

Wolli Creek Update

PO Box 270, Earlwood NSW 2206

MARCH 2003

Pathfinders propose alternative Wolli Valley cycleway route

HOPEFUL NEWS ON THE WILDLIFE FRONT

SINCE last September's *Update* interested WCPS and Bicycle NSW members, calling themselves the Wolli Pathfinders, have produced a significant document on the issues involved with creating this cycleway. It sets out in an even-handed way the problems facing cyclists who want a cycle-adapted route through the valley, and conservationists who want to conserve the creek and its banks from further degradation.

The document, which details an effective alternative to the RTA's proposed route alongside (and over) Wolli Creek, is called *Bikes, Bush and Bitumen* and is available at <http://www.cat.org.au/maffew/pathfinders/>. If you cannot access the internet and would like to see a copy, write to the Secretary, WCPS, PO Box 270, Earlwood 2207.

Reaching agreement on a good alternative route has been a long process involving much discussion of different viewpoints. Some cyclists fear being squeezed out between space-hungry cars and the drive to retain areas of conservation importance. They need our support to ensure that a good cycleway does result, though not at the expense of the creek!

The document has already been circulated to cyclist groups and to member organisations of the Nature Conservation Council. It has also been sent to the Minister for Roads with the request that he require that the RTA conduct an engineering feasibility study of the alternative route to at least the level of detail undertaken for the RTA's creekline route. The letter may be followed up by a delegation to the incoming RTA minister after the election – if you are interested to be involved in this please advise Peter Stevens on 9554 3176.

Long-nosed bandicoot *Perameles nasuta*

Evidence bandicoots have returned

National Parks and Wildlife Service naturalists were recently astounded to discover a small colony of long-nosed bandicoots living in the backyards of shops fronting New Canterbury Road, Dulwich Hill. The bandicoot, a marsupial which preys on beetles, spiders, worms and other small invertebrates was once a familiar part of Sydney's wildlife, but, in the last 30 years, numbers have crashed to the point where special efforts have been made to preserve colonies on North Head and elsewhere. Bandicoots are especially vulnerable to foxes and dogs.

It now seems likely that the Dulwich Hill bandicoots are an offshoot of a small population which survived urbanisation in the seldom used goods rail corridor linking Lilyfield to the Bankstown line. An appeal for Dulwich Hill residents to report signs of bandicoots has resulted in further sightings and other signs of bandicoot activity.

Recently too, possible signs of bandicoot activity have been found in the Wolli Valley near Jackson Place and at Turrella Reserve. These include diggings similar to the characteristic conical holes bandicoots make while unearthing worms and beetles, and some droppings which have been given to the NPWS for analysis. If you think you might have evidence of bandicoots, please ring Gavin on 9567 8502.

Cabbage-tree palm rediscovered in Wolli and Bardwell creek valleys

In 1987, the Society published Les Robinson's *Trees of Wolli Creek*. In the back we gave "Special honorary mention" to the cabbage-tree palm (*Livistonia australis*) "unmistakable were it not extinct in the valley". But the palm is back and natural processes are certainly responsible! Some months ago, a few seedlings were found by bush regenerators working in the Bardwell Valley. Now a palm about two metres high has been found in a seldom visited part of Girrahween Park.

The black fruits of the palm are a favourite food of various native fruit pigeons, including top-knot pigeons, which have been observed migrating through the valley in increasing numbers. The pigeons have probably regurgitated seeds from fruit collected just south of Sydney.

A win seems likely on the cable bridge issue

Transgrid are taking the new cable to expand the electricity supply to the Sydney CBD along and across the valley. In September, we thought that a really quite poor outcome for the Valley would result from the proposed route. But, at present, it appears that the detailed route has been changed, largely in line with

suggestions the Society made for inclusion in Canterbury City Council's consent conditions.

It seems likely that the cable will now cross the Creek upstream of Bexley Road, tunnel under Bexley Road itself (the pits on either side have already been dug) before heading up the slope to the

Earlwood ridge. This would protect the Creek and the openness and appearance of the vacant land just downstream of Bexley Road, which we expect eventually to be included in the Wolli Regional Park. Please keep your eyes peeled for any developments in this area and advise the committee (9567 8502 or 9559 281).



Guided Wolli tour will introduce valley's flora, fauna and history

ON SUNDAY 6 APRIL members of the Wolli Creek Preservation Society with specialised knowledge of the local heritage, flora and fauna and the fascinating battles to save Wolli Creek will be leading a walk through the valley as an event of the *National Trust Heritage Festival*. Members are welcome to join the walk and volunteers to help with the organisation of the 'cuppa' and the picnic would be very welcome.

You can walk from Tempe to Bardwell Park or join the group at any of the meeting points en route. Easy walking paths through Wolli Creek Valley past mangroves, through heath, open parkland and eucalypt forest.

THE ITINERARY

- **9.30 am** Meet at Tempe railway station (west side). Walk along the valley to Jackson Place
- **10.15 am** Join us for a 'cuppa' at Jackson Place (off Highcliff Road).
Hear the fascinating story of the Jackson Place stone cottages.
- **11.15 am** Meet group at Turrella Reserve at base of Nannygoat Hill, Finlay's Avenue
- **11.30 am** Guided walk to Girrahween Park.

For bookings ring 9567 8502

View the variety of flora in the valley, see the results of bush regeneration by the National Trust. Learn about NPWS plans for the recently declared Wolli Regional Park.

■ **1.00 pm** Community picnic in the recently upgraded Girrahween Park picnic area. View historic displays and videos about the valley and the struggles for survival. Publications and information for sale.

HOW TO GET THERE

Tempe Station Illawarra Line train and occasional East Hills Line ones. Check timetables.

Jackson Place Bus 423 to corner of Homer Street and Bayview Avenue, walk to Jackson Place. Parking in Highcliff Road. No parking in Jackson Place.

Turrella Reserve Train to Turrella (East Hills Line). Bus 423 bus along Homer Street to Hocking Avenue, short walk to Finlay's Avenue. Car parking in Finlay's Avenue.

Girrahween Park Train to Bardwell Park station (East Hills Line). Short walk via Fauna Avenue to picnic area in Girrahween Park.

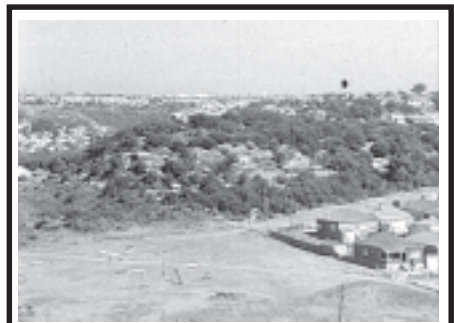
For cyclists Safe bicycle parking arranged at Jackson Place and Finlay's Avenue.

Return Train from Bardwell Park pick up cars/bikes. Lifts available to Jackson Place.

What to bring Wear hat and comfortable shoes. Bring your picnic lunch and drinking water.

Cost: Donations welcome!

For further information contact: Judy Finlason 9559 2821 or Peter Stevens 9554 3176.



Nannygoat Hill as it looked in 1967: a still from *The Battle for Nanny Goat Hill* screened at last year's annual dinner.

Two dates for your diary: annual dinner and AGM

A good crowd turned up to the Society's annual dinner which was held at the Earlwood Bardwell Park Bowling Club on 25 October. Long-term and new members got together with a number of visitors for a buffet meal and great conversation. A stimulating, indeed, rousing, talk was delivered by our guest speaker Justice Barry O'Keefe, President of the National Trust of NSW. A number of quality prizes were raffled, and the evening concluded with a showing of rare 1967 ABC footage of the "Battle for Nanny Goat Hill". This pre-dates even the better-known battle to save Kelly's Bush in Hunters Hill.

Make an early note of **Friday 24 October** for the Society's 2003 **Annual Dinner**. The **AGM** will be on **Wednesday October 22**. Further details will follow in subsequent Updates, but don't delay, and avoid forgetting by putting the dates in your diary now!

Members clear overgrown pathway

An eager band of members spent a couple of morning hours on Sunday 11 March, clearing away undergrowth and blockages on the short valley pathway between Jackson Place and Unwin St (east of Turrella Reserve). This is one of the more degraded areas of the valley but access had become more difficult because of lantana and privet growth and some fallen trees and shrubs. This led to new paths being trampled around obstacles, which may damage smaller natives and compact soils making regeneration harder

later on. Keeping the already formed path open is thus important for the future. Canterbury City Council agreed to collect and dispose of the rubbish and cuttings (mainly lantana and privet) we brought out.

This section can now be walked with ease – find the path from the dead end of Jackson Place. However, there remains some larger rubbish (mattresses, boxes) that appears to have been dumped from the streets or houses on the cliff line above. It will be good to tackle this at a later stage.

Wildlife-friendly gardens talk a hit

Following a presentation to the Executive Committee last November by Richard Davies of the NPWS's Backyard Buddies project, and inspired by a new approach to spreading the message about "wildlife friendly gardening", a group of members got together to present a talk and slide show on this theme.

It was a fun evening. Novel and attractive ways to provide shelter and food resources/habitat for native critters such as birds, frogs, skinks/lizards, possums were discussed, and illustrated by slides. A number of members' gardens were showcased and many ideas were shared. Some useful "how to" reference books were also on display, as

well as cut foliage from examples of excellent habitat shrubs, which also naturally occur in the Wolli Valley. (These were *Bursaria spinosa*, *Melaleuca nodosa*, *Hakea sericea* and *Kunzea ambigua*). Our thanks to Gavin Gatenby for sharing his 20 years experience of backyard buddy efforts in downtown Turrella – and for sharing his mistakes as well as successes (message – don't plant too many River She-Oaks). We are all still learning about ways to make our backyards attractive to local wildlife, and in the process, how to get more enjoyment, and even to save labour from the presence of these local residents and visitors.

NSW RIVER CANOE CLUB

On the Cooks River, just upstream of its junction with Wolli Creek, sits the home building of the NSW River Canoe Club. Recently, two members of the WCPS Committee have paddled up Wolli under the watchful eye of Sue Stevens, a member of both organisations. At the right times, Wolli can be navigated as far as the Henderson St Weir, providing a unique view of the Creek in its saltwater stretch.

The Club is very active, with regular flat and white water canoe and kayak trips as well as social activities, and it welcomes new members. Interested people are welcome to come along to club meetings or beginner paddles. Club meetings are usually on the first Friday of the month at 8:00 pm, at the club house, which is right opposite Tempe Railway Station. Beginner paddles are usually on the first Saturday of the month; the start time depends on tides.

For more information on the Club visit <http://www.rivercanooclub.homestead.com> or contact Lynn Parker on 9428 3131.