



# Eucryphia

ISSN 1037 – 2032

Number 136 – April 2015

Robertson Environment Protection Society – to promote the protection and enhancement of the Robertson environment.  
PO Box 3045, Robertson NSW 2577 [www.reps.org.au](http://www.reps.org.au)

## PUBLIC MEETING

**Friday 10th April at 7.30pm**  
**Robertson Community Hall, Caalong Street**

### **The Moss Vale “Mouse House” – state-of-the-art biology and energy efficiency**

Our guest Speaker, Ken Hayward (a Robertson local), is the electrical engineer in charge of the Moss Vale Australian Biomedical Resources Institute (ABR), the state-of-the-art biological support facility for the pre-eminent Garvan Institute of Medical research, specializing in such diseases as bone disease, cancer and diabetes. The ABR, known locally as “The Mouse House”, is the main source of “blood-line” mice for Garvan and other Australian Medical Institutes.



Ken’s job is to maintain constant environmental conditions for ABR mice by meticulous engineering and monitoring of their temperature, humidity, light and water supply.



900 solar collector tubes used for water heating.

The focus of Ken's address will be the state-of-the-art energy efficiency and renewable energy features of the ABR building, which have wide relevance to our area, whose long-term community strategic plan calls for “a carbon-neutral Wingecarribee by 2031.”



40 tonnes of waste bedding recycled annually

**ALL  
WELCOME**

Informal  
discussion, light  
refreshments,  
gold coin donation

**Extra: Books, lots of them!**

On the night, please browse through books donated to REPS by Denis Wilson. There are many excellent pre-loved books on diseases, composting, orchards, birds, native animals, environmental protection – that’s just a few of the topics.

Again, a gold coin donation would be appreciated.

---

---

**Report by David Mee on the REPS meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> February 2015, at the Robertson Community Centre.**

Following a welcome to all members and guests by the incoming president of REPS, Peter Glass, a brief report on the progress of the Pinkwood Park bench seating was given by David Mee.

This was followed by Allan Stiles paying tribute to long-term member Denis Wilson, who is leaving the district. Denis has been very influential as an observer and raconteur, an admirable photographer, an orchid and animal enthusiast, a fountain of knowledge, and insightful blogger. We will all miss him very much.

**Presentation by Kersten Schweth, with assistance from husband Richard (Woody) Woodman.**

**Caring for sick and orphan native animals.**

Peter Glass then introduced the speakers and welcomed them to the meeting. Kersten was originally from Germany and came to Australia, firstly to Sydney and then to Robertson, several years ago. She and husband, Woody, now live on a property off the Illawarra Highway, east of the Robertson village. For one who was initially afraid of snakes and spiders, Kersten is now very much a seasoned wildlife carer.



Peter Glass with Woody and Kersten

After a short introduction by Woody who described what they do, Kersten took the floor and described how they do it. Firstly Woody noted that they belong to an organisation called “Wildlife Rescue South Coast Inc.”, one of a few organisations, of which WIRES is another, which provide care for sick and wounded native animals, many from road accidents. (Young marsupials which are often rescued from the pouches of their dead mothers are a special case, requiring intensive care when small.)

Here are some of the important details from last month's *Eucryphia*:

*Wildlife Rescue South Coast Inc. covers an area from the Victorian border, up the coast to Wollongong, extending inland to Picton, across to Taralga, south to the west of Goulburn, south to the East of the ACT and back down to the Victorian border. This includes the entire Southern Highlands and Wingecarribee Shire.*

*When you encounter any injured, sick or orphaned wildlife in the Southern Highlands, northern part of Southern Tablelands or Kangaroo Valley, please contact Wildlife Rescue South Coast Inc. on their 24/7 hotline number 0418 427 214. Alternatively call the Regional Coordinator Richard Woodman on 4885 2008 or mobile 0412 002 400 / 0413 768 656.*

Kersten and/or Woody will come to the scene when called to try to rescue any injured animals. They will take them back to their place and put in the care required, so that eventually the animal can be released back into the wild. There are a number of pre-requisites for them to be able to do this, as Kersten explained:

1. The care organisation must be licensed, and to obtain this license, specific training in animal welfare and caring must be carried out.
2. A lot of networking is required with volunteers who have specific expertise and facilities. For example, Kersten said that she is trained in caring for macropods, especially wombats, kangaroos, wallabies and similar. On the other hand her colleague in Fitzroy Falls, Peggy McDonald, looks after birds, especially raptors. Kersten did a reptile course in Dapto, but others provide specific care for reptiles.
3. The support of a local vet is essential.
4. There is no government support for this work, and costs are ongoing. Kersten and Woody meet a lot of these themselves, but help is very much appreciated.

Kersten demonstrated some of the home-made equipment she uses for rescue, such as blanket bags to simulate mothers' pouches, and hot water bottles that are heated in a microwave oven. She noted that, on a rescue call out, she has to assess the extent of the injuries and whether the animal or its offspring can be helped. Most of the time there is a good outcome. She may have to call upon the services of a vet, usually given free. If you come across a dead female animal by the side of the road

---

---

with a cross sprayed on its back, it means that the pouch has been checked for live babies.

Woody and Kersten have an animal nursery at their home. Following an initial stay, the recovering animal is put in a small paddock near the house (with beds for joeys) and then moves into a larger paddock (no beds). Finally they move to a pre-release paddock of three acres. Their property is too close to the highway and railway to release the animals there, so they are generally taken to a remote release site, where they are then occasionally monitored. Typically, baby wombats stay in care for up to one year. Kersten mentioned that you develop an emotional attachment to the animals and it is difficult to let go. Regular treatment for worms and parasites must be carried out.

At times the workload can be heavy. Feeding time with bottled milk formula, for example, has to be done for all animals simultaneously, otherwise they steal from each other. Nevertheless, the total commitment has its personal and emotional rewards.



Members of the audience

After the presentation the members were abuzz with questions; too many to keep track of who asked what. However some of the answers can be recorded. Wombat mange was discussed and acknowledged as a difficult disease to combat. Kersten explained that there is a 12 week program for combating it for wombats in care. Another issue is when an animal cannot be healed: it is usually chemically euthanased.

Now the carcass must be disposed of correctly. If it were left in situ, other animals would eat the carcass and they too would be poisoned.

There was a discussion of costs and funding and REPS members agreed to help here



Barbara Smith thanking Kersten

Finally, a vote of thanks was proposed to the speakers by Barbara Smith and she presented some gifts on behalf of REPS. We all adjourned for supper.

(REPS has subsequently made a donation to the work of Kersten and Woody.)



Peter Glass, President, presenting our REPS cheque for \$100 to Kirsten and Woody

---

---

## A FASCINATING ORCHID

There are two remarkable species of underground orchid in Australia, one in WA and another in NSW. The latter was first found early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century near Bulahdelah and, in recent years, it was also discovered near Springwood. The plant, not beautiful but fascinating, needs no leaves as it lives in association with a fungus. Alan Stephenson, who attended our last meeting and whose book on the orchids of the Shoalhaven district is well worth a look, has lately found it and his account is below. Does it also grow near Robertson? It may well be here and, informed by Alan's photos below, let's keep our eyes open. When we discussed searching, Alan's advice was: "I hope a find is made but (snakes aside) it's a good idea to use an implement or gloves as there are lots of biting things in leaf litter." (Ed.)

### Alan Stephenson's account

#### LOOKING FOR DEATH ADDERS

In September 2001 I was approached by an acquaintance who inquired if I would be interested in helping him undertake an Environmental Impact Study on a five acre undeveloped parcel of land near Jervis Bay NSW. Of course I immediately said yes as the chance to look at undeveloped private land in that area is always worthwhile.

Garry is a former science teacher turned Zoologist who spends most of his time involved in EIS work. He has a wide knowledge of general flora and fauna with frogs, bats and reptiles his specialty and readily admits his orchid knowledge is only fair.

The land in question has been owned by the one family for over 40 years and is now proposed for sale, either with a house already constructed or at least a building permit assured. Therefore an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was required to determine if any threatened species of flora or fauna were in situ.

Several threatened species of fauna are known to occur in the general area. These are the Eastern Bristlebird (*Dasyornis brachypterus*), Glossy Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*), Large Bent-wing Bat (*Miniopterus schreibersii*), and the Eastern Freetail Bat (*Mormopterus norfolkensis*). Three others are considered likely, Ground Parrot (*Pezoporus wallicus*), Giant Burrowing Frog (*Helioporus australicus*), and the White-footed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis leucopus*). In addition to these, three orchid species are also considered:

*Caladenia tessellata*, which has not been sighted for over thirty years, *Cryptostylis hunteriana* and *Prasophyllum affine*. I have seen both species nearby in recent times.

Garry came by on Sunday September 16<sup>th</sup> and said we would go for a cursory look to make sure we had the correct site and see how detailed the assessment would be. It's only 20 minutes away and familiar territory so we thought it would only take a couple of hours. The site abuts the Jervis Bay Road with developed sites to the south, Jervis Bay National Park to the north and Jervis Bay 3.5 km to the east. It is narrow and deep with a creek and wetlands but the eastern third has been slightly degraded from contact with adjoining habitation.

We encountered orchids immediately with several large specimens of *Cymbidium suave* in the trees. Garry was busy listening and watching for birds and recording tree species. He also pointed out the diggings of Bush Rats and Bandicoots and we did see one very tough looking Eastern Grey Kangaroo. Other orchids then began appearing: *Acianthus* and *Corybas* leaves and also those of *Cryptostylis erecta* and *Cryp. subulata* which are quite common to the district. As we progressed into the more untouched section we noticed orchids in flower: *Petalochilus carneus* (Syn. *Caladenia carnea*), *Petalochilus hillmanii* (Syn. *Cal. hillmanii*), *Petalochilus catenatus* (Syn. *Cal. catenata*), *Thelymitra ixioides*, *Thel. pauciflora*, *Thel. carnea*, *Thel. media* and the natural hybrid, *Thel. X irregularis*. Things were looking good but so far nothing significant. Garry mentioned we had done enough and he would return during the week to set some traps for bats and gliders and do some spotlighting on one or two nights for nocturnal species.



Two capitulum (flower heads) which until a few weeks prior to flowering are horizontal and stand erect to open. Hence the name *Rhizanthella* being derived from ferns which have a rhizome type root system. Photographed during the Death Adder exercise

---

---

As we turned towards the western boundary fence he saw a large scribbly gum and began to scratch at the rather deep leaf litter with the heel of his boot. What are you looking for there I said? He replied, "Death Adders". My step back was cautious and measured and he noticed some concern. What's the matter Al, aren't you fond of snakes? (Silly question, I thought.) But then I realised with his second effort, if there was a Death Adder under the litter, it would have been apparent by this time, so I also had a scratch. Immediately we noticed a white plant had been exposed but unfortunately the indelicacy of a boot had severed two pieces. As I had seen this species before, just a few kilometres away and four years prior, I recognised it immediately. We looked at each other and I said, "Do you know what we have here?" Garry wasn't sure so I said, "It's the Underground Orchid, *Rhizanthella slateri* and this find is very special".



The plant in flower. It is about the size of a 50 cent coin and each nodule is an individual flower. Photographed at Bulahdelah.

The severed flower heads looked like asparagus spears and the pink colour of approaching flowers was visible through the outer bracts, wrapped around the flowers. The site is between 15 metres and 20 meters above sea level and as mentioned, 3.5 km from Jervis Bay. The previous find in this area was in a similar location, 10 meters above sea level and six km from the Bay, and that plant was in the final throes of flowering. The time was Good Friday 1997. This time we have a specimen which is yet to open so the chances of seeing a fully open flower are quite good.



A single flower between the fingers of a Canberra Botanist. Photographed at Bulahdelah.

On arriving home I contacted David Jones in Canberra to inform him of another sample of this elusive species. Naturally he was surprised and pleased but indicated he was leaving for the Orchid Conservation Congress in Perth later that week so it was necessary to send the sections immediately. By the appearance of the plant section uncovered, flowers could reasonably be expected in three to four weeks. As there are several more large scribbly gums on the site more plants might yet be uncovered. I am pleased to report, no Death Adders were uncovered.

As a footnote to the above, the owner of the property was granted his Development Application and later proceeded to clear the front section of the land. It is interesting to note the DA was granted one week before *R. slateri* was accorded Threatened Species status by the NSW Scientific Committee and that listing was opposed (as expected) by the Shoalhaven City Council. During this operation I went to photograph the property and was chased by an irate and screaming bulldozer driver who obviously did not want his photo taken. Later a dam was constructed, a caravan brought on to the site and a vineyard was laid out. All of this was finalised late in 2003 and since then there has been no activity whatsoever on the site, with weeds rapidly overtaking the vineyard and a general scene of neglect being obvious. As I am now (legally) unable to gain access to this property I am unable to guarantee the condition of *R. slateri*, or even check to see if the required protection in the form of a fence was ever constructed but at least that section has not been subject to development (so far).

Alan W Stephenson  
[affine@tpg.com.au](mailto:affine@tpg.com.au)

---

---

## Caalang Creek Project - A brief history

In 1987 a group of locals and combined community groups were successful in obtaining a \$5000 Bicentennial Local Government grant to begin the 'Robertson Village Re-Foresting Project'. This was the beginning of work and planting in the Caalang Creek Reserve which has been ongoing ever since.

Tree plantings started in Arbor Week 1988 and continued into 1989. Around 1000 trees were originally planted in the area to the north of the Community Centre by local citizens, sporting clubs and community groups. A variety of Eucalypt species and Blackwoods (*Acacia melanoxylon*) were chosen to provide a windbreak and canopy cover. Some of these plantings are now reaching maturity. The small pedestrian bridge which now spans the creek was constructed by the Lions Club.



1989

At the same time local interest in the unique flora and fauna in the Robertson area, spurred by an influx of 'new-comers' keen to help preserve this beautiful area, was growing. Information sources and data related to the local area was very limited. The Caalang Creek Project also needed an ongoing management structure. Many members who have joined the organisation in recent times may not know that the combination of these two factors was the catalyst for the formation of what is now REPS.

Interest in the project has waxed and waned over the years. Nevertheless, a small group of dedicated volunteers have continued to work in the area with the results of their efforts becoming more evident every year.

The frequent frosts and areas of imported fill adjacent to some areas of the creek proved to be major challenges. Notable achievements include the removal of large infestations of Pussy Willow (*Salix cinerea*) which once lined much of the creek banks and fringes of the small wetland area within the reserve. Other woody weeds such as Hawthorn and Privet have been brought under control but still require constant vigilance. In recent years Wingecarribee Council Bushcare staff have undertaken the responsibility of controlling blackberries and other woody weeds as well as undertaking maintenance between working-bees. This assistance has proved invaluable.

The canopy species are now providing sufficient cover for local rainforest species which are being planted with a greater chance of survival. Most pleasing is that the area is now regularly used by a variety of people and provides a pleasant link between sections of the village.



2013

Any revegetation project is by nature a long-term undertaking. Results can take years if not decades. This can at times lead to those involved becoming disillusioned, particularly in a society that seems to require most things instantly. However, to coin a phrase made famous by Paul Keating, the rewards are there for the 'true believers'.

The Caalang Creek Project will ultimately require a new generation of volunteers if, as a community, we want this invaluable asset to continue to evolve. Where they will come from remains to be seen. I'm hopeful that others will realise the benefits and joy that can come from observing something change and beautify over time.

Steve Douglas

---

---

## Poetry Corner

Edited by Peter Glass

### To commemorate ANZAC day 2015, 100yrs since our soldiers landed at Gallipoli.

The 1<sup>st</sup> World War Gallipoli campaign of our troops failed to achieve its objective. 7,600 of our troops were killed and 19,000 wounded. Told to evacuate Gallipoli on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1915, by the night of 20<sup>th</sup> December the entire force had been evacuated with only two casualties.

The ANZACS were amazed and unbelieving when told they must leave the peninsula. Some were angry, some turned to poetry. A sergeant wrote these lines of verse to capture the poignant hurt to those who were leaving behind their dead comrades. The poem was featured in *Eucryphia* last April and I thought it was worth repeating at this time.

Not only muffled in our tread  
To cheat the foe  
We fear to rouse our honoured dead  
To hear us go  
Sleep sound old friends, the keenest smart  
Which more than failure wounds the heart  
Is thus to leave you, thus to part

## FAREWELL

### DENIS WILSON

At the February meeting Denis was wished farewell from Robertson, having sold his property to move to the South Coast. Denis will be much missed but it is hoped that we will maintain contact. His contribution to the life of the village has been significant, with his notice "The Nature of Robertson" on the side of his car advertising his excellent blog of that name with its wonderful photos of plants and animals. The articles and photos that Denis has contributed to *Eucryphia* have been greatly appreciated.

Many thanks Denis. Best wishes.

### JOHN and ANNE STOWAR

John and Anne, who were foundation members of REPS 24 years ago, have left the district permanently to live on the South Coast. They took part in the 'REPS Rainforest Regeneration Project', fencing off part of their paddock and planting rainforest trees to link up two of their rainforest remnants. John's professional horticultural expertise was very helpful in 1995 when REPS produced the "Wingecarribee Tree Book". REPS wishes them the very best in their retirement and extends our gratitude for their support and companionship over the years.

**Welcome to new members Norman & Gail Hunt**

---

---

## HELP CARE FOR OUR NATURE RESERVE

1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month from 9:30am till noon. Please bring garden gloves. More volunteers would be greatly appreciated. Everyone is welcome.

Details: Helen Tranter 4885 1394 or  
NPWS in business hours: 4887 8253.

---

## CAALANG CREEK WORKING BEES

Last Saturday of each month - April 25<sup>th</sup> is Anzac Day this year so the working bees will be  
**May 2<sup>nd</sup> and May 30<sup>th</sup>**

9:30am onwards, subject to the weather.

Please come and join us for as long as you are able. Don't forget water, hat and gloves. We have tools available, but bring your own if you can. Caalang Creek volunteers meet at the footbridge in Hampden Park.

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

---

## Tuesday April 21 - *Backyard Bees* with Doug Purdie in Bowral

WHEN: Tuesday 21 April 2015 10.30am – Noon  
WHERE: Henrietta Rose Room, Bowral Library.  
Join the Friends of Wingecarribee Libraries for their April Event with Morning Tea and Guest Speaker.

Bookings - Bowral Library 4861 1167  
\$10 members \$15 non-members

Doug Purdie fell in love with bees in 2009 when reading about the battle they face world-wide due to widespread disease. Five years later he's a self-described "beevangelist" managing over 70 beehives on city rooftops, balconies, backyards and community gardens. Bees have a bad rap but they pollinate our food. Without them we'd have a major problem. In *Backyard Bees* Doug shows us that just about anyone can keep bees; they don't take a lot of time and by having a hive you are helping the planet. All you need is a bit of space. His book tells you the rest. Doug says "Just try it and you'll be hooked."

---

---

## REPS MEETINGS FOR 2015

Dates for your Diary:

Friday 10th April

Friday 12th June

Friday 14th August

Saturday October Walk - tba

Friday 13th November AGM

---

## Sunday April 12<sup>th</sup> Historic Car Day and Autumn Fair

Heritage Railway, Robertson Common

- The Fettle's Art prize entries will be on show in the Fettle's Shed gallery
  - Working vintage farm machinery display and dozens of beautiful vintage and classic cars to admire on the Common
  - Cockatoo Run tourist train to Moss Vale and return.
  - Ceremony to launch the relocated heritage rail signal
  - Station history display will be open
- 

## REPS MEMBERSHIP

Membership is from November to November and we are looking forward to another great year. If you are not yet a member, please consider becoming one.

Helen Tranter ph.4885 1394

---

## CONTACT REPS

Those who are interested in supporting our aims 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. For further information and subscriptions please contact:

President, Peter Glass on 4885 1921,  
Vice-President, David Mee on 4885 1483,  
or write to REPS at PO Box 3045, Robertson,  
NSW 2577.

---

Articles for *Eucryphia* may be sent to the editors, Allan Stiles and Sheila McInnes, at  
[stilesaljen@bigpond.com](mailto:stilesaljen@bigpond.com).

---

Visit the REPS website  
[www.reps.org.au](http://www.reps.org.au)

---

---