



October saw Wolli Creek filled with colourful crafts expertly (or shakily) making their way up Wolli Creek from the Boatshed on Cooks River to Turrella Reserve.

This was a fascinating way to view the Creek as habitat. We saw a Great White Egret lurking in the mangrove shallows, several Cormorants roosting on overhanging branches and Yellow-tailed black cockatoos flying alongside us on their way to Nannygoat Hill.

Sadly we farewell our trainers and minders, Matt Lavin and Kim Reeves, whose move to the Blue Mountains precludes future involvement in this event. We do hope to find others to work with regular guide, Deb Little. This is a popular event so register your interest now (for October 2008) by contacting info@wollicreek.org.au.

supported by Society members. We look forward to sharing the survey results with you and making the most of them! Email copies should be sent to info@wollicreek.org.au and hard copies to WCPS PO Box 270 Earlwood 2206. Thanks for helping.

Help us get to know you

MEMBER SURVEY 2008

We are feeling very encouraged by the growth in the Society over the last few years, but this also means that the Committee doesn't know as much as we would like to about other members. In particular, we believe that there is a very wide range of skills, interests and contacts within the membership that we would like to be able to draw upon. And, we suspect, more recent members won't yet be aware of all that the Society does, so we'd like to learn what we need to say more about.

In order to fill out the picture we have designed a survey that accompanies this Update. We would be hugely appreciative if you could take the time to complete it and return it to us. It looks big, but it's mainly tick-a-box and trials suggest that 20 minutes will see you through it all. It will provide invaluable information to the committee for the next few years. The name of everyone who responds will go into a draw for a \$20 Gift Voucher kindly donated by The Art of Cakes at Bexley North (excellent coffee and cakes).

In seeking this information from members, the Committee is guided by the Society's constitutional purpose to "ensure the preserva-

tion of the natural and cultural heritage of the Wolli Creek Valley, its tributaries, associated corridors and their ecological communities, and the ecologically sensitive restoration, expansion and maintenance of these areas". But we recognize that this can't be achieved unless we simultaneously ensure that members' expectations are met and their interests taken into account. The Society's philosophy is to achieve its purpose by having many people each doing a little, so one intent of the survey is to help match up the available time and skills of members with the varied multitude of tasks at all scales that maintain the Society and can make it more effective. But we also want feedback on whether the activities we have and the issues we engage in are ones

Volunteers needed for major planting work

This year we will be setting some 9,000 plants into the creekside area of Turrella Reserve between late March and June 30, under funding from the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority and, hopefully, with a number of corporate volunteers as well. Interpretation signs about the planting have gone up in the reserve, a leaflet has been distributed to nearby streets and to commuters using Turrella station. Grass-spraying has begun and a protective fence has been put up. Some vandalism is already evident so please be watchful and report in if you notice anything.

The planting will take about a dozen days of planting sessions and about half of these will be in weekdays with corporate volunteers (though members are welcome to come

along). That leaves a lot of plants for Society and community volunteers on weekends, so please put your hand up now to be part of this historic exercise so that we can give you details of dates and times when finalized. Register with Peter on 9554 3176 or via info@wollicreek.org.au.

Bush regeneration work will also continue in 2008; our regular volunteer sessions will be on the first Saturday, second Sunday, second Wednesday and third Saturday of each month. All sessions standardly run from 9-12.30, but dates and times do get varied to take account of the weather etc, so you need to be on the volunteer list for up-to-the-minute advice. Register with Peter as above.

WCPS turns 25!

2008 marks 25 years since the formation of the Wolli Creek Preservation Society. We would like to celebrate with a community festival in Turrella Reserve but this can only happen with YOUR HELP! Contact voren@ihug.com.au to get involved.

It pays to keep an eye on our website

While this Update only issues three times a year, the WCPS Website is the place to find regular updates about Valley events. You can check for bush regeneration dates; find out about upcoming talks, or events such as tree planting; birdwatching or kayaking. And don't forget to visit the Resources page, which has an increasing collection of information and photos of the flora and fauna of the Valley.

Synopsis of Valley Fauna A longer article being prepared for the Royal Zoological Society will be posted on the web during March.

Wolli fish Little has been known about the fish species (fresh and salt water) to be found in Wolli Creek, however, recent baseline sampling carried out by the NSW Department of Primary Industry in November 2007, in advance of the installation of a fishway at Turrella weir, has identified six native fish species in the fresh-water section above the Henderson Street weir. These were: Empire Gudgeon, Flathead Gudgeon, Striped Gudgeon, Firetail Gudgeon, Common Galaxia and Long-Finned Eel.

In the brackish to salt water immediately below the weir, Sea Mullett, Yellow-fin Bream, Port Jackson Perchlet and Toadfish were collected.

Even more plentiful than the fish were the questions from one keen 5-year-old Society member, Gabriel Bakker, who turned up to help check the fishnets!

Turtle troubles Eastern Long-necked Turtles have survived the foxes!

We've long been trying to find out more about the Eastern long-necked turtle (*Chelodina longicollis*) and worried that with all the eggs seen dug up, that their young weren't surviving. But some are, and, in October 2007, Voren O'Brien found one on the Girrahween Track and escorted it to the creek, but not until she'd conducted a photo shoot. It was her most exciting Wolli encounter yet, which is saying something! In November, fish netting at the Weir turned up another baby turtle that had made it safely to the water so there's some hope for this species surviving in the Valley.



Invasive feral: Red-eared Slider.

However, in November a local herpetologist found a Red-eared slider turtle (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) at Turrella. It was big and full of eggs. This is a non-native, invasive species and classified as an extreme risk to native plants



Scientists from the Department of Primary Industries sampling fish species below the Turrella weir. Inset: Port Jackson Perchlet. Photo: Voren O'Brien.

and animals. Large specimens can inflict a painful bite. It is an offence to sell or to keep these animals without a permit, attracting fines of up to \$60,000. It is also an offence to release them into the natural environment. They are aggressive invaders and we don't want them in Wolli. If you see any, please immediately contact info@wollicreek.com.au.

To distinguish the sliders from the native species, look for a distinctive red stripe behind each eye. Another distinguishing feature is that Red-eared sliders retract their short necks straight into their shell while the native Long-necked turtle curves its neck when retracting.

Creepy crawlies There have been no systematic studies of the invertebrate life in the Wolli Valley, but there is a growing collection of photos of species seen locally that can be accessed via the internet at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/14316262@N00/sets/>

Burgeoning bats Residents of the inner-west are noticing blackened skies around dusk as a large camp of flying foxes leave their roost in the Wolli Valley and head out to feed in the suburbs. The camp is estimated to contain over 1000 Grey-headed Flying-foxes and has only been established in Valley since mid-2007.

This dramatic increase in numbers means that many bats will become trapped or injured in areas where people are not used to them. Bats entangled in fruit nets are often badly injured trying to escape. Do not try to remove the animal yourself (their bite may carry lyssavirus). If you find an animal that needs help call a wildlife rescue group such as Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services (02 9413 4300) or WIRES (1300 094 737).

The Society has organised a special talk by Flying-Fox experts who may be bringing along a living example! See calendar on p 4 for details. Meanwhile, you can read more about our local Flying-Foxes on our website at: http://www.wollicreek.org.au/flying_fox.html.



Male Variegated Fairy-wren, Nannygoat Hill. Photo: Voren O'Brien.

Yet another new bird! The Society's bird-watching group continues to discover interesting species visiting or returning to the Valley. Gavin Gatenby recently recorded the first sighting of a Bar-Shouldered Dove in the Valley. Variegated Fairy-wrens, also recently recorded for the first time have since been found nesting and raising young near Turrella Reserve. A Sacred Kingfisher has taken up residence at the Henderson Street Weir and a Peregrine falcon is again visiting the M5E Stack. You can keep track of our uncommon bird sightings via the wiki <http://www.scribblygumwiki.net/regulars/wcps/> and read more detailed articles about unusual bird behaviour and interesting discoveries at <http://wollibirds.blogspot.com/>. The group always welcome new members. To find out more, email birds@wollicreek.org.au.



What La Nina brought to the Bray Avenue wetland. This picture was taken shortly after a concentrated downpour on Sunday 3 February that was sufficient to close Bexley Road for a while. The water level is metres above what is usual, so the wetland certainly acts as an effective stormwater retention basin. Now to ensure that stormwater is clear of rubbish and sediment! PHOTO: Deb Little.



Governor to open Two Valley Trail photo exhibition

This 13km walking track is a joint project with four other local groups and runs from Campsie to Bexley North via Tempe. (For more information on the project contact Peter on 9554 3176 or via info@wollicreek.org.au).

The TVT group has received a grant from the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority to develop some environmental educational resources to support teachers who want to use the TVT as an outdoor classroom. This pilot program will involve 8 schools and run during Terms 1 & 2. If you would like to find out more about the project, contact Judy Finlason on 9559 2821.

A photo exhibition to promote the Trail has attracted 150 entries from 25 community members and about 65 of these will be on display when the exhibition is opened by Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir, the Governor of NSW, at 4pm on Thursday 3 April at a local venue to be notified. There are some very striking images among those selected for display by the independent panel.

The Society is also interested in any historical photos of the Wolli Valley from before 1980, say. Contact Voren voren@ihug.com.au or 9559 4706 if you have any.

The Two Banks project moves ahead

Since the last Update, the Society has convened with representatives of RailCorp, the City of Canterbury, Rockdale City Council, and National Parks and Wildlife Service (DECC) to look at what can be done to improve Wolli Creek's riparian zone between Bexley North and Tempe. The parties agreed to support the development of a Plan of Management for the zone, but also agreed that there were a number of actions to prevent any further degradation that could be taken ahead of its development.

right at the base of the Bluff and working with the City of Canterbury to impose a one-storey limit on development. This would be less than ideal, even if an improvement over the original expectations.

For copies of the Society's submissions on any of these issues or an update on the state of play, contact Peter on 9554 3176 or via info@wollicreek.org.au

Nibbling at the edges

A significant threat to the Wolli Valley is the 'nibbling' that keeps pushing development closer to bushland and creek, intensifying edge effects of stormwater, pollution, weed spread and pet invasion. For humans, it reduces the sense of seclusion still possible to find in a valley already intensely developed. Native fauna can lose habitat and access to the creek for water. The resulting degradation may create arguments for still further encroachment. Three examples are current; the first more a bite than a nibble.

13 Henderson St Turrella. This roughly triangular block is directly opposite Turrella Reserve just downstream from the weir. An earlier community proposal to convert it into a community garden was rejected by the Department of Planning because of the site's contamination problems. The Dept then sold off the land to an industrial developer who has submitted a Development Application to Rockdale City Council to put 20 industrial units on the site. The plan includes a roadway on the creek front right across the site, bringing noise and visual pollution to the enjoyment of Turrella Reserve. The roadway is nowhere more than 10m from the creek bank (riparian zones typically call for a 30-40m buffer zone) and at Henderson St itself it would be a mere 1.5m from the creek bank. The development would come well outside the line of adjacent industrial sites, which present a plain wall to the creek. The Society has lodged an objection to the proposal and is aware of at least a dozen others from individuals. We understand that the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority has also raised

concerns with Council. Council has not yet reached a decision.

48 Hocking Avenue Earlwood. The Department of Lands is seeking a re-zoning of a large block of land here from 'open space' to allow residential development. The block was excluded from the land being incorporated into the Wolli Creek Regional Park, but adjoins it. While a single dwelling on the site, comparable to others in the street would be tolerable, the Dept is also seeking to include an 'Asset Protection Zone' (APZ) stretching right to the edge of the Park. Inevitably, the City of Canterbury, which recognises no such Zone for adjacent properties, would come under pressure to allow further development at the back of the block, at a level where other properties already exist. The Society wants the APZ removed from rezoning so that it can be retained as a Bushland Protection Zone (BPZ), of which we need more round the Park's edges! We think it should be managed by NPWS with support from local residents. The Society and residents are to meet soon with the Mayor and others to discuss options ahead of a Council decision on Feb 28.

18 Bayview Avenue Undercliffe. This block is at the base of Wolli Bluff (the eastern limit of the Regional Park) above Waterworth Park. The Department of Planning is seeking to sell it for residential development, which could result in a large two-storey development blocking views to and from Wolli Bluff, which are quite striking. We have lobbied the Minister for Planning (Frank Sartor) to prevent this and retain the block as open space. The Dept is now considering leaving a 5m buffer strip

Annual Dinner success

The Society's Annual Dinner was held on the 19th October 2007 at the St. George Rowing Club. Name tags allowed newer members to put a face to the names we hear during the year.

As the 70 members and guests arrived, they were entertained by a slide show of birds, reptiles and views of the Wolli Creek area. There was an interesting array of publications for sale on the history and use of Wolli Creek and our very impressive banner decorated the stage.

Peter Stevens brought us all up to date on the Society's activities with the Annual Report. Judy Finlason introduced Linda Burney, Minister for Fair Trading, Youth and Volunteering, who gave an informative talk on volunteering efforts and her surprise and delight at the numbers of people involved in all voluntary activities.

The buffet dinner was served and we all settled at the tables to enjoy the meal and some stimulating conversation. After the dessert course and the drawing of the raffle tickets for a range of donated goodies, it was well into the evening as we all departed after a pleasant night.

AGM 2007

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on 24 October, 2007.

Officers and members were elected as set out below. Peter Stevens and Yvonne Singleton continue as president and treasurer; the posts of vice president and secretary, initially remaining vacant, were filled in November. Thelma MacGowan was re-appointed as auditor.

President – Peter Stevens

Vice President – Voren O'Brien

Secretary – Lynda Gordon Squire

Treasurer – Yvonne Singleton

Public Officer – Deb Little

Committee Members

Judy Finlason

Paul Fitzgerald

Ute Foster

Alan Leishman

Deb Little

Ann Porter

James Sen Gupta

The President's annual report for 2006-2007 was circulated to all WCPS members ahead of the meeting. For those joining later, a copy can be obtained from Peter on 9554 3176 or via info@wollicreek.org.au.

Schools activity

The Why Wolli is Wonderful 2008 calendar was posted to all members last year. We hope that everyone enjoyed the colourful images created by local children.

To complete the WWiW project, we are developing a kit for schools about local birds. It will be distributed to the five schools involved in the project and also be available to other schools through Rockdale Council and WCPS.

Society trials direct banking

The Society is now set up to trial receiving membership renewals, donations and publication purchases by direct transfer from those with internet banking facilities, saving members cheque and mail costs. Details are below, but remember, donations of \$50 and above can be made tax-deductible via Landcare and a special form is needed. Contact the Society if you want to make use of this arrangement.

To use direct transfer, fill in a standard membership/order form, available from the website, email it to info@wollicreek.org.au and make the corresponding funds transfer to the Society's bank account (BSB 032 067 Account number 288 295) Use 'WCPS Inc' to identify the Society and ensure that your payment will show in our bank statements with your initial and surname as identifier. We will marry the two up and contact you if there are problems.

Events Calendar

Bush Regeneration sessions are currently scheduled for 1, 9, 12 & 15 March, 5, 9, 13 & 19 April, 3, 11, 14 & 17 May and 7, 8, 11 and 21 June. Turrella planting sessions are on through these months as well – please volunteer!

Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 March 10-3 pm, Gough Whitlam Park, Bayview Street, Undercliffe – the Riverworks Environmental Sculpture Competition. On Saturday only, the Society will have a stall promoting the Wolli Valley to its Cooks River neighbours and, for the first time, will participate with a group entry in the sculpture competition. If you can spare a couple of hours on the WCPS stall, or would like more information please contact voren@ihug.com.au or phone 9559 4706. To join in the group sculpture let Voren know or you can just turn up on the day.

Thursday 3 April 4pm – Opening of the Two Valley Trail photo

exhibition by the Governor of NSW. Watch the website and local papers' community announcements for venue. The exhibition is expected to run for 10 days.

Sunday 13 April National Trust Heritage Festival Events:

1. Walk the Wolli Valley. Take a walk from the junction of the Cooks River and Wolli Creek through the bushland of the Wolli Creek Valley to Girrahween Park. Learn about people who call, and have called, the valley 'Our Place': the Bidjigal people, Brodie Spark and Tempe House, William Jackson and his stone cottages, and local volunteers who through bush restoration and environmental activities are making the Wolli Valley a place we can all be proud of. \$10 (WCPS members free)

9.00 am Meet Wolli Creek Station

1.00pm Finish at Girrahween Park. Return by train Bardwell Park to Wolli Creek.

For bookings and full details of walk contact Judy Finlason on 9559 2821

Organized by WCPS as part of the National Trust (NSW) Heritage Festival.

2. Cooks River Festival 11-4pm

at Steel Park Volunteers to staff WCPS stall needed and welcomed! advise info@wollicreek.org.au or Peter on 9554 3176.

Sunday 20 April 8.45, 1.00pm 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. New and joining members especially invited. Get to know more of the Valley's remarkable bushland and history.

Wednesday 7 May 7.30pm. Marjorie Beck and Nancy Pallin of the Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society will conduct a talk on bats for WCPS

at Ferncourt PS, Premier Street, Marrickville (enter via main door and go upstairs to meeting room). The KBCS is a non-profit community organization working for the conservation of all bat species, especially the Grey-headed Flying-fox, and they are keen to share their knowledge with us. Their website is: <http://www.sydneymbats.org.au/cms/>



Grey-headed Flying-foxes at the Turrella roost. The Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society will share their knowledge with us on May 7.