



# *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](http://www.reps.org.au)

## **PUBLIC MEETING**

**FRIDAY 14<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2022 7.30PM**

**CTC, HODDLE STREET, ROBERTSON**

**FELICITY STURGISS**

**will speak about the Fitzroy Falls Spiny Crayfish**



***Euastacus dharawalus* – The Fitzroy Falls Spiny Crayfish Photo: Rob McCormack**

Acknowledgement to the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services as the owner.

**ALL WELCOME**

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Felicity is a Senior Land Services Officer with South East Local Land Services. She is the project manager for the 'Securing the future of the Critically Endangered Fitzroy Falls Spiny Crayfish' project supported by the Australian government's National Landcare Program. She has extensive on-ground experience and has managed a number of natural resource management, threatened species and biodiversity projects over the last 20 years. Felicity has a BA Sc with media and bush regeneration qualifications. She has lived and worked throughout Australia in her early career spending the last 13 years in Braidwood working with Landcare, Southern Rivers CMA and Local Land Services.



These days her passion and expertise are predominantly focussed on connecting and collaborating with people of diverse values, expertise and ambitions to engender long-term vision and action for environmental systems. Felicity says: 'It's challenging work that brings me real optimism and joy. Coordinating the efforts of passionate, capable people, alongside working with land managers to design systems that support

agricultural productivity and environmental security is a real privilege'. 'You really need everyone on board to make it work and in my experience most people are keen and capable which is where I get my optimism'.

Felicity will be joined by Sarah O'Hea Miller who is a passionate and articulate PhD candidate at the University of Wollongong. Sarah is investigating the key threatening process impacting the Fitzroy Falls Spiny Crayfish *Euastacus dharawalus* as part the Local Land Services project. She has spent considerable time observing, recording and analysing *E. dharawalus* in Wildes Meadow Creek deducing some key insights she is keen to share with us.



Finding a crayfish in its habitat. Photo by Felicity Sturgiss.



Crayfish with tracker - photo by Sarah O'Hea Miller

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## REPS MEETING FRIDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2022

Report of talk presented by  
Nic van Oudtshoorn, ARPS

### Preliminary notices

Before introducing our guest presenter, President Peter Glass called for a minute's silence in memory of the late David Tranter OAM, who was one of the founding members of REPS. Peter drew the audience's attention to the fine tribute to David by Bob McInnes in the August edition of *Eucryphia*, and informed the meeting that the REPS committee was considering a more lasting tribute that might be placed among the Waratahs planted and nurtured by David for so many years in the Robertson Railway precinct.

The other notice was an invitation issued by Ted Smith to attend the meeting of the Royal Society to be held on the following Thursday. Two prestigious speakers were scheduled to speak on the topic of Lake George and the Hawkesbury.

### “MARVELS AND MONSTERS IN THE BACKYARD GARDEN”



Peter then introduced our guest speaker, retired photojournalist Nic van Oudtshoorn, ARPS (Associate of the Royal Photographic Society - as previously explained in the August edition of *Eucryphia*, this is one of the oldest and most prestigious photographic organisations in the world). Nic's work has been published in many books, newspapers and magazines around the world, and has been used in TV documentaries including those of David Attenborough and National Geographic. He now teaches macro photography at Wollongong WEA and other community colleges.

Nic then proceeded to demonstrate how aptly his brilliant close-up photography illustrated

the title of his presentation, which opened up a whole new world that is barely visible to the naked eye. Tiny wasps were shown in close-up to have distinct personalities and several resourceful ways of caring for their young, while others demonstrated some less-than endearing habits such as injecting their eggs into the live bodies of aphids; the intricate patterns and colours of butterfly wings were highlighted in all their beauty; and apparently defenceless worms demonstrated that they could still get the better of attacking bull-ants by secreting a sticky substance which results in their would-be predators becoming covered in mud and giving up the attack.



Your reporter has to admit that, like the rest of the audience, she found the visual images so enthralling that she was able to make notes of only a fraction of the stream of detailed knowledge that Nic shared with us while showing the photographs and video footage.



A few more highlights that she did manage to make some notes on included:

- Video footage of pond life with images of a beetle that had eggs glued to his back by the female, which will stay there securely until they hatch.
- Footage of mud wasps cutting up paralysed spiders to feed to their larvae.

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Paralysing the spiders keeps them alive and therefore fresh until they are eaten. Since the adult wasps cannot digest solid food – only liquids – the larvae masticate the spider fragments then feed the nutrients back to the adults in liquid form.

- Blind hover-fly larvae eating aphids.
- Close-up images of wolf spiders and net-casting spiders.
- Hermaphrodite snails which shoot darts carrying their eggs into each other's genitals.

Nic's wife, Daphne, is also a talented photographer. Nic showed some of her video footage of a Monarch butterfly larva feeding, spinning its own cocoon for its chrysalis, and finally hatching.

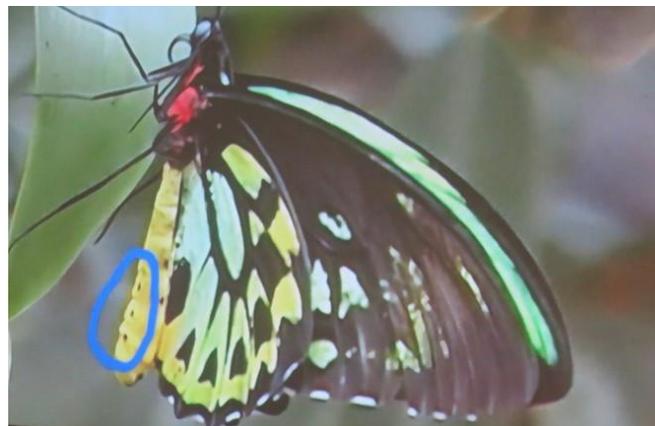


The presentation was followed by several questions from the appreciative audience. In response to a question about what is required to be able to produce results like the ones we had just viewed, Nic's response was: "patience, and some high-end equipment". It was clear to all those present that a high degree of talent was also required. It was indeed a privilege to have been a member of the audience that evening.

**Post Script:** One more bit I did manage to make a note of:

You may remember the close-up photograph of a paper wasp with a drop of water in her mouth in the August edition of *Eucryphia*, together with the promise that the reason she was carrying this drop of water would be revealed at the meeting during Nic's talk. Well, just in case you had a rare

moment of inattention, or you were not able to attend the meeting, the answer is that she fanned it with her wings to create a form of air conditioning, to keep her eggs and larvae at an even temperature – another one of the many backyard marvels we were treated to at the meeting.



Peter Glass thanking Nic van Oudtshoorn

Report by Judith Mee  
Photographs by David Mee

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## OFFSETTING OUR THINKING

You would think that laws protecting critically endangered rainforest would be a straightforward and unambiguous process. If it were only that simple. To give you some idea of how convoluted and complicated such a seemingly simple process can become needs some explanation. So here's my attempt. There will be some annoying acronyms to save space.

Under the Constitution, the Commonwealth's jurisdictional power to make laws directly dealing with the environment is a grey area. Having no direct power, it tries to fit it within other powers and various conventions and treaties and consequentially, any laws it makes relating to the environment are potentially exposed to challenge. The states are well aware of this and that they have the upper hand.

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) is the flagship Commonwealth environmental legislation. Under this Act, it is a criminal offence punishable by severe penalties to take any action that has a significant impact on threatened species or threatened ecological communities, such as the Robertson rainforest. This sounds clear enough but there is the fine print to consider and this is where the real power of state law exerts its influence. The relevant NSW legislation is the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act and under that Act the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme (BOS) is established. Importantly, the Robertson rainforest is listed as a threatened ecological community in a Schedule to the Act.

You can get away with having lots of "significant impact" if you can hide under the warm cloak of the BOS. This plays a key role in the now updated 2015 Assessment Bilateral Agreement between the NSW and Australian governments and essentially allows "offsetting" any impact on an endangered species or ecological community. This is achieved by either paying into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund (pay to cut down a tree offset), getting a credit by, for example, planting a tree somewhere else (little tree for a very old tree offset) or trading plant community types (I'll show you mine if you show me yours offset).

Although the Australian government has to affix its stamp of approval to certain offset proposals, the method of determining ecological

impact is the NSW Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) as endorsed by the NSW BOS - so really determined at the state level and the Australian Government, having agreed to the BAM method, is truly only a rubber stamp. For matters not covered by NSW conditions the Commonwealth has produced a 22 page environmental offsets policy guide using a balance sheet approach to estimate impacts and offsets for threatened species and ecological communities even though there is no mention of the word "offsets" in the EPBC Act. For NSW conditions the BAM assessment takes precedence. So, "offsets" has become a favourite word at both levels of government.

The BAM process is a treasure trove for bureaucrats. There are volumes of instructional guides and rules to follow and the task of applying those falls largely on local government. The NSW BOS Local Government Resource manual runs to 51 pages. Pity the poor officer assigned that task.

There may be a place for offsets to prevent unbridled land clearing but pretending that offsets help preserve a critically endangered environment is laughable. The fact remains that the unique Robertson rainforest is classified as being critically endangered and is recognised as such in both the Commonwealth and State legislation. It is difficult to comprehend how one can offset the destruction of an irreplaceable ecological community.

More generally, there must be sufficient land available for an offset and this is not the case as the NSW Auditor-General has recently found in a report pointing out that the offset scheme has no strategy or safeguards. To quote from the report, "Biodiversity gains made through the scheme will not be sufficient to offset losses resulting from development". The difficulties facing governments when balancing the pressures for more housing and infrastructure development against the need to retain our natural environment are well recognised but sadly, offsets do not equal preservation.

There is offset nibbling at the edges of our rainforest and the threat of a big bite remains so let's keep advocating for the secure protection of our environment. The town might not be quite the same if it lost the Big Potato, but it certainly wouldn't be Robertson without the Robertson rainforest.

Mark Turner

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## ROBERTSON SCHOOL ANNIVERSARY

Peter Glass presented our rainforest book and map to the Robertson School Principal, Gordon Parrish, on the occasion of the 150th Anniversary Fair on 24 September.



Gordon Parrish and Peter Glass. Photo by Mark Turner

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## PRESENTATION TO KIRSTEN SCHWETH



Peter Glass, Kirsten Schweth and David Mee  
Photo by Mark Turner

Peter Glass, Mark Turner and David Mee visited Kirsten Schweth at her home on 6<sup>th</sup> August, where she was presented with a donation from REPS to help in support of her work for injured wildlife. It was also in appreciation for accommodating John Marsh on his visit to Robertson for his wonderful talk on dingos.

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## NATIVE PLANT CONFERENCE VISIT

Some of the members of the Australian Native Plant Society Association who attended a conference at Kiama and visited the Robertson Rainforest Reserve as part of the event. Peter Glass and David Mee met three busloads of visitors (2 on Wednesday and 1 on Friday) and David

accompanied three groups of about 25 people around the reserve walk. He gave a short talk on the rainforest as an introduction and then tried to answer questions on the way through. David gave a similar talk on Wednesday at the Nursery to the group that went straight to the reserve and did the walk by themselves.



Some of the visitors at the Nature Reserve  
Photo by David Mee

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## VALE JONATHAN PERSSE (1934-2022)

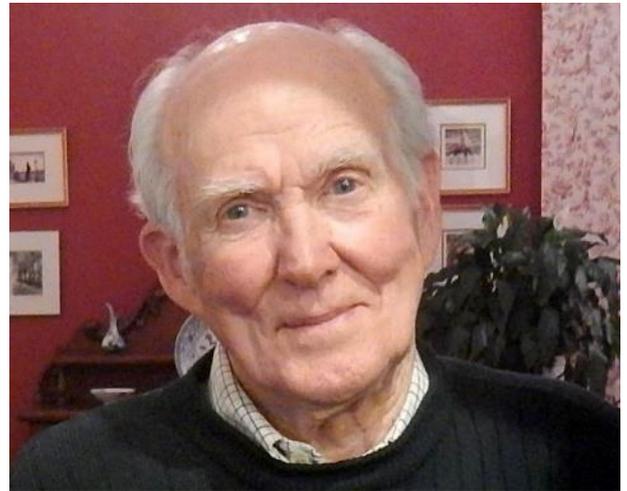


Photo by Bob McInnes

After a long and distinguished career as a teacher at The King's School, Parramatta, Jonathan and his wife, Georgina, who was once the secretary of REPS, settled near Burrawang and became keen supporters of this organisation, Jonathan initiating the *Poetry Page* in *Eucryphia*.

Bushwalks with like-minded souls were a joyous experience, sharing a deep appreciation of the wonders of nature.

In recent years he researched diligently and wrote books on Australian poets, particularly David Campbell.

They have lately been living in Sydney but retained a keen interest in our district.

Jonathan will be greatly missed by his many friends.

Allan Stiles

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**Poetry Corner**  
From member Mark Turner  
*The Claw – the tale of the Spiny Crayfish*

My word! Spielberg said  
What a wonderful claw  
You could be famous  
No need to be poor

That was the start  
Of my career as a star  
With a claw in the script  
I'm bound to go far

I'm very much bigger  
When up on the screen  
They made me an alien  
Both scary and mean

Who am I kidding? \*  
That was a dream  
Just wishful thinking  
I live in a stream

My home is the creeks  
I share with the Yabby  
There is quite a difference  
A Yabby's quite crabby

In case you do find me  
Magurrung's my name  
I'm not for eating  
But the Yabby's fair game

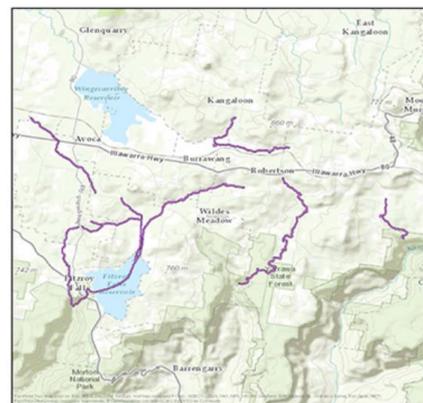
I'll have a long life  
If you leave me alone  
I dig in the mud  
And have a pet stone

I'm one of those species  
That's protected by law  
If I'm not here tomorrow  
Say farewell to the Claw

*Mark Turner 2022*



The Fitzroy Falls Spiny Crayfish – *Euastacus dharawalus*



Creeks possibly in the range

\* "*whom am I kidding*" is correct but sounds so wrong and who would argue with a crayfish?

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## FUTURE PUBLIC MEETINGS

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
and  
**PRESENTATION BY DAVID MEE**

The Flinders Ranges in South Australia is one place that Judith and I have always wanted to visit, and an opportunity came up to make a quick trip in September 2022. Flying to Adelaide, the next morning we met our guide complete with 4 wheel drive vehicle, who had our accommodation bookings and meals all organized, and we spent the following 4 days touring a very wonderful part of Australia. We are pleased to be able to show some of our photographs and relate the story about the discovery by Matthew Flinders, the geology, the wild flowers, the native animals including birds, reptiles and ruins, of this magnificent piece of Australia. Great lessons to be learnt about nature conservation. From the air, seeing Lake Eyre (Kati Thanda) full of water is amazing.



Wilpena Pound – photo by David Mee

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### HELP CARE FOR OUR NATURE RESERVE

1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month from 9:30am-noon. Meet at the South Street Carpark. Please bring garden gloves. More volunteers would be greatly appreciated. Everyone is welcome. It is not necessary to stay for the full time.

Please contact  
[Melinda.Norton@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Melinda.Norton@environment.nsw.gov.au)  
at NPWS about the next working bee.

## 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. Further info and subscriptions please contact:

President – Peter Glass – 4885 1921  
Vice-President – David Mee – 4885 1483  
PO Box 3045, Robertson 2577

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### REPS MEMBERSHIP

Membership is from November to November. If you are not yet a member, please consider becoming one. The committee is seeking as much support as possible.

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### VISIT THE REPS WEBSITE

[www.reps.org.au](http://www.reps.org.au)

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This newsletter is printed at the CTC, Robertson, and named for the beautiful local rainforest tree, *Eucryphia moorei*, known as Pinkwood or Plumwood. It was named in honour of the botanist and one-time director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Sydney, Charles Moore (1820-1905). The REPS logo is based on its leaves.

Readers who wish to receive this newsletter as an attachment to an email should contact the editor.

Articles for *Eucryphia* may be sent to the editor, Allan Stiles, at [eucryphia@reps.org.au](mailto:eucryphia@reps.org.au)

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

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### WARATAH WEEKEND

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October  
9am – 3pm  
at the Robertson Railway Station

Waratah flowers, plants and seeds,  
BBQ, coffee, and art exhibition

<https://www.robertsonrailway.org.au/>