



Wolli Creek Preservation Society

Update

February 2022

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JUDY FINLASON WINS JACK MUNDEY ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE AWARD



On Australia Day, long time member Judy Finlason won Canterbury Bankstown Council's Jack Munday Environmental and Heritage Award.

In her nomination of Judy for the Award, WCPS member Judi Rossi wrote, "For over 40 years, Judy has excelled in her activism, advocacy, leadership and passion for the community and the local environment of the Wolli Creek and Cooks River valleys. A founding member and former President of the Wolli Creek Preservation Society (WCPS), Judy helped save the Wolli Creek valley from the M5 motorway."

Judy said, "It came as a total surprise. I only heard about it when Council contacted me a couple of days before their Zoom awards presentation. I was amazed at the amount of research that Judi had done and kept it all secret. I was very chuffed to receive it, which I did on behalf of all the people who have contributed to Wolli and the other projects I have been involved in. That's where the credit lies. Jack Munday has been a hero of mine for many years since my old innercity days."



Tony French, Judy Finlason and Jack Munday at the 1999 launch of her book 'The Place That Jackson Built'

40 YEARS OF ADVOCACY

As Judi Rossi says, Judy Finlason is a gifted communicator, “The lovely lady in the last stone cottage in Jackson Place...”, the one who answers the question, “Who built these cottages?” before she gives a potted history to everyone walking the TVT track past her house.

Judy, as a natural storyteller, loves to share what she knows. Judy’s interest in history and heritage led her to research and write, ‘The Place That Jackson Built’ in 1999, giving the history of the six stone cottages in Jackson Place. The book was launched by Jack Munday, in recognition of the work that Judy and the WCPS had done in preserving the cottages from being obliterated by the proposed M5 motorway.

Judy has successfully won grant applications and project-managed WCPS projects including:

- **Eyes on Wolli**, 1989, in which children and teachers from Our Lady of Lourdes and Earlwood Public School worked with composer John Shortis and WCPS volunteers to produce and record original songs full of children’s humour and observations about threats to the environment. This project won the Sir William McKell Children’s Media Award for excellence in environmental reporting.
- **The Amazing Wolli Creek Valley**, 2011, a series of 16 large display panels, for which she did extensive research and writing, working closely with graphic designer Damon Basset.
- **The Wolli Creek Archaeological Report**, by archaeologist, Graham Wilson
- **The Two Valley Trail Teacher Resources**

In 2017, Judy spearheaded the 50 Year Commemoration of the 1967 Battle for Nannygoat Hill, organizing a day of festivities in Turrella Reserve and a re-creation of the walk up Nannygoat Hill, with many residents dressed in sixties outfits. She also convinced ABC local news to come and cover the event and we made the Friday night news. See the [ABC news story intercutting the present day protest with the original here](#).



The original 1967 protest on Nannygoat Hill



Judy with the 'Tea Ladies' at the 2017 Commemoration



Georgina gives Saniya some tips on weeds



Maggie and Leigh covered in sticky Bidens seeds

JOHNSTON STREET BUSHCARERS

Since the end of last year’s lockdown, the old hands of Johnston Street Bushcarers have been able to welcome a few new members.

Bushcare Coordinator Georgina is glad to get to work. “Despite Omicron, we are back in full swing now, as we feel we are outdoors and distanced enough to be safe. The first job this month is to tackle the weeds on this verge. Because of the rain, the weeds are going gangbusters. Later when it gets hot, we’ll head further into the shade to some beautiful regeneration that needs our attention.”

Saniya lives in Kogarah. “This is my second time and I really love it. Walking through the park during lockdown, I saw the bushcare signs and thought I’d give it a try. I grew up so removed from nature, but this is so close to the earth, so wholesome. I’ve only been in Australia four years, so I can come to know the bush now. And I’m learning to recognize Morning Glory, Mickey Mouse plant, and Bidens of course.

It’s WCPS member Isaac’s first day. “I did some bushcare 5 years ago. With Georgina’s help, I’ll have a good eye for weeds again soon. I’m concentrating on Crows Foot Grass today. Now that restrictions are easing, it’s great to be outdoors and get some fresh air.”

Peter was a Bushcare Manager with the railways, so he knows his weeds. Recently retired, he says, “I’m really enjoying being hands on again instead of behind a desk. And it’s lovely company too.”

Amelia is here for her third session at Johnston Street, after two sessions at the Bray Ave wetlands. “During lockdown, I finished my PhD in Ecology and Conservation. Tied to my desk for so long, I was feeling very disconnected from nature. I live in Ashfield and looked around and only found tiny patches of bush. I was pretty amazed when I found the Wollie Creek Valley bushland. It’s so big and so intact. It’s great to come and get back into nature again. And I’m loving learning my species!”



Isaac, Amelia and Peter brushing up their bushcare skills



Photos by Deb Little



BEVERLY GROVE BUSHLAND LOSS REVISITED 5+ YEARS DOWN THE TRACK

2016 The Year the Bushland was Felled for Westconnex

It felt like things were really being rubbed in when most of the remaining Beverly Grove bushland, at Kingsgrove in upper Wolli Creek, was torn down on Threatened Species Day 7th September 2016. This was despite this remnant of Cooks River Castlereagh Ironbark Forest being listed as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community (EEC), & despite it being reserved for protection & regeneration - we thought in perpetuity - following the first M5E road project.

See a [Report from the SMH](#) at the time and our report [in a WCPS Update](#) and [Gavin Gatenby's video chronicle](#) of the gut wrenching destruction of the bushland

With hindsight we can see that WCPS was behind the eight ball in terms of campaigning for its continued existence in the face of the WestConnex juggernaut. But we found out too late that perpetuity doesn't always mean perpetuity. And instead of a campaign to head off its loss, we were reduced to bearing witness to its demise and letting others know what was happening.

2021 The Year we Confirmed the Biodiversity Offset Scheme Scam

We have now finally discovered where the "biodiversity credits" generated as part of the "Biodiversity Offsets Package" for the destroyed bushland at Beverly Grove were "secured and retired". It was certainly not easy to find this out. Roads & Maritime Service were granted extensions of time to find a suitable offset area. Correspondence also went unanswered, or partly answered. Then it was by a process of persistence & deduction to determine the location of the 40 credits involved. We were not impressed.

The credits were issued to a NSW Government entity, the Waste Assets Management Corporation, for what is essentially the remnant perimeter buffer zone bushland around the site of the controversial, now closed, Castlereagh Liquid Waste Disposal Depot near Berkshire Park/Londonderry in NW Sydney. This waste depot itself gutted the Castlereagh Nature Reserve in the early 1970's, taking 395 hectares of the then 495 hectare Reserve for the depot.

The remaining buffer zone vegetation should have been preserved anyway as it is also classed as a related EEC and would surely have been retained in any case, following closure of the depot. The fact that the groundwater in the former depot area is contaminated, according to an EPA admission in 1995, also suggests that development was not practicable. So, it all seems that, to coin a phrase, credits were given where credits were not really due. Certainly none is due to the Scheme.

In mid-2021, an Upper House Inquiry into the integrity of the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme was initiated, chaired by Greens MHR Cate Faehrmann. [See this press release](#). We gave Cate Faehrmann a brief about Beverly Grove as a possible case study. An Inquiry hearing is scheduled for April 2022.

New Option S Artist's Impression

ODOUR CONTROL UNIT MEETS COVID

Sydney Water has organized a second workshop meeting with community representatives in March, about the alternative options they are considering for locating an Odour Control Unit near the sewer aqueduct over Wolli Creek at Wolli Bluff.

The meeting was originally set for 14 December, but shifted to February 2nd in recognition of the realities of the Xmas/New Year disruption to many participants. We are now advised that it has been moved again, to March 23rd, because of the impacts of the Omicron variant.

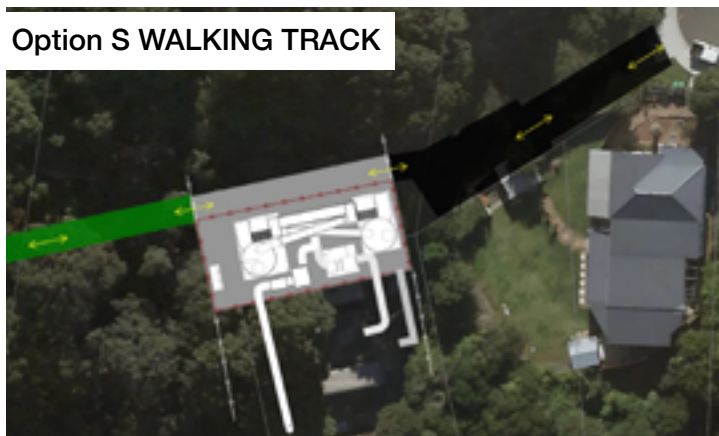
The first workshop was a forced march through a facilitated but strongly constrained process to produce agreed community criteria about the location – but the community is very divided, so this was always going to be problematic. We have since been told that there are three options, all regarded as technically viable, being considered by Sydney Water on which they are seeking comment by workshop participants at this second session.

They are WCPS's Option W (somewhat modified by Sydney Water), their original Option A, and a new option which puts the OCU over the top of the sewer pipes, basically inside their existing fence line below Wolli Bluff. While this latter option has some advantages, it totally blocks the curtilage of the heritage-listed aqueduct and also the views across Wolli Creek currently available at that point.

Our petition opposing Option A passed 5,000 before we closed it. Following the cabinet reshuffle, it is now addressed to the wrong person and has been overtaken by the new options up for consideration. To see SW's diagrams of the three options, follow these links to [Sydney Water's 211210 option presentation](#) and the [Comments on SW package](#) we sent in December. We are still awaiting answers. To join the mailing list, contact info@wollicreek.org.au.

Peter Stevens

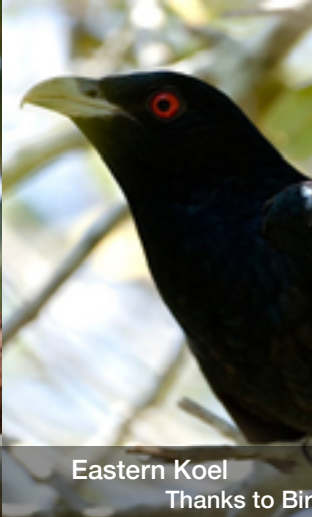
Option S WALKING TRACK



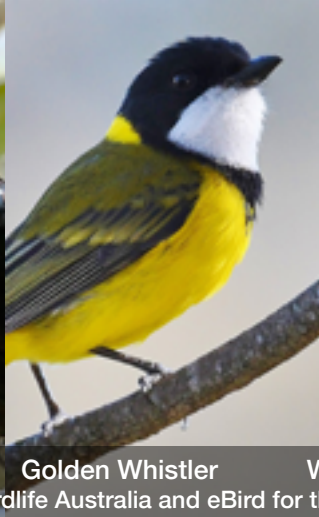
-  3m wide concrete shared path (Sydney Water vehicles and pedestrians)
-  Asphalt driveway / loading zone for Sydney Water access, partially shared with pedestrians
-  Existing walking track (no change)



Channel-billed Cuckoo



Eastern Koel



Golden Whistler



White-throated Needletail



Aust Reed Warbler

Thanks to Birdlife Australia and eBird for the pictures

ARE BIRDS MORE ABUNDANT IN THE VALLEY IN SPRING? WHICH BIRDS ARE SEASONAL VISITORS?

Wolli Creek and Cooks River bird surveyors have commented over the years that birds and particularly juveniles seem to be more abundant in spring. Is this actually true? Dorothy Luther set her Macquarie Uni students a challenge to test the statistical evidence.

Are there more birds in the valley in Spring (September, October, November)?
Which bird species visit the Wolli Creek valley seasonally?
Any changes in the seasonal patterns over 40 years?

The students found that the maximum number of birds is in late winter, August & September, with a minimum in February. Since 2000 the peak has shifted from September back to August.

These findings suggest that spring is indeed peak breeding time and that then the young adults disperse, which lines up with surveyor's anecdotal observations.

To answer the last two questions, the students' analysis was done in 2 stages.

First, they identified potentially seasonal species, then studied those in more depth. Suitable birds were reviewed by a group of experts – Wolli Creek birdo members, Dr. Holly Parsons from Birdlife, Stacy Wilson from NPWS, Robyn Young from Canterbury Bankstown Council, and others.

The study was limited by the small numbers of some species recorded.

Preliminary analysis of the overall abundance showed a tendency to increase over time, suggesting that the bush regeneration work may be paying off in attracting more birds to take up residence in the valley.

Species that show a strong seasonal pattern are the Australian Reed-Warbler, Channel-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Koel, Golden Whistler and White-throated Needletail. Although the Red Wattlebird & Silvereye have seasonal patterns, there are some present at all times of the year.

Seasonality wasn't so clearly shown for a number of other species. They seem to be more like sporadic visitors, perhaps following food supplies. Some species appear to be declining in numbers, in spite of the overall gains.

[Find the full analysis of each species here.](#)

Our thanks to the staff of Macquarie University, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, for their ongoing support for these data analysis projects. The students learn quite a lot about real live databases and WCPS gets some valuable research on our survey efforts. And thanks again to Dorothy Luther for making it happen. Dorothy says she is looking forward to discussion about the results.



Photo by Catherine Keyzer, Fauna St



Photo by Peter Semple, Stotts



Photo by Valerie Atkinson, Parry Steps

OMG BRUSH TURKEYS BACK IN THE VALLEY

In early December, Catherine Keyzer of Fauna St got in touch to report that she was surprised to see a Brush Turkey on her back fence.

Luckily, she managed to get a photo of it. Catherine remembers often hearing one near the wading pool on the Girrahween Track a couple of years ago and bird survey teams reported hearing one near Nannygoat Hill in the same period, probably the same bird. But no-one had heard one for a couple of years.

But it sounds like one or more Brush Turkeys have taken up residence in the valley again. The day before Catherine spotted one on her back fence in December, another Earlwood resident reported seeing a Brush Turkey walking down Finlays Ave. Recently one has been seen north of Bardwell Park along the track and another walking down Jackson Place. Peter Semple reports seeing one outside his back gate, in Stotts Reserve, to the south of Slade Road.

Both Valerie Atkinson and Chris Jordens have seen one on Parry Steps, which connect Bayview Ave with Illawarra Rd, leading over into the Cooks River. Valerie says, "I was going up the Parry Steps from Homer St. He or she was very busy scratching and churning up the leaf litter." Canterbury Bankstown's Biodiversity Officer has reported this sighting to Taronga's Big City Birds site, where they are researching 5 target birds, of which Brush Turkeys are one. Have a look [here to read more about their research](#).

Is this just one bird, who travels widely? Or several?
Has anyone else got any more sightings? Seen any mounds anywhere?

TWO NEW URBAN WILDLIFE VIDEOS FROM GAVIN GATENBY

The Eastern Dwarf Tree-Frog
This frog has been recorded in the Wolli Valley. Can be found hiding in Lomandras and its call is memorable.

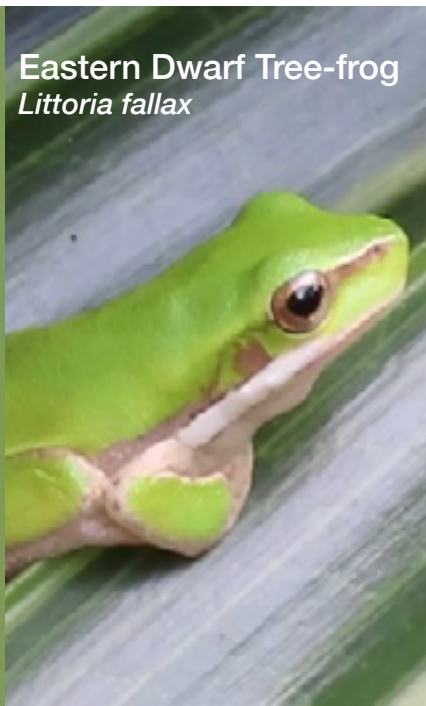
[Watch the video here](#)

Buff-banded Rails

These beautiful but usually shy birds are found in wetlands with low, dense cover. Gavin recorded these birds raising chicks in Sydney Park.

[Watch the video here](#)

Eastern Dwarf Tree-frog
Littoria fallax



Buff-banded Rail
Gallirallus philippensis



Wolli Creek Update

From the Wolli Creek and Bardwell Valley Preservation Society

No.1 March 1987

Round one to the locals

The battle to save the Wolli Creek Valley is starting to show positive gains. In November the Government reversed its pre-election "promise" of 1986 and announced an "indefinite

The Society realizes that economic rationality, good sense and an overwhelming proportion of the residents of Southern Sydney are on the side of preserving the valley.

Even the youngest, more enlightened

• Wolli Creek Preservation Society President Tony French: *Wal Murray's replies to Parliament raise more questions than they answer...*

Baird must face inquiry over RTA operations

VALE TONY FRENCH EARLY WCPS PRESIDENT

Tony French, who died on 17 January aged 79 after a long battle with Parkinson's Disease, played a pivotal role in the Wolli Creek Preservation Society's early struggle to save the valley from the threat of an 8-lane surface motorway.

Tony was, at first glance, an unlikely greenie and freeway opponent. He was a motor sports enthusiast and a leading light of the Mini Car Club. By profession he was an accountant working with commercial and community organisations.

With his wife Carol he was residing in Earlwood, already a member of what was then titled the Wolli Creek and Bardwell Valley Preservation Society, when, in 1986, the infant organisation went through a transformational crisis, leading to a more broadly-based membership and decision-making processes.

Following these somewhat tumultuous events, the Preservation Society was reformed and officially incorporated. Its committee was expanded and its activities greatly expanded. There was a new focus on mobilising the community and reaching out to other conservation organisations.

In March 1987, the first Wolli Creek Update appeared. It was to be an important campaign tool, especially when it appeared as a mass-distribution tabloid and on both occasions Tony's determined visage featured on the cover.

Tony was a driving force in the ultimately victorious campaign. He served at various times as secretary, president, and treasurer, and was often the society's public spokesperson in the electronic and print media. His positive attitude and sense of humour as well as his organisational skills were often needed to help the Society through what were difficult times.

That the Wolli Valley was saved from the threat of an 8-lane surface motorway and became a regional park owes much to Tony's advocacy.

Tony French is survived by his wife Carol, their children Michelle and Cameron and grandchildren Nathan, Caitlan, Oscar, Matilda-Lily and Jemima-Rose.



Birdlife Australia is calling on Bunnings to take bird-killing rodent poisons off their shelves.

As many of you would know, second-generation anticoagulant rodenticide products (SGARs) are causing deaths in owls, eagles, and other birds of prey. They are unnecessarily dying by ingesting rats and mice that have been poisoned by these rodenticides. Second generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGAR) poisons are the worst. Bunnings controls about half of Australia's D.I.Y hardware marketshare and sells a much larger variety of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticide products (SGARs) than any other major outlet. There are alternative products that are just as effective that don't poison our natural food chains.

We are calling all bird lovers to [sign the petition](#) on the Birdlife Australia website to ask Bunnings to stop selling these products. Once you've signed, give your local Bunnings a call to ask them to take bird-killing SGARs off their shelves. Find your local store's number with [this handy tool](#).

Ann Fardell, Wollli Birdos
birds@wollicreek.org.au

COOKS RIVER LITTER PREVENTION STRATEGY



Community groups are making a concerted effort to tackle litter in the Cooks River catchment. How do we reduce litter 50% by 2025?

An initiative of the River Canoe Club in association with the Cooks River Alliance and funded by the NSW EPA, the project seeks to identify sources of litter and litter hotspots in the catchment and to develop strategies to address the problem.

A reference group involving Sydney Water, councils and community groups including WCPS, the CRVA and the Mudcrabs has held several workshops to share their knowledge, insights and practical ideas for reducing litter. Consultants engaged on the project are analysing litter data to find patterns and identify the underlying issues. An online forum was held on 17 March last year to share with the broader community the vision of "Towards a litter-free Cooks River" and the litter reduction challenge. The project will deliver a strategy and action plan to guide councils and community groups to target their activities more effectively to achieve real and lasting reductions in litter impacting on our local environment.

Kitty Hauser is the current volunteer representing the Wollli Creek Valley.
If you're interested to find out more or be involved, contact info@wollicreek.org.au.

Tim Pullen

MEMBERSHIP

Family Three Years \$45

Individual Three Years \$30

Concession Three Years \$21

Group Membership \$30 p.a.

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

Email membership@wollicreek.org.au 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
[WCPS-T-shirt-Order-Form.pdf](#)
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 5, 9, 13, 18, 19. March 5, 9, 13, 18, 19.
April 2, 9, 13, 15, 16. May 7, 8, 11, 20, 21.

Details via bushcare@wollicreek.org.au, website calendar or phone Georgina
on 8958 4801. Always check in case of changes at short notice.

Bat Counting

Generally third Friday of each month, just after sunset

Meeting at the footbridge, Turrella Reserve

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

Teams work to their own timetable, but we can get you involved in a team
if you contact birds@wollicreek.org.au

Committee Meetings

Planning Meeting was Feb 9.

Meeting Mar 23, May 25, July 27, Sept 28, Nov 23

Currently held bi-monthly by Zoom

If interested to attend please contact info@wollicreek.org.au

Guided Walks

None currently planned due to Covid

For more information, contact info@wollicreek.org.au

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All photos by Laura unless otherwise credited

See previous issues at
wollicreek.org.au/publications/update-newsletter

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