Wolli Creek Preservation Society



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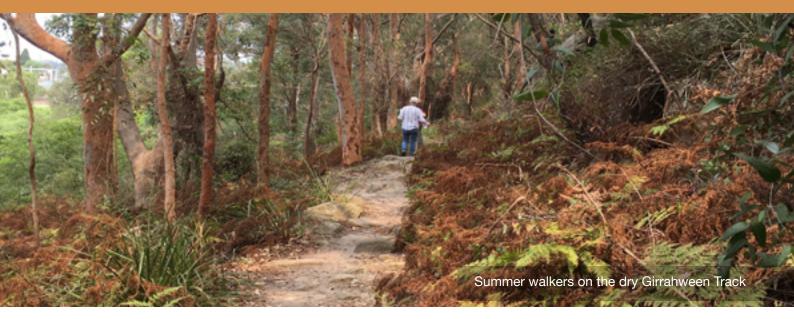
February 2020

- 11. Cooks River Changemakers
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- 13. Report on Annual Dinner
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NIND,

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SUMMER OF DROUGHT AND FIRE



This summer, the devastation to our bushland and wildlife throughout Australia has distressed many of us. The loss has been extreme and the ongoing impact at this stage unknown. Protected in the heart of Sydney suburbs, the Wolli Creek Regional Park escaped any fire damage, but the effects of long term drought, smoke and heat were putting strain on our local bushland and wildlife.

The Committee felt it was important that we contribute on behalf of WCPS to other groups who are caring for our wildlife. We donated \$200 to NSW Wildlife Council which is the peak body for many NSW Wildlife Organisations. We also recently donated \$200 to Inner West WIRES to assist with the Flying-fox care program that supports our colony in the Wolli Valley, as the drought has created extra workload for WIRES for many months.



SMALL WAYS WE CAN HELP

As a Society dedicated to the preservation of bushland and for those looking for ways they can help, I thought I would share some suggested ways that were sent to us by the Nature Conservation Council recently.

WCPS President Gina Svolos

BECOME A VOICE FOR NATURE

Invest in our longterm advocacy work to fight for systemic change to protect our climate, wildlife and forests. With so much lost, we need to give nature the best chance to recover and thrive. We will hold our government to account and fight for real action. Making a regular donation is one of the best ways to support positive change for nature. Regular gifts enable us to plan for the long-term and build a strong movement that stands up for nature. Join us as a regular giver or give a one-off donation.

DONATE TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS HELPING OUR NATIVE WILDLIFE RECOVER

There are many incredible organisations doing critical work to help our wildlife right now, providing food, water, shelter and medical aid. Here are a few ways you can donate to them.

DONATE TO THE NSW WILDLIFE COUNCIL'S WILDLIFE DROUGHT AND FIRE RECOVERY FUND

The Wildlife Council will distribute funds to a range of wildlife rescue groups in NSW as needed.

DONATE TO THE AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE SOCIETY'S WILDLIFE IN FIRES APPEAL

The Wildlife Society will also distribute funds to a handful of wildlife organisations in need.

COUNTER THE MISINFORMATION

Unfortunately, misinformation and lies are spreading about how the fires started and why they are so catastrophic. One of the most common myths is that environmentalists are to blame because they've stopped hazard reduction burning. It's simply untrue. NCC has run countless workshops with the Rural Fire Service helping people plan and execute hazard reduction burns.

Without this training, literally hundreds of property owners would have been more at risk during these unprecedented fires. Misinformation distracts from the root cause that we must address to create a safer planet for all: climate change.

NCC myth-buster that you can share to get the truth out



HELP BIRDS IN YOUR GARDEN

Thank goodness we have had such substantial rain lately. But this is not necessarily the end of the drought. Water experts at NSW Water have stated we need 5 months of steady rain to end the drought.

Tempe Wetlands were dry, Centennial Park was dry, as were many other water reservoirs in parks throughout Sydney, and these conditions may return. So why not see where you can put out some sturdy containers with water for the birds in your garden and provide your regular visitors with a reliable source of water. A good birdbath will also encourage new visitors. You can give vital assistance in supporting an otherwise stressed bird population.

Please change the water frequently. Birds don't like to drink dirty water and they can pick up diseases. When you place a container in the garden, also be aware of areas of ambush from cats. If money and your garden layout allows, a bird bath on a pedestal is best. But steer clear of glazed birdbaths, as the shiny surface is too slippery for small birds to get a grip with their claws. Some stones or branches in the birdbath may help and a rougher terracotta surface is good.

Give some thought to where you put the birdbaths too. Small birds, like Silvereyes, Spinebills and Honeyeaters, won't visit a birdbath out in the open. They need to be close to bushes or branches, so that they can pop in and out from a protected area. Plus they want access to easy refuge if they are disturbed.

Other types of shallow baths, like saucers on the ground, can provide water for a range of other species, including lizards, geckos, bees and frogs.

IT CAN TAKE TIME FOR BIRDS TO FIND A NEW WATER SOURCE BUT THEY WILL FIND IT





BAT WATCH PICNIC FRIDAY 6TH MARCH 2020 - TURRELLA RESERVE

Come along to our annual wildly popular picnic and watch a great urban 'David Attenborough moment' during Australasian Bat Month

CREATIVE AND CRAFTY BATTY ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG AND OLD

COME AND ENJOY FROM 6.30PM

HAVE A LOOK AT THIS VIDEO OF A PREVIOUS PICNIC

Come down before sunset to watch Grey-headed Flying-foxes stream out in their thousands from their Turrella camp beside Wolli Creek, as they head out for a night of looking for food.

Share this 'wow' experience with friends and family and celebrate our amazing city wildlife. Learn more about these important night workers. They're our best long-distance pollinators, keeping essential forests healthy. Our forests need them more than ever now.

Bring a picnic dinner, rug or chair and insect repellent. Get into the spirit of things by coming in batty costume.

Turrella Reserve: Enter via Henderson St. Turrella (close to Turrella Station) or Finlays Ave. Earlwood. For more info email bats@wollicreek.org.au



Organised by The Wolli Creek Preservation Society

with support from The National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), Sydney Trains, Canterbury-Bankstown Council and the Australasian Bat Society (ABS)





PROPOSED

ALL QUIET IS NOT ALL RIGHT THE CASE OF THE ODOUR CONTROL UNIT

In October last year Gina Svolos and Peter Stevens met with the Sydney Water (SW) team designing an Odour Control Unit (OCU) to be installed next to the South West Ocean Outfall Sewer (SWOOS) where it emerges from under the Earlwood ridge at the top of Unwin St and goes on to cross Wolli Creek as a set of very large pipes.

Sydney Water's proposed installation solution is two large tanks, each one storey high, with associated pipework and ventilation stack, bang in front of the striking rockface of Wolli Bluff to the **west** of the SWOOS. The Two Valley Trail (TVT), closed for a year for the OCU's construction, would reappear as a cantilevered walkway around the outside of the tank site - shown in blue in the diagram above.

Our alternative solution: installation of the OCU on land to the **east** of the SWOOS, already in public hands, allowing easier and cheaper construction, better access for maintenance and probably allowing the walking track to stay open. This was declared unsatisfactory because of impacts on one isolated residence in Unwin St. We made a further suggestion that SW acquire this property to allow even easier access and to give scope for a visual barrier for the intensely industrial character of the OCU.

Numerous bureaucratic objections to this were raised. But we know that the NSW Government has had no trouble with compulsory acquisition. Remember the M4 at Haberfield? We also know that the market price is well within SW's reach given the resulting reduction in construction and maintenance costs. There is of course also the intangible saving of a beautiful natural feature for the innumerable future users of the TVT and the freeing up of other adjacent land for bushland restoration.

We made it explicitly clear that WCPS did not accept or acquiesce in their proposed solution and insisted that they review their proposal. Since then – silence, all quiet, no contact from SW Another success for community consultation?

In parallel with our engagement with Sydney Water, letters protesting the OCU proposal have been sent to various Ministers from WCPS, its members, local MP Sophie Cotsis and shadow environment minister Kate Washington. Melinda Pavey, the minister responsible for SW, has signed off on a letter, clearly drafted by SW, claiming their proposal will be OK because there is "no endangered ecological community on the area to be cleared". Sydney Water will be the approving authority and will avoid any further public process as no DA to council will be needed. For access to various documents in this saga please go the WCPS website at http://www.wollicreek.org.au/wolli_valley/other-issues.

I fear that we are losing this battle and will have the rest of our lives to regret it. The only prospect I see for success is mass action of some kind by WCPS members and that requires some new ideas and new energy to implement them. Can you provide it? Talk to me.

Peter Stevens 9554 3176

NOV



WOLLI CREEK VALLEY AUTUMN WALKS COMING UP

SUNDAY 29 March 8am – 12:30pm

To Celebrate the Wurradjul Festival, the Wolli Creek Preservation Society, in partnership with Canterbury Bankstown Council, will be hosting a walking tour of Wolli Valley, part of the Two Valley Trail Walk.

This walk will be a 5km walk from Bexley North to Tempe via the Wolli Creek Valley Walking Track. The walk will showcase some of the best bushland in the local area, highlighting sandstone cliffs, tall gum trees and birdlife. This is a medium-hard grade 5km walk with some sections of the trail covering uneven ground. Bookings are required and all children under 18 years must be accompanied by an adult.

Bookings are essential. See https://wolli-walk.eventbrite.com.au

SATURDAY 30 MAY 9am - 12 noon

This will be a leisurely Saturday morning bush walk from Bardwell Park to Tempe along the Wolli Creek Valley Walking Track. We will be starting at 9am sharp. This is a 3.5km walk designed for those who would like to see the Wolli Creek Valley at a leisurely pace.

This walk will traverse a part of the Two Valley Trail (TVT), which in its entirety is a 13 km walk along the Wolli Creek and Cooks River Valleys.

Bookings are essential. To register, email info@wollicreek.org.au

This walk is free to Wolli Creek Preservation Society members. Membership is \$10 pa for an individual & \$15 for a family/household.

By arrangement, you can join on the day, however as numbers are limited and there is always keen interest, preference will be given to those who have joined WCPS ahead of the day.

To join the Wolli Creek Preservation Society go to http://www.wollicreek.org.au/about_us/support_us

Details about where to meet and further walk information will be provided upon registration.



Kindly supported by







Join in for a morning of family-friendly fun and help clean up the Cooks River 8.00 onward Coffee available – bring your 'keep cup' 8.30am Paddle session 1 for the early birds 9.00 onward Land-based clean-ups begin, walking, cycling 10.30am Paddle session Session 2 starts 11am to 1pm Community BBQ + fun displays from all community groups 12.00 Group photo 1pm Event Concludes. A great time to head to the 'Concordia Club' next door

FOR MORE INFO GO TO FACEBOOK





WOLLI CREEK FLYING FOXES ARE BACK

CAMP OCCUPATION

In 2019 the Turrella camp beside Wolli Creek was empty from June until mid September. The last time it had emptied was in 2016 for a period of 2 months. Back then there was a mass flowering of Spotted Gums in the Batemans Bay area. It's an event that happens periodically and which attracts a significant percentage of the whole national population of Grey-headed Flying Foxes when it happens.

It remains to be seen how the fires in that area will affect these trees in the long term and ultimately the availability of this important food source for the Flying Foxes. We do know that in 2019 there were big flowering events for Eucalyptus trees (White Box) in the Central West and Hunter regions of NSW and it's likely at least some of 'our' Flying Foxes decamped there for the duration.

Additionally, the early spring bushfires in SE QLD and northern NSW somewhat "trapped" the Flying Foxes that went north for food then. There was not enough suitable habitat and food trees remaining for them to 'step' their way back to southern regions.

The original camp area on the southern side of the creek on Sydney Trains land near the train track was occupied less often than the camp area on the northern side by the walking track.

This 'southern camp' did become more popular during the very hot days of late spring into summer.

IMPACT OF VERY HOT DAYS AND DROUGHT

The high number of very hot days in 2019/2020, some over 40 degrees, has resulted in deaths of some juvenile GHFF. GHFF start to die when temperatures reach 42 degrees. Pups and juveniles are affected at lower temperatures. So far the number of Wolli deaths observed is less than 20, however parts of the camp are inaccessible or hard to access, so numbers could be higher. The deaths have been reported to WSU researcher Justin Welbergen who is collating data from other camp reports on this tragedy - a tragedy that will be repeated in future as heat waves are part and parcel of climate change.

Other camps such as Bomaderry and Gordon saw deaths in the hundreds, and in the thousands in Adelaide and Melbourne. See this National Geographic article <u>https://www.nationalgeographic.com/ani-mals/2020/01/flying-foxes-are-dying-en-masse-in-australias-extreme-heat</u>

As well as the fires in the north and south of NSW, ongoing drought has continued to be a challenge on the food front as trees fail to flower and fruit. This has resulted in abandonment of pups in some camps where food has been particularly hard to find.

If you have a fruit tree like a Fig or Mango, or grapevines, spare a thought for the hungry FF's and leave some for them - and do use wildlife friendly netting if you net trees.

Wildlife carers often have to rescue and care for FF's injured by fruit tree nets, adding to the burden generated by drought and fires

FLY-OUT COUNTS

Our count team continued to do a great job with the monthly third Friday fly-out counts. The highest count for the camp in 2019 was 13,000. This was in both February and March, during the breeding season, when camp numbers are often at their highest. There is quite a good ongoing level of interest from people who want to join the counts. The bat e-list for notifications currently has 144 people on it. Fortunately they don't all turn up at once!

Email <u>bats@wollicreek.org.au</u> for more info.

Deb Little Bat Coordinator - of people, not the bats

FAREWELL TO A DEDICATED BUSHCARER



Sadly, long-time WCPS member and great contributor to our Bushcare program John Diamond died on 31st December 2019

John, and his partner Georgina San Roque (our current Bushcare Co-ordinator) were co-founders of Bush Habitat, the professional Bush Regeneration Company that for many years has carried out quality bush regeneration work in support of and complementing our volunteer Bushcare work.

Since retiring from Bush Habitat John and Georgina continued their work in the Valley as volunteers.

John was a legend in the bush regeneration field for over 30 years. Generous with his time and extensive knowledge, he was still helping with supervising and educating new Wolli volunteers in early December last year, despite the health issue that had arisen in the past 18 months. His heart also lay with the bushland of Western Sydney where he grew up, and he was instrumental in the establishment of the Ropes Creek volunteer group. He was engaged in other bushland conservation work in that area as well.

WCPS and the broader bushland and bird conservation movement have lost an important, passionate contributor, especially vital during this time of environmental upheaval.

Our condolences go to Georgina, and to John and Georgina's families.



OUR RANKIN AWARDS RECOGNISE LOCAL SCHOOLS

In memory of the late Neil Rankin, known as the 'Birdman of Wolli Creek', the Rankin Award is to recognize excellent work being undertaken to foster children's enjoyment and understanding of the natural world, with prizes of up to \$300. Eligible projects were submitted from a number of local schools and preschools.

We are pleased to announce that last December, we gave out Rankin Awards to three successful winners:

Earlwood Uniting Church Preschool

For the great work that the bush educators/teachers, led by Sue Nevin, have been doing with the students in the Wolli Creek Valley. We note the children's interest in the brush turkey, its nest and the bird's aboriginal colourings.

Dulwich Hill Public School

To teacher David Hilton, an enthusiastic advocate for the environment, who promotes and leads various environmental initiatives at the school including Car Free Days. He has brought the wider community into the school by organising parents and community members to help with free bike repairs, invited the local cycling club in to excite the children about cycling and even brought in a cycle-powered orange juicer for a free orange juice morning.

Earlwood Public School

For the great work that the years 3/4 teachers have been doing with the students in the Wolli Creek Valley as part of their Geography unit. The teachers take the students on two bushwalking excursions each year, plus utilise WCPS resources to further extend the students' studies and learning about their local natural environment.

A great big thank you also goes out to Laura Zusters (WCPS) and Stacy Wilson (NP&WS) for presenting each of these awards to the winning recipients, and to Judy Finlason (long time WCPS member) for her mentorship and years' long commitment to the importance of this Award.

We look forward to offering the award again later this year and hearing about all the great projects happening in our local community.

Abi Curtis



LOCAL ARNCLIFFE SCHOOL AL ZAHRA PAYS A FIRST VISIT TO WOLLI BUSHLAND

On 20th November 2019 Gina and I took a group of 40 year 4 students at Al Zahra School for a walk and adventure along the Wolli Creek from Turrella to Girahween Park. For most of the children, this was the first time they had been along this track. Only one young lady in my group had been before.

The children were given a brief talk about personal safety and caring for the bush by keeping to the pathways. The children had many questions about whether they would be safe from snakes and insects. The walk took approximately 90 minutes.

The children were very excited to climb Nannygoat Hill and to see the 360-degree views. The were asked how they would feel if someone decided to demolish the entire hill to use the stone as building material. They all felt very strongly that this would be a very bad idea. We then talked about the history of Nannygoat Hill.

Continuing safely down the hill, we stopped at various places to discuss the natural history and manmade history of the valley. The children were asked to keep absolute silence as we walked past the bat colony to the metal stairway, so they could use their senses of smell, sight and hearing. They were very good at paying attention and were fascinated by all the bats. The walk would not have been quite the same without the bats, who had kindly returned to the Valley after a few months' absence. The children had many questions to ask.

They were also very excited to see a Water Dragon on the track.

We had a brief stop at Russells Pool for refreshments, then continued to Girrahween Park where they stopped for lunch and a run around, before being picked up by the bus to take them back to school.

The children were very respectful, took care in the bush and were full of curiosity. All the children survived their adventures and we hope they enjoyed the day and learned a lot.

Perhaps they will venture there again with their families.



Maggie

"Most of the children were initially anxious going into the bush and I think they felt a sense of achievement at the end. They have a better understanding of the value of the bushland now and of all its little creatures. It showed me the importance of introducing children to the bush." Gina Svolos



BIODIVERSITY MONTH REPORT ON WALKS IN THE VALLEY

To celebrate Biodiversity Month in Spring, the Wolli Creek Preservation Society partnered with Canterbury Bankstown Council to host two walks in October and November in the Wolli Creek Valley.

Both walks were well attended. As Council promote these walks and look after bookings, the walks bring new local people to the valley and also new members. Many did not know about our amazing Wolli Creek Valley.

Our walks leaders Ute, Heather and Gina, accompanied by Dave from Council, enjoyed the pleasure of sharing the bushland and watching people discover this special area. Many were surprised at the beauty in the middle of our highly urbanized environment.

"It always reminds us of just how lucky we are to have this bushland on our door step"

We particularly enjoyed the young children who came along and learned to appreciate the bushland with our youngest being just 8 months old. She enjoyed the walk from prime position strapped to dad's front in a pouch.

As always a chat with Judy Finlason at Jackson Place was a highlight, as people learned about the history of the Valley and the WCPS. It gives people on the walk a deeper appreciation of how lucky we are to have this bushland. Thank you Judy!



COOKS RIVER CHANGEMAKERS



Running over 6 weeks, a new Changemakers Course connected like-minded people to work together to create fun new projects that positively impact the Cooks River and its communities. More than 20 people from all walks of life took part in this new initiative of the Cooks River Alliance

The Cooks River Changemakers launched on 20th October 2019 with a day-long bus tour of the river and its catchment, starting at the headwaters in Yagoona and running down through the suburbs of Western Sydney to the mouth in Botany Bay. The tour included a guided walk and talk about the Wolli Creek Valley by Peter Stevens and Deb Little from the WCPS.

Participants included students, artists, policy makers, teachers, scientists and people working in marketing. Together with experts, participants explored the river, its issues and solutions and developed creative ways of drawing people to the river. Projects arising from the participants range from monthly moonlit walks along the river to a river canoe clean up group aptly named "The Mullets".

The Changemakers course will run again later in 2020. If interested in taking part email info@cooksriver.org.au to be notified when applications open.

Kate Flannery Cooks River Changemaker participant & WCPS Membership Co-Secretary





OUR 2019 ANNUAL DINNER THE IMPORTANCE OF INVERTEBRATES

Our 32nd annual dinner was a great success once again. It's always a great night to meet up with members old and new, with 77 people in attendance this year.

Our guest speaker was Associate Professor Dieter Hochuli, who leads the Integrative Ecology laboratory in Biological Sciences at The University of Sydney. He spoke about the important role spiders, insects and other invertebrates play in bushland, such as pollination, recycling nutrients and as a food source. It was a timely conversation to have, as reports about the decline of our insect population had recently been in the media.

Following the dinner it was lovely to hear Dieter comment that he enjoyed speaking with so many enthusiastic people. He also said that WCPS does a great job creating a community around one of Sydney's most undervalued pieces of nature.

The raffle was again a great success and this year we had a silent auction organized by Jakki Trenbath and Abi Curtis, which helped increase our revenue this year. \$3,290 was raised to support the ongoing work of the Society, up from \$2,790 last year.

Thanks to all who so generously supported the work of the WCPS by buying raffle tickets and bidding on some special items. Prizes were again donated by many local businesses and individuals and we thank them all for their generosity. I would like to thank everyone involved in the organisation of the evening.

It takes many hands to make the evening such a success.

See more of Voren O'Brien's wonderful photos of invertebrates in the Valley on Flickr

Photos by Voren O'Brien

Wattitle

NEW COMMITTEE AND ANNUAL PLANNING MEETING

It is with great pleasure that we welcome four new committee members - Helen Campbell, Jakki Trenbath, Kate Flannery and Yasmin Mohamed.

We held our Annual General Meeting on 9 December and really appreciated that they were able to join the existing members who had renominated for the committee.

WCPS Committee Members for 2020

Gina Svolos - President, Deb Little – Vice President, Abi Curtis - Treasurer, Tim Pullen - Secretary Committee members - Laura Zusters, Karen Paroissien, Helen Campbell, Jakki Trenbath, Kate Flannery and Yasmin Mohamed.

To assist us in planning our activities for 2020 please come and add your ideas

ANNUAL PLANNING MEETING ON MONDAY 24 FEBRUARY

7pm at the at the CDF offices 11-13 Hartill-Law Avenue Bardwell Park

All members are welcome to attend. Please rsvp to info@wollicreek.org.au

COOLIBAH RESERVE COUNCIL NEGLECT OF VITAL BILLABONG

Bardwell Creek flows down through the lovely Coolibah Reserve and then into Wolli Creek not far from the Flying Fox camp. One of our bird survey teams does a regular monthly survey of the birds at this Reserve, as the island in the billabong here has long been an important bird sanctuary. Rockdale Council used to regularly dredge the billabong, to maintain the island and prevent silting up of the waterway.

Since the amalgamation into Bayside Council, dredging has ceased, the billabong is silting up and the old island is no longer as safe a sanctuary for birds, as it can now be accessed by people, foxes and cats by a land bridge. Our survey team has noticed the numbers of water birds have markedly decreased since dredging stopped.

Ann Fardell, Coordinator of the Birdos Bird Survey groups says,

"I have spoken to Bayside Council several times and even gone down with them to look at the billabong. But the Council has not done a thing. Such a shame to lose such a vital sanctuary for water birds. We used to see many Swamp Hens and Coots, but not anymore."

The Wolli Birdos have 9 active and 2 inactive bird survey sites. Nannygoat Hill and Stotts Reserve have only one surveyor each. If you want to find out more about Birdos or want to join a survey team, contact Ann Fardell on birds@wollicreek.org.au.



MEMBERSHIP

Family One Year \$15 Individual One Year \$10 Concession \$7 Group Membership \$30

Direct Deposit Westpac BSB 032 067 WCPS Inc 288295, with your SURNAME and RENEW in the description line

Email <u>membership@wollicreek.org.au</u> to confirm years and any donation included

WCPS T-SHIRTS

If you would like a t-shirt please let us know



T Shirts are \$25 each Short and long sleeved

The order form is available at <u>WCPS-T-shirt-Order-Form.pdf</u> or via our website/ About Us/ Support Us

We will be printing as soon as we have sufficient orders to make it financially viable.

CALENDAR

Bush Regeneration	February 1, 9, 12, 14, 15. March 7, 8, 11, 20, 21 April 4, 8, 12, 17, 18. May 2, 10, 13, 15, 16 Details via bushcare@wollicreek.org.au, website calendar or phone Georgina on 9957 2284. 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 counting
Bird Surveys	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 <u>birds@wollicreek.org.au</u>
Committee Meetings	February 24, March 23, April 27, May 25 Inner south-west CDF, suite 1, Ground Floor, 11–13 Hartill-Law Avenue Bardwell Park. All members are welcome to attend the meetings, but notification to WCPS is essential due to security at the building.
Planning Meeting	February 24. Community Development Forum offices, Ground Floor, 11–13 Hartill-Law Avenue Bardwell Park.
Guided Walks and Kayak Trips	Walks Sunday 29 March 8am to 12.30 Saturday 30 MAY 9am – 12 noon Numbers are limited info@wollicreek.org

Wolli Creek Preservation Society PO Box 270 Earlwood NSW 2206 info@wollicreek.org.au www.facebook.com/protectwollicreekvalley www.wollicreek.org.au twitter.com/wollipossum youtube.com/user/wollicreekvalley/videos



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