



Wolli Creek Preservation Society

# Update

June 2011



On 15th June the NSW Treasurer, the Hon. Mike Baird MP, announced our treasurer **Peter Stevens** as the winner of the 2011 Westpac Community Treasurer's Awards in the Small Organisations category.

These awards, which attracted 513 nominations, recognise that the success of countless Australian community organisations relies on the unsung commitment of their treasurers. Nowhere is that more true than with our Society.

Since becoming Treasurer in 2006, Peter's efforts to protect the Wolli Creek Valley have been tireless. He prepares our monthly financial statements and associated reports and answers in detail queries from the 'accounts dummies' on our committee. His skill at obtaining grants for bushcare is second to none. In total, nine grants were being administered during 2010.

But his contribution to the Society is so much more than that. Peter is the Society's dedicated Bushcare Coordinator, helps coordinate the kayak trips with the River Canoe Club, instigated the establishment of bird survey teams and helped develop the very popular Two Valley Trail.

Whether liaising with the Federal government, lobbying for a Regional Park, counting bats or just being there with a pot of hot soup for tired kayakers, Peter is always there.

Because of his unstinting dedication, the native bushland in the valley is safer from harm and the Wolli Creek Preservation Society can rest assured that our efforts will be enjoyed by future generations.

*Thanks from all of us, Peter.*

# Bird Talk

## SMCMA COMMUNITY FORUM

On Sat 21st May, the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority held a Community Forum to showcase the diversity of community environmental projects happening in its domain.

I gave a 10 minute talk about our bird surveys and described our survey method, which is officially called atlassing, I found out. I described Wolli Creek's location, varied habitats and abundant bird life, then talked about the history of the bird surveys that are published in Neil Rankin's book. I also talked about the problem of finding a secure place to store all the data we've collected so that it is accessible for research.

The talk struck a chord with members of the audience of about 100. There were lots of questions, particularly about the database. We're not the only group struggling with that problem. Hopefully I can solve it for all of us.

I got some good information on a likely solution from the Cowra Woodlands Bird Survey people.

The keynote presentation on biodiversity pointed out that fur, feathers & flowers is only about 5% of the story. The other 95% is the tiny bugs that make it all work. Other interesting talks included a lyrical presentation on fungi in the Lane Cove Bushland Park and an interactive presentation from the Cooks River Valley Association who won an award for their urban landcare work.

It was heartening to be reminded of what a great difference small bands of committed people can make in the world.

**DOROTHY LUTHER**



## PLANTING GETS UNDERWAY

Once the March rains finally arrived, contractors for National Parks planted out 3,000 Dianella tube stock along the new banks of Turella creek.

Photo: Laura Zusters



Photo: Gavin Gatenby

## THE AMAZING WOLLI CREEK VALLEY

The theme of the 2011 National Trust Heritage Festival, *Amazing Stories*, was ideal for WCPS. What more amazing story than the survival of the Wolli Creek Valley?

This beautiful exhibition was opened by Graham Quint from the National Trust at the Earlwood Canterbury Caring Centre in April.

The 16 panel display is proving an excellent means of promoting the Valley and has generated requests for talks to historical groups. It is well worth seeing. Don't miss it.

My thanks to the 'Amazing Wolli' team, Canterbury Council local studies librarians and everyone who assisted with information, ideas and photos.

**JUDY FINLASON**

### EXHIBITION VENUES AND DATES

Regina Coeli Public School (Beverley Hills) 2	0.06.11 – 25.06.11
Rockdale Library	27.06.11 – 09.07.11
Bexley North Library	01.07.11 – 19.07.11
Marrickville Library	20.07.11 – 10.08.11

*Suggestions for other venues welcome.*

# SPIKE IS SAVED

## DARTER RESCUE ON THE COOKS RIVER

**Gavin Gatenby** was kayaking on the Cooks River when he spotted an Australian Darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*) in urgent need of rescue. It's lower bill was caught under some ribbon tangled around its neck. "After the rains there was an awful lot of rubbish floating on Wolli and especially Cooks. Disgraceful. Is it surprising this happens?" said Gavin. The bird flew away.

*"When we finally caught it..she was in a bad way."*

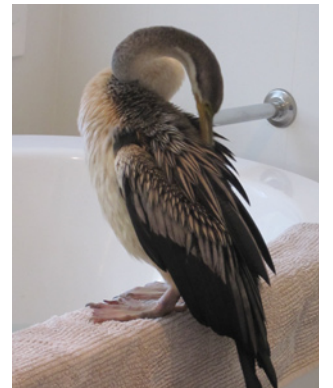


News of the Darter spread on an email network including WCPS, WIRES people, CRVA and WCPS Birdos. On Good Friday, the bird was spotted again and a team from WCPS and WIRES assisted with the rescue operation. Unable to eat and growing weaker, the bird was in desperate need of help. Capture wasn't easy and took several determined attempts. "When we finally caught it, we cut the ribbon and squirted electrolytes down her throat for dehydration."

By the next day, Spike, nicknamed for her painfully sharp long beak, was being looked after by experienced WIRES seabird rehabilitator Kim Strong in her bathtub. Despite several broken tail feathers, Spike was feeding well on a diet of whitebait, yellow tail, pilchards and sardines, which were a favourite.

After several days of recovering body tone and appetite, Spike was returned to the Cooks River and released by well-wishers at Fatima Island near Kendrick Park. Thanks to everyone who got involved to save her.

**Rubbish is deadly for our wildlife. Spike was one of the lucky ones.**



Spike has been seen several times by Gavin, who reports that she looks healthy and happy, although she steers well clear of his purple kayak.



Top to bottom: Darter in distress; recovering Kim Strong's bathtub; Spike on Fatima Island after her release; Gavin goes beyond the call of duty trying to locate the Darter in a swirl of litter.

## REGIONAL PARK MORE LAND TRANSFERRED

A Deed of Agreement was signed with Canterbury Council in mid-February for the transfer of 17.5 hectares of Council land to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for the Wolli Creek Regional Park. Some form of agreement was also reached with the then Minister for Water to transfer a further 2.6 hectares of Sydney Water land to NPWS. This should bring the park to about 90% of its original extent.

We thank the 3,300 people who signed our petition last year, committee members who lobbied ministers and in particular Frank Sartor and Linda Burney for their efforts in achieving this. Of course, this is not all of the land and the transfers are not yet certain, but we see no reason yet why the new state Liberal Government would seek to revise these arrangements.

When we know more we will need to revisit our strategy to complete the Park. Almost certainly we will still need a big effort to ensue that the vital two hectares at Bexley North owned by the RTA and withheld for the M5E tunnel duplication are added to the park.



WCPS President Deb Little makes sure she has Tony Burke's ear for the entire trip.  
Photo: Sarah Michael

**At a celebration dinner held for the successful conclusion of the Cooks River Urban Stormwater Initiative, we heard that Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke was a keen kayaker. We invited him to come and kayak Wolli Creek.**

In early March, members of the WCPS and the River Canoe Club accompanied Tony up the creek to Turrella Reserve and took him on a tour of the recent Turrella Creek restructuring and saltmarsh projects, which were undertaken by the CMA and NPWS with Federal and State funding. Tony also viewed the Grey-headed Flying-fox camp.

He was surprised and impressed with the natural features of Wolli Creek and its banks, which can

really be appreciated from the water. He was keen to photograph some of the lovely sandstone overhangs.

Our regular kayak trips have run now for the past six years and continue to be popular. But the improvements to Turrella Creek mean a new landing area is now really needed. We are in discussions with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service as well as the NSW River Canoe Club to have kayak landing steps constructed, possibly in place of the rock-filled wire gabions near the Henderson Street footbridge.

Grant funding will need to be sought. Until then we may have to suspend or limit the number of our organised kayak trips.

# JOHNSTON STREET BIORETENTION BASIN



**WATER ENTERING  
WOLLI CREEK FROM JOHNSTON  
STREET WILL NOW HAVE MUCH  
HIGHER QUALITY THAN BEFORE.**

The completed Bioretention Basin  
Photo: Peter Stevens

The new Bioretention Basin will effectively treat 80-90% of stormwater flow for gross pollutants, street rubbish, silt and nutrients. The nutrients will be removed by the Wolli wetland plants growing in the special soil medium filling the basin.

Funding came from the Federal Government's Cooks River Urban Water Initiative, channelled through the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority, with on-ground works done by contractors to the City of Canterbury. It takes a lot of organisation and cooperation to see these projects through!

WCPS has worked closely with the parties to restrict damage to bushland and to existing plantings. We lost one mature Turpentine, but a major area of weeds was also removed.

There will be repair work to do after the contractors leave and we are keen to limit the flow of weed seeds into the basin from surrounding vegetation. Volunteers have already been working on the northern edge of the basin tackling weeds such as Privet and Ehrharta grass.

**New volunteers always welcome!**  
**Email [bushcare@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:bushcare@wollicreek.org.au).**

## HENDERSON STREET DEVELOPMENT

Rockdale Council has finally acted on the February clearing of all vegetation on this site on the banks of Wolli Creek. The council has issued a Prevention Notice in relation to sediment control to the developer, as well as penalty notices of \$1,500 to each of the 2 companies involved. In early February the Society also lodged a complaint with the NSW Office of Water. In our last correspondence with them in April, we were advised that the complaint is now at the assessment stage!

To date there is still no sediment control or bank protection on the site, in spite of recent heavy rains. The developer has advised Council that he will be challenging the fines in court. The site was also put up for sale in early April with advertising declaring that the site was 'all levelled and ready to go'.



These days, **Turrella Reserve** is looking more like a construction site than a park. Sydney Water is repairing sections of a large wastewater pipeline, using its temporary compound in Turrella Reserve as a base. The bulk of the work will be done at night, when flows are lower, and take about 12 months.

## WOLLI BIRDOS

**It began when my survey partner Mary Foley and I were bemoaning the lack of personal contact with other Wolli bird-surveyors and with Wolli birders in general. Like many enthusiasts, it's often difficult to find people who share your passion or understand the thrill of a glimpse of a Rufous Whistler!**

On the second Thursday of every month, a small group of enthusiasts now get together to talk about all things birds. Our first guest speaker was Spike's carer Kim Strong from WIRES, who gave a very interesting presentation on the great work done by WIRES in rescuing and rehabilitating wildlife. Eighteen people braved a cold winter's night to be informed and have a chat. Anyone is welcome to come, so if you're interested, please contact me.

Our next guest speaker for our meeting in August will be well known bird bander and ornithologist Alan Leishman. Should be another great evening.

**MELISSA MASON**  
[melissaclaremason@gmail.com](mailto:melissaclaremason@gmail.com)

## WATERWORTH PARK

Some of you may have noticed a new compound taking up one end of Waterworth Park near Wolli Bluff.

**Energy Australia** have built this temporary compound to house materials while they lay new underground cables from Beaconsfield to Kogarah. They are tunnelling under Wolli Creek and the railway line and will then begin on cable installation. See the Energy Australia site for more details and search under 'Kogarah'.



**SPECIAL GUEST DR PEGGY EBY**  
**FRIDAY 21 OCTOBER 2011,**  
**ST GEORGE ROWING CLUB,**  
**LEVEY STREET, WOLLI CREEK**

**BOOK NOW!**

**This year's guest speaker, Dr Peggy Eby, will be sharing some of her vast experience as a Flying-fox researcher and advocate.**

Peggy is a warm, enthusiastic and incredibly knowledgeable speaker on their biology and ecology, and has some great stories to tell. Not to be missed, and it's not too early to book.

Cost will be \$40 per head. Send payment to WCPS PO Box 270 Earlwood, 2206 or make a direct deposit to Westpac BSB 032 067 WCPS Inc 288295 with surname and 'AD' in information line and send an email to [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au) to confirm.

## VALE ALEX CONRADE

**Alex died of cancer at 51, far too young.**

He worked with his partner Tomoko on bush regeneration at the Bray Avenue wetland site over several years. He was a gentle enthusiast for the Wolli Valley and is greatly missed. We are grateful to Tomoko for asking for donations to the Society in lieu of flowers at a warm and moving farewell ceremony in early May.

# In the Valley...



Trim Greenhoods (*Pterostylis concinna*), below: Ant Orchid (*Chiloglottis reflexa*) Photos: Damon Bassett



Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*) Photo: courtesy of Chris Charles

## TERRESTRIAL ORCHIDS

**Greenhood Orchids (*Pterostylis sp.*) are showing their faces at this time of year.**

Bushcare volunteers and walkers are reporting sightings of different species of these subtle but beautiful terrestrial (or ground) orchids in many parts of the Valley.

An uncommon Ant Orchid (*Chiloglottis reflexa*) was recently found on Nanny Goat Hill. This terrestrial orchid is pollinated by wasps.



## POWERFUL OWL

**A couple of weeks ago, Therese Alting was lucky enough to spot a Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*) close to the track towards Girrahween Park.**

“It kindly stayed in the one spot for at least 15 minutes, and we got a fantastic look at its beautiful big eyes. It is one hell of a big bird. I’m still shaking with excitement!”

The Powerful Owl is listed as a threatened species in New South Wales and was last sighted in the Valley in 2008. Since Therese’s sighting, several Wolli members have gone out to see it for themselves – but without luck. With such a powerful predator in the vicinity, the small number of Flying-foxes wintering in the Valley, appear to be roosting densely and very low down in trees near the railway line at Turella. This unusual behaviour could mean they are trying to keep a low profile.

## NEW WOLLI WEBSITE LIVE

**Our new website is up and running and well worth a look at.**

You will see that its now easier to stay in touch with what’s going on by subscribing to ‘what’s new’ and link to the ‘events calendar’.

This new website is also a rich source of information about the geography, history and wildlife of the valley, as well as current issues and campaigns. For the school groups that often come to explore the bushland, the website contains terrific resources to help teachers get the most out of their visit.





Photo: Laura Zusters

## Bushcare profile

### GEORGE & VICTORIA

George and Victoria moved to Bardwell Park from Bondi in 2004, when Victoria inherited the family home.

“We moved here because we love the bush and have always done a lot of bushwalking. One day there was a flyer from WCPS in the letterbox and we thought we’d give Bushcare a go.” They’ve been committed volunteers ever since.

Victoria finds weeding very relaxing, while George prefers rolling his sleeves up and cutting out Lantana and Privet.

“It’s just a couple of hours a month. We enjoy the peace and tranquillity and feel as if we’re contributing to making the Valley a better place. It’s very satisfying, because we can really see results in a small amount of time.”

## KEEP IN TOUCH

If you want to know what’s going on in the valley or share news and opinions, follow us on Facebook, Twitter or have a look at some great videos on our YouTube site.

facebook

[www.facebook.com/protectwollicreekvalley](http://www.facebook.com/protectwollicreekvalley)

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[www.youtube.com/wollicreekvalley](http://www.youtube.com/wollicreekvalley)

## CALENDAR

**Bush regeneration:** June 25; July 2, 10, 13, 15, 16, 23; Aug 6, 10, 14, 19, 20, 27; Sept 3, 11, 14, 16, 17, 24. Details of locations from WCPS. New volunteers always welcome

**Bat counting:** Third Friday of each month, just after sunset. Come along to see the fly-out or join in the counting. For detailed times and other bat news contact WCPS and join the bat group email.

**Bird surveys:** Nine teams are doing regular monthly surveys of bird species and numbers present. They work to their own timetable, but we can get you involved on a team if you contact WCPS. More areas to survey; volunteers, both experienced and novice are needed.

**Streamwatch:** We are monitoring water quality monthly at six sites in Wolli and Bardwell Valleys. We’d love more volunteers to join this. If interested contact WCPS.

**Committee Meetings:** July 25, Aug 22, Sept 26, Oct 24. Any member is welcome to attend the meetings, but notification to WCPS is essential because of security at the building.

**Wednesday 24 July** – 8.45am 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 and stormwater management sites the Track passes plus visits to the fishway and bat camp. Free to members, but registration is essential as numbers are limited. Allow about 4.5 hours. Contact WCPS to register.

**Thursday 11 August Friday** – *Wolli Birdos.* Alan Leishman, guest speaker. See page 6 in this *Update* for more information.

**August (date to be set).** *Kayak trip.* If the tides are high enough we plan to run a further kayak trip. If you are interested to go along on this, contact WCPS asap for more information. Cost \$40 per head.

**Friday 21 October** – *Annual Dinner.* See page 6 in this *Update* for more information.

### Do you have any skills?

Would you like to contribute more to helping the Society, but don’t feel you have the time for a regular commitment? Many of our members have skills that could occasionally be a help to the society, but don’t realise how useful they could be.

We need some people who could spare an hour a month to bring morning tea to our hard-working bush regeneration teams. A hot cup of tea and some biscuits make all the difference on a cold winter’s morning!

We would also love to hear from members with fund-raising skills.

### Wolli Creek Preservation Society

PO Box 270 Earlwood NSW 2206

T 02 9554 3176 E [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au)

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