

The fight against the M5 is on again!

Many members will be aware that the Society had its origins in 1984 in the fight to prevent the M5E being built. It was to be an 8-lane motorway on stilts wiping out all the bushland that we cherish from Bexley North to Undercliffe.

The fight was in part successful – a large underground carpark four lanes wide was built as a tunnel mostly avoiding the valley. Nonetheless, we lost large amounts of open grassy space with patches of native vegetation to the west of Bexley Road and saw a major increase in hard surface area, which has surely contributed to the increased flash flooding by Wolli Creek.

We also finished up with The Stack (emissions from 100,000 vehicle movements per day pumped out unfiltered at Turrella) and, just about finished, The Plant at Bexley North which will filter just a small proportion of the emissions, has wiped out open space with useful buffering vegetation, and destroyed plantings and other natives in the adjacent bushland.

The RTA is now back for its second tranche of four lanes with a proposal for a second tunnel as part of the duplication of the M5 (download the RTA overview brochure from <http://building.sydneymotorways.com.au/m5-corridor/m5-corridor-expansion/>, from which the map below is taken.

This has to be stopped. First, there is the craziness of building major new motorways anywhere, with their proven traffic-inducing



Tempe rallies against the RTA's freeway plan

Undeterred by wet and windy weather, 250 Tempe residents rallied on 6 February to call for an end to the new road plan which will devastate Tempe Reserve and local wetlands.

effects, in an age of peak oil and carbon emission reduction programs. Second, there is the massive cost of building them that would soak up available funds that should be going to long-neglected public transport improvements such as new rail lines in western Sydney and speedy light rail routes in the inner parts.

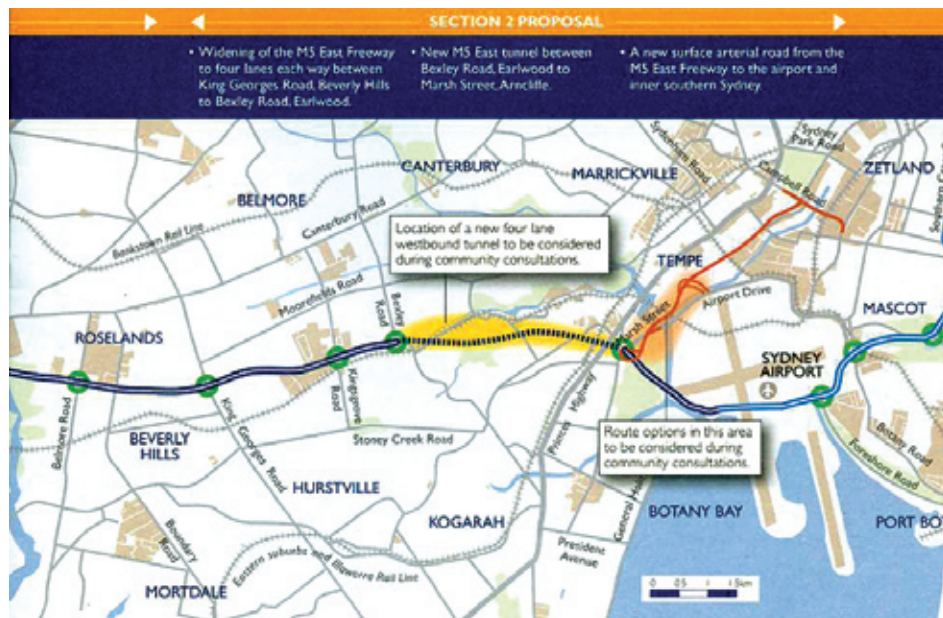
Then there is our own local issue of a renewed assault on the Wolli Valley. Yes, I know, it's to be in a tunnel underground, but remember what we got last time, when the same scenario was painted. And we have to expect that the RTA will want to include new on and off ramps at Bexley Road to provide two-way access,

most likely to the east of the road in an area of bushland within the Wolli Creek Regional Park boundary but **that RTA still owns**. This forms the western entry point for the Two Valley Trail. It is good bush that we have been restoring for over four years with significant NSW Environmental Trust grants and loads of volunteer labour.

Initial submissions are invited by the RTA and were to close on February 19, now extended to March 12. Beware of the feedback form available on the webpage given above – it is essentially written in 'have you stopped beating your wife' mode, so that you implicitly endorse the M5 whatever you say – write your own comments opposing the road altogether.

On a more cheerful note, in May 1991, an RTA representative was completely flummoxed by questions about the impact of the M5 – and was caught on film for a 7.30 Report segment. That segment is on a new DVD available from WCPS for \$7. It is a memorable moment and a reminder that the RTA is far from being a smooth steamroller.

Also cause for optimism, a new group, Tempe 2020, is opposing the RTA's plans there: a link road (a foreshadowing of a further push to build the F6) is to cut a swathe through their suburb – see the map. The group held a 'Rally against the Road' on 6 February with some 200 people in attendance on a wet and windy morning. We need the same level of support in our area to fight the expansion proposal. Contact WCPS* to be put on a special interest list for this crucial issue. • Peter Stevens



Bushcare roundup

Society gains over \$95,000 in bushcare grants!

WCPS has again been successful in gaining grants to support its work.

- The NSW Government's Environmental Trusts will provide some \$50,000 over three years for bush restoration along the Undercliffe track east of Jackson Place.
- The Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority is providing a grant of around \$12,000 to enable an extension westwards of work on the Bray Avenue wetland, centering on the removal of Willows and Privets
- The State Government's Community Building Partnership Program will provide \$15,000 to support work on weed and rubbish removal at the Big Bend Wetland upstream from Turrella Reserve
- The Commonwealth's Caring for Country initiative will provide a Community Action Grant of \$18,600 for initial work on the interesting NW corner of Illoura Reserve.

These are all new areas of work and we will, as elsewhere, use a combination of contracted bush regenerators and volunteers, so of course we have lots of scope for more volunteers to get into action in the outdoors and enjoy good company at the same time. To do your bit, contact WCPS* - tools and training provided.

The Jackson Triangle is a project under Canterbury Council's 'Adopt-a-Patch' program. Formerly an area with a dense growth of tough weeds, it was spreading weed seeds etc across the road into Regional Park land. A first section planted with natives in the spring is doing very well, despite the dry summer. The remainder is being de-weeded for

We have lots of scope for more volunteers



2010 is International Year of Biodiversity

This International Year was "established by the United Nations to increase worldwide awareness of biodiversity and its importance, and to engage more people in its conservation" - see www.cbd.int/2010.

Last year the Society received the Sustainable Cities Conservation Biodiversity Award from Keep Australia Beautiful (NSW). This year we look forward to continuing our positive role by involving as many people as possible in all our planned activities.

We're pleased to have the support of the owners of the Homer Street News Agency at No. 213, who promote the valley by selling our publications and providing leaflets.

Pictured above are (left to right) Suzanne Rose, WCPS committee member, and newsagents Ginetta and Brent Hartge in front of the Wollie Creek publications display. Brent is holding the Biodiversity Conservation Award which is currently on display there. • **Judy Finlason**

mulching and planting in the autumn, and a handover to local residents for on-going maintenance. Local residents and others interested to adopt a piece of bush are most welcome to join in. Please contact WCPS*.

Meanwhile, work in our many other sites continues with our four regular groups active and receiving new volunteers. And some of our work is being made easier by the installation of stormwater treatment arrangements on channels feeding Wollie tributaries. Gross Pollutant Traps (GPTs) are already in place on lower Bardwell Creek, at Bray Avenue,

and at Highcliff Road West, with other treatments to follow at Turrella Reserve (GPT), Johnson St (detention basin), Highcliff Road East (raingarden), and SJ Harrison Reserve (GPT and hydrocon pipes). All this has been done under the Commonwealth Government's extensive Cooks River Urban Water Initiative. There will be lots of detail on the initiative at the Cooks River Forum coming up on May 1 (see Events Calendar on back page).

*** Contact WCPS via info@wolliecreek.org.au or 9554 3176 (Peter)**

Of kings and dragons and much more besides ...



Nankeen Night Herons in the oak tree. Juvenile, right, adult, left, partly obscured. (Gavin Gatenby).

By Voren O'Brien

Recent interesting wildlife sightings in the valley include Brown Quail, attracted to the new plantings in the Green Corridor and Dipping Pond areas of Turrella Reserve. Three adults and up to eight chicks have been seen at different times over summer. The species hasn't been recorded in Wollie since a sighting of a single bird in 1999.

A Nankeen Night Heron appears to be a permanent fixture (although a well hidden one) in an English oak tree on the bank of the creek opposite Dragon Rock. The heron was seen with offspring in late January. This species was once common but was seldom seen over the last 20 years.

King Parrots were recently reported in a poplar in Banks Road, Earlwood, which prompted various members of our survey groups to remember similar sightings over the last year. This is an uncommon species for the Wollie Valley, only recorded once in each of 1944 and 1994, but may now be making a home here.

The Water Dragon population is healthy too. Rediscovered in the valley in February 2007, they have since been seen in the storm water channel in Turrella Reserve and at the Henderson Street Weir. In December, Gavin Gatenby observed a Water Dragon digging a nest near Dragon Rock and subsequently covered the buried eggs with chicken wire to protect them from foxes. A juvenile Water Dragon has also been seen near the nest, presumably from an earlier hatching.

We like to receive reports of any unusual sightings, particularly of endangered species; we know that their presence would increase pressure for more funding to look after the valley. Contribute your reports via info@wolliecreek.org.au; do try to get a photo



A very elusive Brown Quail. (Voren O'Brien).



Beautiful King Parrot at Girraheewen Park.

sightings and providing great info to the rest of us:

- Gavin Gatenby, tyro micro-documentary maker, has made his videos about Wollie's Flying-foxes and the fish ladder available on You Tube (http://www.youtube.com/profile?user=possm1#p/u/0/d_j5aDaykGk).
- Voren O'Brien's latest nature blog has a number of Wollie-related posts. (<http://msvoren.blogspot.com/>).
- Many of Wollie's birds appear in a Flickr album at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/10131109@N04/sets/> and you are welcome to contribute new or unrepresented species for inclusion - send them to info@wolliecreek.org.au.

and note date, time and place. (Rule 7: never go into the valley without a camera!)

Intrepid wildlife stalkers in the WCPS ranks are using modern technology to share their

Wollie Flying-fox camp grows

Grey-headed Flying-fox numbers are now up around the 7,500 mark.

The data from our continuing monthly fly-out counts contributes to research about these Flying-foxes (GHFF's) across their whole range up and down the east coast.

The list of people involved in counts or who just maintain an interest in what's happening in our Wollie Creek camp has been increasing. Hopefully, many of you will have seen the great YouTube clip of the GHFF's dipping into the creek on a hot Sunday evening last November - details above. If you would like to be involved in the counts or just want to be kept informed, contact WCPS*.

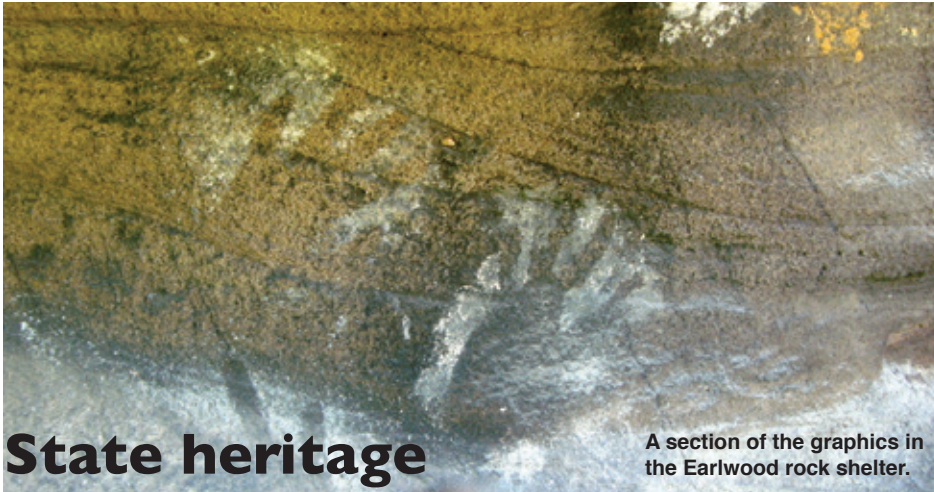
The Society also recently donated to both of the Sydney-based wildlife carer organizations, recognising that increased awareness amongst our members of the peril GHFFs carrying young face from power lines, probably results in more reports for rescue and care of young FFs (pups). Some members have sponsored the care and rehabilitation of pups.

The Society has submitted a response to the Botanic Gardens Trust's proposal



Fetish, a sponsored pup, channels Zorro while on a substitute cloth mother on a clothes-airer 'roost'.

to displace their GHFFs during 2010. We view this proposal with great concern on a number of fronts. A copy of our submission can be found on the Society's website under Issues/Grey-headed Flying-foxes. This year we plan to expand our FF information on the website.



State heritage listing for Earlwood Aboriginal art and midden

A section of the graphics in the Earlwood rock shelter.

On the sandstone ridge that runs through Earlwood is a rock shelter, open to the north, overlooking the Cooks River Valley. It is a special place. It contains Aboriginal art and a midden, both very old, perhaps several thousands of years old. More than twenty hand stencils and two foot stencils, which are very rare, have been recorded there. There are also other marks that could be prints of toes and thumbs, and it is likely that further inside the shelter, hidden by a build-up of earth and weeds, are more artworks. Adjacent is an ancient midden, also overgrown by weeds.

In November 2009, this site was placed on the State Heritage Register, which means that at long last it has some official protection and (hopefully) will be cleaned up and studied. To read more about it, go to www.heritage.nsw.gov.au and key in "Earlwood Aboriginal site" in the search box.

• Paul Fitzgerald

Bardwell Valley in Rockdale's Recreation Plan

Submissions about the plan closed on 29 January but we all need to be aware of its proposals for restricting the Golf course to 9 holes (probably a good thing from an environment perspective) and introducing 'possible dirt jumps and/or mountain bike course' – environmentally a recipe for disaster, as there is no known way of keeping bikes to designated areas. There are vulnerable and high quality bushland areas in the valley that "justify ongoing protection from recreation use", as the plan itself recognizes. We will be working closely with Bardwell Valley volunteers on this one.

Educational resources for schools

- *Two Valley Trail* - Comprehensive resource for those wanting to use sections of the Wolli Creek and Cooks River Valleys as an outdoor classroom. Available on our website www.wollicreek.org.au or DVD from WCPS*. Free hard copy available on application to WCPS*.

- *The Bird's Nest* – a resource for teachers about birds in the Wolli Creek Valley and surrounding areas. Available for loan free of charge.

We encourage schools to become group members of WCPS (\$25pa.) to keep up to date with information and events.

Events Calendar

Aboriginal history of our region

On **Tuesday 9 March** Professor Heather Goodall will be speaking at Campsie Library about her recent book *Rivers and Resilience*, which tells the story of the Aboriginal people who have used the Georges River area as home and hideout from the time of European settlement until the present day.

This fascinating account also provides glimpses into the Aboriginal history of the Cooks River and Wolli Creek. As well as the talk by the book's author, there will be a display of archival photographs and maps.

This event has been organised by the Cooks River Valley Association in partnership with the Wolli Creek Preservation Society and the City of Canterbury Library Service.

WHEN: 6.00 for 6.30 pm, Tuesday 9 March, 2010,

WHERE: Campsie Library, Amy Street, Campsie (ground level of Campsie Centre)

LIGHT REFRESHMENTS will be served from 6 pm.

THERE ARE practical **bush restoration sessions** at various locations on **February 20** (Jackson Track) **and 24** (Turrella Reserve) **and on through March April and May**. If interested, find out more from WCPS*; new volunteers are most welcome.

Friday February 19 initial **submissions re M5 expansion close** see page 1.

Sunday February 28 – morning **Kayak trip**: Wolli from Creek to Crest. Almost full, but see May 1 for a second trip

Sunday March 7 - morning: **Clean Up Australia Day**. This year we will be joining with the Mudcrabs to start on the removal of floating plastic rubbish from the Big Bend wetland upstream of Turrella Reserve. Because of where it is there will be lots of carrying out to do. If you can lend a hand, please let WCPS* know and we'll make sure you have details ahead of the day.

Tuesday March 9 – 6 pm **Heather Goodall talk** at Campsie library – see above.

Sunday March 21 – 9-2 **WCPS promotion stall at Addison Road markets**

– seeking volunteers to be at the stall for an hour or two to help reach a new audience. Contact WCPS* for details.

Saturday March 27 - 7.45 am start. **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 and a visit to the fishway. Free to members, but registration is essential as numbers are limited. Allow about 4.5 hours. Contact WCPS* to register.

Saturday May 1 – morning. **Wolli from Creek to Crest**. Our very popular kayak trip up Wolli Creek with River Canoe Club kayaks and training and WCPS commentary, and a light lunch thrown in. Cost \$40. Early registration makes sure you get advance notice. To register contact WCPS* soon.

Saturday May 1 – 1-4 pm Cooks River Forum focussing on stormwater and sewerage issues; probably at Canterbury Girls High School. Contact WCPS* nearer the date for final details if not on WCPS email list.