged eight and up at Flourish Art in South Lismore.

Covering mini rug making, still life and zentangle drawing, these workshops will be held between Wednesday 7th and Friday 9th January in a safe creative space, focused on nurturing and developing children's artistic direction.

Jeht will also be running the 'Off Grid Art Club', a weekly Wednesday art class designed just for teens (ages 12 to 16) who are ready to put the phone down for six Wednesdays commencing on 4th February from 4-6pm.

Over six fun, hands-on weeks, teens will explore drawing, painting, sculpture, and printmaking, trying out different materials and techniques in a relaxed, supportive environment.

For the adults, Jeht has her popular six-week 'ReSTART Your Art' course commencing on Thursday 5th February, 6-8pm, which is aimed at getting your creative juices flowing and explore different drawing methods using a wide range of mediums.

Also at Flourish, Marty de Weerd is offering a four-week landscape painting course on Thursday afternoons, 12-3pm



throughout February.

It will be aimed at beginners but suitable for all levels, covering composition, using colour, tone and contrast, as well as painting techniques using acrylic paints to create captivating pieces.

To see the full range of available workshops and bookings go to: [www.facebook.com/flourishartworkshops/events](http://www.facebook.com/flourishartworkshops/events)



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# Garden Club raffle takings benefit local youth

by Kerry Hagan

Nimbin Garden Club finished the year on a high note as some 50 members and guests came to celebrate at our Christmas party.

What started out as a washout this year, with month after month being cancelled due to rain, we still did amazingly well with our raffle donations.

With proceeds from our last Christmas raffle and our monthly raffles, we were able to donate \$700 to Nimbin Central School Breakfast Club, \$500 to Barkers Vale Primary school and \$500 to Nimbin Youth.

It's always about the kids!! We thank the Nimbin Apothecary, Nimbin Emporium, Nimbin Building Materials, Nimbin Hemp Embassy, Mended Drum bistro, Aquarius Cafe, Perceptio books, Bunnings Lismore, Lismore Garden Centre, Heping Around, Nimbin Environment Centre, Pauline Ahearn and Sharon Whalley.



These wonderful and generous people helped us raise over \$1000 in the Christmas raffle this year!

Our big thanks also to the people on the street who bought tickets, and a huge thanks to Nimbin Building Materials who subsidise our monthly raffle prizes.

Nimbin Garden Club resumes in February. Happy holidays from all of us.



# What horses experience as followers

by Suzy Maloney

I recently joined a salsa dancing class with my husband. Traditionally in this dance the female is the follower and the male the leader. This placed me in the position of follower.

We were taught some steps, which were fairly easy to master, then directed to do these steps with our partner. My job was to wait until my dance partner gave me a pressure cue, then on his direction move my body either forward or back, left or right, in a turn etc.

I found this extremely difficult. I found letting go completely of my own agenda and only following my partner to be the most difficult part of learning this dance.

Then of course being me, my mind went straight to the horses. I realised that understanding what horses experience as followers was a huge piece of the puzzle that I hadn't been aware of.

It's such a huge piece I was a little shocked that I hadn't really considered it before. To physically feel it gave me an insight into a whole new dimension of understanding.

When horses live in natural herds, leadership is fluid. A horse may follow one moment and lead the next, depending on who has the best information or who is in the optimal position to influence the group.

Following is not passive; it's a conscious choice based on trust, clarity, and emotional safety. This

makes being a follower feel secure rather than stressful.

When we ride, things are different. We become the primary source of direction, pressure, decisions and sometimes confusion. This can create significant challenges for the horse, especially when the rider's cues or intentions lack coherence.

The issues that arise from this forced follower role are often misunderstood as "disobedience", when they may be expressions of discomfort, uncertainty or unmet needs.

To follow confidently, a horse needs clear, consistent communication. Under saddle, we are the one controlling pace, direction, and emotional tone. But we are complex beings. We carry tension in our bodies, our minds drift, our hands become uneven, or we issue conflicting signals without knowing it.

When leadership becomes inconsistent, such as a tight rein paired with a driving leg, a wobbly seat paired with a request for straightness, or if we experience a sudden emotional shift, our horse is left trying to decipher meaning where clarity doesn't exist.

This is mentally exhausting and can erode trust in us. A horse who hesitates, resists, or "shies for no reason" may be responding to unclear leadership rather than challenging it.

Being a follower in a herd doesn't mean giving up one's body; it means aligning movement with others. Under saddle, the horse

doesn't have the same choice. We influence their balance, restrict their natural patterns, and sometimes override their instinctive reactions. This loss of agency can be deeply uncomfortable.

For example:

- A horse may want to adjust their stride on uneven ground, but rein pressure stops them.
- A horse may sense a genuine environmental threat, but we might push them forward anyway.
- A horse may find a bend or gait transition physically difficult, yet we demand repetition.

When horses are denied the ability to communicate discomfort, they may shut down (becoming "quiet" or "bombproof") or escalate (through tension, rushing, or evasions). Neither response is a sign of good following, they are symptoms of compromised agency.

A herd animal depends on their leader to assess risks accurately and keep them safe. Under saddle, the horse cannot easily flee or defend themselves, yet they must still process the environment.

Imagine noticing everything, a fluttering bird, a shift in wind, a distant noise, but not being able to respond freely. This internal conflict may create emotional pressure. A calm, balanced rider can offset that load. A nervous, frustrated, or unpredictable rider increases it dramatically.

Following is an act of trust. Trust only emerges when the horse feels understood, safe, physically



Riding Bob

comfortable, and their concerns are met with clarity rather than force. A horse who willingly follows does so not out of fear, but out of trust gained through consistent, quiet attention.

Develop a listening posture. Notice how the horse adjusts their breathing, how their ribcage swings, how their ears tune in and out, how their stride lengthens or shortens in response to the rider's internal state. When riders communicate from a place of empathy and steadiness, horses step into the follower role more naturally and without fear.

The core issue with riding is not that the horse is asked to follow. It's that we often don't consider the psychological and physical weight of that role. There are things we can do to help our horses:

- offer clear consistent cues.
- allow our horse to express opinions without punishment.
- lead with emotional steadiness.
- keep our horse's balance and comfort as high priorities.
- develop softness before asking for obedience.

When we ride with awareness of what it feels like to be the follower, we become the kind of leaders horses willingly choose to follow. It's quite a different world that horses live in.

For me, the journey of understanding their reality from as many perspectives as possible, is an on-going journey that I willingly undertake.

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Weed Words  
by Triny Roe



Regenerating red cedar struggled before lantana was removed.

# Get on top of lantana

Hot summer, wet summer, weedy summer! The Northern Rivers is a mecca for all plant growth, the ones we cultivate and the ones we don't, the ones known as weeds.

Some of these opportunistic plants are ranked according to their invasive capacity, their potential to spread and the level of damage they can do. Lantana, *Lantana camara*, is ubiquitous and listed as a 'Weed of National Significance'.

Though some sing its virtues, lantana is not particularly good for the soil. First of all, lantana stops everything else from growing.

Allelopathic chemicals exuded from its roots prevent the germination of other species, giving it a superpower in the competition stakes. Nothing else can grow. Lantana takes over. There is no ground cover under a lantana patch.

There are claims that native bush can establish through lantana, however, more likely people have seen regenerating bush that has only recently been invaded by lantana. It looks like the trees are emerging through the patch, but the trees had already germinated there before encroachment.

If you want to restore native bush, the lantana has to go. If biodiversity is the aim, the lantana has to go.

Lantana can grow wide and it can grow tall when it has something to climb on. If not

controlled, in time the lantana will impact regenerating bush as this robust plant has potential to grow up and over and smother small and medium size saplings.

As the young trees attempt to gain height and shoot up through the weedy shrubs, the lantana branches follow, reaching up, seeking structural support. The weight of lantana crushes the struggling native trees and inhibits natural recruitment.

The Northern Rivers with high rainfall, rich volcanic soils and comfortable subtropical temperatures, lantana will just keep growing and spreading, unless kept in check.

Roadside infestations eventually get trimmed by Councils when traffic is impeded. Creek banks might get managed by Landcare groups. Fence lines are buried under thickets of the scratchy shrub. It makes an impenetrable hedge.

Lantana stretches its long scratchy stems several metres across the ground, rooting wherever it can. More root exudate! This ensures peak survival and prevents competition from other plants.

Lantana can climb six metres up tall trees, twisting and tangling, snaking and weaving, its way through the branches of its host.

Lantana is easy enough to manage. Cut through stems and trunks growing up trees. Leave the branches up there to wither and

die. Tugging on the interwoven lantana stems can damage the host tree, breaking its branches.

Eventually the lantana rots and falls harmlessly. The roots can be pulled or dug out to prevent reshooting.

Address solid patches in a staged manner to minimise disturbance to wildlife which may have made their homes there. Begin by cutting paths through the thickets to access the site.

As the project proceeds, the paths widen. Chances are there are plenty of seeds from pioneer species in the soil and these will begin to germinate once the lantana is removed.

Note here that plenty of weed species are also likely to start sprouting once the allelopathic effect of the lantana has gone.

That is one good aspect of lantana, it keeps the other weeds at bay. These weeds will probably germinate earlier and grow quicker than the natives, so follow up.

Maintenance is very important to prioritise the natives, especially in the early days. Selected planting in the cleared areas will enhance natural recruitment and re-introduce species that may not have been there for a century.

Factor in maintenance and ensure regular follow-up. The weeds will return. Happy weeding.



Viscum album

# Reminiscing about mistletoe

Nature's Pharmacy  
by Trish Clough, Herbalist

With the recent Christmas experience, I was thinking about plants associated with the festive season.

We grew up with stories about holly, mistletoe, frankincense and myrrh, cinnamon and cloves and many more. The stories were generally symbolic, conveying emotions rather than medicinal features.

However, these plants are traditionally very valuable and revered for their many properties.

Today I am writing about the healing properties of mistletoe, one of these 'Christmas' plants. There are native mistletoes in Australia, and many species throughout the world, but the mistletoe of Christmas traditions is *Viscum album*.

Mistletoe grows on host trees, most traditionally the oak tree, and as it grows it obtains water and some nutrients from the host tree. For propagation it produces

white berries which are spread by birds.

The oak tree and the mistletoe were worshipped by the Druids in ancient times. Mistletoe was offered to the gods in a Druid winter solstice ceremony to symbolise peace and prosperity.

The traditional belief is that it would heal friendships, which presumably led to the ritual of kissing under the mistletoe as an English Christmas custom.

The plant was known from these times as a universal healer because of its powerful properties. It was traditionally used throughout Europe for a variety of ailments including cancer, heart problems, epilepsy, infertility, high blood pressure and arthritis.

Mistletoe is another of the medicinal herbs that have fallen out of favour in recent herbal medicine and naturopathic training. The tincture is harder to find, as some of our major manufacturers no longer produce it. This is unfortunate, as it has many valuable properties and uses.

In recent centuries it has been used to reduce high blood pressure, to strengthen the heart, and for fluid retention associated with a weak heart.

More recent scientific studies show that its relaxant effect on the cardiovascular system occurs through an upregulation of the nitric oxide (NO) pathway, which helps to reduce both the systolic and the diastolic pressure (the two readings that show when you have your blood pressure tested).

According to herbalist Matthew Wood, it improves circulation to areas that have reduced blood supply from nervous tension, enabling healing and decongestion of those areas of the body.

It also helps protect the kidneys and regulates blood sugar levels. It helps to normalise liver enzymes and can improve fatty liver disease.

I recall when I studied with Dorothy Hall that she taught us to use mistletoe as a lymphatic cleanser, and the specific indication through iris diagnosis was an orange colour in the so-

called lymphatic rosary and additionally in the digestive zone of the iris.

I remember having a patient who presented with exactly these iris signs. I included some mistletoe in the herbal mix, and to my surprise the orange colour had almost gone at the next visit. This was a memorable experience for me as a young practitioner.

In more recent times, mistletoe is used as an adjunct to cancer treatments. According to the Naturopaths and Herbalists Association of Australia (NHAA), Rudolph Steiner started using mistletoe for cancer patients "based on his anthroposophical medicine traditions" in 1920.

"One of the most well-known uses of Mistletoe today is as an anti-cancer, anti-tumour and cytotoxic agent, especially in breast cancer patients due to its anti-mutagenic and immunomodulatory mechanisms displayed in clinical trials," according to the NHAA.

There are also recent studies using mistletoe extracts in

addition to medical treatments for people with pancreatic cancer. It is important to note that the studies are using mistletoe as an adjunct treatment alongside usual cancer treatments in a medical setting.

Any use of mistletoe for patients on prescription medications eg for cardiovascular issues need to be professionally prescribed to assess any possible herb/drug interactions.

*Trish Clough is a Lismore herbalist who has been practising for more than 30 years. She now conducts her own clinic practice in Iluka after relocating from Lismore. Trish is available for consultations by appointment on 0452-219-502 or email: trishclough2@gmail.com*

*The information in the column is meant for general interest only and should not be considered as medical advice.*

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# Beat the heat

**Food Matters**  
by Neil Amor

In food history terms, turns out gazpacho is old. Very old. It predates the Reconquista of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, and goes back as far as the Roman Empire, possibly further. There are multiple variations: there's salmorello, from Cordoba, a thick soup of pulverised bread moistened with vinegar and flavored with garlic and an abundance of tomato. There's the Moorish inflected *ajo blanco*, literally

“white garlic,” that includes grapes and is thickened with crushed almonds. But the version most of us are familiar with is *gazpacho al andalus*, or Andalusian-style gazpacho – a profusion of tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, garlic, sherry vinegar. Traditionally it is made with bread in the soup base but these days frequently without. There's an Andalusian saying, “No-one gets fat eating gazpacho.” The earliest versions of the dish actually pre-date the Romans, pointing to the Greeks, and are mentioned



even as early as the biblical Ruth. But by the time of the Roman empire, the dish first finds form in a sort of

soldiers were paid in salt, hence the “sal” in salary.) Vegetables like peppers, cucumber, and onion were added later, and today there are many variations of gazpacho, each with its own unique flavor. The Guinness Book of Records cites the largest gazpacho ever made, 9,800 litres, was achieved by Unica Group in Spain in 2019. All proceeds from the event were donated to two NGOs. This cooling soup replaces tomatoes with watermelon. Serve super-chilled. Garnish 1 sm tomato ½ cucumber ½ red onion ½ green capsicum ½ red capsicum ice cubes 1 tbs olive oil juice 1 lemon Blend soup ingredients and chill overnight. Finely dice vegetables for garnish and place in a bowl for serving on table. When ready to serve, add olive oil and lemon juice to each soup bowl, along with ice cube. Salt and pepper to taste.

**Watermelon Gazpacho**  
½ watermelon, peeled  
½ large cucumber, peeled  
½ medium red onion

## The country cricket match

by Bett Taylor

Bob put his cap on backwards when he went in to bat He thought it real modern to put it on like that Somebody yelled “Are ya comin’ or are ya goin’ Bob? Are ya talkin’ through yer hat or talkin’ out yer gob?”

Bob’s girlfriend was watching, leaning on the rail He wanted to hit a sixer, he didn’t want to fail Fred was the bowler and he ran up like a clown His arm in windmill circles, goin’ roun’ and roun’

He aimed for the wicket, but Bob hit the ball real high It headed for blue yonder, right into the sky Bob’s girlfriend Marcie jumped and clapped her hands in glee Said to her friend, “See that? He did it all for me!”

Then Bob said to Jason, his partner at the crease “We’ll beat ‘em all Jason, they’ll wish they were deceased Jason said, “Cut it out, give me a turn to bat! It’s not a one-man-band, someone should tell yer that!”

“Okay, okay,” said Bob, “keep your hair on tight.”

Then he hit another sixer, swung with all his might Marcie told her friend, “I am so proud of him.” But her friend didn’t hear above the crowded din

The audience were clapping and standing up to shout “Give it to ‘em Bob! Show ‘em what it’s all about!” Then the ball hit the wicket when Bob waved to say “G’day” So he threw his bat down and didn’t want to play

The crowd all yelled out ‘BOO’, get ‘im off the pitch!’ And Marcie’s friend smiled (she really was a bitch). So Bob’s game was over, before it had begun He thought his bad temper had ruined all their fun

Then both teams got together and the fight was on for real With fists and flaying punches, they didn’t seem to feel The copper blew his whistle for the mighty rage to stop Then they stood like statues, solid as a rock

He said, “Shake hands, you know it’s just a game Don’t ever forget the reason why you came!” Marcie trod on her friend’s foot, “Accident,” she said But her friend knew it was a purpose tread

Then the teams kept playin’ until the game was over Their country cricket match, on a bed of clover.

# Border country

We rode a dog sled driven by seven working dogs, the seventh a young dog in training, and a man standing on the sled behind us taking us through the icy landscape of Kirkenes, that borders Russia and Finland in Norway’s far north. It was freezing cold, fast and incredibly beautiful: frozen lake, rolling snow covered hills, bare trees, and a sliver of pink sky. The last two dogs seemed to argue a lot and one kept turning around and looking at us, as if to say, “See, I’m right and he is wrong,” or something. There is nothing sedate about dog sledding, nothing gentle. It’s heart-pumpingly scary as one whizzes around tight corners. A couple of times, I thought I’d be flung off into the snow. My face hurt with the pain of cold, but I absolutely loved it, and I loved the countryside. It reminded me of the landscape of my family and I felt at home in this border land.

As we crossed the solid lake, I remembered the Ukrainian composer, Prokofiev’s opera *Alexander Nevsky*, the 13th century Prince of Novgorod, about a battle fought and won on the frozen lake between the Teutonic knights (Germans) and the Russians, a lake that borders Estonia and Russia and the lands of my mother’s family.

The land they lived was historically disputed as a site for conflicting ideologies and language (just like the war in Ukraine and Russia at the moment). I note here that Prokofiev is claimed by the Russians as a Russian composer! Kirkenes had this quality, of being between places. It’s disputed territory, and interestingly, these days, Russians and Norwegians can freely move across the border, at least within the fairly tight parameter of 40 kilometres. What are borders anyway, but a human construct, and we are all humans claiming ‘mine versus yours’ stuff, just like the two sled dogs. I found the whole thing of being here deeply moving, stirring something profound within me. It was against this backdrop of deep



by Dr Elizabeth McCardell

remembering that I met a few of the little puppies who begin training to pull sleds at a young age.

One little guy and I totally fell in love. We nuzzled each other and held hand in paw and I wanted to take him home to Australia, but, of course, I couldn’t.

Back home, I have much to think about. Our Norwegian journey was only two and half weeks long and most of it was done travelling on a Hurtigruten ship from Bergen to Kirkenes.

In some ways, the trip was far too short, but perhaps not. It was quite restful, not having to do much at all.

The ship stopped often, mostly merely to collect mail, but sometimes we could disembark and wander new streets, but unfortunately never to do anything but scratch the surface of any place.

I guess, it was because dog

sledding had a dangerous quality to it and that physically engaged us in that experience that this felt the most real of the entire journey.

Everything else became much like drifting through time and space as nothing more than a tourist with a camera.

One place that my friend and I stopped at enroute from Oslo to Bergen, where we boarded the ship, was Flam in the fjords.

The landscape was magnificent: mountains, cliffs, rock formations that blew our minds, but the hotel we stayed at was a theme park.

Their restaurant was set up like a pseudo-Viking feast house, complete with tall blond Viking man with a suspiciously northern English accent (!) who would sell his grandmother at the drop of a hat, animal hides, carved wooden chairs and tables, a booze bar, etc, etc.

I felt almost sick with the silliness of it; a museum piece designed for tourists. If this is what travel has become, I’m not sure I want any part of it.

I suppose what I gained most from my journey was connection with my familial history of border countries/cultures, meeting and loving the dogs, and understanding what matters most to me.

The rest can be forgotten.

# Plant of the month



by Richard Burer

truly great tree to start the year; it’s hardy, resilient, strong, a long connection to humans with a distinctive beauty that captures the eye as easily as it goes unnoticed. Growing from 2 to 40 metres, Red Bloodwood is an iconic Australian tree. It can be scraping its survival on an infertile ridge top or coastal heath where it may take on a Mallee appearance, or hugging the edge of a rainforest where fire may have assisted its presence in that ecotone zone.

A highly regarded tree and cultural asser to the first Australians, *Corymbia* is well know for its blood red kino which was used for medicinal practices, and also well used in repair and hardware.

As a food, indigenous people used the flowers for nectar which is abundant in flowering times and surely was a seasonal indicator as the weather does change in this time of year.

Flowering this month, the

Red Bloodwood will fill the air with a sweet aroma and come alive with all manner of wildlife activity.

Locally it’s critical to Flying Foxes and Sugar Gliders; its nectar filling a food gap that is now becoming more noticeable as habitat destruction and lack of connectivity endanger these species.

Birds like Lorikeets, Honeyeaters and Rosella also find delight in the summer offerings of this tree.

At home in Nimbin, this tree is very common and this season looks like it will be very good with abundant buds developing. A very important nectar for apiarists, Red bloodwood with a good season with dry weather can fill frames in a healthy hive in a week with at least two robbings possible in the perfect season. Good preparation and timing required in this scenario.

Easy to grow from seed with a reasonably fast growth; some pruning is sometimes good to get a straight fast-growing tree.

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

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