



## Federal funds for Wollie Creek!

A pre-election Federal ALP commitment in 2007 was to provide \$2m to improve wetlands and stormwater management in Cooks River and Wollie Creek. The money will shortly be in the hands of the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority

(CMA) and planning is well under way, with the Society providing a member to the advisory steering committee.

We are expecting to see major changes to Turrella Reserve with the restructuring and native revegetation of Turrella Creek across the reserve

and several other stormwater channel improvements across the bushland of the Regional Park and in the Bardwell Valley. Meanwhile the CMA has arranged a small website to keep those interested up-to-date with activity; go to [www.cooksriver.info](http://www.cooksriver.info).

### Much-needed nestboxes for wildlife installed in Girrahween Park



**ABOVE:** Gavin Gatenby with one of his nest boxes. **LEFT:** taken aloft by arborist Jamie; and, **BELOW,** in place, they're hard to spot!

Long-time WCPS stalwart Gavin Gatenby has among his many talents a penchant for classy woodworking. Four of his meticulously crafted nestboxes were installed in tall trees in Girrahween Park in mid-January and are very hard to spot unless you know where to look – which is the general idea! A 1930s aerial photo shows that at that time trees were almost all cleared from Wollie, so today's regrowth trees are still too young to have developed the substantial hollows needed by some birds and animals. These artificial ones are natural enough to fool us; let's hope the fauna find them as lifelike. Possible tenants include rosellas, lorikeets, kookaburras and other kingfishers, owl nightjars, ringtail possums and microbats. We hope to have the boxes monitored for use every month (from the ground!).







## Changes to the Wollli Track

Just east of the old swimming pool on the Girrahween Track there has been for a number of years some heavy duty piping and chains to help walkers down a particularly steep drop – helpful, but not a thing of beauty by any stretch. Well, NPWS has, for safety reasons, decided to install a flight of steel steps down the slope and we expect the old material to be removed in the process. It's a pity to lose what is an exciting adventure for children, if a bit of a challenge for older bones, but safety is what NPWS does, and aesthetically it should be an improvement. Expect it up this financial year.

Next financial year should see some improvement to the track up to Nannygoat Hill to limit erosion, but we want to keep this as an adventure climb for us all so we shouldn't see ladders being deployed. And somewhere along the way, NPWS proposes to install some sort of bridge over Paperbark Creek, which is impassable in significant rain and often slippery for sometime after. Again we are seeking to avoid too much taming of the Wollli Track section of the Two Valley Trail.

## Planning issues

**Rockdale City Council** has approved the DA for development at Henderson St, but with some 32 pages of conditions.. Our challenge now is to assess those and see which we can monitor – the usual problem is that no officials actually monitor compliance. If you are interested, please contact Peter via [info@wolllicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wolllicreek.org.au) or 9554 3176.

**A new issue has popped up in Highcliff Road, Undercliffe**, where there is a prospective development proposal at the end of Highcliff Road that could result in several new residential buildings, potentially at townhouse density, removing buffering bushland, and bordering right on the Regional Park boundary. We hope to spell out the issues more fully on the Issues page of the website in the not too distant future. Meanwhile, for more info contact Claire via 95593803 or [info@stretch.com.au](mailto:info@stretch.com.au).

**There has also been an attempt to modify an original DA in David St/Wavell Parade, Earlwood**, where a builder has patently built a house with a driveway that threatens a magnificent 20 year-old Eucalypt that was protected in the original DA. E-members will have seen detail of this, others can find out more from one of the many concerned members: Judi 9558 4977 or [judi.r@bigpond.net.au](mailto:judi.r@bigpond.net.au).



Linda Burney MP for Canterbury enjoys handing over an Environmental Trust grant to support Wollli bush regeneration.

## Bush restoration grants awarded

The Society's applications for funding for bush regeneration have been successful! We have been awarded a three-year grant of \$41,000 from the NSW Government's Environmental Trust to continue work below Johnston St, and (though the funds technically go to Canterbury Council) a grant of \$27,000 over two years from the NSW Department of Planning's Greenspace program for work below Bray Avenue. Congratulations and thanks to Georgina and Peter for the major work involved in preparing the detailed applications.

We have also, in conjunction with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, ensured continued funding for 2009 of bush regeneration work on Wollli Bluff and along the Jackson Track, so all our current groups will continue to be supported, which is great news. To be involved, contact Peter via [info@wolllicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wolllicreek.org.au) or 9554 3176.



A view upstream from the most recent plantings.

## Planting and fencing at Turrella

'Impressed' is the general spontaneous reaction from those with planting experience to the success of our efforts alongside the Creek at Turrella Reserve. Growth has been very rapid over the warmer months with some trees already at head height, and the colours have been particularly commented on. Even the plantings around the pond, carried out very late in Spring, seem mostly to have survived despite the heat and recent lack of rain.

Both have massively benefited both physically (exclusion of dogs,

discouragement of people) and aesthetically from the removal of the tatty temporary fencing and the installation by NPWS of a more serious fence. Its presence has allowed the plantings themselves to be seen in a better context and has shown that they are being actively cared for – no doubt explaining the recent increase in positive comments. And offsetting the understandable sense of loss some have felt about the removal of the trees around the pond, which, although invasive weeds, did provide scale and shade. The young gums will soon begin to fill some of those roles.



## WCPS volunteers to watch stream health

On 31 January a group of 22 volunteers met on Turrella Reserve to be trained in the procedures for sampling the creek and measuring aspects of water quality. This was a fabulous response to a new program for the Society. Hayley Bates and Manu Black from Sydney Water's Streamwatch program showed how to get samples and how to go about the tests, and had us trying them out. The two-hour session was very interesting and informative. We all learnt heaps, and will no doubt bed down all the detailed skills quite quickly. I was reminded of why I originally trained in chemistry. Volunteers will be sampling at several locations in Wollie and Bardwell Creeks on a regular basis and the results will be posted on the Streamwatch website – see [http://www.streamwatch.org.au/cms/sites\\_and\\_data/](http://www.streamwatch.org.au/cms/sites_and_data/) and click the Streamwatch data item and find your way to the Wollie Creek sites – which haven't been reported for several years. Lots of other interesting information on the site too, if you just want to know more.

We'll let you know in the next issue how the first efforts have gone. Ongoing co-ordination will be by Graham Weaire-Buchanan, who can be contacted via [gwb@intechslns.com](mailto:gwb@intechslns.com) or 8021 5736. We are grateful to the Streamwatch staff for their help and encouragement and we are very pleased to have the support of Rockdale City Council, which is funding the very expensive testing equipment we will be using.

### Canterbury Citizens of the Year

In the Environment section of the awards this year and in their respective age groups (no secrets revealed here!) committee member Voren O'Brien and member Chris Bartlett were each made Citizen of the Year for the City of Canterbury. Voren led Wollie walks for 1,000 schoolchildren during 2008 and was a leading light in the development of educational resources to accompany the Two Valley Trail. Chris is recognised primarily for his fabulous work in founding the Mudcrabs over in the Cooks River, but we like to own a bit of him too.

### Annual General Meeting

The Society held its AGM on Wed 29 October 2008. As foreshadowed, Peter Stevens stood down as President and we are currently without someone in that role. The 2008/9 committee is Vice-President Deb Little, Secretary Lynda Gordon-Squire, Treasurer Peter Stevens, Committee members Judy Finlason, Voren O'Brien, Ann Porter, Ute Foster. As always, committee meetings are open to all members and we like to share knowledge about how things are run. We are also keen to recruit new committee members and coming along to a meeting or two can help dispel (or confirm!) any fears about what is involved – less than most people think! Try it out.



Delayed by power cable drama ...

## Fishway finally finished

The completed fishway, waiting for rainfall and a high tide. Below: mullet below the weir.

Anyone passing the weir at Turrella over the last months of 2008 could be forgiven for thinking that the fishway was going backwards! In its initial construction a major power cable was breached in the middle of the weir and an enormous and expensive operation has been underway to replace a length of the cable that was in a pressured, oil-filled pipe through the weir wall. It was finished in late December and of course further work was then overtaken by the Xmas-New Year lull in activity.

All a great pity, because at the king tide peak on January 12, there were literally thousands of small mullet milling around at the base of the weir unable to go upstream, despite the weir spillway (and some leaks!) being overtopped and water flowing upstream from the brackish stretch of Wollie below. Our photographs were taken on 31 January as work on the fishway neared completion, filling the gap created by the various repair works and the effects of flood flows.

The fishway will provide access to the upper creek for spawning by ocean fish species such as Sea Bass, Mullet, and Bream; but it will also massively improve the aesthetic appearance and interest of the weir. The works are also aimed to fix the many leaks that have sprung up through the weir over the years. Another part of the project is to get an interpretation sign up to explain the fishway to passers-by. And the Society is aiming to have a talk for members later in the year about the role of fishways generally, with information about fish in Wollie Creek and any changes evident following the fishway's completion.



## The Rankin Award



You might think that there would be little to report about schools activities this early in the year but WCPS members have been busy throughout summer planning an exciting opportunity for primary school age groups visiting the valley in 2009.

The Rankin Award has prize money for several categories of class entries. Student and community groups are encouraged to create an entry (in various media) to reflect their experiences in the Valley from "a bird's eye view". Teachers can utilise the Bird's Nest resource and TVT Education resource to make the study of Wolli birds a focus for the class. You will soon be able to find Rankin Award brochures and entry forms and these teaching resources online at: <http://www.wollicreek.org.au/schoolsandchildren.html>

There will be a **Teacher Orientation walk** for staff not yet familiar with the Valley (or those who want a refresher) held on Wednesday 11 March 2009. Details online at <http://www.wollicreek.org.au/activities.html>

## Wolli from Creek to Crescent – the kayak trip

In November 2008 a group of us gathered at the River Canoe Club in Tempe to get kitted up with kayaks, paddles and life-jackets. We were excited at the prospect of seeing our favourite local bush walks from a kayak in the middle of Wolli Creek. We took two young teenagers who managed the paddle well. We glided past bush and infrastructure, explored the mangroves and heard about the history of the creek and the efforts to preserve and restore the area. A highlight was the trek up to the top of Nannygoat Hill – what views! Can you believe that this hill was nearly carted off for fill for an airport runway? Where there once was a Chinese market garden there is now an impressive bush regeneration project. Best of all was to be gliding through the water, with a new group of friends and a fresh view of the Wolli Valley. • **Susan Cornish**

• **We have already organised another trip** to cope with the demand for this event – it will be on Saturday 28 March and places are filling fast, and we may just have run another in spring. So if you would like to make the trip please email [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au) or phone 9554 3176 to express interest and get more details; cost is \$40.

## Occasion: Wolli Creek Preservation Society Annual Dinner

**Venue:** St George Rowing Club

**Guest Speaker:** Justice David Kirby, NSW Supreme Court. In 1978 Justice Kirby, then a young barrister, convened the NSW Government's inquiry into a Department of Main Roads proposal to use the Wolli Creek valley as part of its road expansion plans. In 1980 Commissioner Kirby found for the valley. It survives.

**The remains of the dinner in my mind:**

A ribbon of green on a map in the office of a Commissioner appointed to inquire into the construction of a new road.

A woman dwarfed by a huge bunch of flowers and leaves from the local bush ... part of the protest against the road

Faces with smiles that celebrate a fight well won.

A basket overflowing with silverbeet as

green as the deep ocean, seedlings in pots and eggs fresh from a suburban backyard. Bottles of home brewed beer with beautiful labels. Prizes in the raffle.

Easy parking, nice venue, good food.

A room full of people interested in doing things. A room full of people doing things. Enjoying riding their bikes to work, supervising volunteers in bush regeneration, tagging birds, raising money, guiding walks, writing letters, talking to their neighbours.

A room full of people interested in sharing. A room full of people sharing – their experiences, their knowledge, their space, their neighbourhood, their produce, their energy.

Driving home I thought: the strength of community is still alive and that dinner was a wonderful celebration of that.

• **Susan Atkinson**

## Events Calendar

- **Sunday 22 February.** 9 am to 12.30 pm: Making tricky distinctions; a workshop on plant identification for bush care volunteers. At Community Development Organisation, 11-13 Hartill-Law Avenue Bardwell Park. If interested contact Peter on 9554 3176 or [dips@ozemail.com.au](mailto:dips@ozemail.com.au).
- **Sunday 1 March.** 8am to 12pm: Clean-up Australia Day; site: Kingsgrove Avenue Reserve, 100 metres from Bexley Rd. Bags, gloves & morning tea provided. This is removing rubbish that can all flow into Wolli Creek in the next downpour. Please come along in work shoes and sun protection. Please let Ann know you are coming: [badporter@ozemail.com.au](mailto:badporter@ozemail.com.au) or 9587 9391
- **Tuesday 10 March.** 7pm: The community's role in local planning decisions, with distinguished speaker John Mant, self-described "ex-Labor apparatchik", architect of the Local Government Act, and veteran of planning-law reform. At CECAL Hall, entry in Lewins St Earlwood, opposite Coles car park. A good chance to get some general and specific input about the several planning issues we have been faced with recently (Henderson St, Hocking Avenue, Wolli Bluff, now Highcliff Road.
- **Wednesday 11 March.** Teacher Orientation Walk. See notification under Rankin Award elsewhere in this Update.
- **Saturday 28 March,** am, about 4 hours: Wolli from Creek to Crest, a kayak trip up Wolli Creek with River Canoe Club kayaks and training and WCPS commentary, and a light lunch thrown in. Cost \$40. To register contact Peter on 9554 3176 or via [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au). Already almost full!
- **Sunday 5 April.** 8.45 am: Walk the Wolli Track. 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 and a visit to the fishway. Free to members, but advance registration is essential as numbers are limited. Allow about 4.5 hours. Contact Peter on 9554 3176 or [dips@ozemail.com.au](mailto:dips@ozemail.com.au).
- **February 21, March 7, 8, 11 and 21; April 4, 12, 15, 18** – regular bush regeneration sessions. To get involved contact: Peter on 9554 3176 or via [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au).
- And there are always bird survey teams and, now, Streamwatch teams that you could get involved with. Initial enquiries via [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au) or 9554 3176.