

Wolli Creek Preservation Society

Update

February 2015

BUMPER ISSUE 12 pages

Rising Tide of Opposition to Westconnex



ST PETERS RALLY

Just two weeks before Christmas, about 2,000 inner Sydney residents gathered at Simpson Park St Peters and blocked Campbell Street to resoundingly reject WestConnex and its impact on inner west communities. **Over forty houses are slated for demolition in that neighbourhood.**

KING STREET CRAWL

Even more support was mobilized on Feb 1st when over 3,000 people walked down King St Newtown from the Hub to St Peters to protest Westconnex plans for the slashing of Sydney Park and the building of tunnel exit ramps into King St, increasing congestion and destroying the popular shopping strip.

Together with our affiliated community group NoWestConnex, WCPS members rallied to call attention to the loss of urban green space around Sydney due to proposed WestConnex routes and to raise awareness of the possible loss of two hectares of significant Wolli Valley bushland.



INNER WEST RALLIES

continued

WCPS members were on hand at both rallies to answer questions and distribute material about the impact of the project for precious Wolli Valley bushland. Over 200 people signed postcards to NSW Labor Opposition Leader Luke Foley calling for the Wolli Valley to be saved.

As an allied member of the NoWestConnex Public Transport community group, the Society also collected signatures to prioritise public transport instead of toll roads. WCPS has been involved in the wider WestConnex opposition campaign because of the lack of information released by the Government, its refusal to release a full business case for the toll road project and its plans to increase urban density without sufficient public transport investment to address Sydney's worsening congestion.

Westconnex will have a huge impact on local communities if allowed to go ahead – residents' houses will be sacrificed to make way for it, green space destroyed, taxpayers' funds spent on a road that will be heavily tolled, rat-running traffic in school areas and secret locations for tunnel ventilation stacks disclosed only at the last minute.

Our Valley is one piece of the pie and we must work together if we want to save it!

See more photos on www.facebook.com/projectwollicreekvalley and at the end of this Update.

By Anna Le Masurier



Christine and Silvie Miles, Ann Porter
Photo by Laura Zusters

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FIGHTING TO PRESERVE THIS VALLEY FOR A LONG TIME.

BUT NOW, WITH THE STATE ELECTION LOOMING, IT WILL TAKE THE EFFORTS OF ALL OUR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS TO PUT THE WOLLI CREEK VALLEY ON THE AGENDA.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

The WestConnex Delivery Authority will choose three tenderers' bids to design and construct the M5 East duplication later this year. Sign our petition calling on the tenderers for the M5 duplication to avoid destroying our valley in their design and construction bids, keeping it safe for current and future generations to enjoy.

Come to our public meeting on 25 February, hand out flyers at railway stations, join one of our information stalls, write letters to politicians and the media or ring talkback shows.

Contact info@wollicreek.org.au for more information or like the Society's Facebook page to keep up to date with our campaign.

KNOW WHO YOU'RE VOTING FOR

PUBLIC MEETING 25 FEB

WCPS has also been in contact with local State Government parliamentarians to voice our opposition to WestConnex and understand their responses on the issue.

To hear the results of our survey, and find out the latest on Westconnex, come to the public meeting at the **Earlwood Senior Citizens Centre, corner Homer St and Hartill-Law Ave, 7.30 till 9pm** on Wednesday 25th February.

RECENT ACTIVITY

ANNUAL DINNER, OCT 2014

A lot of new faces came to join long-time members for our popular dinner. Old friends had a chance to catch up and many people made new friends. The Annual Dinner is one of our best fundraising events and from 100 attendees we raised \$1856. Deb's excellent raffle prizes raised us almost \$1,000 alone and competition between tables to win the Quiz was fierce.

Bird expert Dr Richard Major from the Australian Museum entertained us with tales of the very charismatic White-fronted Chats, a bird of salt-marsh areas, which he has been monitoring on Botany Bay.



Any ideas on other ways to raise funds for WCPS?

BIG BOTTLE CLEAN UP



If you'd like to be involved next time there's a Clean Up Flash Mob, please contact WCPS

Wolli Creek spilled its banks last October, when a massive amount of rain fell on Sydney. Fed by numerous stormwater outlets, a ferocious torrent of water swept into the Bray Avenue wetland at Bardwell Park, leaving behind a large legacy of mostly plastic bottles and polystyrene "floatables" in this beautiful site that has been undergoing restoration over the past decade.

Wolli Bushcarers visiting the wetland were confronted by the sad sight of ducks walking over rafts of plastic bottles and the despoiling of an attractive billabong wetland. 17 volunteers from the WCPS removed as much of the litter as they could. One volunteer donned waders and two worked from kayaks, while others on foot scoured the accessible edges of the wetland and the creek-side bushland.

Hundreds of plastic bottles were hauled out and put into 40 bags to be collected by Canterbury City Council, a great supporter of bushcare in this area. A volunteer said, "why on earth don't we stop this sort of pollution at the source by implementing a container deposit scheme as they have in South Australia?"

So many people still fail to realize that the things they casually drop or throw away finish up in our waterways. The streets, footpaths and car parks of our suburbs are actually the head waters of our urban creeks. The rubbish is ugly to look at and endangers wildlife.

Peter Stevens

In the Valley...

As the last substantial remnant of natural bushland in this area, the Wolli Creek Valley provides an irreplaceable wildlife haven for many animals, including birds. The plentiful food of summer sees many visitors and also young birds finally out of the nest, fed by diligent parents. The cuckoos, of course, take advantage of very unsuspecting parents, who raise them instead of young of their own.



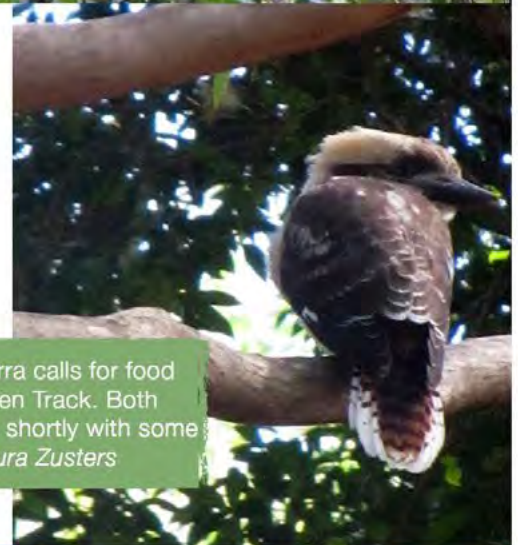
A Currawong feeds its gigantic Channel-billed Cuckoo 'chick'. Photo by John Marychurch



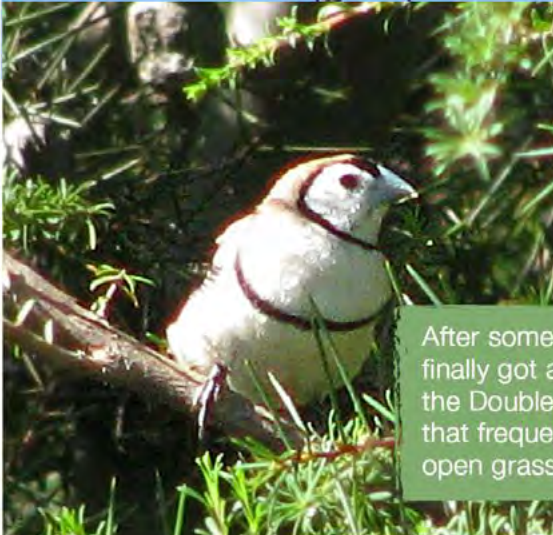
Wattlebird contemplates its oversized Koel 'chick'. Photo Laura Zusters



The Magpie Larks of Fauna St have already raised a brood of three this summer. Robyn McGregor found them sitting on this second 'hi rise' nest.



Juvenile Kookaburra calls for food near the Girrahween Track. Both parents turned up shortly with some snacks. Photo Laura Zusters



After some stalking, Deb Little finally got a photo of one of the Double-barred Finches that frequent the Bray Ave open grassy area.



John David captured the elegant Great White Heron fishing on Wolli Creek at Turrella Reserve.

WOLLI CREEK FLYING-FOX CAMP MAKES THE BIG TIME

The Wolli Creek Grey-headed Flying-fox camp at Turrella has been identified as a Nationally Important (NI) camp. Under the Federal Government's recent draft policy statement outlining management guidelines for Grey-headed and Spectacled Flying-foxes camps, the Wolli camp is one of the 29 NSW camps mapped as Nationally Important.

This news underscores the importance of the management plan for the Wolli camp currently being prepared by environmental consultants Eco Logical. The NSW Environment Trust is funding the development of this management plan under their grants programme. Reps. from WCPS, Rockdale Council, Canterbury Council, NPWS and Sydney Trains are overseeing the project. WCPS and Rockdale Council staff, who initiated the grant application, are driving the community engagement and education parts of the project, which includes BAT WATCH.

COMING UP

SOCIAL BAT WATCH EVENING

Friday 6th March, 6.30 to 8pm Turrella Reserve

Sit or lie back with BYO food and drink in hand and watch the show that is the nightly fly-out from the camp. We'll even have some batty craft for kids young and old.

It's a great opportunity for budding young David Attenboroughs to cut their teeth on one of the great urban mass movements of wildlife. In January we counted just under 11,000 Flying Foxes!

If you are good at crafty things, we would love a bit of help on that front.



A FUN SUNSET GET TOGETHER



Maya Harriman-Khan
by Trudie Harriman

The Bat Watch evening will be followed up by a late afternoon stroll on Saturday 11th April from Girraheen Park to the Flying Fox camp at Turrella, and the theme will be bats and plants. More details soon. Later in the year we will have a talk by a bat expert.

Don't forget that our regular **FLYING FOX COUNTS** are on the third Friday of each month – email bats@wollicreek.org.au if you want to join the count team or just be in the loop. It only takes an hour at sunset and it's really rewarding to be involved.

Deb Little, Bat Co-ordinator
0422 156 632, 02 9554 3176
bats@wollicreek.org.au

COMING UP



CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

Sunday 1 March, from 9am to 12 noon

We have once again chosen a site that needs cleaning up in the Valley and are calling for lots of helping hands to make a real difference.

The site is near Wolli Bluff, at the eastern end of the Wolli Creek Track, where a lot of rubbish has accumulated. Access is from the top of Unwin Street, a short walk from Tempe Station.

This is a steep site and not recommended for children under the age of 14.

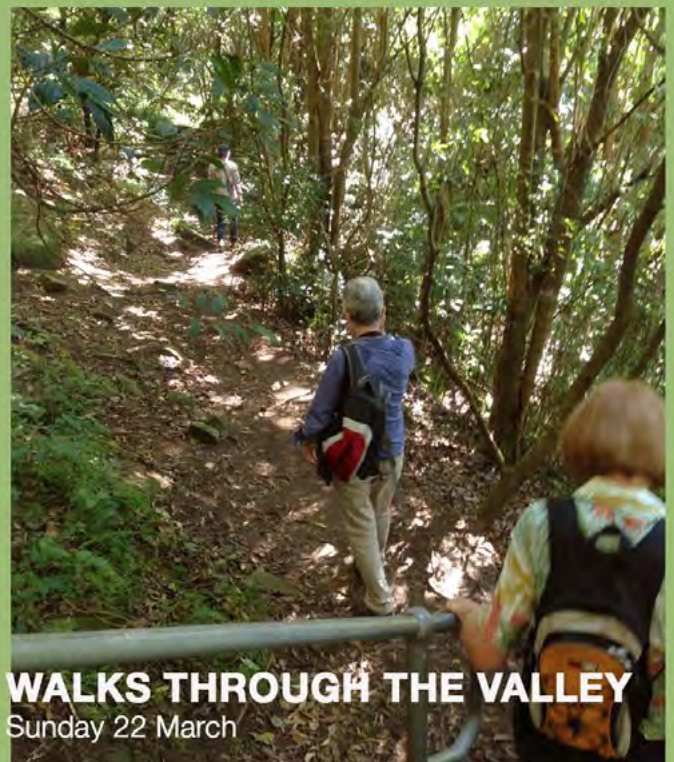
You can let us know you are coming by registering online or contacting Anna via anna@lemasurier.com.

NEXT TWO KAYAK TRIPS ALREADY BOOKED OUT

NEXT TRIPS NOT TILL SPRING



Photos by Laura Zusters



WALKS THROUGH THE VALLEY

Sunday 22 March

Ute Foster will lead a 5 km walk through the Valley on the last Sunday before the state elections. The walk will start at Bexley North at 8am.

Two short walks of the Western part of Wolli Track on Sunday 15 Feb and 15 March. See Calendar.

For more information or to book your place, contact info@wollicreek.org.au.

HISTORY IN THE VALLEY

Many people have fought for the preservation of the Wolli Creek Valley since the 1970s, waging the longest anti-motorway campaign in Sydney's history.

This vital corridor of bushland has been an important refuge, resource and recreation area for a very long time.

COULD WE SEE WOLLI CREEK CLEAN ENOUGH AGAIN ONE DAY TO SWIM IN?



OLD SWIMMING HOLES

In the Earlwood Community News, Christmas 1985, Frank Valentine remembers the valley in the 1920s and 30s, when Wolli Creek, like Cooks River, had its own favourite swimming holes. Article found by Judy Finlason in the CECAL archives.

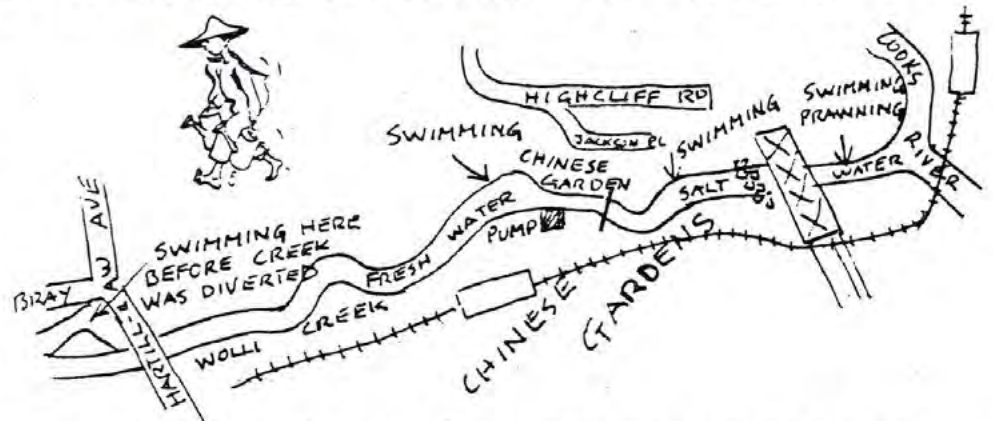
EARLWOOD'S LOCAL SWIMMING HOLES

Wolli Creek, like Cooks River, had its own favourite swimming holes that were frequently patronised by the local skinny dipping lads. Three lads, strangers to the district, lost their lives whilst swimming in these holes.

There were three favourite swimming spots, one being situated a little way up from the junction of Cooks River and stretching up as far as the sewer pipes. This was a favourite spot for prawning by local residents. Another popular swimming hole was in the fresh water area, approximately opposite where Turrella Station is now situated. Another spot was the swimming hole in the fresh water area at the bottom of what is now known as Hartill-Law Avenue. Because of difficulties arising during the construction of the road bridge, the creek at this point was detoured, and from that time; the swimming hole ceased to exist.

We made corrugated iron canoes that were flattened and hand-crafted into shape with some degree of innovation. As they were often sunk during "naval battles", the lads would tie a long rope with a half-gallon airtight tin attached to it to make the canoes easy to retrieve from the murky depths. **Water Hyacinth** was in abundance in the fresh water section of the creek, and with the help of a few old palings, made an excellent raft.

Prior to the East Hills Railway Line being constructed, **Chinese market gardens** dominated the valley from Turrella, down to the main sewer pipes at the Undercliffe end of the valley. During



floods, the market gardens were often washed away, and these hard-working people would have to start all over again. They lived in very primitive conditions, their home being a tumble-down shack with a dirt floor. Outside the shack was a large mound of manure mixed with hay. This was used for mulching the crops.

The gardeners left Arncliffe for the city markets in the early hours of the morning, travelling in a one horse powered waggon, the horse taking its time with a slow plodding walk. Water for their crops was pumped from the creek, filling square shaped wells. The crops were watered by carrying two large cans with a yoke across their shoulders. They filled them by walking down a wooden ramp into the square well. The more daring lads of the district would occasionally try to nick a cabbage or two, but

were rarely successful, the Chinese being ever watchful.

When the East Hills railway line eventually went through this area, it divided the market gardens to both sides of the railway line. The Chinese moved out shortly after this. Over the years, the valley was gradually raised level with filling, and factories now stand where once beauty and tranquillity of nature, were in abundance.

Now a Freeway is threatening to destroy the north side of the creek, and Wolli Valley (the 'gully' to all of us who remember the district's early days) will be just a memory should this eventuate in our time.

We lose so much of what is good, in the name of progress.

by Frank Valentine

HISTORY IN THE VALLEY

NATURAL HISTORY OF WOLLI CREEK

Part one now available

The first installment of Justin's Cahill's long planned account of the natural history of the Valley is available as a free e-book download at <https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/485470>.

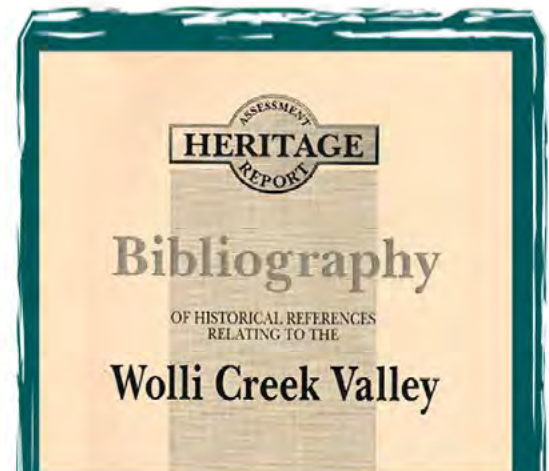
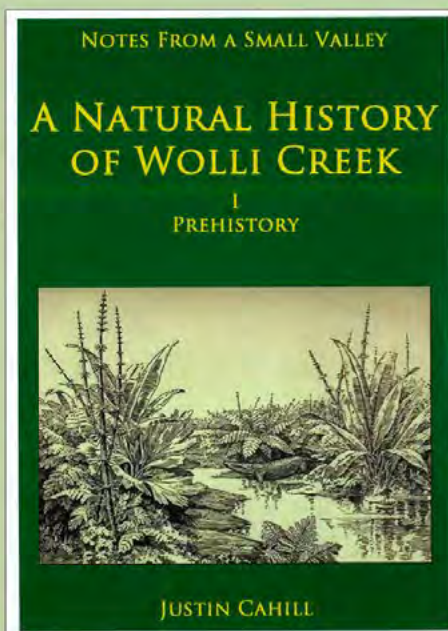
The book covers the Valley's prehistory, including its geology, fossil record and human occupation before the First Fleet arrived. It includes details of some little-known aspects of the Valley's past, such as nearby volcanic activity and the exceptional collection of fossils found nearby at St Peters, which include the remains of a large amphibian, the labyrinthodont, and an equally impressive grass-hopper with a 50 cm wingspan.

Justin is a former President of the WCPS and was the project director for our history publication 'The Wolli Creek Valley: A History of Survival' by Brian Madden & Lesley Muir, copies of which are available at the special price of \$8 up until the March 28 state election.

Justin plans on producing a number of installments. This first one was somewhat delayed by a legal career and the birth of his two daughters.

Justin has done quite extensive research into the Valley, but some of the findings included in this initial installment surprised him. He welcomes comments on this first version (via jjpc@oze-mail.com.au) It's a fascinating read, and highly recommended.

Deb Little



BIBLIOGRAPHY DIGITIZED

AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE

This extensive and thorough bibliography of all historical references to the Wolli Valley was originally compiled by Lesley Muir and Brian Madden in 1992 and is an invaluable resource for research on the history of the valley. It includes books, newspaper and journal articles, land titles, pictures, manuscripts, parliamentary papers, oral history, reports and maps.

Ute Foster valiantly took on the task of digitizing this bibliography to make it available to a wider audience, with the help of Judi Rossi, who did the proof reading. This excellent resource is now available on our website, plus at the State and National Libraries.

Sadly, well-known historian Brian Madden OAM recently passed away.

HISTORY IN THE VALLEY

SAVING WOLLI CREEK

The Wolli Creek Valley might have become an 8-lane freeway, but it was saved by Sydney's longest conservation fight.

Gavin Gatenby, another past President of WCPS and co-founder of EcoTransit, has produced two videos about the Wolli Valley and the struggle to save it from destruction.

These are worth watching to give you a broad background to both the struggles to save our city from being devoured by motorways or toll roads and our Valley by Westconnex in particular.

Saving Wolli Creek Pt 1: From Mussolini to the County of Cumberland Plan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ehv5fM-Nawo>

Saving Wolli Creek Pt 2: From the Fig Street confrontation to the Kirby Inquiry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jLqMmmqzhl>



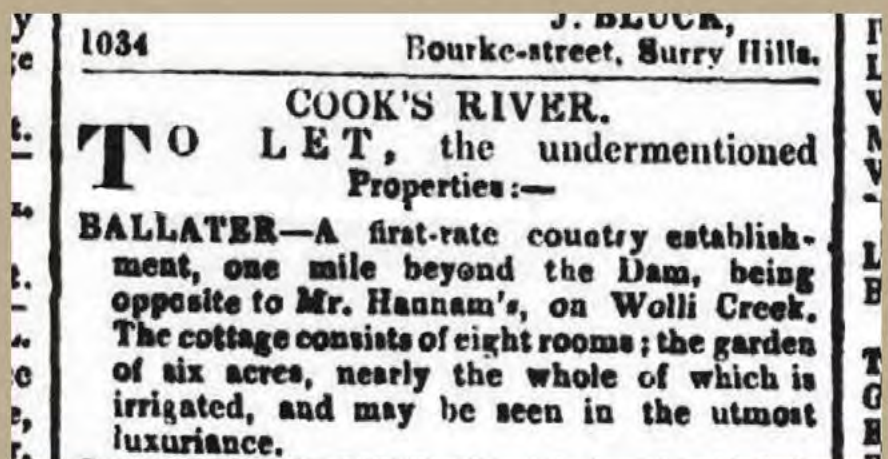
1930s market gardens, looking at Wolli Creek from Nannygoat Hill.

Did you know that Turrella Reserve used to be the site of one of the largest Chinese market gardens in the Valley, supplying fresh vegetables to Sydney?

And that Chinese and Australians banded together to build a bridge across Wolli Creek in 1928?
as reported in the Singleton Argus

HISTORICAL SURVEY

A grant from the Royal Australian Historical Society has allowed WCPS to re-visit a historical survey of the Wolli Creek Valley, first made by Graham Wilson in 1992. Graham originally examined 17 sites, but with new research tools, improved mapping techniques and Trove's access to old newspapers, he is now able to identify many other important historical sites in the valley. Although most are now destroyed, we now have records of their existence.



STALLS AT SHOPPING CENTRES

Joanna Robinski has taken the bull by the horns and committed to organizing weekly stalls from November all the way up to the state election to educate locals about WestConnex. The stalls focus on people signing the petition and sending a postcard to the Premier and Luke Foley. Joanna and other volunteers have been running stalls outside Woollies in Wolli Creek, Coles in Earlwood, Bexley North and other nearby centres.

Joanna says, "Many people gave us their email addresses and they were really keen to be kept informed about the NoWestConnex campaign. The public is really very supportive of us."

People are really keen to know which areas are at threat and eager to sign the card. About 40% of the people we speak to, stop and sign.

"If you want to come but aren't sure what to say, then just come along and listen to us for a bit. You'll get the hang of it quickly and we have photos and maps that are self explanatory."



James Sen Gupta, a new committee member, helps staff the stall at Wolli Creek Woolworths.

Any volunteers to help Joanna for a couple of hours one Saturday?

WCPS T-SHIRTS GET YOUR ORDERS IN

Help publicise Wolli Creek in the lead up to the election

Deryn is organizing another round of WCPS T-shirt orders leading up to the election. You should have received an order form in your email.

Get your order in within a week of receiving this, please.



T shirt models: Deb Little, Laura Zusters, Joanna Robinski and Anna Le Masurier

NOW ON ECOTRANSIT'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL



GAVIN GATENBY'S LATEST VIDEO *THE KING STREET CRAWL*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUXZGawVH2g>

On Sunday 1 February 2015, 3,000 people marched down King Street in Newtown, from Newtown Station to Sydney Park), calling for the scrapping of the WestConnex motorway proposal. This is a brief record of that march.

The video includes speeches by Chris Lego from Reclaim the Streets and UTS transport expert, Dr Michelle Zeibots.

Please share this widely.



Elvis MC's the King St Crawl
Photo Laura Zusters



Angophora on the
Girrahween Track
Photo Laura Zusters



Summer orchid on the Wolli track
Photo Laura Zusters

TO SEE MORE PHOTOS AND COMMENTS

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

twitter

twitter.com/wollipossum

You Tube

www.youtube.com/wollicreekvalley

CALENDAR

Bush regeneration: Feb 7, 8, 11, 20, 21, 28. Mar 7, 8, 11, 20, 21, 28. Apr 4, 8, 12, 17, 18, 25. May 2, 10, 13, 15, 16, 23.

Get details of locations via email bush-care@wollicreek.org.au or from WCPS or website calendar. Always check in case of changes at short notice.

Bat counting: Generally, third Friday of each month, just after sunset. For up-to-date details, join the bat group email list by contacting bats@wollicreek.org.au and come along to see the fly-out or join in the count.

Social bat watch evening

Friday 6 Mar 6:30pm – 8:00 pm. More details in the online calendar http://www.wollicreek.org.au/about_us/calendar

Bird surveys: Ten 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 birds@wollicreek.org.au

Committee Meetings: Feb 23, Mar 23, Apr 20, May 25. Inner south-west CDO, suite 1, Ground Floor, 11–13 Hartill-Law avenue Bardwell park. All members welcome to attend meetings, notification to WCPS essential due to security at the building.

Short Walks: Sun 15 Feb & Sun 15 March
Walk the western part of the Wolli Track. A shorter walk with special focus on section threatened by WestConnex and large number of bush restoration & stormwater management sites. Free to members, but registration essential. Numbers limited.

11 April. "Bat and Plant" Afternoon Walk. Contact WCPS to register.

CHECK YOUR EMAIL INBOX FOR OUR REGULAR MONTHLY E-NEWS

Editor + Layout Laura Zusters

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