

NATIONAL PARKS NEWS AND EVENTS

Interpretive signage at Turrella Reserve

In recent years, WCPS has produced and installed some interpretive signage in the Valley in a few locations (at Turrella Reserve pond, Bray Ave billabong bushland, and in the bushland near Illoura Reserve). These small layback style signs were made possible by various Bushcare grants.

Now, we are pleased to be able to report that a double-sided, largish panel sign is soon to be installed at Turrella Reserve by NPWS, close to one of the TVT bushland track exits. Funding had been secured for this during the last financial year.

WCPS members collaborated with NPWS staff on the text and provided some photos, such as this great historical photo taken at Bardwell Park in 1918 (below). Do keep your eye out for the sign's installation. When it is in, please give us your feedback, and report any anti-social actions against it.

Unfortunately the Fishway sign installed down by the weir by then Canterbury Council, has suffered from such actions from time to time, although it is of a less robust nature than the one to be installed.

Installation of "People Counters"

Our membership officer, Deryn Griffiths, has discovered that NPWS has two people counter devices installed in the valley measuring track usage. Their figures indicate that Jacksons Track, between Jackson Place and Turrella Reserve, gets about 40 people walking along it per day while the Girrahween Park counter gets about 80 people passing it each day. With help from members, Deryn is taking more frequent readings of the counters. This will show some of the patterns of usage. On the Queen's Birthday Public Holiday, Jacksons Track had over 170 people use it!

Deb Little



Family fishing in Wolli Creek at Bardwell Park, at a farm owned by Arthur Burrell. Photo courtesy of Marilyn Keys.

NPWS staff matters

We are disappointed, to say the least, that the staff resources committed to the Wolli Creek Regional Park (already very small) have been reduced by the NSW government in recent months. Many of you will have seen former NPWS senior field officer (and human dynamo) Paul Ibbetson working in the Valley's bushland and in Turrella Reserve in past years. Paul has now retired from NPWS, and unfortunately his position has been deleted as of March 2018, meaning that we now have one NPWS Ranger, Stacy Wilson, who is allocated to our Regional Park along with Nielson Park and Malabar Headland NP.

This has happened at a time when most of the land earmarked for the Wolli Creek Regional Park has been passed to NPWS. And as we write, just post budget, the NSW Government has further slashed the funding to the Office of the Environment and Heritage (OEH), of which NPWS is a part, which is an unfortunate way to mark the 51st anniversary of the establishment of the NPWS.

NPWS staff, despite the cuts and their ever-stretched responsibilities, have kept our Regional Park in their sights.

MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between NPWS and WCPS.

In 2007, WCPS and NPWS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This co-operative agreement was initiated by WCPS in anticipation of NPWS becoming the land-holder for the whole Wolli Valley bushland in the near future. We wanted to make sure we were on the same page regarding the conservation work, and other management issues and policies associated with the soon-to-be Regional Park under NPWS management. Now, 11 years on, it is time to revisit and review this MOU, and update it where needed. One of the things we really haven't done from our end is to ensure that members of the WCPS are aware of this MOU. So once the MOU has been reviewed and re-signed, we will let members know, and make the MOU available to those who want to know about it in more detail.

Volunteers' Thank-you Morning Tea at Paperbark Creek, 2 June



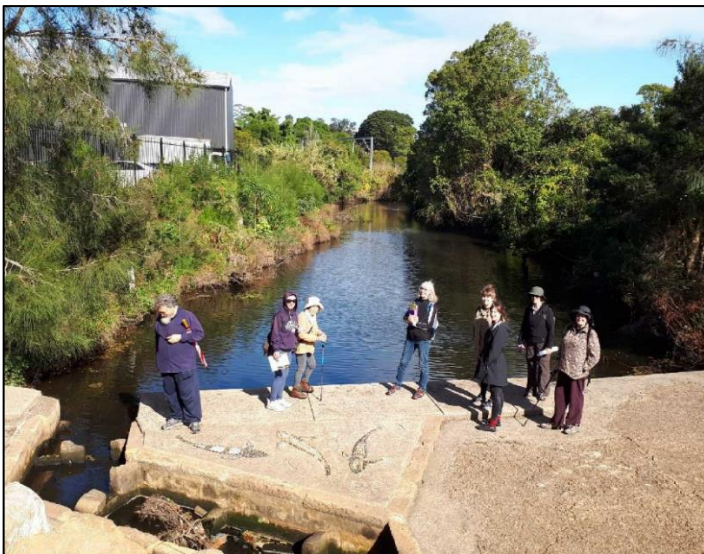
On 2 June, at the Paperbark Creek Bush-care site, NPWS staff organised a wonderful thank you morning tea - complete with marquee and terrific food. Ben Khan, NPWS Manager for Sydney South area, also attended and spoke of NPWS's appreciation of the conservation work that WCPS has been responsible for. Ben has had a long history with the Valley, having been a Ranger responsible for the area in the past. He worked extensively with Paul Ibbetson in those early days.

WOLLI VALLEY WALKS AND WANDERS

Local Leisurely Walks

We have had several group walks in the autumn and winter, with more planned. The shorter, 3.5km walks that are described as a leisurely Sunday morning walk were very popular. Our walks in April and June included several new members and it is always a pleasure to show people the beauty of this hidden valley. Our walkers, young and older, are always impressed by this piece of bushland so close to the city. It is also great to be able to show the value of the work our bush care volunteers undertake to those not familiar with this program and share a bit of the history of the area. Thanks to all who have joined us on these walks and a special welcome to our new members.

Gina Svolos



Walkers investigating the fish ladder at the Henderson Street Weir, Turrella Reserve

Further walks are planned for **22 July, 16 September** and **21 October** so please keep an eye out for these on our website, Facebook or through our regular emails to members. Or email us at info@wollicreek.org.au to express your interest.

Numbers are limited so don't leave registering till too late.

Outsiders Visit Our Valley!

On 24 May, 16 valiant early risers from a Kiama Walking Group arrived at Wolli Creek Station for a walk through the Wolli Valley. The group dispersed among the many coffee shops at Wolli Creek for a much-needed coffee before their walk. We then headed to Tempe via Discovery Point Park. It was an opportunity to share some of the local history. Saint Magdelene's Chapel was fortunately open. No pews but an active mother's group inside. We looked at Tempe House and Mount Olympus. One of the Kiama group spent his childhood in Arncliffe and remembered the trams coming over the Cooks River and thought there was a depot in Wolli Creek where the new development has transformed the area into a residential suburb. We climbed Nanny Goat Hill – a great photo opportunity.



Kiama walkers in Wolli

Lunch was at Girrahween Park. Everyone was delighted that I remembered the code to the toilet block. Onwards to our destination of Bexley North Station, sharing history and information along the way. The group, under the leadership of Dianne Whittacker, were delightful, fun and great company. A lovely day. Even the weather was perfect

Maggie Aitken

FUN FINDING FUNGI



As a result of one of the regular emails from the WCPS, I attended a Fungi Survey on 7 April. We were asked to bring some suitable containers to place our “finds” in and to wear suitable attire and footwear. People came from the Blue Mountains and the Central Coast to be a part of the survey on a fairly overcast Saturday. My friend Andrea and I joined the group in Girraween Park where Dave Noble from the Sydney Studies Fungal Group was getting us sorted into 2 groups. After a talk from Dave about the general safety aspects of our search/survey, our groups split, one going north and the other south along the Wolli Creek valley. Our group went south. We basically stayed on the trail, with regular excursions to places Dave and others thought might be ripe for fungi growth. He had mentioned that it was a bit dry and we might not find many, however we did seem to find at least 15-17 types of fungi, this being realised when we returned to base with our specimens.

It seems that looking for fungi is a bit like birdwatching. If you know **what** you are looking for and **where** to look, there is a good chance you will find it. We had a very passionate lady in our group (I apologise I can't remember her name) who was an expert on fungi, and she was very helpful in naming the often strange and sometimes exquisitely small fungi we found. As I really didn't know what to look for, I just wandered off the trail from time to time, searching in some places Dave had suggested had the conditions for fungi growth. I did find at least four types, and compared them to what the others had gathered. Some in our group were more focussed on the photography of the specimens and got themselves into extraordinary poses to capture just the right angle. I was hoping to find some edible mushies on our survey, but alas, this was not to be. One of the folk from the Sydney Studies group said that there probably

were some that *may* have been edible, but she advised that we should err on the side of caution and not attempt to eat *any* of the fungi found.

Whilst out on the trail, we came across Bush Care members doing the very important work of weeding and regeneration. They also had found some fungi while working, and showed us their location. I'd taken my camera, but found that my pics didn't do the varied and interesting subjects justice. Therefore, I'm pleased to note that Dave took quite a few that day and these photos can be found at this link, take a look, they are fascinating.

<http://www.david-noble.net/Fungi/WolliCk7Apr18/WolliCk7Apr18.html>



Slime mould - *Stemonitis sp*

On our return to Girraween Park, we ate our packed lunch and shared our finds. The park tables were strewn with all the fungi we found, and the Sydney Studies people quickly identified them all with labels placed near or underneath the specimens. I very much enjoyed the few hours spent on the survey, and also the knowledge passed on to us by the experts. I'd recommend this outing for anyone interested in the Wolli Valley, and of course fungi.

Sharon Thompson (WCPS member)

The next Fungal Field Study Day is on

Saturday 7 July

Full details available from:

<http://www.wollicreek.org.au/fungal-field-study-day-in-the-wolli-valley-on-saturday-7th-july>

FLYING FOX COUNT TURNS 10

In April this year, our collection of monthly data about the population of the Grey-headed Flying-fox camp in Turrella (beside Wolli creek) reached the ten year mark.

We started counting the number of Flying-foxes in the camp via monthly fly-out counts as they exited their camp in April 2008. This was 10 months after the roosting camp formed on Sydney Trains land, between the creek and rail line. Back then, their numbers were just a few hundred.

We started the counts in response to a number of things. Firstly we heard about PhD research being carried out by a NPWS officer, Billie Roberts, who was looking into the dynamics of the Grey-headed Flying fox (GHFF) population through its range along the east coast of Australia. This involved synchronised counts, on the third Friday of each month of as many GHFF camps as possible. We decided to contribute to her important work. Secondly, we were aware that around the same time, the Sydney's Botanic Gardens Trust was planning to disperse the camp that was currently occupying a part of the Sydney Botanic Gardens. As the Turrella/Wolli camp was potentially a site where some of these dispersed FF's might end up, we wanted to collect our own base-line data about the population. It also seemed a good idea, thinking into the future, recognising the value of having long-term population data starting from close to when the camp was established.

The numbers of GHFF in the camp at any time fluctuates. They are a nomadic species, moving about in response to food sources, although some GHFF are quite sedentary, and show fidelity to a camp. Their camps have been likened to back-packer hostels, where some pass through, and others hang around, and stay for extended periods. The graphs here, produced for this year's Bat Watch picnic, so a month shy of our 10 year period, show this fluctuation.

Our biggest count was 24,000+ in November 2016. Our last count on 15 June was only 2,900, which is quite low.

In the 10 years, we have had 153 people have a go at counting at some time. The number of regulars who still come along, after so many years, has been heartening. On 15 June, despite the cold and the early count time that applies in winter, fourteen people turned up, and the photo below shows some of them.



As we enter the next 10 years of counting, new counters are always welcome. Just email bats@wollicreek.org.au to be put on the e-list.

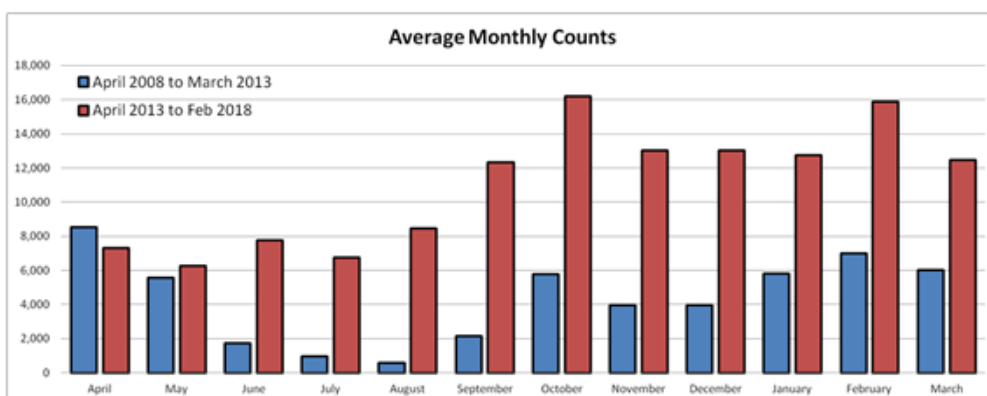
More information about GHFF can be found on our website here:

http://www.wollicreek.org.au/plants_animals/flying_foxes

For an informative and entertaining talk on GHFF watch this TEDx talk by wildlife ecologist Tim Pearson:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnOhS5jVBFk%20Ted%20X>

Deb Little, WCPS Bat Co-ordinator



Average monthly Flying-fox counts for the first five years (blue) and recent five years (pink).

Graph by Deryn Griffiths.

URBAN POWERFUL OWLS

On Friday 8 June I attended an all-day conference “Urban Powerful Owls – Current Knowledge and Future Action” at the Maiden Theatre, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney. The conference was hosted by Dr Beth Mott, Outgoing Powerful Owl Project Officer at Birdlife Australia.

The Powerful Owl is listed as vulnerable in NSW and some other states.

In addition to Beth there were 10 other speakers; Dr Rod Kavanagh (Senior Ecologist, Australian Wildlife Consultancy), other scientists, wildlife carers, university students carrying out research, arborists, environmental activists and members of the “Powerful Owl Coalition”.

The conference was so fascinating I didn’t fall asleep! Let me share some interesting information with you:-

- Powerful Owls can have a wingspan of 1.4 metres. They are Australia’s largest nocturnal bird and the largest species of “Hawk Owl” found in Australasia.
- Powerful Owls eat Possums (Brush Tail and Ringtail) Sulphur Crested Cockatoos, Magpies, Rainbow Lorikeets, Flying Foxes and also insects.
- They need to eat the equivalent of one possum a night. In the breeding season and when they have young they increase their food intake.
- Powerful Owls mate for life. They use nesting hollows only found in very old trees to brood their young.
- They share a large home range which they do not leave. This is problematic if their nesting hollow tree is destroyed and there is no other suitable tree in their territory.

Instead of finding another territory they will remain where they are and no longer breed.

- Trees with nesting hollows can take anything from 100 to 200 years to form. Therefore urban Australians propensity to have old or dead trees chopped down is having a significant detrimental effect on Powerful Owl breeding.
- Nesting Boxes have been tried in various areas, however to date Powerful Owls have rejected them.
- An Arborist from “Sydney Arbor Trees” told the audience that it is a myth that very old or dead trees need to be removed for safety reasons. A dead tree can stand for 100’s of years in complete safety.

If you would like to know more please go to the Powerful Owl Project website or Facebook page:

<http://birdlife.org.au/projects/powerful-owl-project>

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/ThePowerfulOwlProject>

TO WCPS MEMBERS
WE NEED MORE BIRD SURVEYORS!

Please email info@wollicreek.org.au if you are interested in joining a survey team.

Powerful Owls in Wolli Creek

No Powerful Owls have been spotted in any surveys. However that doesn’t mean they aren’t there. They particularly like to nest near Flying-fox colonies. Let’s all start spotting by:

- LISTENING Just after dusk or in the very early hours of the morning they will call. Powerful Owls have a slow, double-note ‘whoo-hoo’ call that is soft, but very strong and resonant, and which can be heard more than 1 km away (from Birdlife Australia). Google “Powerful Owl Call”.
- LOOKING They roost during the day on a tree branch, rather than in a hollow. Look on the ground for the indigestible, regurgitated remains of their prey: bundles of hair, animal jaws and other bones. These pellets can be easier to spot than the owls themselves.

Keep Powerful Owl locations a secret!

If you see a Powerful Owl, please do not tell people of the exact location. Unfortunately this can lead to unintended harassment of the owl. Let the Powerful Owl Project team know and/or email me at info@wollicreek.org.au. I will pass on the info to our Birdos group without revealing the exact location and also to the Powerful Owl Project Team if you have not done so.

Fingers crossed!

Ann Fardell

Co-ordinator Wolli Creek Birdos

SAVE THE DATES - ANNUAL DINNER + SITE VISIT

Our 31st Annual Dinner will be on

Friday 19 October

at the Scots Club, 29 Burrows Street, Arncliffe. Our guest speaker is Dr Stephen Gapps, author of *The Sydney Wars: Conflict in the Early Colony 1788- 1817*. Stay tuned for details and booking information but for now...

SAVE THE DATE!

Planting at Illoura Reserve April 2018

On a bright morning in early Autumn, volunteers gathered for a planting at Illoura Reserve fulfilling a commitment that WCPS made towards a Stronger Communities grant received from Canterbury-Bankstown Council and the NSW Government. There were 260 plants put in on the day, being locally-sourced tubestock of shrubs and grasses and a small number of trees, all grown by Marrickville Community Nursery. Watering these in well was of particular concern because of the dry conditions and water had to be carted in by car in 20 litre containers.

Word had gone out to WCPS members and to the Mudcrabs, whose help was particularly appreciated on the day. The mulching and some hole digging had been carried out by the team of bush regenerators before the planting day, and the enthusiastic volunteers got the planting and watering done very efficiently and could then retire to the shade for a convivial morning tea.

Within a day or two we were alerted by a Wolli member that some of these plants had been removed from their holes. *Approximately 90 to 100 plants had been stolen!* This was very surprising, especially given the many successful plantings that the Society has carried out. Hopefully having many walkers observant of the bushland can deter such theft in the future.

If you see any suspicious behaviour please report it to the police and email us at info@wollicreek.org.au

Georgina San Roque

Visit Exciting Bushcare Site

We've had stunning results from bushcare work done at Paperbark Creek under a two-year grant from the State Government's Environmental Trust. We have:

- Rechannelled the middle section of the creek below Bray Avenue
- Rescued the canopy of tens of native trees from Lantana and vines
- Provided a haven for a plant (Tassel Sedge) uncommon in the Sydney Basin
- Removed swathes of weeds from the Creek's banks and floodplain
- Planted hundreds of natives from local provenance stock to replace the weeds
- Maintained all areas weeded in previous years.

In particular, we now have a showcase example of bush regeneration, with sites cleared recently and one year and three years ago, adjacent to one another. In the oldest area a dense colony of Ochna, an exotic shrub, was removed, and we now have over 20 species come up, with no planting. This includes several seedlings of Woody Pear, a plant rare in the valley.



Woody Pear – photo by Deb Little

At 2pm on **Sunday July 15** we will conduct a site visit at Paperbark Creek to inspect the work. Stay tuned for details and an invitation.

ACTION MEETINGS

In 2018 the committee has made every second monthly meeting an “action meeting” where we discuss important topics in more detail than is possible at regular committee meetings. Action meetings are open to all members and ideas for topics are welcome.

In the March meeting, we discussed the need to ensure that funding and resources are available to support the regional park. As a volunteer community organisation we depend on National Parks staff both to protect and maintain the park and also to support and manage community activities in it.

Many things could be done to improve the bushland and the visitor experience, including maintenance, signage, rubbish removal, education and outreach, schools programs, improved toilet facilities and disability access, and controlling inappropriate usage like bike riders and off-leash dogs. However, despite the wonderful commitment of local staff, restructures and budget constraints have meant reduced service and support from National Parks in the area.

We agreed to develop a campaign to lobby local state members of parliament about our concerns and to arrange a meeting with National Parks to discuss how we work together.

We invited Sydney South Area Manager, Ben Khan, to our May meeting. Ben gave us an update on the recent restructure within National Parks and what that will mean for them and for us. In the new structure there will be no dedicated field officer role for Wolli Creek, but there will be more rangers with project management responsibilities.

National Parks is aware of the unique features of the Wolli Creek Regional Park, including the creek with its natural banks and its easy access by public transport, as well as challenges caused by population pressure and what he called “edge effects” – somewhat offset in our case by the railway line and the creek.

A key management priority for National Parks (and for us) is to work with Sydney Water and private landowners to achieve completion of the regional park.

We discussed grants and funding opportunities and a possible outdoor education area, and also issues including missing signage and restoration of damage to Paperbark Creek. Ben noted that WCPS is the most organized group he has come across.

Tim Pullen

CALENDAR

Bush Regeneration: Expected dates are 7, 8, 11, 20 and 21 July. Always check in case of changes at short notice. Get details of locations from WCPS website calendar, phone 9554 3176 or email bushcare@wollicreek.org.au

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

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 into a team if you contact info@wollicreek.org.au

Committee Meetings: 9 July, 23 July, 27 August, 24 September, 22 October, 26 November. Community Development Forum (CDF), Suite 1, Ground Floor, 11-13 Hartill Law Avenue, Bardwell Park. All members are welcome to attend meetings but notification to WCPS is essential due to security at the building.

Wolli Walks: Sunday 22nd July from Tempe to Bexley North 8am start (5km); 16 September (3.5km) and 21 October (5km). Booking essential. Contact email info@wollicreek.org.au

Kayak Trips: Saturday 27 October and Saturday 10 November. \$50 per person. Booking essential.

Annual Dinner: Friday 19 October, Scots Club, 29 Burrows Street, Arncliffe. **SAVE THE DATE!**

To register info@wollicreek.org.au

Wolli Creek Preservation Society
 PO Box 270 Earlwood NSW 2206
E info@wollicreek.org.au
FB Protect Wolli Creek Valley
www.wollicreek.org.au



**ANNUAL DINNER BOOKINGS
 OPEN SOON!!
 Keep Friday 19 October FREE!**