

Wolli Creek Update

FROM THE WOLLI CREEK PRESERVATION SOCIETY Inc.

FEBRUARY 2005

Who owns the Henderson Street Weir?

Members have already been sent a detailed report on the information gathered though the public meeting on the future of the creek on 23 November. Comments and suggestions on the issues are welcome. Your committee is following up many of the issues noted with local and State authorities, including the new interim Sydney Catchment Management Authority. We need help on some of these and offers are always welcome.

In particular, we are seeking information from our older members with long memories of the valley, on the history and ownership of the weir at Henderson St/Turrella Reserve. If you have any memories or knowledge about this, or have research skills to offer, you may help us to establish just who has ownership of the weir. Please contact Peter Stevens on 9554 3176 or via info@wollicreek.org.au.

The new Catchment Management Authority – is the government serious?

Planning and Natural Resources Minister Craig Knowles – he who is reported to believe that there are no natural resources in Sydney – has at last established a Catchment Management Authority for the Sydney area covering Sydney Harbour/Parramatta River, Botany Bay, Georges River and Cooks River (and therefore Wolli). Unfortunately, it remains a less than whole-hearted step by the minister as the CMA Board is only interim and for six months.

We believe that there is an important role for a State Government body to encourage coordination of the multiplicity of State and local authorities with responsibilities affecting the catchments, not least of Wolli Creek and its valley. We are working cooperatively with the CMA's staff on several of the issues revealed by our recent public meeting.

The Chair of the interim CMA Board, Bob Junor, has agreed to give a 'vision' talk



A flotilla of kayaks rounds a quiet bend of Wolli Creek during our *Wolli from Creek to Crest* event conducted with the River Canoe Club last November. It will be on again in November this year – no previous experience needed as the River Canoe Club trains paddlers and accompanies the river stretch of the tour. Register your interest now with Peter on 9554 3176 or via info@wollicreek.org.au.

in relation to the Cooks River catchment as a whole, on Saturday afternoon 18 June. An important date for your diary now; more information in our next Update in early June. Bob already has form on the Cooks catchment, having prepared a report for a group of local councils on the barriers to, funding for and organisational requirements for tackling catchment problems. A short promotional brochure based on the report can be emailed to you by request to info@wollicreek.org.au. We are hoping to work with a number of other catchment community groups in promoting this talk widely – it could be a milestone for our area.

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY WE NEED YOU

As part of Clean Up Australia day on **Sunday, March 6, 2005**, the Society has registered the area of Wolli Creek at the Bexley Road crossing as an official site. We want to clear the creek of plastic in trees as well as general street rubbish.

This is the first time we have participated for some years, so we're looking forward to a good result. We need volunteers to assist on the day from 9.00 – 12 noon. So please if you have not already registered your interest, please respond to yvonne.s@bigpond.net.au or leave a message on phone/fax 02 9787 5329 ... please include contact numbers or emails.

Fox alert: have you seen one?

Members report seeing foxes – adults and cubs – in the Wolli Valley from time to time, and late last year Rockdale Council removed an injured female fox from the Bardwell Valley near the Bexley Swimming Pool complex. Backyard chickens and some pets can be vulnerable to fox attacks. Last September a fox killed two chickens in our secretary's Bexley North backyard.

Many people are surprised to hear that foxes are present and surviving quite well in urban areas. But as local Councils and the NPWS can attest, foxes are now found in all urban bushland areas in the Sydney area, and in much higher numbers than in rural areas. Besides bushland, they can survive in rubbish tips, sand dunes, golf courses, cemeteries and other areas. They can make dens in sandstone outcrops and dense weeds, and can actually climb

trees, so roosting birds as well as ground dwelling small native animals – lizards included – end up as meals. Berries from weed plants such as blackberry or privet also form part of their diet, so the spread of weeds is yet another "contribution" they make to our urban bushland areas.

A co-ordinated approach involving Councils, the NPWS and community groups is needed. Such an approach has been quite successful in northern Sydney suburbs.

If you see foxes in the Wolli or Bardwell valleys or other nearby areas let us know at info@wollicreek.org.au or 9567 8502. Remember too, that foxes can feed on fruit and food left outside for pets or birds so try to make sure this sort of treat isn't available to them.

Beautiful creatures but, in Australia, beautiful killers.

Your chance to tour the Rockdale wetlands

WCPS members are invited to tour key Rockdale wetlands on **Saturday 12 March**. The walking tour will visit Eve Street Pondage (normally closed to the public), Firmstone Gardens wetland and the 'Landing Lights' pond. The tour has been kindly organised for us by Rockdale Wetlands Preservation Society which has fought for two decades to preserve and enhance this vital part of our heritage. It will be led by their president, Ron Raynor.

The Rockdale wetlands are a destination for migratory wading birds from the northern hemisphere as well as fascinating resident species like pied stilts. A recent invitation-only tour of the wetlands for government officers and key Conservation movement people, organised under the auspices of the Sydney Catchment Management Authority, was a great success. Now it's WCPS members' chance.

An easy walk of about 700 metres is involved. Wear a hat and good walking shoes. Bring water and, of course, binoculars. Meet 1.30 pm at the east end of Brennans Road, Arncliffe (off West Botany Street). *There are limited places so you must book.* Ring Gavin on 9567 8502 or email info@wollicreek.org.au.



Top: the Eve Street pondage. Above left: pied stilt, a resident wader. Above right: sharp-tailed sandpiper. This species is one of several which migrates each year from the Northern Hemisphere. The Rockdale wetlands are a vital part of the Botany Bay region's habitat for these birds.

Childrens' award will honour 'Birdman of Wolli'

Danny Rankin and her sons have generously donated \$5,000 to the Society for an environmental award to be established in memory of Neil Rankin, who died in 2000. Neil, affectionately known as 'the Birdman of Wolli Creek', was a well known ornithologist and author of *Birds of Wolli Creek*. He spent his working life dedicated to primary school education and was actively

involved in environmental education programs in the valley, especially for school students. In view of Neil's interests, the Society has decided that the award will be for environmental activities conducted by primary school age children. We'd like to hear from any members who'd like to assist in planning for the award. Phone Judy on 9559 2821.

Annual dinner a success

Once again our Annual Dinner, held at the Marrickville Golf Club on 22 October, was a great success. Fifty members and friends attended. Our guest speaker was Alexandra de Blas, presenter of ABC Radio Nationals 'Earthbeat'. Alexandra spoke of her experience as an environmental reporter in the ABC's prestigious Science Unit and the role that programs such as Earthbeat play in providing an in depth analysis of the many environmental issues facing the world. (It is somewhat ironic that, at a time when awareness and objective scientific analysis of the issues are needed, the ABC has decided to discontinue this the popular program).

The Annual Dinner also featured a display of the interesting collection of memorabilia that the Society has collected in its 21 years of existence.

Our thanks to everyone who attended. It's a great opportunity to catch up with members and helps raise money to keep the Society afloat.

Bush restoration and National Tree Day

Our sturdy band of volunteers is still awaiting the outcome of our grant application with Canterbury City Council to the Cooks River Foreshores Improvement Program. Whether successful or not, Council and WCPS will undertake a significant planting event in conjunction with National Tree Day on 31 July. We have already set in train the growing of about 400 plants from locally collected seeds of Wolli native plants, mainly by the Marrickville Community Nursery. As they grow, these plants will offer a native barrier above our current regeneration site at Bray Ave, enabling us later to remove an existing barrier, mainly of exotic weed species. If you would like to put in a couple of hours in July for this planting exercise, please advise Peter on 9554 3176 or via info@wollicreek.org.au.

MORE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY ...

Wolli picnics at Girrahween

All members and friends are invited, nay encouraged, to join bush regeneration volunteers after their monthly sessions on **Sundays March 20, April 17 and May 15** for a self-catering picnic. Join them at the excellent facilities at Girrahween Park (enter from Fauna Street, Bardwell Park) from about 12:45pm. Come along and enjoy the valley!

Members' Walk, Sunday 1 May

Now an annual event, this, well, *amble*, might be the best word, takes participants from Bardwell Park to Tempe over a leisurely four hours. It includes an extensive historical and environmental commentary along the way, a visit to one of the historic stone cottages in Jackson Place, Undercliffe, and a screening of the epic *Battle of Nannygoat Hill* (five minutes). It's a great introduction to the valley, its history and the issues facing it. Recommended to all members who haven't been along before. Numbers are limited and prior registration is essential. Contact Peter on 9554 3176 or via info@wollicreek.org.au.

Bird Week

Our 2004 Bird Week event, led by Alan Leishman, went really well. It's good to go with an experienced birdo as we saw birds we would never have noticed ourselves. We hope to run this again in **October 2005**, with two separate groups: rank beginners and those with some experience in bird-watching. More information in our June Update.

Email the Society...
info@wollicreek.org.au