

Wolli Creek Update

FROM THE WOLLI CREEK PRESERVATION SOCIETY Inc.

FEBRUARY 2004

2004 packed with Wolli work and play

Renew yourself!

Annual renewal is now due for everyone, **except** those with a red X in the top right hand corner of their Update (or on the email to which your electronic version is attached). If you have the red X you have already renewed.

Memberships begun or renewed after October 1 each year are effective until the end of the following year – so we intend to seek annual renewal for 2005 in October this year. There is an interesting range of activities for members for 2004 and details until July (see accompanying sheet). We draw particular attention to the March public meeting to assess progress with the Wolli Creek Regional Park and its draft Plan of Management.

Cycleway and creek widening

The RTA's proposal for a creek-bank cycleway from Bexley North to Turrella remains current and a major threat to the integrity of a restored creek.

The proposal conflicts with the government's own Southern Sydney Catchment Blueprint and we have asked the responsible Minister (Knowles) to intervene with the Minister for Roads. The RTA has also canvassed 'widening' of Wolli Creek downstream of Bexley Road – which would effectively kill off any restoration capacity and is flatly contrary to the Blueprint.

Minister Knowles has also been asked to act against this proposal. We are expecting responses early this year and will provide a copy to members on our email listing.

Regional Park Gateway – Bexley North

The Society is working with Canterbury and Rockdale Councils, the NPWS and other State Government agencies on a package of propos-

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One of the most interesting urban wildlife developments in recent years has been the dramatic increase in channel-billed cuckoos visiting Sydney. These large, imposing grey and white cuckoos have a long tail and an enormous yellow, toucan-like bill. Their elongated body (around 600mm long) has caused them to be dubbed "the flying walking-stick". They usually lay their eggs in the nests of crows, magpies and especially currawongs.

The increase in currawong numbers in Sydney over recent decades has created a terrific breeding opportunity for channel-bills. The baby channel-bill pictured here with its hapless foster-parent is one of two raised by currawongs in a blue-gum in my front garden.

In another promising development, a pair of peregrine falcons has been spotted in the valley. They can sometimes be seen roosting on the east side of the MSE stack. The peregrine is the fastest living thing, reaching 300 km/h in power dives.

Worldwide, during the 1960s, peregrines were severely threatened by the widespread use of DDT by farmers. This insecticide, now banned in most countries, accumulated in the bodies of rodents and small birds that ate the insects it killed. The birds and rodents were in turn the prey of the peregrines, which accumulated massive doses, causing breeding to fail because the affected females laid soft-shelled eggs.

Fortunately peregrines are now staging a strong come-back. Over the last six months I have seen pairs twice in Royal National Park, once over Parramatta CBD and once at Maroubra beach. **GAVIN GATENBY**

Regional park delay sparks fears

THE Plan of Management (PoM) for Wolli Creek Regional Park has not yet been approved. Final establishment of the park and planned improvements appear to be held up because of this.

This delay is very worrying. Your Society, together with thousands of local residents and the state's peak conservation bodies, fought for 15 years to save this precious greenspace for future generations.

Many residents fear that, until all the land proposed for the park is transferred to its managers, the style of urban consolidation favoured by the Carr Government will see parts of the Wolli open space used for high-rise development like that around Wolli Creek station. Others are expressing the fear that, with major expansions mooted for both Sydney airport and Port Botany, there will

again be pressure to expand road capacity at the expense of parkland. Opposition to this, both by the Society and by the wider community needs to be made abundantly clear.

Currently, we believe, the decision to finalise the Wolli Park PoM lies with Minister Bob Debus.

Canterbury MLA, Linda Burney, has kindly agreed to chair a public meeting we are calling to consider the history of the regional park, progress towards its establishment and the status of the PoM. State agencies with landholdings within the proposed boundaries of the park and local Councils have been invited to attend.

It is crucial that we have a major community turnout for the meeting. Please come yourself, bring friends and neighbours, and tell as many people about it as you can.

PUBLIC MEETING

Wolli Creek Regional Park: What progress has been made?

Monday March 15

7:30 – 10:00 pm

Earlwood-Bardwell Park RSL Club
Hartill Law Avenue

(Next to Bardwell Park rail station)

Chair: Linda Burney, Canterbury MLA

FROM FRONT PAGE

als to highlight the western gateway to the Wolli Creek Regional Park. These include using the ex-RTA site over the M5E tunnel entrance for parking, council and park information displays and extensive revegetation, compatible with the park, of this site and the adjacent strip recently used for the underground route of the new power cable for the CBD.

In addition, we want to begin new bush restoration work in the third priority area identified in the park's draft plan of management, which includes some remnant rainforest species.

We intend to seek funding (which we and our partners will have to match dollar for dollar in cash or kind) from the Cooks River Foreshores Improvement Program which is managed by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources. We have two members working on our proposals but would welcome others. For details contact Peter Stevens on 9554 3176.

Bush restoration work

Work in the regional park's second priority area at Bay Avenue, Bardwell Park, has gone on throughout 2003. This is a particularly difficult site, but major inroads have been made and change is already visible, though much remains to be done.

The many enthusiastic members working each month will be starting again on Sunday February 21. To register (or re-register) your interest for 2004 please contact Marisa Bottaro on 9597 5721. We'll be looking for new funding from 2005 and would love to hear from someone willing to work with us on the relevant applications – contact Peter Stevens on 9554 3176.

Volunteers always needed!

We always have events – campaigns and educational projects under way or planned – which would benefit from additional volunteers. We have some events later this year:

- A kite-making and flying day in Turrella Reserve on Tuesday, October 5 (contact Judy Finlason on 9559 2821).

- A picnic lunch for members and friends in Girrahween Park on Saturday December 4 (contact Peter Stevens on 9554 3176)

And we have a list of 20 or so items which we'd love to do, but can't yet resource, covering a wide range of commitment levels – we're sure to have something to match whatever time you're willing to offer. To discuss, contact Peter Stevens on 9554 3176.

Call to teacher members

The valley is an immensely important educational resource for schools over a very wide region. We want to develop this role more but know that it has to be done carefully to prevent overuse and damage. We'd like to canvass the issue with members who are teachers, to get a better feel for how to proceed.

If you have a teacher member or friend

2003 Annual Dinner

John Dengate stresses Wolli's wildlife role

THE Society's 2003 Annual Dinner at the Marrickville Golf Club on the Cooks River was attended by 60 people. We were delighted to welcome new members and friends as well as familiar faces.

Our guest speaker, John Dengate, naturalist and media personality, gave a most interesting talk illustrated with an excellent slide presentation of birds found in the valley.

John has been a longtime supporter of the valley and the Society. His talk stressed the importance of our valley to the biodiversity of the region.

The following morning on his regular 'chat' with Angela Catterns on ABC 702 Breakfast Show, he spoke about the Wolli Valley's importance for small migratory birds, such as the silver-eyes that pass through Sydney on their way north from Tasmania. They use the valley to recuperate before they face the arduous 10 kilometre flight through the most built-up areas of the city before reaching safe haven on the North Shore.

Linda Burney, the new State MP for Canterbury, attended as the Society's guest. Linda has shown a great interest in the valley and has been most helpful in following up our

who would be interested in this, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can get discussion started. Science, geography, social studies/history, environmental studies are just the most obvious curriculum areas where interest is already evident. We need both primary and secondary teachers so that we can address all the issues. Please provide names and contact details to Peter Stevens on 9554 3176.

Riverlife activities

Marrickville Council, having trained a number of volunteer guides, is now offering interpretive tours under the Riverlife program, based on the Cooks River (which we like to think of as the Wolli's major tributary!). Two items coming up soon are:

- **February 21 - Kayak Tour** (including part of Wolli): 9:30 am for about 3 hours, from the River Canoe Club, opposite Tempe station. Cost \$25, including BBQ at end – this can be joined by non-paddling family and friends for \$5

- **Also Feb 21 - Art workshop** Enjoy relaxing by the river whilst tapping into your creative side. All art materials supplied, no art experience necessary! Cost will be advised.

Bookings are essential as places are limited. Book via Marrickville Citizens centre on 9335 2222 and get further details as well.

We are hoping to run a tour later in the year in conjunction with the River Canoe Club, involving a paddle up to Henderson St followed by a guided walk up to Nannygoat Hill. A chance to see Wolli from the water perspective. Please register your interest in this tour with Peter Stevens on 9554 3176.



John Dengate draws a winning raffle prize.

requests for assistance by contacting the appropriate ministers and departments.

Our thanks to all the Committee who assisted with the dinner and to all our generous sponsors. We were delighted with the range of raffle prizes (12 in all) we were able to offer. Our thanks go to Deb Little, Gavin Gatenby and Judy Finlason for donated items and, in particular to Ron Davies for his turned wooden pen and pencil set.

We especially record our thanks to four institutions that generously provided free passes for family entrance: the Australian Museum, the Maritime Museum, the Sydney Aquarium and the Powerhouse Museum. Now to find this year's prizes! ■ JUDY FINLASON

Sunday 2 May

2004 National Trust Heritage Festival

Tranquillity and turmoil,
people and politics:
conflict over the built
environment across the
centuries

A guided tour by bus and foot.

Beat the rush and get in before the Trust's brochure hits the streets! We're offering a guided tour by bus and foot to four conflict sites: Brodie Spark's Tempe House (1835); Jackson's stone cottages (1920s); Nannygoat Hill (1967); M5E ventilation stack (2000). These illustrate the problems of conserving natural and older built environments in the face of continuing development.

- **Meeting time** 9:30 am, light morning tea provided, ends about 12:30, with option for extension guided walk in Wolli Regional Park. Meet outside Wolli Creek station at 9:30 am sharp – look for "Heritage Tour" sign. Bus will return participants to Wolli Creek station unless taking walk extension.

- **Tickets \$10**, booking essential and prepayment required. Phone 9554 3176. Maximum numbers will be 20 or 40 (bus seating sets this).

- **You need** Good walking shoes. Bring drink and picnic lunch if going on extension walk (45 mins) – picnic facilities at Bardwell Park at walk end, close to Bardwell Park railway station.