

## World Environment Day in Wonderful Wolli

The normally peaceful Girrahween Park was a hive of activity on World Environment Day, on 5 June, with children from local schools joining in bush walks to Nannygoat Hill and activities in the park.

The event was part of a special project 'Why Wolli is Wonderful', being undertaken by WCPS in partnership with Rockdale Council and five schools – Bexley North PS, Athelstane PS, Al Zahra College, Carlton PS and Ramsgate PS – supported by a grant from the NSW Natural Resources Advisory Council. Each class has also been on a walk through the valley from Bexley North to Tempe.

Voren O'Brien, a local parent and a volunteer with WCPS, leads the bush walks. She is astounded that so few children have visited the Wolli Valley. 'The students were amazed by this bushland and asked hundreds of questions. It's so different to the parks and school grounds where they play. It's great to be able to share this fabulous area with such



**Students from Years 3 and 4 at Athelstane PS with the bark hut (*ngurra*) they built under the guidance of Ken Searle, using methods similar to those used by Aboriginal people. From left to right: Ricki Mehanna, Muhammad Tahir, Ahmed Rachid, Hassan Khanafer, Hassan El Ammar, Ayat Reda, Zeinab Mechaourab.**

an enthusiastic audience.' Voren is also visiting the schools to give a talk about the birds to be found in their backyards and how important the valley is to saving our native bird population.

Children's paintings, about their walks and the environment, will be used for a calendar to be launched at the end of the year at an exhibition of all the children's artwork completed during the project.

Our thanks to everyone who made World Environment Day such as success: our WCPS volunteers, parents, teachers, NPWS staff, Rockdale Council for organising the transport and most importantly the children whose enjoyment of being in the natural environment showed once again how important it was to save the valley.

## Governor visits the valley

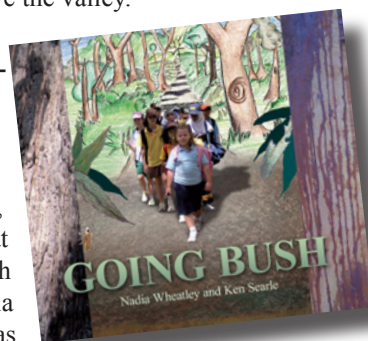


When the Governor of NSW, Professor Marie Bashir, arrived at Girrahween Park on 14 March to launch *Going Bush*, by children's author, Nadia Wheatley and artist, Ken Searle, she was amazed to find such a wonderful area of bushland hidden away below the Earlwood shops.

The occasion, organised by publisher Allen and Unwin, was the culmination of the Harmony project developed with 16 children from eight schools surrounding the Wolli Creek Valley. *Going Bush* uses the children's writing and illustrations to tell the story of their explorations and discoveries on their walk through the Wolli Creek Valley.

This unique book is a celebration of children's creativity and the wonderful bushland on our doorstep. It is an inspiration to adults and children alike.

*Going Bush* is a great present for all your children and grandchildren and is available from good bookshops, or via the Society for \$30 (+P&P if we can't arrange pick-up or delivery).



**Governor, Marie Bashir, launching *Going Bush*.**



## Paperbark Creek changes

Contractors to the City of Canterbury have just completed the major earthworks needed to control stormwater entering the top of the creek close to the edge of Bray Avenue, almost opposite Richard Avenue, Earlwood.

In the near future, the Council will install a Gross Pollutant Trap (GPT) to capture street rubbish that, unfortunately, still washes down into the drains, some from as far away as William Street. The work has been done with the help of a significant grant from the Australian Government's Community Water Grants.

Now it's the turn of the Society's volunteers to revegetate the area disturbed by the work and return the area as far as possible to something resembling the local native vegetation that would have existed prior to European settlement. Council is supporting our work, which began in early June.

The area affected by the earthworks is quite large and was severely degraded prior to the re-channeling work beginning. Too much water, sediment and nutrient from the drainage channel was supporting exotic weed species such as Privet, Willow, Camphor Laurel and Lantana and there was a large accumulation of rubbish both washed down and deliberately dumped.

The 'before' picture was taken in September 2005. You can see the oval stormwater outlet in the middle of the shot. The 'after' shot was taken on 30 May 2007. Restoration work will be going on over many months and we will use a Council temporary fence and other barriers to discourage people dumping rubbish into the cleared area.



## Old Man Banksias brought back from the dead



All but one of the grand Old Man Banksias native to the Wolli Valley have died out between Bexley North and Bardwell Park. There are several contributing causes. Most important are shading out by the dense foliage of exotic Privets and Camphor Laurels and the absence of (controlled) fire.

Around the base of two of the trees, probably dead for several years, members of the Wolli Creek Preservation Society were lucky to find some old and mouldy cones. These were persuaded to give up some seeds and, with the help of the Marrickville Community Nursery, a number of plants have been propagated. The local genetic variants of this species have thus been brought back 'from the dead'.

Some are now being returned to areas near the dead Banksias. Bush restoration work by the Society under a grant from the NSW Environment Trust has cleared exotics in the vicinity to allow enough light in for the successful growth of these plants as replacements for long-dead parents – a real resurrection.

**Victoria Feitscher planting a resurrected Banksia serrata with its parent, a very dead Old Man Banksia, in the background.**



## Oldest Silvereye was captured in Wolli Creek Valley ...

An Australian record for the oldest Silvereye – a bird captured in the Wolli Valley – has recently been scientifically recognised. Silvereyes (*Zosterops lateralis*) are small (10–12 gram) greenish-grey birds with a prominent white eye-ring. The species is notable for the number of subspecies (seven in Australia) and for the large migration range of a portion of its population. Banding of large numbers of Silvereyes has shown that there are regular patterns of movements and that about 60 per cent of the mid-eastern New South Wales winter population is made up of birds that have migrated from Tasmania. Silvereyes banded in Tasmania have been recaptured in northern New South Wales/southern Queensland, a distance of 1600 km.

Silvereyes are very common in the Wolli Creek Valley being recorded in 99 per cent of the surveys carried out over the period 1989–1999 by Neil Rankin (*Neil Rankin's Birds of Wolli Valley*, 2006). They feed on a wide range of foods including nectar, insects,

fruits and berries, but particularly on the large number of introduced species such as Privet, Asparagus Fern and Ochna which grow in the Wolli Valley. They are a major vector of these weed species.

The longevity of this species as found from banded birds has stood at 10 years 7 months since 1979, but recently a new record of 13 years was provided by the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme for a bird banded and recaptured in the Wolli Creek Valley. This bird was banded and recaptured by Rolf Lossin who has carried out a banding project in the Wolli Creek Valley over the last 40 years. This record has recently been published in *Corella*, the Journal of the Australian Bird Study Association, Vol: 31:20, and is reproduced below.

**Silvereye** *Zosterops lateralis*  
012-53893. Adult (1+) banded by R. Lossin



**A Silvereye at its nest. The longest-lived example of this native species was recorded in the Wolli Valley by birdbander Rolf Lossin.**

at Wolli Creek Valley, Earlwood, NSW on 1 Aug. 1986. Recaptured, released alive with band at banding place on 2 Aug. 1999, over 13 years after banding.

(This is the oldest recorded for the species.)

As the bird was banded as an adult and not a nestling or juvenile its age could have been considerably greater than the 13 years referred to above.

• Alan Leishman

## And Tawny Frogmouths return!

Tawny Frogmouths, an owl-like night bird have been rediscovered in the Wolli Valley, after an absence of at least 38 years. A pair of the cryptic Kookaburra-sized birds has recently taken up residence in Girrahween Park where they were spotted by sharp-eyed Voren O'Brien of the Wolli Creek Preservation Society.

“These birds are Australian icons, imitating broken grey branches to remain unseen. Seeing them in the Wolli Valley so close to Sydney's centre is a special thrill”, Voren said.

Records of bird species seen in the valley since 1940 are available in *Birds of Wolli Valley*, published by the Preservation Society last year. They show a single sighting of a frogmouth between 1940 and 1969 and none since. The book is based on the research, personal observations, and meticulous records of the legendary Wolli birdo, Neil Rankin, between 1970 and his death in 2001.

Tawny frogmouths are relatively common in bushland around Sydney but have probably only recolonised the Wolli Valley very recently. The birds are active at night, hunting small animals such as mice, frogs and insects. By day they roost on branches close to a tree trunk where their bark-coloured plumage makes them almost invisible to an untrained observer.

• For copies of *Birds of Wolli Valley* contact the Society on 9554 3176 or via [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au) - cost is \$10 plus any mailing costs, if needed.



### **Birds? What birds? Where?**

The Girrahween Park-based pair of Tawny frogmouths. The birds rely on their bark-coloured plumage to make them almost undetectable to day-hunting predators such as hawks and eagles.



## On-ground advances to celebrate

Our grand lift-out lays bare an overview of all the amazing things that have happened, are underway, or are imminent, on-the-ground, in protecting Wolli Creek and its bushland.

We are very grateful to all our varied partners in what we regard as 'our own' projects (shown in red italics), and make special note of the fundamental support provided by Canterbury City Council and its staff. The map and text give some idea of how many people and bodies regard Wolli Creek and its valley as important. The best way to see most of these items is to join one of our guided walks through the valley from Bexley North to Undercliffe – the next one is on September 29, see Calendar for details.

## Grants recently notified and under way

### Bush Regeneration

- Recently notified: Cooks River Foreshore Improvement Programme, Dept of Planning: **\$39,000 over two years**, with Canterbury City Council. Includes channel reshaping and armouring at wetland (2007); board walk underpass of Hartill-Law Avenue (2008) and two years of continued bush regeneration in the wetland and associated areas.
- Recently notified: Sydney Metro Catchment Management Authority: **\$34,000 to June 2008** for revegetation of a section of Turrella Reserve – about 9,000 plants to be propagated and planted. Supported by Canterbury City Council.
- Our three-year grant (2006-8) from the NSW Environment Trust is continuing.

### Work with schools

- The Wolli Creek Preservation Society in partnership with Rockdale City Council and five schools in the Rockdale Council area has already seen a number of activities undertaken as part of the "Why Wolli is Wonderful" Project, funded by a grant to Council and the Society from the NSW Natural Resources Advisory Council:
- Wolli Creek nature walks, led by WCPS

volunteer Voren O'Brien, to derive an appreciation of local flora and fauna and to experience nature firsthand;

- an in-school presentation on why native birds are important to the environment;
- a visit from Taronga Zoo staff to demonstrate the types of native fauna found in the area; and
- nature activities on World Environment Day at Girrahween Park, including building traditional Aboriginal bark huts and working with clay (see page 1).
- Students will later have the opportunity to build a fauna habitat in their own school grounds using nesting boxes and bird baths to develop a sense of environmental stewardship.
- Throughout these activities and walks, students were encouraged to use all their senses to experience nature and following on from the above activities the students will convey their experiences in drawings and sketches. 12 images will be selected from the schools to make a 2008 calendar and all works will be exhibited at an official launch in November.
- The project's steering committee will then launch this publication to other local schools, educating both the school and whole community in the process.

## The "Rain Only" message

Canterbury Council has supported Society volunteers with clothing and equipment to enable us to begin a program of stencilling drains and roadways with the message "Wolli Creek – For Rain Only" to emphasise that the streets are the beginning of Wolli's head waters and any cigarette butts, bottles, and wrappers dropped there flow into Wolli Creek.

It's a simple educational message and should help to remind everyone to put rubbish where it belongs, not drop it in the street. About ten Society volunteers will be involved, in teams of two, over the next several months, covering the Canterbury side of Wolli Creek from Kingsgrove to Undercliffe.

Down the track we hope to extend the program into other areas that drain into Wolli Creek. If you want to be part of the action, now or later, contact Peter on 9554 3176.

## Art on a Box

Committee member Debra Little has been awarded an art prize for one of her contributions to Canterbury City Council's covering of RTA traffic signal boxes with art designed by locals.

Her "Blue-tongue Crossing" reflected the required road safety theme and showed off one of our local icon animals. It's located on the corner of Roselands Avenue and King Georges Road and gained the award for best design by an adult artist.



## Events Calendar

### Teachers' Orientation Walk

#### Wolli Creek Valley

Sat 28 July

10am to 12.30pm

Starts at Girrahween Park, Earlwood and follows Wolli Creek to Waterworth Park at Tempe.

Join experienced WCPS members to discover the potential of the Wolli Creek Valley as educational resource.

For local teachers, but additional knowledgeable members most welcome.

Contact Voren [voren@ihug.com.au](mailto:voren@ihug.com.au) or 0403 932 199

#### Sun 29 July from 9am: National Tree

Day. Six hundred plants to go in along Johnston Street, Earlwood. Please register interest with Peter on 9554 3176.

**Sat 29 Sept 8.45-1.30:** Free-to-members' walk from Bexley North to Undercliffe. An environmental and historical commentary will be provided. New members especially invited. Get to know more of the Valley's remarkable bushland. Limited to about 16 and usually fully booked well in advance. Pre-registration essential, contact Peter on 9554 3176 or via [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au).

#### Fri 19 Oct 6.30 onwards: Annual Dinner.

Local member and now Minister (for, among other things, volunteering), Linda Burney is to be our speaker, so get this into your diary! Further details in September's Update.

#### Sun 28 Oct 9-12: Free-to-members'

Birdwatching walk from Bardwell Park to Turrella (more details in Sept Update). Pre-registration essential - to register for the walk contact Peter on 9554 3176 or via [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au).

**Our main activity** in the cooler winter months is of course **bush regeneration** and there will be the usual three mornings of that each month. To get involved and learn new skills and knowledge contact Peter on 9554 3176 or via [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au).

## 20 years of Wolli Creek Updates!

We have a limited number of beautifully bound copies of the *Wolli Creek Update*. These newsletters are a fascinating twenty-year record of the successful fight to stop the construction of the M5 motorway through the Wolli Valley bushland and the many other key events that occurred during this period. If you have already indicated interest in acquiring this we need you to confirm as soon as possible to ensure you are supplied. **Cost:** \$ 42.00 plus \$12ph.

To order, contact [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au), or Judy on 9559 2821. We will try to help save postage with pickup or delivery in the local area.