



Eucryphia

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Robertson Environment Protection Society – to promote the protection and enhancement of the Robertson Environment
PO Box 3045, Robertson NSW 2577 www.reps.org.au

Next REPS Meeting Friday 14th June 2013 at 7:30pm at the Robertson Community Centre

Brendhan Waters and David Bartlett from the Robertson Rural Fire Service

“Bush Fire in Robertson – How likely is it?”

The talk will include a look at the historical fires in Wingecarribee Shire and Robertson, and how the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) and the local brigades prepare for bush fire through fire management plans and hazard reduction.

There will also be a discussion around bush fire behaviour and emergency fire response processes and the changes that have occurred in the Robertson landscape that potentially put at risk the commonly held view that Robertson won't burn.

This background will lead into a discussion on how to prepare and plan for fire at your own property or household.

Brendhan Waters has been the fire captain at the Robertson Brigade since 2007, and has continued a family tradition, following in his great grandfather's footsteps, who was also captain.

David Bartlett (Inspector Operational Services) is

located at the Mittagong office of the NSW Rural Fire Service and has worked for the RFS for 10 years. He has worked in the Shoalhaven, Illawarra,



and Wollondilly areas, and has been a volunteer for 20 years in the service. David has a background in environmental management and business.

**All welcome Active discussion Light supper
Gold coin donation**

Upcoming Events

Fri 14th June – REPS Talk, *Bush Fire in Robertson*, see above

18th June, 2nd, 7th July, 3rd August – NPA Bushwalks, page 4

Sat 29th June, 27th July – Caalang Creek Working Bees – 9:30am onwards, page 6

President's Report

I am writing this in mid-May when our drier than usual warm autumn has produced one of the best displays of deciduous leaf colour in years. How do exotic trees and shrubs fit in with REPS values? This is something for each of us to decide but I, for one, love the colours of autumn produced by such species. The Robertson environment is a mixture of man-made landscape with isolated pockets of remnant rainforest.

I remember the views of a respected member who stated at a talk he gave to REPS that if there was a movement to regrow all of Robertson back to rainforest, he would be against it. We must preserve and conserve what original 'primeval' areas we have and there are plenty of places to regenerate with indigenous plants. However people need to live here too, which automatically alters the original pristine environment.

I love the cherry leaves in autumn along Hoddle Street and the blossom in spring. I even like the flowers of red-hot poker that you see in summer naturalised here and there in Hoddle Street and along the railway line, although not all REPS members will agree with me on that.

The very "green heart" of the Highlands is produced by acres of that environmental weed, kikuyu grass. I am not too keen on that, but fortunately it is slowing down now and mowing does not have to be so regular.

Weeds in Robertson are a big problem, not only the recognised weeds like fireweed, blackberry, inkweed, turnip weed and sheep sorrel, but also the so called environmental weeds. The Council has produced a brochure on this subject (ed. you can still pick up a copy at the CTC). When you are considering planting a non-indigenous plant, do check that it does not have any tendency to "go feral" by spreading seeds or suckers into the local rainforest, or paddocks.

Agapanthus is a known problem, as is montbretia. Cherry laurel and holly are hard to keep under control and are always popping up in the rainforest or roadside verge. There are some real weed problems in roadside verges in our village and surrounds, of which council needs to be notified. REPS does not have the energetic manpower or even permission to work on this issue. Property owners need to be vigilant. When the spring explosion of annual grasses and weeds comes it will be worse, so winter is the time to regain control.

REPS willing workers have been planting and mulching along Caalang creek near the soccer fields, weeding in the rainforest reserve and also will soon be planting new waratahs in Pinkwood Park next to the Post Office.

We have had some wonderful speakers this year and this month REPS is presenting a talk by our local fire brigade experts on fire risk and preparation for the warmer seasons. Please come along, contribute to the discussion and bring your questions.

David Mee

April Talk Review

by David Mee

Our speaker Dr. Stephen Brown, BSc, MDS, was introduced by Jane Lemann who noted that Stephen was an expert in his subject, as both a hobbyist and a scientist. By profession Stephen is an orthodontist but he has published 15 papers in the journal *The Entomologist* and contributed to a field guide. He has travelled all over Australia and risked the perils of field work in finding new and coveted species.

Stephen thanked Jane for the introduction and Georgina Persse for the invitation to speak.

The first question Stephen proposed was "what is a butterfly?" He noted that there were only superficial differences between butterflies and moths, and for any general rule for distinguishing them there are exceptions. Butterflies tend to have fine antennae, rest with their wings closed and have smooth scales. Moths have feathery antennae, rest with wings open and have hairy scales.

His first image was the *Cressida cressida* butterfly, in a very unusual manifestation. This was a gynandromorph, being both male and female, and rare in the wild.

The Skipper butterfly from Mt. Alexander in Mittagong was shown to illustrate a butterfly that looks like a moth.

A 30 cm long giant moth from North Queensland, by contrast, looks like a butterfly.

Images of Australia's smallest and biggest butterflies followed.

A species of butterfly in Penang, Malaysia is attracted to decaying matter, namely dead prawns.

Next he showed images of blue butterflies from the tip of Cape York, North Queensland, and ones from the Torres Strait Island, Dauan.

His investigations there led to the finding of a new species called *Hypolycaena litoralis*, so named

because it can only live in the inter-tidal zone between low and high tide. It also has a one-sided symbiotic relation with green ants.

Some species of butterfly require a particular species of ant in the environment to survive. The butterfly larvae live in the ant nest and feed on ant larvae. If the ants die, so do the butterflies.

Stephen noted that a rare species of ant-associated butterfly escaped destruction when the authorities, who wished to straighten a sharp road bend, were given a report indicating that if they did, they could destroy the habitat of the ants and the related rare butterflies. The bend was left unstraightened.

The topic turned to invasive species and Stephen showed an image of an orange butterfly with black and white spots from S.E. Asia and India which had found its way to the Northern Territory and was breeding in massive numbers, stripping *Hybanthus* plants and moving on to passionfruit. It is poisonous to native birds and animals. Scary stuff!

Stephen had a wonderful set of images to show, but your poor recorder could not keep up with the names. A picture of a death adder from North Queensland was shown to illustrate some of the perils encountered in tracking elusive butterflies.

Stephen briefly mentioned the migration of the famous Monarch butterfly. Through spring and summer in northern America, four generations of Monarch larvae feed on milkweed plants, but as autumn comes the fourth generation is seasonally triggered to migrate south to Mexico or California to escape the freezing winter temperatures. They hibernate there in the very same trees each and every year which seems odd as they aren't the same butterflies that were there the previous year. Because milkweed (the larval food plant) doesn't grow in these southern areas, the butterflies mate and return to the north in spring to lay their eggs and start the new stage one and generation one all over again.

While answering questions Stephen told of a larva from the Queensland rainforest, which needed to be rescued and nurtured. He called it Pete, but it turned out to be a female. He nurtured it for 4 months as it grew and pupated. It took 15 minutes to emerge as a butterfly.

The white butterflies of the Southern Highlands migrate only occasionally.

As Stephen has recently been in Rwanda interacting with the mountain gorillas, the presentation finished with some images and video of his experiences in

Rwanda with the gorillas.

Judith Mee then formally thanked Stephen on behalf of members. More informal discussion continued.

(Stephen is joint author with Meyer and Weir of a 2008 paper on the species *Hypochrysops theon johnsoni*, a blue butterfly of Cape York.)

Pinkwood Park Waratah Planting



Helen Tranter, Leon Hall and David Tranter after the hard work of planting waratahs in Pinkwood Park on Friday morning, the last day of autumn.

Missing is David Mee, who kindly took the photo. Helen Tranter is still looking for volunteers who can spare a few hours on Wednesday morning to work in the Nature Reserve, see page 6.

What's driving the drought cycle?

by David Tranter

(ed. ENSO – El Nino Southern Oscillation. INDI – Indian Ocean Dipole SAM – Southern Annular Mode)

Sheep farmers think of “weather” in terms of the sheep dogs ENSO, INDI and SAM, who round up the storm clouds. Sam's a dud because he can't distinguish between continental sheep runs and the well-watered wastes of the Southern Ocean. This article is about ENSO (El Nino Southern Oscillation).

ENSO begins his roundup a long way from home in the Central Pacific, which soaks up the sun's heat and passes it on to the Trade Winds, which drive the Equatorial Current towards New Guinea, creating the largest “heat engine” in the global ocean. This mound of warm water lifts moisture up into the (cooler) atmosphere where it condenses into rain drops that pelt down upon the drought-parched lands below. “Nice work ENSO, good doggie!”

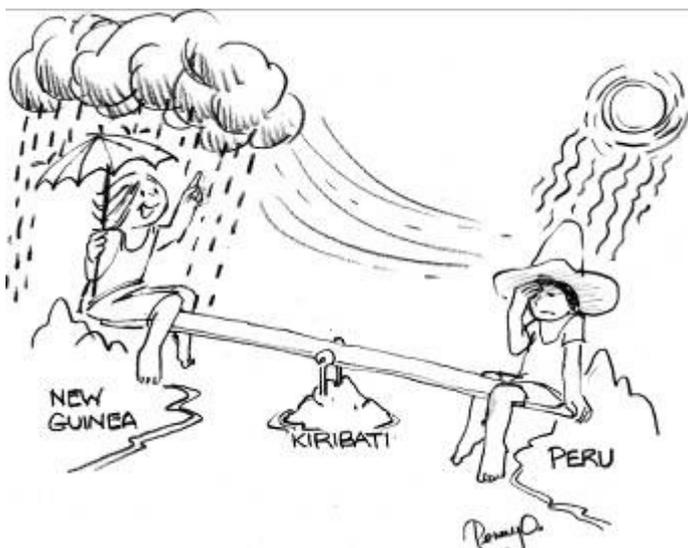


Illustration by Penny Osterhaus

Since Western Pacific sea levels rise in the process, you can also think of ENSO as an ocean-wide seesaw hinged mid-Pacific (see cartoon above) which moves up and down in a 5-7 year cycle to the heartbeat of the Trades. For reasons yet unknown, the Trades periodically subside, at which point, that pile of warm nutrient-poor water has nowhere to go but “downhill” in a long, slow wave that takes several months to reach the shores of Peru, with dramatic consequences that Spanish colonists called “El Nino”.

The arrival of this warm current ends the largest fishery in the world, destroying a food chain that includes pelicans and cormorants, which now can't dive deep enough to reach their anchovetta prey. Consequently, sea birds die by the millions, their rotting carcasses decomposing to form hydrogen sulphide gas, which strips paint off the wharves of Peru's main port. That's why El Nino is sometimes called the “Callao Painter.” The good news is that its arrival breaks the Peruvian drought cycle; the bad news is that their dry rivers often break their banks.

ENSO is a weather, not a climate, cycle. Cynical climatologists say that climate “is what you expect, weather is what you get”, but the truth is that weather comes in cycles shorter than 30 years and climate in cycles of centuries or millennia. Right now it's a bit hard to tell whether current climate extremes are weather or climate or a mix of both. On balance they're probably a vicious mix. That's where mongrel sheep-dog SAM loses the plot. Later articles in this series deal with “vicious feedbacks” that are destabilizing our “normal” global climate which, like SAM, seems also to be losing the plot.

NPA Walks, Southern Highlands Branch

18 June, Carrington Falls

Martyn Mordy

Grade: 3, 12kms, limit: 6

Circuit walk descend to Kangaroo River via Stevo's Track, ascend via Missingham Steps

2 July, Shoalhaven River

Martyn Mordy

Several river crossings

Grade: 4, 12kms, car shuffle, limit: 12

Descend on steep track via Badgerys, ascend on track via Long Point. Spectacular scenery in river valley

7 July, Lake Yarrunga Morton NP

Joan Lowe

Steep, fallen trees, rough track.

Grade: 3, 17kms, limit: 12

Contact leader by Thursday 4th July. The track down to Lake Yarrunga is an historic fire trail giving access to Kangaroo Valley. The road is now blocked by Lake Yarrunga formed by Tallowa Dam. Lunch is by the lake and return is via the same track.

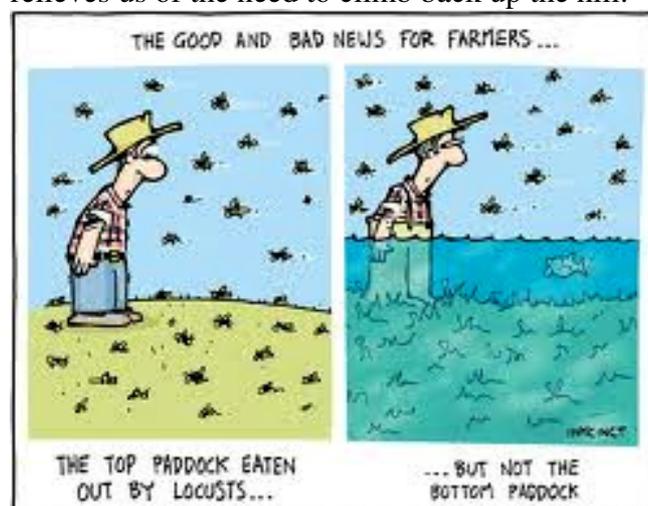
3 August, McPhail's Fire Trail Morton NP

Joan Lowe

Very steep sections, rough with branches and fallen trees.

Grade: 3, 13kms, limit: 12

Contact leader by Thursday 1st August. The Pipeline Management Trail leads to the Pipeline Lookout with wonderful views over Bendeela Pondage in Kangaroo Valley. We then retrace our steps to McPhail's Fire Trail which descends into the valley through thick rain forest. A car shuffle relieves us of the need to climb back up the hill.



Poetry Corner

Edited by Jonathan Persse

Five poems by Rosemary Dobson, who died in Canberra last year, on birth and childhood, part of the human environment everywhere.

The Birth

A wreath of flowers as cold as snow
Breaks out in bloom upon the night:
That tree is rooted in the dark,
It draws from dew its breath of life,
It feeds on frost, it hangs in air
And like a glittering branch of stars
Receives, gives forth, its breathing light.

Eight times it flowered in the dark,
Eight times my hand reached out to break
That icy wreath to bear away
Its pointed flowers beneath my heart.
Sharp are the pains and long the way
Down, down into the depths of night
Where one goes for another's sake.

Once more it flowers, once more I go
In dream at midnight to that tree,
I stretch my hand and break the branch
And hold it to my human heart.
Now, as the petals of a rose
These flowers unfold and grow to me —
I speak as of a mystery.

To a child

Through the dark maze I went and wound
The fine red single skein of love,
Accosting space I parted night,
Cracked the great O of day and cried
With my five voices, 'Child, come.'

And answering 'I am I' you jumped
With joy to life. I stretched my hand,
Mountains reared up to thrust between,
Great oceans yawned, plains stretched away,
Valleys divided one from one.

Before you were then you were mine,
Dark honey of my honeycomb.
I laboured patiently and long
To fashion out of flesh and bone
The form to keep you housed and home.

The pulse still beats upon your head
For me, though bone may shield the vein,
The world divides - and yet we hold,
An end to each, the seeking skein,
The indestructible thread of love.

The Community of the Unborn, stanzas 1 and 3

The new-born child sleeps.
The catspaw of a frown
Troubles her smooth-shut eyes
Her mouth is petulant
For friends plead in her sleep —
Her unborn friends — 'Come back'.

When island children fight
The island mothers say
'Leave them. It's their concern.'
The dark-eyed children stare
Keeping their shared recall —
The world of the unborn.

Child of Our Time, stanzas 1 to 3

The world is yours, and you must take
Your making, breaking, shaping way:
That instant when the cord was cut
Ended my brief imperial sway.

Mine only was the being shaped
In darkness and in solitude
Moving upon the tides of dream,
Unknown yet known beatitude.

All that is done. Now every step
You take is further still from me
Along your destined path to death,
Light, darkness or eternity.

The Green Years, stanzas 1 and 4

With wandering thoughts content, never at pains
To put her mind upon the thing at hand
Careless, untouched, she moved through distant days
A green, a silly girl. Was troubled only
By small guilts of omission: by words of hers
Wounding, better not said. And still these loom
Darker with time than many an outright wrong.

She, like a yard of pump-water, slipped away
But something of her still remains with me —
The magic healing power of all she read.
Chilblains have disappeared. I share no joke
At pitiful human ills. Am troubled still
By guilt for past omissions, wounding words;
Wakeful at night, recalling the green years.

Please send a poem on the environment, written by yourself or another person, to Jonathan Persse, Sallyhill, Burrawang 2577



Next REPS Working Bees Saturday 29th June & 27th July

Meet at the footbridge in Hampden Park from 9:30am onwards. Don't forget water, hat and gloves. We now have tools available but, if you can, bring your own.

Queries to Steve Douglas 4271 4957 or Leon Hall 4888 2222.

Help Care for Our Nature Reserve

1st Wednesday of each month 9:30am to noon

Everyone welcome; please bring garden gloves; work sites are chosen according to the weather; stay only as long as you choose.

Details: Helen Tranter 4885 1394 or Ford Kristo (NPWS) business hours 4887 8244.

Robertson and surrounds e-news

Would you like to subscribe to the free monthly Robertson e-news? Follow the steps below and a newsletter will be sent to your email address at the beginning of each month,

1) Click on the link below to the Robertson e-news page on the Tiny Letter website.

<http://tinyletter.com/robertsonctc>

2) Enter your email address and click on the subscribe button.

3) Tiny Letter will send you an email to confirm your registration. You need to confirm your subscription by clicking on the link in the email.

The newsletter content is put together at CTC@Robertson and includes relevant information for Robertson residents.

Eduone and QuickSmart training available free at CTC@Robertson.

QuickSmart courses are designed for people who would like more confidence in their basic numeracy or literacy skills, either for work of just for life in general.

You can do the QuickSmart Online course any time at your own convenience, and at your own

pace. Drop in to CTC@Robertson and check it out.

Homework Club for students available on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. Booking essential.

We have a number of other eduONE short online courses available.

www.eduone.net.au

eduONE is an Australian Government Initiative

REPS welcomes new members

The McCabe-Wilson family - Todd, Kate,

Tamica & Leanna

Lyndy Scott

Penny Williams

Contact REPS

All those who are interested in supporting our aim are welcome to join REPS. Our aim is to promote the preservation and enhancement of the Robertson environment. We welcome contact with individuals and other community groups.

Please contact The Secretary

PO Box 3045, Robertson NSW 2577

or President – David Mee on 4885 1483

Also, we are always looking for new contributions to Eucryphia and we are grateful to those who send in contributions to help make our newsletter so interesting. If you have an essay, article, poem or photograph that you would like to share with other REPS members please contact Monica Engel.

Telephone: 4885 2665

Or email: monicaengel@robertsonctc.org.au

All contributions will be most welcome.

Visit the REPS website

www.reps.org.au
