



Eucryphia

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Robertson Environment Protection Society – to promote the protection and enhancement of the Robertson Environment

Next REPS Meeting
Friday 9th June at 7:30pm
at the Robertson Community Centre

A talk by Dr. John Bunt
A career in the sciences, unexpected twists
and circumstances and final concerns,

John Bunt is one of Australia's top marine scientists. One of the first to work with the Australian Antarctic Research Expedition after World War II (Macquarie Island and Mawson), and the first to dive beneath the Antarctic pack-ice, he went on to head the Rosenthal School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences in the United States and eventually the Australian Institute of Marine Science in Townsville.

An agricultural scientist by training, his extensive research has included studies on marine microbiology, primary production and the ecology of mangroves and coral reefs. You will be treated to a down-to-earth, personal story of interesting problems and extraordinary places.

All are welcome – please bring friends and family. A light supper will be provided. Entry with a gold coin donation.

2006 National Landcare Awards

REPS is a finalist at the 2006 National Landcare Awards.

There will be an Awards Dinner held on the 10th October during which the winners of each category will be announced.

REPS has been nominated in the “Bushcare Nature Conservation” category and Leon Hall and Sandy Morse will be representing REPS on this night.



A marine research vessel in the days of sail.

Upcoming Events

Fri. 9th June – A Talk by Dr. John Bunt, 7:30pm, Robertson Community Centre

Sat. 24th June – REPS Working Bee, 9:30am, Meet at Robertson Community Centre

Sat. 29th July – REPS Working Bee, 9:30am, Meet at Robertson Community Centre

Tues. 1st August – Groundwater Conservation by Dr Emmett O'Loughlin, 7:30pm CWA Hall Moss Vale

Sat. 26th August – REPS Working Bee, 9:30am, Meet at Robertson Community Centre

Nature and Society Discussion

Report by Jim Foran

REPS' 7 April regular meeting was most irregular. The meeting took the form of a forum to discuss David Tranter's book *Nature and Society (N&S)*. The author was present but, having had his say in the book, said very little in the forum.

The first forum panelist, Margaret Ralph, wondered whether *cooperation* – an important theme in *N&S* – was a fundamental property of human and other life. Others asked why sometimes members of human societies found it more difficult to work together than to pursue their own agendas, and whether cooperation is indeed more important for survival than competition: what are their relative values as survival strategies?

Tony Hill spoke next and eloquently, of *Nature and Society* as one scientist's Dreaming, a "love story, full of knowledge and wisdom and passion, but with a dollop of farce and the possibility that it will all end with tragedy, a familiar story but on a grand scale." For him, *N&S* gives us reasons to demand from those who deny climate change and environmental degradation and who worship the primacy of the economy that to justify their stance they must present their evidence for critical evaluation.

Jane Lemann focussed on corrugations in time, in particular the dangers in such time lags as the human population explosion, pests and weeds, greenhouse warming, genetic modification, and groundwater extraction.

Jonathan Persse provided the context for many of these issues, noting the tension between unity and harmony on the one hand and sovereignty and territorial ambition on the other. He asked what moderating influence might ease this tension: surely not *growth*, since sovereignty and cooperation are equally vulnerable to unbridled growth. Is *equity* the needed influence?

The forum asked the central (to us) question of the value of the human species. Why should we be concerned if, whether as the result of Armageddon or of environmental catastrophe, this one species were wiped out? Are we more important than Earth

itself? Should we be adapting to our environment or constraining our environment to adapt to us? Are we or are we not the gatekeepers, the stewards of the earth? Are the poverty of some and the wealth of others a question of territory? Do some have too much and other too little? Leon Hall asked why we are all so self-obsessed, why we aren't looking to other species for the answers – they are after all the survivors.

Thanks in equal measure to a valuable book, provocative panelists, a cheeky audience, and Jane Maxwell's delicious finger food, most participants rated the forum a roaring success.

The Mittagong Geebung by Denis Wilson

Persoonia glaucescens, (The "Mittagong Geebung") is growing along Tourist Road, just near one of the "test" bore sites for the Kangaloon Aquifer.

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife **Threatened Species List** classes this species as "Endangered". The website states: "The Mittagong Geebung's historical distribution places the northern and eastern limit at Couridjah (Thirlmere Lakes), the southern limit at Fitzroy Falls and the western limit at High Range. However, recent surveys have indicated that the species no longer extends to Fitzroy Falls or Kangaloon and that the present southern limit is near Berrima. The northern limit appears to have contracted a few kilometres south to Buxton."

Finally I have been able to take some photos of my own to demonstrate that the plant does still exist in Kangaloon. Unfortunately, this particular plant is more than "endangered", it is threatened, because of the proximity of the test bore, which is one of the proposed pumping stations for the proposal to drain the Kangaloon Aquifer.

The grey-green leaves of the small shrub at the base of this large Eucalypt are a give-away. The specific name of this *Persoonia* refers to its "glaucous" or grey-green colour. At a distance the shrub could easily be mistaken for a small Eucalypt, or else, *Hakea dactyloides*, which also grows there.

Readers of “Eucryphia” might be interested to check various entries in my “blog” “The Nature of Robertson”, in which I have published numerous articles about issues related to the proposal to drain the Kangaloon Aquifer. I have also written widely about birds and plants in the Robertson area. The address is: <http://www.peonyden.blogspot.com/>



Persoonia glaucescens

The “Mittagong Geebung” on Tourist Road, Mittagong.

Photo by Denis Wilson.

Shoalhaven Water Issues

by Leon Hall – REPS President

I have recently been appointed to the Shoalhaven Transfers Community Reference Group representing the Wingecarribee Bushcare and Landcare Network of which REPS is a member. This reference group has recently been expanded with two new representatives from the Southern Highlands; Councillor Jim Clark and me.

The NSW government has decided to not go ahead with raising the Tallowa dam wall at Kangaroo Valley but does want to get an extra 30 gegalitres each year with more inter catchment transfers from the Shoalhaven river, by changing their operating procedures.

Since April 2003, twenty five percent of Sydney's and Wollongong's water supply has come from the Shoalhaven catchment (Tallowa Dam).



Photo: Tallowa Dam

These water transfers happen when Sydney's overall dam levels drop below 60%. This has happened over three previous drought periods (since 1977), 1980-84, 1994-95 and 2003- current.

Water is pumped up the cliffs to the Wingecarribee Reservoir (via Fitzroy Falls Reservoir) and then sent, either through the Glenquarry Cut via a river run to the Nepean dam for further distribution, or is sent down the Wingecarribee river on a longer river run into the Wollondilly river and onto Warragamba dam.

These transfers deplete the Shoalhaven River of water affecting both the ecology and economy of the river. Under the new plan water will be pumped when overall dam levels are higher (e.g. 80% full) which will make the Shoalhaven river a regular mainstream supply of water for the Sydney area. As well as this the Sydney Catchment Authority plans to give a more regular and better environmental flow below Tallowa dam with its changed operating conditions.

Parts of the Southern Highlands river runs will be replaced by using pipes (1800mm diameter) to transfer the water (due to the high flow scenarios) or by a tunnel (this may be too expensive).

There are a number of issues relating to this plan. One major issue is the very high cost of pumping water up from the Shoalhaven catchment (large amounts of electricity used and greenhouse gas production). This may be justified in droughts but may be excessive when overall dam levels are good.

This change in inter-catchment transfer rules is just part of the 2006 Metropolitan Water Plan, another part being the "Kangaloon bore fields" project.

The water plan has many aspects to it and can be viewed at www.waterforlife.nsw.gov.au. Also of interest is the Sydney Catchment Authority Annual Report 2004-2005 which is available in a printed or CD version (phone SCA on 1300 722468).

For any queries about the Shoalhaven transfers please ring me on 4888 2222.

Are you aware?

Letter by Jane Lemann to Wingecaribee Landcare and Bushcare Network

"I am writing in my capacity as a community representative on the Wingecaribee Environment Committee and a volunteer member of the Mount Gibraltar Landcare and Bushcare, a member of the Network.

As such, I wish to bring to the attention of members some recent developments at the council. A majority of the Councillors and the staff have not been at the council long enough to know of the efforts that were made to secure, protect and manage the little that is left of our natural areas, and therefore, are not aware of the importance and vulnerability of the environmental protection structure under which we operate.

Many of our members will remember the Mount Gibraltar Reserve Management Committee (then) obtaining a grant for the council to employ a scientific bushcare officer for three years to guide our activities (Larry Melican). This was matched by the volunteer hours of labour of all the groups. Subsequently we all lobbied hard for the position to become permanent 'core business' to ensure that the natural areas would have ownership and guardianship for the long term (at least 50 years- not less) Bushcare is a long term concept. (This position was confirmed by General Manager David McGowan)

We all then campaigned hard for the Environment Levy (which now has two years left to run) in order to help the council support the extra activities necessary to effectively protect and restore the natural areas of the shire. This has provided the qualified bush regeneration team and the Biodiversity Strategy among other things.

Recently the Council has been preparing the council finances for a major development by reducing staff, internal restructuring and selling property. All members should be aware of and watch for the community consultation opportunity in May to comment upon the following:

The Council has been transferring 'core business' expenses to the Levy, e.g. noxious weed control and

track maintenance. This year the Council intends to transfer the Bushcare officer's salary and expenses to the Levy as well as the noxious weed control.

Implications to consider

The present officer (now called Natural Resources Supervisor) has a contract but there is the possibility in two years time when the Levy should be renewed that:

- a) the Council will not reapply to the Minister for the levy = loss of entire Bushcare division
- b) the application may fail = ditto

There is also the possibility that the present officer may leave and the job could be dropped or revised into something different from care of the natural areas and bushcare support (this is on top of the vulnerability of the temporary WOFE bush regeneration team) This would be a betrayal of trust in the council assurances of long term qualified support.

It therefore becomes quite easy for the Council to drop natural area management altogether, leaving volunteers unsupported and the enormous restoration work already achieved, neglected and likely to revert.

Also the council is proposing to sell community land, (2 x residential blocks are proposed from the Mount Gibraltar Reserve, both of which were purchased to be public open space) You are advised to look to the safety of your own reserves.

I wish to alert you to;
Study the budget papers and the LEP with great care when they are placed on display for community consultation in May and contribute your thoughts to the process.

We, the community, must ensure that our representatives value, protect and enhance what is left of our natural environment and its bio-diversity as a priority and for the long term".

Regards

Mrs Jane Lemann

Poetry Corner

Edited by Jonathan Persse

Trees and humans have a close relationship. Our ancestors sometimes worshipped trees, man has always used their timber for a multitude of purposes; we grow them, we exploit them, we conserve them, we love them.

The first poem "The Tree's Prayer" was found by Roy Freere on the dedication page of the field guide, "Trees and Shrubs of Nepal and the Himalayas" by A. and D. Storrs.

The second untitled poem was written out by my wife Georgina's grandmother on the inside of the cover of a book on country houses.

Please send a poem on the environment to:
Jonathan Persse, Sallyhill, Burrawang 2577.

Untitled

Pine bough, pine bark
Cone and yellow wood,
Drenched with forest fragrances
Found in solitude.
Filled with summer breezes,
Song of bird and bee
As you burn upon my hearth
Give them back to me.

Pine bough, pine bark
Yellow wood and cone,
Send your tongues and tangled flames
High against my stone.
Let me listen as I dream
Knowing that I hear
All the sounds the pine has heard
Listening through the year.

Anon.

THE TREE'S PRAYER

You who would pass by and raise your hand against me,
Listen before you harm me.

I am the heat of your hearth on the cold winter nights,
The friendly shade screening you from the summer sun;
And my fruits are refreshing draughts,
quenching your thirst as you journey on.

I am the beam that holds your house.
The board of your table,
The bed on which you lie
And the timber that builds your boat.

I am the handle of your hoe
And the door to your homestead,
The wood of your cradle
And the shell of your coffin.

I am the gift of God
And the friend of man.
You who pass by, listen to my prayer.....
Harm me not.

Anon. (translated from the Portuguese)



Peter Preier: "Big old Tree" - Drawing Pencil, 2000

Update on Blackberry Rust Release Report by Sandy Morse

In October, 2005 the Entomology Department of the CSIRO, Canberra released 8 new European rust fungus strains on private property along Caalang Creek, and along High Street, Robertson, for the biological control of blackberry. Monitoring of the rust spread was undertaken and infected leaf samples sent to the CSIRO in November, 2005 and March, 2006 with a visit from entomologists in February to inspect the sites.

Spread of the rust was found at both sites. Following is an extract from the March 2006 report “Release of new rust strains for the biological control in the Hawkesbury-Nepean region.” by Louise Morin & Ruth Aveyard, the Research Scientists from CSIRO.

“CSIRO visited both sites on 27th February, 2006; 4 months after releases were made. Climatic conditions during that period had been excellent for infection and development of rust epidemics (Table 2). Incident and severity of the rust disease was highest at the release site at Morse and D’hondt’s property (Fig.4). This was probably because the site is adjacent to the creek and thus consistently exposed to more favourable humid conditions for rust epidemics, compared to the High Street site.

*During this visit, another four sites in the Robertson area were also inspected for presence of rust symptoms (Fig.2). The blackberry rust *Phragmidium violaceum* was found at all inspected sites. This indicated that population of the rust fungus already exists in the region, probably as a result of the illegal introduction in 1984. It is unlikely that the rust symptoms seen at these sites was caused by the new strains that we released at Morse and D’hondt’s property and High Street sites because it is unlikely that they have spread that far in such a relative short period of time.”*

The rust is dormant over winter and further monitoring will be undertaken in spring to determine if the rust re-activates on any new blackberry growth.

If you would like a copy of the full report please contact Sandy Morse on 4885-1905.

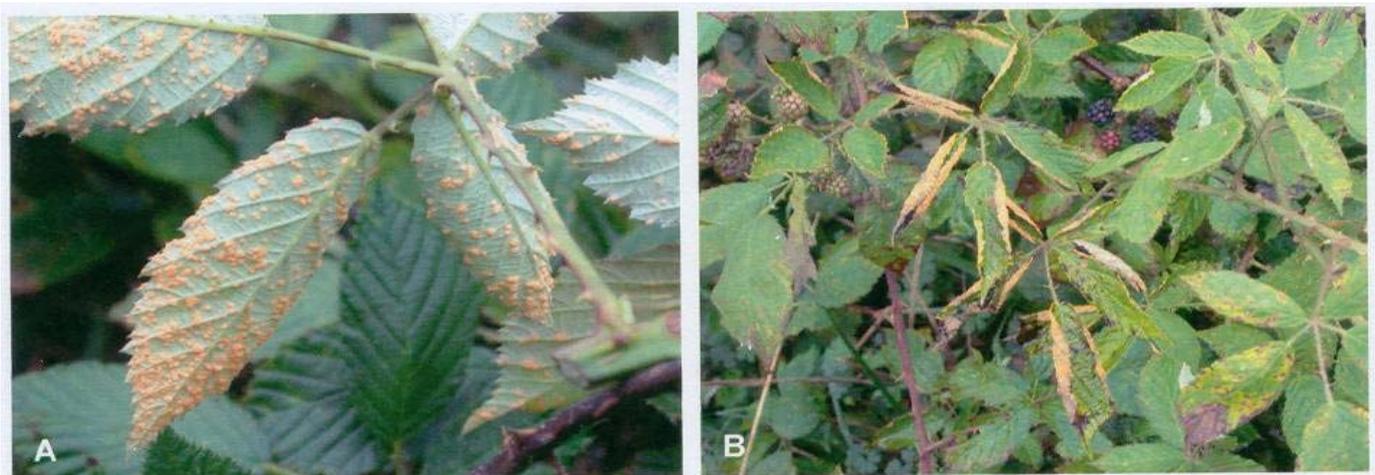


Figure 4. Symptoms of the blackberry rust fungus observed on plants at the release site on Sandy Morse and Paul D’hondt’s property along side Caalong Creek, Robertson, in February 2006.



Engineering Talks

Thursday 15th June 6:00pm

Local members of Engineers Australia regularly meet for dinner meetings with interesting guest speakers. These meetings are now open to the public.

The next talk is on "Hot Dry Rock Electricity" with Dr Prame Chopra, Director of Geodynamics at the Department of Earth and Marine Sciences at the ANU.

This meeting will be held at the Mineral Springs Room at Mittagong RSL. The entrance fee of \$25 includes a 2-course dinner.

Please register with Dr Tom Romberg 4861 2535.

Groundwater Conservation

Tuesday 1st August 7:30pm

CWA Hall Moss Vale

A NPA Talk on Groundwater Conservation by Dr Emmett O'Loughlin is open to the public with gold coin donation.

Emmett represented NPA and REPS at the Mining Wardens' Enquiry on the renewal of leases for mining peat in Wingecarribee Swamp about 10 years ago. He is one of Australia's leading catchment hydrologists.

Next REPS Working Bee

Saturday 24th June from 9:30am-noon

A big thank you from REPS to Transgrid who recently donated some large piles of mulch which they got from chipping prunings taken from under the large power lines.

One pile was dumped at Pinkwood Park and the others at Hampden Park. This mulch will be of great use at the parks. We also need helpers to continue spreading the mulch. Note that we hold a working bee on the last Saturday of each month. Please contact Sandy Morse (48851905) or Leon Hall (48882222) for more details.

Welcome new REPS Members

A warm welcome to Mike and Barbara Meldrum, new members of REPS.

Caalang Creek Rehabilitation

Extensive plantings have taken place adjacent and along Caalang Creek from the Community Centre east to the footbridge. On the last Saturday in January areas were prepared for commencement of planting in February. Some very interesting items turned up amongst the rubble uncovered. One is an old soil aerating roller thought to have been used for the original Bowling Club green.

On February 25th 17 REPS members and family, as well as some members of the Robertson Ratepayers Association arrived throughout the morning to help with planting which was completed in March and April – around 180 plants in all! *Callistemons*, *Melaleucas*, *Leptospermums*, *Eucryphias Doryphoras*, *Acacias* and *Lomandras* are the species. Well done and thanks to all those who contributed, including Baby Guymer, Tas Engel, Murray Hall and Radoo!

What is required now is maintenance! To ensure the ongoing survival of the plants, and to not dissipate all of the precious labour hours contributed, weeding, mulching and checking on plastic sleeves needs to be ongoing with the winter, early spring months a good time to do this. There is more planting of grasses and sedges to be done in November. Just an hour of your time would be most helpful on either or all of the last Saturday of each month - June 24th, July 29th, August 26th, September 30th, October 28th and November 25th. Please contact Sandy Morse on 4885-1905.

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 – Jill Keft
PO Box 45, Robertson NSW 2577

or President – Leon Hall on 4888 2222

or Editor – Lyndon Stanley on 4885 1322