



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

PUBLIC MEETING

FRIDAY 14th October 7.30 pm

**Robertson Community Centre,
Caalong Street**

Speaker: Ray McGibbon

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS REPTILES

Ray will discuss how he got involved with reptiles, his experiences, and related history.

He will discuss:

- what types of reptiles are found in the southern highlands.
- each common species there.
- what to do if you see a snake on your property or while you are bush-walking .
- making your garden reptile and wildlife friendly.
- first aid for snake bites and what to do if you are bitten by a snake.
- his involvement in injured wildlife rehabilitation.



Dragon



Highlands Copperhead



Skink

Snake Safe Bandages, the new type of snake bite compression bandages, will be for sale.

ALL WELCOME

Supper and chat after talk

A gold coin donation would be appreciated

Rehabilitating birds of prey – Challenges, experiences and dreams for the future

by Dr Ellen Rasidi, REPS Friday, 12th August, at
the Robertson Community Centre at 7:30pm.

Report by David and Judith Mee

The presentation was to have been given by Peggy McDonald, but she was not able to be present, so Dr. Ellen Rasidi, a veterinarian and raptor expert, took her place and gave an enthusiastic illustrated talk on the subject. Both Peggy and Ellen are members of the association: Australian Raptor Care and Conservation Inc, an organisation founded by Peggy McDonald. Richard Woodhead (Woodie), Coordinator of Wildlife Rescue NSW, was in attendance to support Ellen.



The audience gathers

Ellen began by describing how and where she met Peggy McDonald. She said that she always had an interest in raptors and visited the world-renowned facility for raptors in Abu Dhabi, where she met Peggy. The facility includes a falcon hospital with, for each falcon, individual tiled rooms which can be hosed out. There is also a huge communal circular aviary for them to fly around, which is 200m in circumference and with a sand floor. This enables birds to engage in continuous flight without being impeded by walls as in a traditional aviary. Peggy has built something smaller but otherwise similar on her property in Fitzroy Falls. It is 12m in radius (approx 80m circumference).

The Association founded by Peggy was incorporated last year and has as its aims the expansion of raptor care and rehabilitation in Australia as well as the gathering and dissemination of knowledge. It attempts to study how rehabilitated raptors fare after release.

Referrals of birds needing care come from all over Australia. Ellen said that when injured or sick birds arrive at the centre they are given a full vet check-up, including an X-ray for possible bone fractures. Special attention is given to sight and hearing. Some birds will need re-hydrating.



The interior of Peggy's aviary at Fitzroy Falls

Under her heading of raptor care, rehabilitation and medicine, Ellen spoke about another famous institution, the Gabbert Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota in the USA. Here they do not have the space for large flight aviaries, so they attach a string line to the legs of the bird and let it have free flight out in the open, slowly reeling in the string to retrieve the bird.



Ellen during her presentation

Ellen then spoke about the details of the vet side of the management which is her field of expertise.

When a bird arrives at the centre a prompt vet intervention and triage needs to take place. This includes:

- A full physical examination
- Radiographs
- Blood testing
- An ophthalmic examination
- Cytology of the oral cavity and faeces.



Exterior of the aviary at Fitzroy Falls

The bird needs to be fed well, but it cannot be allowed to get too fat. It also needs to be able to stand on its prey while it rips food with its beak.



Ellen and Woody

Ellen then concentrated on orthopaedic cases, as many birds have broken bones, wings etc. She made the following points:

- Fixing breaks needs to be followed by physiotherapy.
- Intensive care units include cages with heat and light. Birds are progressively moved to larger cages as they get better. Standard sizes are 3x2x2m (too small for most eagles to stretch their wings fully), 4x3x2m, 4x4x3m, 6x4x3m, and 8x5x4m, the latter being the size recommended by the NPWS.
- Finally, the bird is released into the large aviary where the pre-release fitness level can be confirmed. This aviary is well drained and has a structure in the centre so

that birds cannot see the other side. This makes them more likely to fly right around and enables them to pick up speed – a peregrine falcon flies at around 60 kph. The big aviary includes perches and places to hide and also CCTV so that birds can be closely monitored. Typically eagles need a whole year in care before release. Finally, large doors high in the aviary walls can be opened to release the healthy and fit birds when they are ready.



Ellen showed some wonderful images of raptors both still and in flight, which are available for sale as prints.

<http://www.mkimages.com.au/fine-art-prints-for-sale/australian-raptor-limited-edition-prints/>

Finally, the session was opened for questions from the large and appreciative audience. A question was asked about what happens if the bird cannot be rehabilitated and the answer was that it was euthanased. This is NPWS policy, which also states that no animals for rehabilitation can be used for public display. As for funding for the vets, Ellen said that her employer allows her to treat wildlife for free, a very generous policy. A question was asked about what one should do when an injured bird is found. Ellen said to first put it in a suitably sized box, cover it with a towel or blanket, close the box and bring it to the centre.

Membership of Australian Raptor Care & Conservation Inc (ARCC) has a \$25 annual membership fee. More members are needed so that the association can get tax-deductibility status.

<http://www.australianraptorcareandconservation.com/>

After question time a formal vote of thanks was proposed by Bob McInnes and flowers were presented. A gift to the association was made by REPS and supported by the meeting. Further discussion continued over a supper of tea and cakes. It was an excellent night all round.

Photos by Bob McInnes and David Mee

Vale Denis Wilson



Denis was a very well-respected member of REPS who made a highly significant contribution to knowledge of local botany and wildlife. His passion for so many things, including birds and native orchids, was remarkable and this was communicated to many through his blog, *The Nature of Robertson*, a truly splendid achievement, a memento to his life. It may still be visited online at: <http://peonyden.blogspot.com.au/>

Since 2005 there have been over 466,000 visitors to this site and it is intended that it will continue to be available.



Wonga Pigeon

As a member of REPS his work has been greatly appreciated. Denis was active in the society and articles in *Eucryphia* have often been enhanced by his excellent photographs and words. In spite of ill health, at the last meeting he attended not long before his death, his interest in the topic discussed and his questions at the conclusion of the presentation demonstrated his undiminished enthusiasm.

Denis was a sociable person, enjoying the company of like-minded friends, often at one or other of the local coffee shops. The packed School of Arts for his funeral demonstrated the width of his circle of friends and admirers.



A local frog

It was a privilege to have known Denis and accompany him on walks in the bush to find and photograph plants and wildlife. To spend some time with him in the last week of his life, reminiscing and chatting about plants, birds, and many other matters of common interest, was special. His words then, "I am not afraid of dying", were a tribute to his courage.

Allan Stiles.



Tiger Orchid



Orange Blossom Orchid



Eucryphia moorei flower



Christmas Bells



Tree Violet in flower



Eucryphia moorei on Knight's Hill



Helicia glabriflora close-up of flowers



Flying Duck Orchid



Helicia glabriflora leaves, buds, and flowers

Photos by Denis Wilson

REPS floral tributes for the funeral of esteemed member, the late Denis Wilson

Article by David Mee

As Denis had passed away on the day of our last meeting, a minute's silence was observed in his memory. A funeral was arranged by his daughter Zoe and held at the School of Arts, with burial to take place at the Robertson Cemetery. REPS members were asked by Zoe if they could provide floral tributes to Denis. Denis himself had previously asked that flowers be left on his grave as "something for the birds to pick at".

REPS President, Peter Glass, asked Judith and me to assist and Peter turned up at our property with a boot full of flowers from his garden. We also had quite a few typical Robertson flowers to add, both native and exotic. In our business as flower growers, we have had ample opportunity to observe professional florists making casket top arrangements, especially Judith, and fortunately we had some spare materials to use to put one together. It starts with a light container of a suitable size to form a base, and then a good sized block of Oasis, which is a material much used by florists, being a sort of water holding plastic foam, which must be pre-soaked. The stems of flowers are inserted into this at the desired angle and length, and it will hold them and at the same time provide them with water to keep them fresh. However, in the finished arrangement, the Oasis should not be visible, just the flowers.



Judith took charge of the arrangement operation and her expert eye produced an excellent result. It started off with some long foliage and flowers to go either end of the arrangement and shorter groups of flowers and foliage for the sides. Symmetry is preserved. Some long yellow leucadendrons were used as well as native leather fern, banksia foliage and king proteas. In the centre was the main feature, a cluster of orange *Banksia ericifolia* and *Banksia spinulosa* flowers. These

were surrounded by pink king proteas, clusters of "limelight" yellow-green proteas and also yellow *Leucadendron* flowers. To enhance the arrangement, sprigs of *Philotheca* flowers (pink-white) were added, some pink flowered tea-tree (apple blossom *Leptospermum*), some flowers of *Sassafras doryphora*, for the scent, and a little *Eucryphia* foliage.



Peter Glass and Judith Mee with the flower arrangement

Although the *Protea* and *Leucadendron* flowers are not Australian native flowers but are South African in origin, they are closely related to their Australian *Proteaceae* cousins, which include banksias and waratahs. The Robertson climate suits them, being at a similar latitude and altitude and having a moist microclimate similar to that of their home in the Cape floral kingdom in South Africa. They are grown in many gardens in Robertson. All other flowers and foliage we used had a local origin, either on the sandstone surrounding Robertson (*Banksia*, *Philotheca*, and tea-tree) or on the basalt soil (*Sassafras* and *Eucryphia*). We hope that Denis would have approved. Neither waratahs nor his beloved peonies were in flower at the time.

Additional vases of Australian and South African flowers prepared by Peter and Lynn Glass and Lynette and Jack Skipper were placed around the casket in the School of Arts and helped to brighten the atmosphere of the typically wet and misty Robertson day. The final touch was added by a magnificent pot of native epiphytic orchids in flower, provided by Allan Stiles as a reminder of Denis's great love for and knowledge of Australian orchids.

REPS MEETINGS

Dates for your diary:

GUIDED TOUR OF THE CAALANG CREEK REVEGETATION SITE.

Saturday 15th October 2016 9.30 – 10.30 am

The tour will inspect the results of 25 years of revegetation activities. Meet at the Hampden Park footbridge at 9.20am. Call Peter Glass on 4885 1921 for further information. Bushcare volunteers work on this site on the last Saturday of each month, supported by REPS, Council's Bushcare Team, and the WSC Environment Levy.

Friday 11th November 2016 at 7.30pm

AGM and presentation by Alan Stephenson on Australian orchids.

Friday 9th December 2016 at 6.00pm

Christmas party at the home of Peter and Lyn Glass.

Friday 10th February 2017 at 7.30pm

Joe Stammers will speak about a Koala tracking project and the latest news on that.

LEON FULLER PRESENTATION at Fitzroy Falls

Saturday 8th October from 11.00am – 12.30pm

Leon, author of *Wollongong's Native Trees* (3rd edition with 12 reprints), will speak on the **Urban Biodiversity Illawarra Project**, an ambitious, web-based initiative to capture a lifetime's work to assist local people landscaping with Illawarra species.

For more information call 4887 7270.

OPEN GARDENS

Saturday 8th & Sunday 9th October

The Heritage Railway Station will be open with a great display of waratahs. Gallery open. Details and information on the Robertson Open Gardens are available at the CTC – Community Technology Centre. 9am to 4pm.

REPS MEMBERSHIP

Membership is from November to November and we are looking forward to another great year in 2016. If you are not yet a member, please consider becoming one. (Forms will be emailed prior to our November meeting)

Helen Tranter ph.4885 1394

HELP CARE FOR OUR NATURE RESERVE

1st 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

The last Saturday of every month at 9:30am onwards, subject to the weather.

October 29th November 26th

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.

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
PO Box 3045, Robertson 2577

This newsletter is named for the beautiful local tree, *Eucryphia moorei*, known as Pinkwood. Articles for *Eucryphia* may be sent to the editors, Allan Stiles and Sheila McInnes.

VISIT THE REPS WEBSITE

www.reps.org.au

*Disclaimer: The views expressed in Eucryphia are not necessarily the views of the Society.
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