

## Two Valley Trail opened

The official inaugural walk of the Trail was held on Sunday 1 June. Despite early showers that may have discouraged the faint-hearted, about 70 people walked from Bexley North and 15 from Campsie after the launches by Linda Burney and Robert Furolo, respectively.

The refreshment stops organised by WCPS at Jackson Place and by Friends of Ewen Park in Ewen Park were great hits and feedback has been very positive. Expect to see more people walking in Wolli from now on!

The photographic exhibition to promote the Two Valley Trail foreshadowed in the February Update was opened by the Governor of NSW on 3 April and was on display at Campsie Library. It then moved to the Chrissie Cotter Gallery in Camperdown, to Rockdale Library and then on to St Peters Library.

We thank Canterbury, Rockdale and Marrickville Councils for making venues available free and Canterbury Council for providing a small grant to assist with the costs of mounting the exhibition.

The Society has much enjoyed working with the groups based on Cooks River in developing and realising the Two Valley Trail concept.

### Route map

At the launch of the exhibition a leaflet with a route map was also released and promotion work around the trail has led to requests for it from all over Sydney and from as far afield as Goulburn, Medlow Bath, Bomaderry and Coffs Harbour – often from former residents of the area and from bushwalking groups.

You can download a copy of this from the WCPS website, though it will be half-size on your A4 printer. Go to [www.wollicreek.org.au/activities](http://www.wollicreek.org.au/activities). For a hard copy, please ring 9554 3176.

The Cooks River Valley Association is applying to the City of Canterbury, on behalf of the five TVT groups, for a grant to fund translation of the leaflet into three or four community languages.

The next big walk event will be the Great Australian Bushwalk day on 14 September. There's still time to get fit enough to cover the whole distance!



Above: Walkers being briefed at Bexley North before the start of the inaugural walk. Right: Linda Burney cuts the ribbon. Below: One of the waymarkers installed by the NPWS.



### Wolli Track changes

NPWS staff have made some major changes along the Wolli Track, some of immediate benefit and others that will take longer to settle in.

- There are now a fair number of waymarks to help with the ambiguous points in the Track, although the 1 June TVT walk revealed the need for a couple more.
- Steps have been cut into two particularly slippery rocks – on the Jackson Track and just east of Paperbark Creek, much improving safety.
- The stormwater flow down the Jackson Track has been tackled by digging out the pond that formed above the track and putting a culvert under the track to carry the water away. This required significant machinery and the Jackson Track looks a bit bruised and sorry for itself, but the early June rains have settled some of the crushed sandstone imported for the track and early spring growth will soon heal the bruising.

NPWS continues work below the track to get this particular stream of water (from the bend in Highcliff Road) down to the creek through a weedier part of the good bushland to be found there. The whole area will benefit from the reduction of moisture and this will work against a lot of the exotics, like Privet, to be found on the lower parts of the track.



## Major planting underway at Turrella Reserve

Those of you visiting **Turrella Reserve** will have noticed the fence surrounding our planting area. Behind it we have now got over 3,300 plants in, and the early June rains have been most welcome as it is otherwise a lot to water by hand! Still another 2,000 plants to go, and additional volunteers are always welcome – ring 9554 3176. We are grateful to Conservation Volunteers Australia, Price Waterhouse Coopers, and Westpac, as well as our own stalwart band of volunteers for the fantastic effort in getting this project so far along. We are also going to need a band of folk for quarterly weeding sessions among the plantings, starting in early August. This is a good way to keep an eye on plant growth. Please volunteer to [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au) or 9554 3176.

We can expect further changes in **Turrella Reserve** over the next two years:

- The old dipping well alongside the footpath is to be reworked to form a more effective wetland area with a significant planting of natives around it, probably in the spring.
- Additional funds have now been found by the Catchment Management Authority and the Department of Primary Industries and allocated to the fishway up the weir; that work should start in June and be completed by the end of 2008.
- NPWS is planning a major reworking of Turrella Creek (the side stream across the reserve), changing its profile and installing a large gross pollutant trap (GPT) – this will take a couple of years, but we will then be able to plant lots of saltmarsh species along the new profile. This is important as Sydney saltmarsh is an official Endangered Community and Wolli has some of the best examples in Sydney, certainly in the Cooks River catchment, and it has nowhere to retreat to when sea levels rise.

Despite all this flurry of Turrella planting our **regular bush regeneration groups** have been beavering away on sites from Bexley North to Wolli Bluff and points in between. Knowledgeable visitors are now starting to comment on how much has been achieved, rather than just reflecting on the amount of work there is to do! One of the most exciting developments is the coming forward of a fair number of new and younger volunteers, which augurs well for the 50 year restoration program ahead of us! Fingers crossed for the success of funding applications detailed elsewhere in



Volunteers at work on the Turrella plantings. So far 3,300 plants have been put in.

## Funding Wolli improvements

Applications have been made by:

- WCPS to the NSW Environment Trust for a further three years of funding for bush regeneration work below Johnston St Earlwood
- WCPS to the Greenspace program of the Department of Planning for a further two years funding for work in the areas around the Bray Avenue wetland
- The Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority (with support from WCPS, NPWS, Railcorp, and Rockdale and Canterbury Councils) for a two year grant to fund some immediate protective work and the development of an integrated management plan for the riparian zone on both sides of Wolli Creek from Bexley North to Tempe. If successful, the Society will be on the steering committee for the project.

And there are other major funds in the pipeline, so to speak:

- The Cooks River Sustainability Initiative is funded by a \$2m grant from the NSW Environment Trust to the Councils of Cooks River catchment to improve water management in the catchment by closely involving sub-catchment communities.

One of the six sub-catchments to be involved is the Upper Wolli. On May 20, the Society had a presentation about the project there and engaged in a brief 'visioning' exercise in which those present identified what they wanted to see in 50 years time – some very striking changes envisaged!

The federal budget contained an allocation of \$2m for stormwater and wetland work in the Cooks River and Wolli Valleys over the next two years. The Society has been consulted on the priorities for this funding, and we expect to see further significant improvements to the quality of stormwater entering the lower Wolli system, and reductions in the damaging effects of unconstrained flow routes across the bushland.

The Society has received \$4,000 from the Department of Lands for further bush regeneration work just east of Girraheen Park, and has just been offered a further \$2,000 to supplement this work.

The Society and the NPWS are jointly funding supervision of our volunteers working on the weeds on Wolli Bluff until mid-2009.

## WCPS - 25 years and going strong

This year's Annual Dinner will be celebrating 25 years since the formation of the Society, and we want you all to come! It's on from 6 pm on Friday 24 October and will once again be at the riverside venue of the St George Rowing Club on Cooks River in the new suburb of Wolli Creek. The last two years have each seen over 70 people enjoying good food, great company and a vast array of prizes. So get the date firmly fixed in your diary and we'll give you more details about it in the September Update.

# Then suddenly, they vanished ...

In previous Wolli Updates we have reported on the presence of the Grey-headed Flying-fox (GHFF) camp by the creek in Turrella. Some interesting developments have taken place since that last report.

In April 2008, Society volunteers joined in an official “fly-out” count of the number of GHFF leaving the camp at dusk. A PhD student researching GHFFs is coordinating a synchronised count on the third Friday of each month for camps across NSW and Victoria to gain additional information about this vulnerable species.

We aim to add our information to the project while learning more ourselves about the Wolli camp, particularly following recent reports that the Botanic Gardens Trust’s may apply for a licence to try and re-locate “their” GHFF; their approach, if successful, could impact upon “our” camp.

Some 13 Society volunteers have now been involved in the official counts. We had some initial training in how to count them, generously provided by Andrew Smith, who has recently completed an Honours thesis on GHFF camps around Sydney. In April, we counted over 6000 flying-foxes, and in May, just over 7,600.

These numbers indicated that the Wolli camp was a significant one. This is a huge jump from the 300 estimated mid-2007, but the static count method used then (counting them from below while they roost) is known not to be as reliable as our fly-out counts - where a number of counters station themselves along the major flight paths of the departing bats.

Just as we grew excited about the numbers being counted and got more proficient in the counting process, lo and behold, over the weekend immediately following the May fly-out count, the GHFF had decamped! Not a sound to be heard, nor a flying-fox to be seen then, nor over the next few days, nor since. More knowledgeable GHFF watchers have suggested that, while interesting, this is not unusual just after the breeding season when they may take off in search of reliable food.

While no one knows how they coordinate their efforts, there is no doubt that they communicate, being the social animals that they are. While we don’t know where they have gone, they could be back at any time, and we will continue to do our monitoring. Such fascinating creatures.

## Big roll-up for Flying Fox talk

On 7 May, 38 people turned out to hear Marjorie Beck and Nancy Pallin of the Kuring-gai Bat Conservation Society give a great talk about the lives and loves of Grey-headed Flying Foxes. It was also very special to be introduced to the two live Flying-foxes who accompanied the speakers. They were very charismatic animals. A great night, and our most popular talk to date.

## Planning update



An artist's impression of the proposed industrial development fronting Wolli Creek.

## Henderson St industrial development would impact Turrella Reserve

In the last Update we highlighted three planning issues – here’s an update on them.

**13 Henderson Street:** Rockdale Council has still to make a decision on this. The Society has written (4 April) to Frank Sartor as both the Minister for Planning and the local MLA for the site urging that he require the Department of Planning to repurchase the site and hive off the riparian part of it for retention in public hands. As at 4 June, the Minister was still awaiting advice. Expect more action on this one. If you are interested to campaign further, please get in touch via [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au) or 9554 3176 and join others already active.

**48 Hocking Avenue:** Canterbury Council postponed a decision on this following the meeting foreshadowed last time, as it seemed likely that an agreement would be reached between NPWS and the Department of Lands to alter the re-zoning request very

much along the lines sought by the Society. That agreement seems to be progressing satisfactorily but has yet to be formalised.

**18 Bayview Avenue:** The Society had hoped to arrange a land swap between the Department of Planning and Canterbury Council that would save this block. But, despite the markings on Council’s own plans, it turns out that they don’t own the swap block, Planning does! So there has been no further progress on this issue. We have asked Council to extend the proposed one-storey building limit to include all blocks west of Unwin Lane. This suggestion “will be taken into account” when formulating the draft Local Environmental Plan for this vicinity. Planning will not now sell the land until the LEP process is concluded.

## Still not too late to contribute to our members’ survey

About 10 per cent of the membership responded to the survey in the last Update. The raffle prize for participants (a \$20 voucher from Art of Cakes at Bexley North) went to Patricia Dostine of Kingsgrove. The sample size may be a bit small and biased to enable many reliable conclusions to be drawn. However, from the number of returns and the specific comments received we can probably safely conclude that many members are providing financial support to help with the Society’s activities, aims and objectives, but, with a busy lifestyle, cannot commit much time to the activities.

Other comments suggest interest in talks about the native plants, wildlife, and history of the Wolli Creek area; and in the Society’s bush restoration progress, especially seeing before and after photos. We also got some very useful offers of skills and time for various aspects of the Society’s other work, such as Festival preparation, setting up and staffing stalls, and letterboxing and campaigning.

More analysis of the responses will appear in the next Update, so it’s not too late to help with the data by filling out a survey. We can send you a fresh copy if you contact 9554 3176 or [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au).

## SCHOOLS & CHILDREN

### Come out to play – rain or shine

Our schools' program has been on and off due to the weather. It makes planning very difficult and is most frustrating for all concerned.

We are currently involved in developing school curriculum material with the TVT environmental education group, comprised of representatives of community groups from the two valleys, teachers and interested individuals. This project received a grant from the SMCMA to encourage schools to use the TVT as an outdoor classroom. Judi Rossi has developed teachers' notes and activity sheets. Eight schools (Earwood, Undercliffe, Tempe, Ferncourt, Bexley Nth, Marrickville West, and Our Lady of Lourdes) are being taken on guided walks by Voren O'Brien, Rebecca Whitehall and Prue Gibbs to pilot the resource material. At the conclusion of the project the resource material will be available on a disc and later online.

This project has sparked interest from schools not involved in the program and has led to more requests for guided walks. We would like to hear from anyone who is interested in volunteering to assist with our schools' program.

### A changeable world environment day

From small beginnings, World Environment Day on 5 June turned out to be a most exciting event. Originally we were planning a small gathering of schools in Girrahween Park. Then the Wilderness Society asked if we would host the presentation of their Environmental Award for Children's Literature at our event. Nadia Wheatley and Ken Searle were the successful recipients for *Going Bush*, their book about the valley. Gillian Calvert, the Commissioner for Children and Young People agreed to present the award and we were all set for a celebratory event in the valley. But then the weather turned against us.

Fortunately, Ruth Bradfield-Ling, the Principal of Marrickville West PS, had invited us to use her school as a wet weather alternative. So, with a quick change of plans, we transferred our celebrations to the school. It is a very welcoming place and everyone pulled together to make it a



**Commissioner for Children and Young People, Gillian Calvert (back R) with Ken Searle, Nadia Wheatley, and children whose poems, writing and artwork formed the basis of the award-winning publication *Going Bush*.**

most successful day. Six children who were involved in writing and illustrating the book came along with their families and read some of their poems to the audience of school children and friends. Following the presentation of a beautiful little bronze Platypus to Nadia and Ken, a group of children stayed on to create masks, paint and make objects from clay.

Our thanks to everyone whose contributions made World Environment Day 2008 a really memorable occasion.

### The bird's nest – a teachers' kit about Wolli birds

Unspent funding from the Why Wolli is Wonderful project enabled WCPS to develop a resource for teachers who have limited knowledge about birds of the valley. Based on the Powerpoint presentation that Voren O'Brien developed for her bird talks, the kit contains poster displays, teachers' notes and activity sheets about changes in habitat, simple bird identification and links to resources. Copies will be distributed to the five schools in the WWiW project and Rockdale and Canterbury Council libraries. Copies can be borrowed from the Society on request. For information about our schools' program contact Voren O'Brien: voren@ihug.com.au, or Judy Finlason: judy@imageoz.net.

## Events Calendar

**Saturday 9 August, 8.45 am** – A walk with environmental and historical commentary along the Wolli Track from Bexley North to Wolli Bluff above Waterworth Park. A special focus on the large number of bush restoration sites the Track passes through or close to. Free to members, but advance registration is essential as numbers are limited. Allow about 4.5 hours. Contact 9554 3176 or [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au).

**Sunday 14 September** – The Great Australian Bushwalk is on and we are planning a walk of the Two Valley Trail from Bexley North to Campsie, all 13 km! But there are plenty of dropping out points at train and bus stops along the way. Meet at the junction of Bexley Road and Wolli Creek at 8.45 for a 9 am prompt start and allow 4 – 4.5 hours for the full trip.

**And these dates for your advance diary, more details in the September Update**

**Sunday 28 Sept from 9-12** – Introductory birdwatching walk from Bardwell Park to Turrella with Alan Leishman. Pre-registration essential - contact Peter on 9554 3176 or via [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au). Free to members.

**Friday 24 October** – 6pm onwards – Annual Dinner – see separate notice

**Wednesday 29 October, 7 pm** – Annual General Meeting.

**Saturday 15 November, 9 am** – Annual kayak trip up Wolli Creek with River Canoe Club training and WCPS commentary, with a light lunch thrown in. Cost \$40. Pre-register your interest with Peter on 9554 3176 or [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au).