



## Walks, talks and meetings ...

**It's a full calendar from now 'til Christmas!**

**Presentations Showcase – 7.30  
Wed evenings 3 and 31 October, 14  
November, and 5 December**

Over recent years, the Society has presented a lot of talks to external groups, which members don't get to know much about, so we have arranged to put several of these on for our home audience between now and the end of the year. Venue: Ferncourt Public School, Premier Street, Marrickville. Enter gates on Premier St. Go up steps, almost opposite, into main building, then up main staircase and turn left to the meeting room. Details of each talk in the calendar below.

**Saturday 29 September 8.45 am – 1.00 pm. A guided walk from Bexley North to Undercliffe with environmental and historical commentary.**

Free to members but pre-registration essential, contact Peter on 9554 3176 or via [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au). New and joining members especially invited. Get to know more of the Valley's remarkable bushland and history.

**Wednesday 3 October 7.30 pm. Illustrated talk: The struggle for Wolli Valley.**

Speaker: Gavin Gatenby. Lasting from the mid 1970s until the late 1990s, the epic struggle to save the bushland and open space of the Wolli Valley was Sydney's longest running environmental dispute. During its course the Preservation Society mobilised local residents and the broader conservation movement and pioneered new campaigning techniques. Venue details at top of calendar.

**Wednesday 24 October 7.30 pm. Annual General Meeting.**

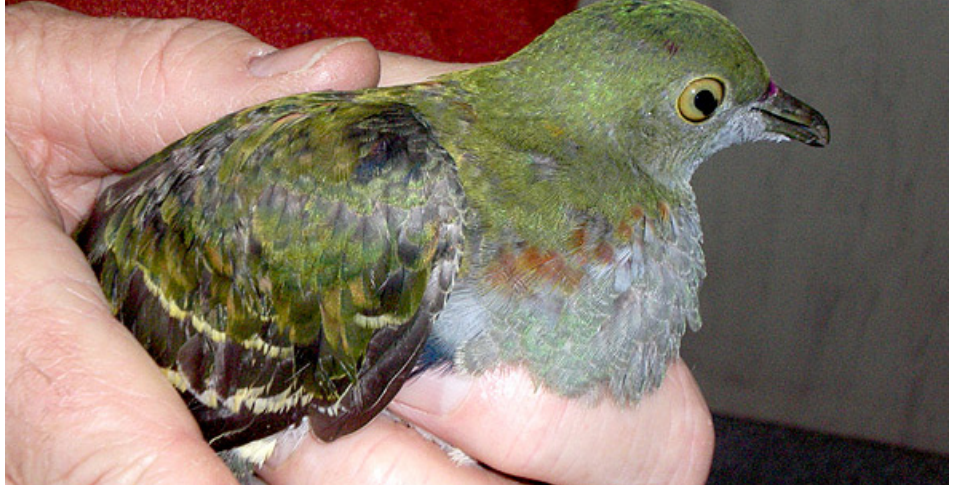
11-13 Hartill-Law Avenue, Bardwell Park.

### Agenda

- Minutes of previous meeting
- Reports
- Election of Committee and Office Bearers (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary).
- Appointment of Public Officer and of Auditor.

The meeting will immediately precede an ordinary

### More Wolli bird surprises



**This injured juvenile Purple-crowned fruit dove was captured in the Wolli Valley in June. There are only about 20 records of the species from Sydney in the last half-century. Full story page 3.**

meeting of the Committee who, as always, are keen to hear from others interested in taking a role in the organizational side of the Society. If you would like to discuss what is involved, please contact the President, Peter Stevens, on 9554 3176 or via [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au).

In line with the revised constitution adopted last year, nominations "(a) must be made in writing, signed by 2 members of the association and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate (which may be endorsed on the form of the nomination), and

"(b) must be delivered to the secretary of the association at least 14 days before the date fixed for the holding of the annual general meeting at which the election is to take place."

This year that means no later than 10 October.

**Sunday October 28, morning to early afternoon - From Creek to Crest**

Each year our joint event with the River Canoe Club has been oversubscribed and no wonder! An initial training session, a leisurely paddle from Tempe

(Unwin's Bridge) down Cooks River and up Wolli Creek – with views you just can't get any other way – to Turrella Reserve, a trip to the top of Nannygoat Hill for the stunning 360 degree view, before returning to the clubhouse for hot soup and rolls. This year's event already has one or two registrants and there's only room for seven (unless you're bringing your own canoe), so act now to get aboard! Cost is \$35 (mainly insurance). Register by emailing [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au) or ringing 9554 3176.

**Sunday October 28 afternoon (3 pm – sunset) Ewen Park Community Picnic**

See story on back page for details.

**Wednesday 31 October 7.30 pm. Illustrated talk: The Jackson Place Cottages.**

Speaker: Judy Finlason. Judy's account of the fascinating history of these heritage-listed cottages, the man who built them, and the work of uncovering the story. Venue details at top of calendar.

**Sunday 4 November. Birdwatching walk 9 am-12 (note changed date).**

The Wolli Valley has recorded over 25 per cent of the bird species known for NSW – phenomenal for its size and location and largely due to its role as one of only a few remnants in the heavily urbanised SW of Sydney. They won't all be seen on this walk, which will be focussed on introducing beginner and early stage birdwatchers to the habitats and birds of Wolli. Experienced birdwatcher and bander, Alan Leishman, will lead a morning bird walk from Bardwell Park to Turrella to celebrate Bird Week. It's free for Society members. To register for the walk contact Peter on 9554 3176 or via [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au) as soon as possible. Details will be sent to those who register.

**Monday 5 November 7.30 pm Two-Valley Trail Education Group**

Meeting at Ferncourt School. Access details as for the talk series at head of calendar. To get involved

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**Friday October 19. Annual Dinner. Evening from 6 pm. Speaker: Linda Burney.**

The Society's annual dinner will again be held at St George Rowing Club, 6.00 pm for 7.00pm. And the cost will remain the same, at \$35 per person for a two course buffet dinner with coffee etc. Other drinks will be available from a cash bar. Popular local MP Linda Burney (left), a long-time supporter of the Society and now Minister for Volunteering (and other things) will be our speaker this year. We've had great evenings there the last two years and this is a really valuable occasion on which to meet and socialize with other members. We need your registration now and your money ahead of time to be able to confirm numbers with the Club and to ensure that this is a fundraising event, not a fund-reducing one! So, please, use the enclosed form to book early, spread the word to your friends and family and come along for a fun night.





## Fishway at the Henderson Street weir

This long-awaited project has moved another step closer to action, with a development application submitted to the City of Canterbury. The Society was invited to comment on the proposal and has very recently looked at the plans and detailed proposals. and our initial reaction is that the \$65,000 project will be an important step towards increasing the biodiversity of the creek.

At present the weir forms a barrier to the movement of large and small fish species upstream from the salt/brackish section to the freshwater where many species breed. It is expected that after construction an additional six native species could recolonise the creek or be reintroduced.

The fishway will take the form of a concrete spillway channel about a metre wide and half a metre deep into which will be set large rocks to break the flow of the water, creating eddies and pools of low-velocity flow. This will allow small fish to negotiate the seven metre long channel. At times of high flow (and high tide), larger fish will also be able to make their way up into the fresh water.

Comments to Canterbury Council are due by September 28.

## Update on Regional Park

Progress continues to be slow – major parcels of land are being held up because of detailed problems in a small section of each – but at least it continues. Wollli Bluff is now in the hands of the Dept of Environment and Climate Change, as is a major part of Turrella Reserve (east of Turrella Creek) and the bushland extending eastwards to Jackson Place, including the old Jackson quarry. Further large parcels should be transferred once a formal memorandum of understanding with the City of Canterbury is signed, and a further one with Sydney Water at a corporate level. Remaining RTA land within the park boundaries is complicated by the remediation needed for mildly contaminated land opposite Jackson Place. So far, none of these delays has stood in the way of the Society's program of bush restoration, but the residual uncertainty needs to be removed as soon as possible, and we expect to take the issue up with the Minister for the Environment again later this year.

## Wollli Creek has two banks!

The Society has written to RailCorp seeking discussions on the management of the southern bank of Wollli Creek, between the creek and the railway line, from Bexley North to the rail bridge over Cooks River at Tempe. Our request is based on a very valuable discussion paper written by a volunteer, David Frith, providing detailed background information, and raising the issues involved, with good suggestions on how to tackle them. RailCorp is the biggest owner of the land in question and we hope to have constructive discussions with them. If you'd like to read David's paper, or, better still, to become involved in the actions needed to give us a two-sided creek, please contact Peter on 9554 3176 or via [info@wolllicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wolllicreek.org.au).

## It's been another eventful period for on-ground activity

- A further stormwater channel has undergone **sandstone armouring**, this time at the Bray Avenue wetland (see photo) and some of the plants rescued beforehand are already back in the ground. Once we have recovered from the inevitable damage this is going to be a great improvement.



- The City of Canterbury has applied for funding from **Commonwealth Community Water Grants** to apply related treatments to two further stormwater channels (ie side creeks piped in their upper reaches). One of these is adjacent to our site at the end of Johnston St, Earlwood, where our temporary redirection of stormwater will be superceded. The other is at the right-angle in Highcliff Road, Undercliffe, which contributes to the watercourse that the Jackson Track up from Turrella Reserve has become. It won't solve that problem on its own, but it will make any solution more meaningful.

- **National Tree Day** plantings were again at Johnston St this year and 32 volunteers enjoyed spectacular weather while getting 434 plants into the ground in Stage 2 of the barrier planting along the street.

- **The recent rains** have ensured that this planting and others at Bray Avenue and Paperbark Creek have got a good start. Unfortunately, it has also given a good boost to the weeds, though there are less of them each year.

- We have applied for a new **Dept of Lands grant** under its program for the control of weeds on Crown Land. This is for work just east of Girrahween Park, which we are organizing jointly with NPWS.

- WCPS has also entered into an arrangement with NPWS to jointly fund a professional supervisor for our **new group of bush restoration volunteers** working on Wollli Bluff overlooking Waterworth Park. This is our fourth regular monthly group and they meet on the third Saturday of each month. Others meet on the first Saturday, second Wednesday and second Sunday of each month. For more details contact the Society on 9554 3176 or via [info@wolllicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wolllicreek.org.au).

- **A grass identification workshop** for volunteers aimed to help us identify the weed grasses we find in the valley. It was very helpful to us all. Grasses are a difficult area, but at least they no longer all look the same! **Chris Miles** reports further:

WCPS bush regeneration volunteers were recently invited to attend a half-day workshop on the identification of weed grasses growing in the Wollli local area. The August workshop was organised by WCPS and supported by funds obtained from a Cooks River Foreshores Improvement Program grant.

What the ten enthusiastic students learned was not only how to readily identify quite a number of exotic grasses that are common in our area, but also their growth habits, and hence the most efficient method for their removal. The instructor, Lyn Whiley, herself a member of WCPS and a bush regenerator long-experienced in the local area, distributed simple, clearly-written and brief handouts on each of the grasses and with the samples of the grasses she had brought, we studied the major differentiating characteristics of each.

After morning tea we went out into Girrahween Park to put our studies to the test! Of course we spotted a few native grasses too. It was a most informative and enjoyable session - we came away from the workshop feeling much better informed and very pleased with ourselves.

- We have been in correspondence with the City of Canterbury about installing a **fence along Hartill-Law Avenue** between Bray Avenue and the Bridge. We are concerned about the safety of children with a hazardous steep slope, still containing much glass and concrete etc, just the other side of an easily passed post-and-rail fence. And of course, we want any replacement to take place **before** we complete restoration work on that slope. Council has put it onto their "Rolling Works Program", which has a rather indefinite time frame, so we have postponed our restoration work there.

# More Wollli bird surprises

By Gavin Gatenby

Since the last Update two more birds have been added to the official Wollli list. On Wednesday 20 June Peter Stevens came upon a distressed young bird fluttering along the Undercliff Track near Jackson Place. With the help of Judy Finlason, it was carefully captured. It turned out to be a juvenile male Purple-crowned (or Superb) Fruit-dove, arguably the most beautiful Australian fruit dove and a real rarity this far south. The species has only been recorded in the Sydney region about 20 times since 1953 (a 2002 record is from Earlwood) and only once before 1953 (in 1876!).

The little bird was collected by local Wildlife Information and Rescue (WIRES) carer, Chris Lloyd, a bird specialist. It had a badly injured wing and had lost many flight feathers, possibly having fallen victim to an attack by a raptor.

Cared for by Lloyd, the little dove continues to put out some distorted flight feathers from the follicles damaged in the attack and, once fully formed, these are plucked to gain, hopefully, better replacements. It continues to demonstrate wild behaviour despite months in captivity, a hopeful sign it may one day be released back in Wollli Creek.

As if the fruit dove wasn't exciting enough, on the evening of 5 August I spotted what I thought was a male Variegated Wren and his troop in thick scrub near the escarpments on the Girrahween track. Luckily I had my camera with me and, braving the low-light conditions, I took a quick shot, resulting in a lousy image, but good enough to confirm the first ever sighting of the species in the Wollli Valley. Voren O'Brien has since seen another (or perhaps the same) Variegated Wren a few hundred metres away.



Above: this photo records the first sighting of the Variegated Wren in Wollli. Right: a juvenile Black-shouldered Kite.

To an inexperienced observer the Variegated Wren might understandably be mistaken for the well-known "Blue Wren" (officially known as Superb Blue Wren) but it's difficult to see how its presence could have escaped the notice of such an experienced birdwatcher as the late Neil Rankin who meticulously recorded the valley's birdlife until his death in 2001. These are not the sort of birds that can suddenly migrate into the area from many kilometers away, so I can only conclude that a small remnant population has been present, all along, in the nearby Bardwell Valley, from which they have now recolonised Wollli.

Another interesting development is that a pair of Black-shouldered Kites recently observed in the valley have raised at least one offspring. On 22 August I got the accompanying photo of a juvenile kite in a willow on the edge of the Henderson Street Industrial Park.

## Bird observer activity

Bird watching is building up very strongly. Here's an indication of what's afoot:

The bird group has continued to gain members; the main focus is regular monthly surveys of as many sections of the Wollli and Bardwell Valleys as we can manage – this builds on Neil Rankin's long-term observations. The observations are being fed into regional and national databases. We almost have all sections covered now, but would benefit from more members in each team to ensure back-up. It takes about an hour each month and can be a great way to start learning more about the bird life, so you don't have to be an expert already! Other ways are to go on our introductory bird walk on 4 November or attend the talk on birds on 14 November – see events calendar for details of these.

This month we launched Wollli Birds Online, an internet companion to Neil Rankin's book "The Birds of Wollli Valley". This includes several indoor tools to assist with bird data collection and recording in the field. From this one site bird group members can:

- List uncommon bird sightings in a central, chronological table;
- Add Wollli bird photos to a community album;
- Write detailed items for a weblog recording unusual behaviour and interesting discoveries;
- Interact through the "comments" feature.

Or, of course, you can just visit and browse to see what others have been entering.

Wollli Birds Online is located at <http://wolllibirds.blogspot.com/> or follow the link from the resources section of the Society's website.

These online tools are quick and easy to use and we are working on instructions and guidelines to help even the technologically shy to participate and make Wollli Birds Online into a more comprehensive resource.

There's also an email group system that enables each bird group member to automatically send information to all the others or to ask questions, send photos to the group to get help in identification. Contact [birds@wolllicreek.org.au](mailto:birds@wolllicreek.org.au) to join the list.

In the planning pipeline are a series of 'snapshot' days, when we hope to get a lot of observers out on the same day all over the valleys to get a maximal picture of species present – eventually we want to do one for each season.

## Grey-headed Flying Foxes roosting in Wollli

By Andrew Smith

For the first time that we know of, Grey-headed Flying Foxes (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) have been noticed roosting in the Wollli Creek Valley. It is possible they have camped here before as this species often chooses historical roost sites that have been used on previous occasions. Due to their nocturnal nature, flying foxes and other bats generally go unseen. It is truly important for Australians to understand the vital role flying foxes carry out in maintaining the continued health of forests on the east coast of Australia.

Flying foxes are a keystone species in the continued biodiversity of Australian forests. The main diet of Australian flying foxes consists of *Eucalyptus* and *Banksia* blossom as well as rainforest fruit such as native fig. Due to their highly mobile nature, flying foxes can distribute pollen from flowers or seeds from fruit more effectively than any other animal. This is of particular importance in fragmented patches of remnant urban bushland such as the Cooks River catchment including Wollli Creek Valley. Flying foxes maintain the flow of genetic diversity to and from these bushland patches, ensuring the maintenance of a healthy ecosystem.

Flying foxes were once abundant in Australia but populations have been decreasing at an alarming rate due to clearing of natural

forest habitat as well as systematic culling by orchardists. Scientific estimates have shown that the population of Grey-headed Flying fox declined by up to 30 per cent between 1989 and 2001. Flying foxes are a protected species by law and in 2001 the Grey-headed Flying fox was listed as vulnerable in NSW, to protect the species from further decline.

The flying foxes roosting in the Valley may or may not be permanent. They are in a secluded location far from any resident dwelling. It is best not to disturb these animals as our forests depend on healthy flying fox populations. If you come across an injured flying fox or other native animal, immediately call a wildlife rescue group such as Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services (9413 4300) or WIRES (1300 094 737); do not handle them yourself. If you wish to observe flying foxes, there is a colony in the Royal Botanic Gardens. If you would like to know more about flying foxes or bats in general, contact NSW National Parks or visit the Sydney Bats Website at <http://www.sydneymbats.org.au/cms/>. If you see them in the Wollli Valley, please report them to the Society via [info@wolllicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wolllicreek.org.au). They are an important new addition to the native wildlife here.

• Andrew Smith is finishing a thesis on flying foxes and has visited the Wollli group.



## Sunday Afternoon in Ewen Park (Cooks River)

As a celebration of spring by the river and the start of daylight saving, the Friends of Ewen Park will be holding their Second Annual Spring Community Picnic on Sunday 28 October from 3 pm to sunset. Celebrations will be opened by Linda Burney, the Member for Canterbury. There will be Children's Art & Craft Activities, with an Environmental Theme. Bring friends and family, and some afternoon tea!

## Events Calendar

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contact Nadia on 9558 1362 or Judy on 9559 2821.

### Wednesday 14 November 7.30 pm. Illustrated talk: Urban birds and the birds of Wolli Valley.

Speaker: Voren O'Brien. Drawing on her birdwatching experience, Voren investigates differences in the birds we see around schools and homes and the prolific birdlife in the valley and explores ways to change the number of native birds that we see. This talk has been given in a number of local primary schools and has a wealth of photos to illustrate the topic and some birdcalls for children to identify. Venue details at top of calendar.

### Wednesday 5 December 7.30 pm. Illustrated Talk: Biodiversity and your backyard.

Speaker: Peter Stevens. Aimed to help people access the range of materials now available for those wanting to convert their general support for native biodiversity into practice in their own garden areas. Peter will illustrate Specific local examples of simple ways to do it and suggest designs and plant choice. The general importance and personal value of increasing backyard diversity are stressed. Venue details at top of calendar.

## REJOIN NOW FOR 2008

Our membership is for the calendar year, but to aid your committee with financial calculations etc and to enable it to focus on recruiting new members, it really helps if you renew at this time of year. So, please, act now – an application form is enclosed with this hard copy version of the Update – and you'll be financial to 31/12/2008. (Email members will also receive their usual copy, in glorious colour, electronically.) One cheque can cover this **AND** your payment for the Annual Dinner!

# Our outdoor classroom

The *Why Wolli is Wonderful* project will culminate with the launch of a 2008 calendar on Tuesday 13 November at Rockdale Town Hall. Children's artwork, depicting their experiences of the valley will feature on the calendar which will be widely distributed to schools and community organizations. This project, with financial assistance from the Natural Resource Advisory Council, was the result of a partnership with Rockdale Council and involved five local schools – Bexley North, Athelstone, Ramsgate and Carlton Public Schools and Al Zahra College, Arncliffe.

In addition to the WWiW project, there has been an increase in interest by schools in using the Valley as an outdoor classroom. Earlwood Primary School has had guided bushwalks for three Year 1 classes and are keen to take Year 2 next term. PLC Croydon has booked walks

for their Year 2 classes, and Ferncourt PS is determined to take the entire school on guided bushwalks despite two postponements due to rain!

Voren O'Brien and Judy Finlason, together with interested members and teachers in the area, have been looking at ways in which WCPS can work with schools to provide opportunities for environmental educational programs in the valley. Voren and Judy will be presenting a workshop, *Why Wolli is Wonderful – Steps to sustainability*, at the SEEN (Sydney Environmental Education Network) conference at Cockatoo Island on Saturday 3 November.

A further meeting of teachers and community members to discuss the Two Valley Trail as a teaching resource will be held at Ferncourt School on 5 November. For access arrangements see top of calendar on page 1.

## The M5 East – more filtering of the facts

By Judi Rossi of Residents Against Polluting Stacks

The M5East ventilation debacle continues, with more filtering of the facts by the RTA. As all Wolli wonderers would know, back in 2005, Premier Iemma allocated \$50m to trial filtration in the M5East tunnel, and community groups applauded the initiative. However, when details of the proposed trial became available, it was apparent that the RTA was not proposing an optimal solution. In fact, the RTA initially sought approval to release unfiltered vehicle emissions from the Bexley Road portals for up to fourteen hours per day. After successful lobbying by RAPS, local residents and AQCLG members, just before the State election, the Premier stated that there would be 'no portal emissions before filtration was installed in the tunnel.'

On 18 July 2007, Minister Sartor announced the approval of the filtration plant under Section 3 (a) of the EP&A Act. The release of portal emissions, previously part of the filtration plant proposal, will now be dealt with separately, at a later date.

What's RAPS' position on this?

RAPS rejects any untreated air being released at the Bexley Road portal and supports a filtration trial, but has serious reservations with the RTA's proposal: it will cost \$50m, but treat air at only one point in the westbound tunnel before returning it to the tunnel up to 500m from the western portal. It is unlikely to achieve any noticeable improvement in the 'haze' inside the westbound tunnel and air released at the portal will still be dirty. RAPS has been unable to find any substantiation for the RTA claim of a 36% improvement in air quality in the westbound tunnel.

Two alternative proposals for filtering the air inside the tunnel have been proposed, but it appears that neither has been properly assessed by the RTA. In fact, there is no evidence that the RTA has even assessed its own objectives against outcomes for the project and by their own admission (at the Air

Quality Community Liaison Group), there has been no cost-benefit analysis.

After a series of meetings with the RTA over eighteen months, RAPS believes that the RTA has misrepresented to Planning NSW key information from one of the alternative proposals, and kept silent on a third alternative. RAPS also has concerns that the filtration plant was approved separately from consideration of the portal emissions when the two are integral parts of the same proposal. If the RTA filtration plant is ineffectual (as predicted), and the 'haze' remains, will dirty tunnel air be released at the portals?

These matters are currently the subject of further investigation and discussion between PlanningNSW, the RTA and RAPS. Concurrently, there has also been lobbying by Bexley Road and other local residents and Ms Cherie Burton has promised to organise a meeting with Minister Roozendahl and Minister Sartor.

Meanwhile, the new Madrid Calle 30 tunnels are operating with filtration equipment provided by four different manufacturers and Copenhagen has just begun construction of a 12.5km tunnel, again using in-tunnel filtration. While there's an argument for investing in better public transport infrastructure rather than tunnels, there's certainly proof in these projects that if filtration is required, there are effective systems available!

• **RAPS meets at the EBP Bowling Club, Doris Avenue, Earlwood every second Tuesday, at 7:30pm. To get involved or just to learn more, phone the Secretary, Gina Briers, on 9559 1278 to check the next meeting date.**

## WCPS turns 25!

2008 marks 25 years since the formation of the Wolli Creek Preservation Society. *Let's celebrate!* A small group has formed to investigate ways to mark the occasion. Contact [voren@ihug.com.au](mailto:voren@ihug.com.au) to voice your opinions or join the team.