

Wolli Creek Update

FROM THE WOLLI CREEK PRESERVATION SOCIETY Inc.



www.wollicreek.org.au



Valley birds: in spite of the chilly weather, silvereyes migrating north from Tasmania got together with local red-browed firetail finches to bathe in a Turrella garden. The Society is forming bird study group – MORE ON PAGE 4. PHOTO: GAVIN GATENBY

Regional Park progress

The Society held a public meeting on 4 April to end the delays and establish a timetable for the rezoning necessary to create the regional park and thereby the lifting of the road reservation through the Wolli Valley. In brief, the results of the meeting were quite positive and we now have some greater confidence that things will proceed at some speed, though, of course, not as fast as we would like. Key points to emerge were:

- **The Society** has itself recently added to delays by seeking an adjustment to the proposed boundaries of the Regional Park to include Wolli Bluff – the rocky ridge end on the southern side of the hill down to Waterworth Park on Bayview Avenue owned by the Department of Planning – and the adjoining block owned by Sydney Water, linking the bluff to the rest of the park area.
- **The Department** agreed to transfer their block to the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) for the park – this is a major inclusion as the bluff contains excellent heathland, despite some encroachment by weeds. So does the Sydney Water block.

Gazettal could come in mid-2007

- **Sydney Water** was unwilling to transfer ownership of its block, arguing for control needed to maintain 'vital infrastructure' ie the SWOOS pipeline. (The Society is unconvinced by the argument if taken to apply to the whole block in question and believes it could be resolved by a re-subdivision of the two parcels owned by Sydney Water.) However, they committed to finding an administrative arrangement with DEC that would enable the park's management regime to cover this block as well.
- **There remained** some minor issues re boundaries and some previously expressed Council concerns to be resolved between DEC and Canterbury City Council before there could be agreement on final boundaries for the park, otherwise accepted by the major agencies owning land in the valley. This would open the way for rezoning.
- **Generally**, all rezoning of land these days is required to be undertaken within the context of a municipality-wide Local Environment Plan (LEP), which in Canterbury case is a major

operation and some years from completion. However, Council believes that it could be ready for this particular section much faster than that, perhaps within six months.

- **The meeting** was advised by the office of the Minister for Planning that in this particular case it would expect the Department of Planning to allow a separate rezoning to occur outside the LEP process.
- **The RTA advised** that it was ready to hand over all the land they owned within the boundaries and that the road reservation over those lands would be automatically lifted by the rezoning. There has since then been a meeting between key agencies including DEC and Canterbury City Council to address the remaining issues and we have been given to understand that gazettal of the park could come in mid-2007. This is later than the aim of the Society to have the road reservation lifted before the next State election in March 2007, but is nonetheless the best news we have had for a long time on the regional park front.

For more on Wolli Creek, visit us online at www.wollicreek.org.au



Coming up ...

We have two community planting events coming up in the next period. We only do plantings of plants from locally sourced seeds and we do them on the fringes of existing bushland, typically in areas that have been under grass or weed cover. The plantings serve three functions. They:

- provide a better barrier to dumping and undirected intrusion
- introduce greater native biodiversity to an area much disturbed in the past
- provide a seed orchard of the planted species for future seed collection.

Our plantings this year will be on:

- Sunday 30 July, 9-12 am at Johnston St Earlwood
- Saturday 9 September, 9-12 am at Bray Avenue, Earlwood

We would love to have you come and help get our natives into the ground – we've had fantastic success with last year's planting, despite the prolonged drought. You need to register in advance though so that we can give you more details and keep a handle on numbers. Contact Peter on 9554 3176 or via info@wollicreek.org.au.

Bush regen progress

Bush regeneration volunteer teams are now working on three days each month (weather permitting!) and progress continues to be good, though it is important to keep a long perspective and to recognise that 50 years of neglect may well take 50 years of repair work. In a recent audit of our work at Bray Avenue wetland, State Government representatives were (suitably!) amazed at how much had been achieved with so little funding – a welcome pat on the collective back for the team there. A great addition to our work in recent times has been the stepping forward of additional volunteers to provide the bush regen folk with a morning snack and hot drink (particularly welcome in these colder months). Thanks to the four who have taken on this role so far; we have room for more at the rate of one morning tea every two months. Let Peter know if this is something you could take on.

Other little successes

- All the Old Man Banksia (*Banksia serrata*) plants we have seen from Bardwell Park to Bexley North are dead, which is tragic, but we have been lucky to find some cones with seeds still in them. Marrickville Community Nursery has been able to grow over 20 seedlings so far from the cones collected, baked, and stripped of seed (some of it mouldy).
- The Coachwood (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*) trees near Bexley North are a

rainforest species very rare in the Wolli Valley. Work is going on to free them from vines and other exotic weeds pressing on them, but we haven't been able to see, let alone collect any seed. But the trees have produced loads of seedlings nearby (too many to survive) and a number of these have been successfully collected and potted up and are thriving so far.

Great work by Westpac volunteers!

We had a successful day of corporate volunteer labour with Westpac workers on 26 May. Good financial support from Westpac enabled us to ensure that this was professionally supervised and well-resourced. Some 24 bags of rubbish and weeds plus an equal volume of larger dumped items was collected by the complement of 15 people working on the day as well as an 11 metre long pile of cut privets etc, all removed by Canterbury City Council. The day enabled initial work to be done on a good stretch of the Undercliffe Track between Jackson Place and Wave Rock. (If you don't know where those are, it's time you came on one of our members' walks! Next one in Spring.) We hope to have more of these corporate days in the coming year. An earlier Westpac group worked like



Linda Burney to speak at Annual Dinner

Popular Canterbury MP Linda Burney has agreed to speak at our Annual Dinner which is set for Friday 20 October at the St George Rowing Club on Lower Wolli (or Cooks River, if you insist). Make sure it's in your diary as you would hate to miss this event by double-booking yourself.

Trojans on business Clean-Up Day in March to remove street and dumped rubbish from the Richard Avenue stormwater drain outlet. Some rubbish is back with the recent rains, but in much more manageable amounts. Maybe a proper stream name for what was (and still is, really) a side creek tributary of Wolli Creek would gain more respect – any suggestions?

Locals needed to work alongside CVA teams

In our ongoing cooperation with Conservation Volunteers Australia, teams of theirs will be working with us again from July, after a break. It's always good to have some locals to work alongside these groups from CVA and if you want to join in for all or part of their days (9-3 roughly, on six weekdays during July) please contact Peter on 9554 3176 or at info@wollicreek.org.au for details.

During the break in CVA availability a number of members assisted in their stead with a key project in the Bardwell Valley organised by the local branch of the Australian Plants Society. They have asked us to pass on the following message.

“The City-St. George Australian Plants Society/Bardwell Valley Bushcare Group would like to thank all the folk who helped us plant along our creek at Binnamittalong on Saturday 22 April and the following Saturday. Our major project for the year would not have been possible without all the wonderful help that we received over the two days.

“We have now planted 845 grasses/lomandras to stabilize the creek bank, 385 on the first Saturday and 460 on the second, which is remarkable in anybody's language and I am sure everyone concerned will feel a sense of achievement.

“A little bit on history about Binnamittalong may be of interest to the participants. The APS St. George group (as it was then) was formed in 1969 and two of the members, Ginger and Hilda Herbert, lived in the house near where the plantings were undertaken. They considered the whole area their backyard, planting and maintaining the gardens, and according to all accounts the area looked absolutely magnificent under their care. Unfortunately, after many years they were unable to continue the task, moved on to retirement and from this point the gardens were neglected, with Lantana, Privet etc taking over. The St. George branch took up the challenge about 8 years ago to restore the gardens to their former glory, and we have been working at this project ever since. The restoration of the creek bank is a major part of this restoration”.

Book launch will celebrate the 'Birdman of Wollie Creek'

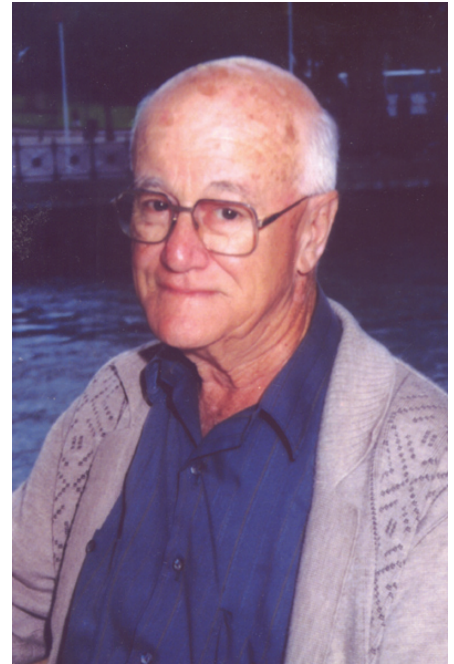
Our spring events calendar features a community celebration on Sunday 10 September (at 11 am) to launch *Rankin's Birds of Wollie Valley*. Neil Rankin, known to many as the 'Birdman of Wollie Creek', died in 2001. For twenty years he meticulously documented his observations of the birds of the valley and collected historical information. In 1989, he wrote his popular guide, the *Birds of Wollie Creek*, published by the Society.

This book has gone out of print recently and for many months a small group of members has been expanding and updating the original text and including the extra decade of observations Neil made after publishing his book. *Rankin's Birds of Wollie Valley* will replace the earlier book as an essential resource both for residents wanting to know more of their local birdlife, and for experienced birdwatchers needing a guide to which species can be found and where in the Wollie Valley.

The launch will be held near a native planting below Nanny Goat Hill at the end of Finlays Avenue where the Rankin family lived. This is a planting made by the Society while Neil was alive and with which he was very taken. As part of the launch this area will be augmented with additional native plants and we hope to install within it a sandstone block with a small plaque in Neil's memory.

We look forward to members and the general community joining us to celebrate Neil's unique contribution to our knowledge of the birds of the valley.

An order form for the book and full details of the planned activities will be posted on our website closer to the event. If you are not on our email listing and would like notification of these please ring Judy on 9559 2821.



Neil Rankin.

New Wollie DVD preserves a vital part of struggle to save the valley

• *Wollie Creek Valley – Five historic video items*

To make the history of the valley more accessible, the Society has had five videos transferred to DVD. They provide an interesting background to the efforts of the local community to save the valley from quarrying, road construction and other developments. The videos include the *Battle for Nanny Goat Hill* filmed by the ABC for This Day Tonight in 1967. This struggle was one of earliest fights to protect the natural environment in urban areas, even

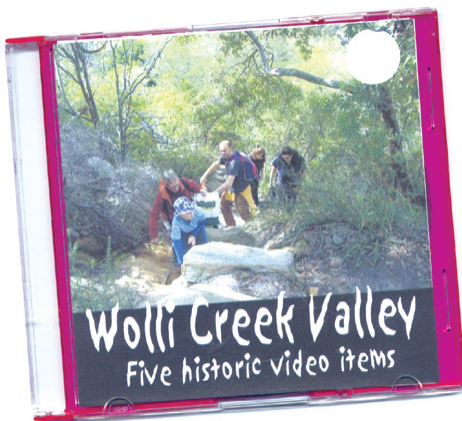
predating the famous fight for Kelly's Bush in Hunter's Hill.

Other videos included are:

- *Too Precious to Pave*: WCPS 1993
- *Wollie Valley Revisited*: Friends of Wollie Creek/Disadvantaged Schools 1990
- *Placid Stream; Raging Torrent*: Friends of Wollie Creek
- *Wollie Creek Valley*: Marrickville West PS /Disadvantaged Schools 1987
Total running time 51 minutes.
Cost \$15.00 (\$10 to WCPS members) plus \$2 p&p. *JF to provide figure*

• *The Place that Jackson Built* has been reprinted for a second time. Vital to everyone who has been surprised and amazed by this heritage-listed set of stone cottages on the valley's Undercliffe side, the reprinted version will also include some additional photographs. Still at the same price of \$6 (+\$2 p&p) though!

• *The Wollie Creek Valley: A History of Survival* has also had to be reprinted and it now boasts a much improved index. All for no extra charge! Still \$10 (+\$2 p&p).



Oral History Workshop

Rosemary Block, Curator Oral History, State Library.

Saturday 19 August 2006

9.30 am to 3 pm

The Wollie Creek Preservation Society invites you to attend an oral history workshop to be conducted by Rosemary Block.

Rosemary is the Curator of Oral History at the State Library of New South Wales and also the national president of the Oral History Association of Australia and president of the New South Wales branch of the OHAA. Topics to be covered:

- introduction to oral history
- nature and reliability of memory
- interviewing techniques
- equipment
- documentation
- ethical issues, ownership and copyright
- transcription and logging
- listening to tape excerpts

Workshop notes will be provided.

There is no charge for the workshop. Booking fee \$10 refundable at workshop. Tea and coffee provided – please bring your own lunch.

WCPS would like to thank Canterbury Council for its financial support for this oral history project.

Bookings and further information:

Judy Finlason info@wolliecreek.org.au or 9559 2821.

Send \$10 booking fee to WCPS, PO Box 270, NSW 2206.

Popular Wolli walks and talks

Our wildflower walk this year will be on Sunday 24 September. Much appreciated by last year's attendees, this one promises to be even better and you should register as soon as possible to be included. Send details to Peter on 9554 3176 or via info@wollicreek.org.au for a reminder and further details as the date approaches. Free to members.

And this year's birdwatching walk with Alan Leishman is set for 8 October – another popular event so register now (as above) for a reminder and further details as the date approaches. Free to members.

The Society continues to lead guided walks through the valley to get it more widely appreciated and to give talks to promote bush-friendly house and garden practices.

- Two free-to-members' walks from Bexley North to Undercliffe were scheduled this autumn. These are very popular events and both were over-subscribed but the second had to be cancelled because of the (very welcome!) wet weather – it is being

rescheduled for July - so we will have another one in late September. The date is yet to be set, but if you want to be on it give your details to Peter on 9554 3176 or via info@wollicreek.org.au so that you get advance notice as the next Update in early October will be too late.

- A group of 30 students from Sydney University was taken through in May.
- A morning's presentation and walk from Bexley North to Turrella was conducted for the Garden Care volunteers of the Canterbury City Community Centre – cross-infections of weeds between bush and gardens need to be tackled on both fronts.

If there are groups you are involved with where such events would be useful to promote broader WCPS aims please be in touch to discuss the possibilities. Now that we have a fine data projector (thanks Sony and Landcare!) we can conduct a range of presentations reasonably readily. Of course, volunteers to train up to give such presentations are also highly welcome!

Valley bird group forming

A small group of members is working to set up various mechanisms to link and support those of us in the Society who have an interest in bird life around the valley, at whatever level of knowledge. It may include:

- a section on the website with self-reported sightings, links to other useful sites, and a help desk.
- an email group to circulate latest news and views
- group events and activities.

If this would be of interest to you, or is something you might be able to contribute to, or a development you'd just like to stay in touch with, please send in your details to info@wollicreek.org.au. It would be good to:

- include some info about what you do/are interested in re birds and
- offer any ideas you have on what might be useful to include on our website for local purposes
- Suggest activities that a local group might engage in that would be of interest to you.

More on the fox problem

Research into the problems caused by foxes for the native snake-necked turtles in the Wolli Valley has led to some new items about the issue and some details about both foxes and the turtles on our website at www.wollicreek.org.au. Excellent pictures of foxes close to Homer Street, Earlwood are included. Visit the site, or ring Peter on 9554 3176 if you need to have a printed copy sent to you.

The fox issue continues to develop as the Society's request for sightings to be reported to us has led to much greater awareness of fox prevalence in the valley and surrounding areas. In a recent incident,

two chickens and possibly two missing cats were taken by foxes in Undercliffe Road between Wolli Valley and Cooks River. There is no clear picture of how to deal with them or who has any responsibility for doing so. But one thing seems clear – they eat a lot of food put out for domestic pets, either outside or even by coming in through pet flaps in doors. They might also eat the domestic pets, if small! So we can all help to reduce numbers by denying easy access to food. One good point about foxes, beside their beauty and intelligence is that they are keeping feral cat numbers down.

Loss of Rick Farley

To honour the life and achievements of Rick Farley, his partner, local MP Linda Burney has nominated the Australian Bush Heritage Fund to create a memorial scholarship to support young Indigenous Australians to pursue excellence in conservation and cultural management.

If you would like to find out more about the memorial scholarship, or donate to it, go to:

www1.bushheritage.asn.au

Events Calendar

Saturday 15 July – Members' walk from Bexley North to Undercliffe (replacement for 10 June walk cancelled for wet). This is already fully booked, but if you want to register for the next one see September 30.

Sunday 30 July – National Tree Day, planting at Johnston St, 9 am-12 noon. See p 2.

Saturday 19 August – Oral history workshop. See ad page 3.

Saturday 2 September – Public consultation re design for stormwater channel, Bray Avenue wetland. Venue: CECAL, 15 Clarke St, Earlwood, 2pm.

Saturday 9 September – Community planting day at Bray Avenue, 9 am - 12 noon. See p 2.

Sunday 10 September – Book Launch at Turrella Reserve 11 am. See separate story.

Sunday 24 September – Wildflower Walk, Bardwell Park to Turrella, 9 am -12 noon. To register see item above left.

Saturday 30 September – Members' walk from Bexley North to Undercliffe, along new sections of track, explaining bush regeneration projects, plus historical and environmental commentary. Pre-register with Peter on 9554 3176 or via info@wollicreek.org.au

Sunday 8 October – Birdwatching walk from Bardwell Park to Turrella, 9-12. To register see item above left.

Friday 20 October – ANNUAL DINNER. See separate story. More in September Update.

And of course, bush regeneration on the first Saturday, second Sunday and Second Wednesday of each month, 9-12.30 plus work with CVA 3, 5, 7 and 17, 19, 21 July.