

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

Well, here we are in 2022 and what has changed? We were hoping that this year would be better than last year but Covid is still with us and although we aren't officially in lockdown it still feels like it. This must be the wettest summer we've ever experienced here in the Blue Mountains, with rain and low temperatures every day. So we don't get out much! Pinerolo cottage is still quite busy with Airbnb bookings and when we get a new booking I always ask if the guests are fully vaxxed. Fortunately they all are.

Because of Covid I cancelled one-day courses. Watch this space for news of 2022 events. As well as picture book courses I expect to be continuing the Westwords/Pinerolo Illustrators in Residence program. This is particularly inspiring for illustrators and enormously satisfying for me when I see them doing well.

LEIGH HOBBS

It was a huge disappointment but a sensible decision to cancel Leigh Hobbs' visit to the Blue Mountains. We had already generated interest in schools and bookshops but schools especially are still nervous about large events. Leigh said he'll be happy to come later this year, so we can celebrate Horrible Harriet's 20th birthday.

SOCIETY OF WOMEN WRITERS MEMBERS' BOOK AWARDS

Every second year, NSW members of the SWW are invited to submit books published over the previous two years. Separate awards are given for fiction, non-fiction, poetry and children's books. Two Children's Book Awards are given – one for a book for younger readers, and one for an adolescent/young adult book. I was honoured to be invited to judge the children's category and of course I accepted.

The next SWW Book Awards for NSW Members will be held this year, for books published between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2022. Entries open in March and I look forward to receiving books from the society.

CBCA MERCHANDISE

The Children's Book Council of Australia are doing some amazing things. The 2022 merchandise, including the Yearly Planner, is stunning and very collectable, so I recommend you go to the cbca estore to get some before it all runs out. Go there as well to check out the Notables, as follows.

CBCA BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Because this is such an important month in the CBCA calendar I've devoted a lot of space to it. Announced on Night of the Notables, 22/02/22 was the impressive list of **CBCA NOTABLE BOOKS — TWO'S DAY!** This is the list of the top books entered for this year's awards. Go to the website: cbca.org.au or utube and look at the entertaining videos of Australia's authors and illustrators all featuring the number 2. What fun!

There's an amazing total of 553 entries for this year's awards: Older Readers: 62, Younger Readers: 129, Early Childhood: 111, Picture Book: 179, Eve Pownall: 72.

The Notables is a very exciting list, diverse and representative of the best of last year. Inevitably some favourites might not have made it. I am particularly pleased though that Martina Heiduczek's picture book *What Do You Call Your Grandma?* is Notable in the Early Childhood Category. She also illustrated the YR novel *Rabbit, Soldier, Angel, Thief*. I'm also very pleased that Max Hamilton's picture book *When the Waterhole Dries Up* is Notable in the Early Childhood Category.

I'm very proud of both these illustrators. Martina won the New England Writers Centre Illustration prize. Her prize was a creative weekend at Pinerolo. That resulted in her first picture book written by Glenda Millard and she's going extremely well. Max Hamilton was an Illustrator in Residence here at Pinerolo. She went on to illustrate picture books, culminating with this one. Congratulations to them both.

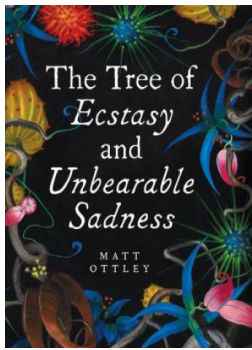
It was also fabulous to see local creators on the Notables list. Congratulations to Steven Herrick, Toby Riddle, Emily Rodda, Penny Jaye and Freya Blackwood.

AGM CBCA BLUE MOUNTAINS SUB BRANCH

This important meeting will be held at 2pm on Saturday 26 February at 46 Sayers St, Lawson. Our president Sheryl Cootes was a judge for the Eve Pownall category and will talk about the process and the books. **All welcome** — but please ring Sheryl 0416305135. Full vaccination required.

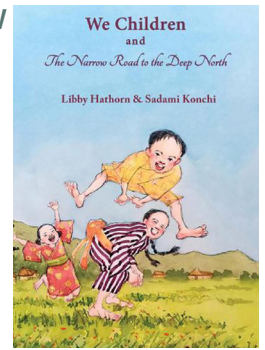
MARGARET WILD NOMINATION

It's exciting that IBBY has announced that Margaret Wild has been nominated and is on the shortlist for the **Hans Christian Andersen Award**. This is a prestigious international award and it will be announced on Monday 21 March at the Bologna International Children's Book Fair. It's wonderful that Margaret is getting this international recognition. Congratulations to her.



THE TREE OF ECSTASY AND UNBEARABLE SADNESS by Matt Ottley. (Dirt Lane Press). Words almost fail me in my recommendation of this magnificent book. It's a masterpiece. It's about a boy's experience of psychosis, with mental illness represented as a fantastic tree. Its flowers are ecstasy and its fruit is unbearable sadness. It's based on Matt Ottley's own experience, with the drawings and paintings taking readers through the boy's early discovery of his strangeness, his surrender to the disease, the ensuing psychotic journey, and eventual self-acceptance. A CD of a full orchestral score composed by Matt Ottley accompanies the book. Highly recommended for older readers.

WE CHILDREN and THE NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH by Libby Hathorn & Sadami Konchi (Interactive Publications). This beautiful book is an introduction to Haiku and the famous Japanese poet Basho. Libby and Sadami acknowledge the Australia Council for funding their trip to Japan. Their journey resulted in this beautifully written and illustrated picture book, engaging readers with the Japanese children and introducing haiku. The text is moving and involving and the watercolour illustrations are gentle and expressive. Special mention of the endpapers, which at the front are a stunning painting of the Japanese landscape and at the back, the same scene with examples of haiku. Highly recommended for all ages.



NEW PICTURE BOOKS

The two above are my featured books because they deserve special attention but here are the others I received from publishers — all special in themselves.

BIG BOSS by Dianne Bates & Patricia Ward (Little Pink Dog). During the night he's boss of the night monsters but in the morning he discovers who really is boss. Intriguing and very colourful illustrations.

BOSS OF YOUR OWN BODY by Byll & Beth Stephen & Simon Howe (ABC). Colourful and energetic illustrations support this simple but effective message of empowerment.

CRANKY FRANKIE and THE GREAT BARRIER THIEF by Suzie Starfish (Little Pink Dog). Two very topical books about saving our environment. Entertaining text and illustrations but serious message.

DOGS IN DISGUISE by Peter Bently & John Bond (Harper Collins). The text and illustrations are clever, witty and very funny, combined in a book that will entertain and enthrall young readers.

THE DUNGIIRR BROTHERS AND THE CARING SONG OF THE WHALE by Aunty Shaa Smith & Yandaarra (A & U). A wonderful book to connect readers with a unique story from the Gumbaynggirr people on the NSW coast. Beautifully illustrated with a mix of photos and paintings.

FEELING BLUE by Trevor Todd & Mark Eatwell (Interactive Publications). Don't fret about the things you haven't got. Rather be thankful for what you have. This message is simply and evocatively put and illustrated with stunning photographs.

LITTLE NIC'S BIG WORLD by Nic Naitanui & Fatima Anaya (A & U). This entertaining story, with the excitement of the school fete acknowledges our multicultural society in simple playful text and colourful illustrations.

THE LOVE THAT GREW by Sarah Ayoub & Mimi Purnell (Harper Collins). A mother's love expands with each new child. This tender rhyming story is illustrated with appealing pastels.

MRS KOALA'S BEAUTY PARLOUR by Catherine Jinks & Tania McCartney (Working Title Press). A hilarious count down to the end of a busy day in a beauty parlour. The illustrations extend the humour and add to the chaos. Entertaining and recommended.

100 WATERMELONS by Trevor Todd & Steve Page (Interactive Publications). This chaotic story of runaway watermelons with its equally chaotic colourful illustrations will entertain readers again and again.

OUCH! TALES OF GRAVITY by Kate Simpson & Andy Hardiman (A & U). From the apples falling down on the endpapers to the bright pages, this is an entertaining introduction to gravity. Very useful fact pages added.

OUR COUNTRY: ANCIENT WONDERS by Mark Greenwood & Frané Lessac (Walker). This spectacular book invites several readings, on different levels. It reveals many of the wonders of our country with striking illustrations, accompanied by a timeline and a glossary.

THE SECRET OF SAPLING GREEN by Penelope Pratley (EK). Unusual, believable and original — about saving of a school playground tree. Engaging illustrations.

A SQUIGGLY LINE by Robert Vescio & Kathy Creamer (Little Pink Dog). Inspiration to draw and produce a picture is very simply conveyed but it will involve young readers from the front to the back endpapers. Very cute.

THAT CAT by Jacqueline Harvey & Kate Isobel Scott (Puffin). As it says on the back cover 'purrfect for the whole family'. A fun introduction, in simple rhyming text and energetic, colourful illustrations, to all kinds of cats.

THIS IS MY DAD by Dimity Powell & Nicky Johnston (EK). A unique and touching way to deal with having a single parent during Show and Tell. Pastel illustrations echo the mood.

WHEN YOU'RE OLDER by Sofie Laguna & Judy Watson (A & U). Heartfelt and tender text shares a boy's dreams of adventures with his baby brother when he's older. Stunning illustrations. Recommended.

FINALLY

I hope you've enjoyed this newsletter. Feel free to pass it on to others. Thank you. Regards Margaret Hamilton AM