

Park plan of management finally approved

The Society's March public meeting, organised to hear reports on progress with the establishment of Wolli Creek Regional Park was a great success.

Chaired by Canterbury MP Linda Burney, the meeting was attended by over 60 people and heard reports from NPWS, RTA, Sydney Water, RailCorp, DIPNR and Canterbury, Rockdale, Hurstville and Marrickville councils.

At the meeting Linda Burney announced that environment minister Bob Debus had approved the final Plan of Management for the park.

A representative of the Parks and Wildlife Division of DIPNR advised that a project officer is to be recruited to speed up the land transfers needed. With some reservations, public landholders within the proposed boundaries indicated that they were ready to move on these transfers.

Outstanding issues raised at the meeting included:

- access across Sydney Water land near the historic sewer crossing (the SWOOS);
- the future status of the former site office land for the M5E tunnel at Bexley North;
- the funding to ensure that Parks and Wildlife will be able to manage its new holdings; and
- the future of local development controls over land close to the Park, particularly in light of recently proposed changes to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.

Volunteers needed for Wolli Creek clean up!

As part of Clean Up Australia day in March 2005, we are hoping to clean up part of Wolli Creek – the amount we can clean up will be limited by the amount of assistance we can generate.

At this stage we have identified two areas of priority – near Bexley Road at Bexley North and under Hartill-Law Avenue Bridge at Bardwell Park.

It would greatly assist our planning if we had an indication of the number of people who are willing to assist on Clean Up Day 2005 (date to be advised. Respond to Yvonne Singletonor on phone/fax 9787 5329 ... please include contact numbers or emails. Yvonne can also be reached on 0418 204 707 or emailed at yvonne.s@bigpond.net.au



• Judy Finlason talks to Heritage Week walkers in her garden at Jackson Place.

Heritage Week walkers hear of battles to save Wolli

Twenty people attended the Society's event for the National Trust's Heritage Festival on Sunday 2 May.

Entitled "*Tranquility and turmoil, people and politics: conflict over the built environment across the centuries*" the walk through Wolli Creek started at Tempe House where Gavin Gatenby outlined the Society's attempts to save the environs of Alexander Brodie Sparke's beautiful 1835 villa before travelling by bus to the historic stone cottages of Jackson Place, Undercliffe. There, Judy Finlason outlined the history of the cottages. The walkers also saw a video of the 1967 *This Day Tonight* story on the battle to save Nannygoat Hill from being levelled to provide fill for the Third Runway.

From Jackson Place the walkers moved on to the summit of Nannygoat Hill to hear about the Society's long fight against the M5 East motorway. Charles Briers spoke about Residents Against Polluting Stacks fight to have the M5E exhaust stack filtered. The Society is considering repeating the event if there is sufficient interest. Call Peter on 9554 3176 before July 15 to register interest.



• Peter Stevens points out Wolli Valley landmarks from Nannygoat Hill.

WOLLI WILDLIFE

Some winter migrants

By GAVIN GATENBY

The winter months bring an influx of migratory birds to the valley. Some of these are passing through Sydney on their way north. Others are "altitude migrants" that travel to the coast from the mountains.

The reason for both these movements are obvious – the birds are looking for warmer weather and more abundant food resources, but one bird, the wonderfully named spangled drongo, is actually moving south.

Over the last decade, drongos have become a more common sight in Sydney, usually singly, but sometimes in pairs. They're a shiny black bird, about the size of a starling, with a long forked fish-like tail. They have a loud and distinct cackling call.

Silvereyes are currently migrating north, filtering through the valley's bushland and suburban gardens, feeding as they go. These are of the Tasmanian race which can be distinguished from the few resident silvereyes by the rich buff colour on their flanks. They eat tiny insects.

Grey and rufous fantails are the most obvious altitude migrants – delightfully lively little birds that will stay in a bush garden for days before moving on. At this time of year golden whistlers are also seen and heard, although I have never seen the strikingly colourful adult males in our garden, only the grey-brown females and immature males.

Over recent weeks Red-browed firetails have often visited our garden. These little brownish-green



Secretive boobook owl returns to the valley

One of the more exciting bird events of the past decade has been the recolonisation of the valley by southern boobook owls. According to the records kept by the "Birdman of Wolli Creek", the late Neil Rankin, there have only been a few sightings of the bird since the middle of last century.

Boobooks are the smallest and most abundant of Australia's owls, but they are not often spotted in suburbia. They eat small birds, mice, moths and beetles.

On two recent occasions I heard a boobook's "*more-pork, more-pork*" call in our back garden.

A boobook roosts almost every day in the private recesses of a cypress pine growing in a Bexley North garden where the photo above was taken by Deb Little.

Boobooks are very secretive. They leave their roosts at dusk and come back before dawn. An owl's presence is usually betrayed by small birds which "mob" it vigorously if detected.

finches have a scarlet brow and rump. They come for the tiny seeds that shower down from our river oaks (*Casuarina cunninghamia*). There are about 20 firetails in the little troop and they can spend hours feeding on the seeds that accumulate on our roof.

When they finish the fallen seeds they sometimes work their way through the foliage pulling out the casuarina seeds that are still lodged in open cones.

If you have a Wolli wildlife story contact me on 95678502.

Backyards – Ways of life

• **Sunday 18 July, 7:30 pm, free.**

River Canoe Club (at Tempe, on the banks of the Cooks River just off Richardson Crescent across from Tempe Station. Entry, including access to parking, is via the Concordia Club gateway to the north).

Associate Professor Lesley Head (Wollongong University) gives an overview of the diverse ways in which people think about nature in relation to their backyards, how this influences their practices, and what we might all learn from that. The talk will be based on a survey and extended interviews across a wide range of users, in which several WCPS members took part. Newcomers also welcome. Enquiries: Peter on 9554 3176.

Wolli Walk for members and friends

• **Saturday 24 July, 9 am – 1 pm, free to members.**

A repeat of the walk of 17 April that was heavily oversubscribed. We walk from Bardwell Park to Tempe, via Nannygoat Hill, with an extensive environmental and historical commentary. To register call Peter on 9554 3176. Numbers limited.

Wolli Wildflower Walk

• **Saturday 18 September, 9 – 11 am, free to members.**

An easy stroll in Wolli from Bardwell Park

Wolli Events Calendar

to Turrella with a specific focus on noting and identifying the wild flowers of the Valley in the early Spring. To register call Deb on 9554 3176. Numbers limited.

Kites and Community

• **Tuesday 5 October 10 am – 2 pm**

A day of kite-making, kite-flying and community information. More info from Judy on 9559 2821 (evenings from 1 August).

Wolli Birds and Birdwatching

• **Saturday 16 October, 9 am, free to members.**

Experienced watcher and bird-bander, Alan Leishman will lead a bird walk from Girraheen to Turrella, encountering a variety of bird habitats along the way. Alan will provide tips on bird identification and what to watch for where and when. Bookings and information: Deb on 9554 3176. Numbers limited.

WCPS Annual Dinner

• **Friday 22 October**

It is 21 years since the formation of the Society, so let's make this dinner a really big one. As usual,

good company, the scrapbooks, prizes and a great speaker (TBA). Book early (9554 3176), organise a table. Venue TBA. More info in late September Update.

Teddy Bears' Picnic

• **Saturday 30 October (morning) Cost \$10 per child (parent free!)**

For parents and children 3-8 Includes a short talk, a 2 km walk with activities at the end. To register and for further information contact Isabel on 9789 0634. Offers to help with organisation very welcome.

WCPS Annual General Meeting

• **Wednesday 3 November 7:30 pm**

Time to renew and expand the committee! We will also be showing the famous video clip *The Battle for Nannygoat Hill* and, hopefully, a first version of Wolli – the virtual walk!

Wolli from Creek to Crest

• **Saturday 20 November 12:30 – 5 pm. Cost \$20**

A rare opportunity to combine a look at Wolli from the water (by kayak), and from above (at Nannygoat Hill). Paddle from Tempe to Turrella, walk to the hill top. Hire kayaks available, but numbers severely limited (8). To register call Peter on 9554 3176.