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Wolli Creek Preservation Society

Update #101!

Sept 2023

The Wolli Creek Preservation Society would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners, the Dindjari and Bidjigal people of the Fero Nation.

1. New WCPS Website
2. OCU abandoned
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WOLLI CREEK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Protecting the natural and cultural values of the Wolli Creek Valley

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New WCPS website now live!

We felt great excitement as our [new website](#) went live over the weekend of September 9/10. After several years of planning, writing, designing and meetings it is finally live! The information from the old website has all been reviewed, updated, and most of it rewritten, with some new sections added. It will now be much easier to join and renew your membership, make donations and purchase books and t-shirts with our [online shop](#). And to view our [upcoming events and campaigns](#).

We know we will have some teething problems, so please let us know if you notice any errors, inconsistencies or missing links, etc. at info@wollicreek.org.au. We thank all who have been involved along the way, with special thanks to the Website sub-committee members – Deb Little, Tim Pullen, Laura Zusters and Gina Svolos for the many, many hours of work. And also to Peter Stevens, who has written the section [history of achievements](#) of the WCPS, as well as our [current campaigns](#). It's great to have all this documented for our future reference.

And a very special thank you to Penny Waterson who provided us with many hours of free technical skills to get the website up and running. She is not a local, but her willingness to assist us has been extremely generous. *Gina Svolos*

Wolli OCU dropped, funding to complete Regional Park in State budget

In my August report as President for 2022/3, I noted that we were still awaiting a decision on Sydney Water's proposed Odour Control Unit inside the Regional Park boundaries. That decision has now been made and, in the technical language of such things:

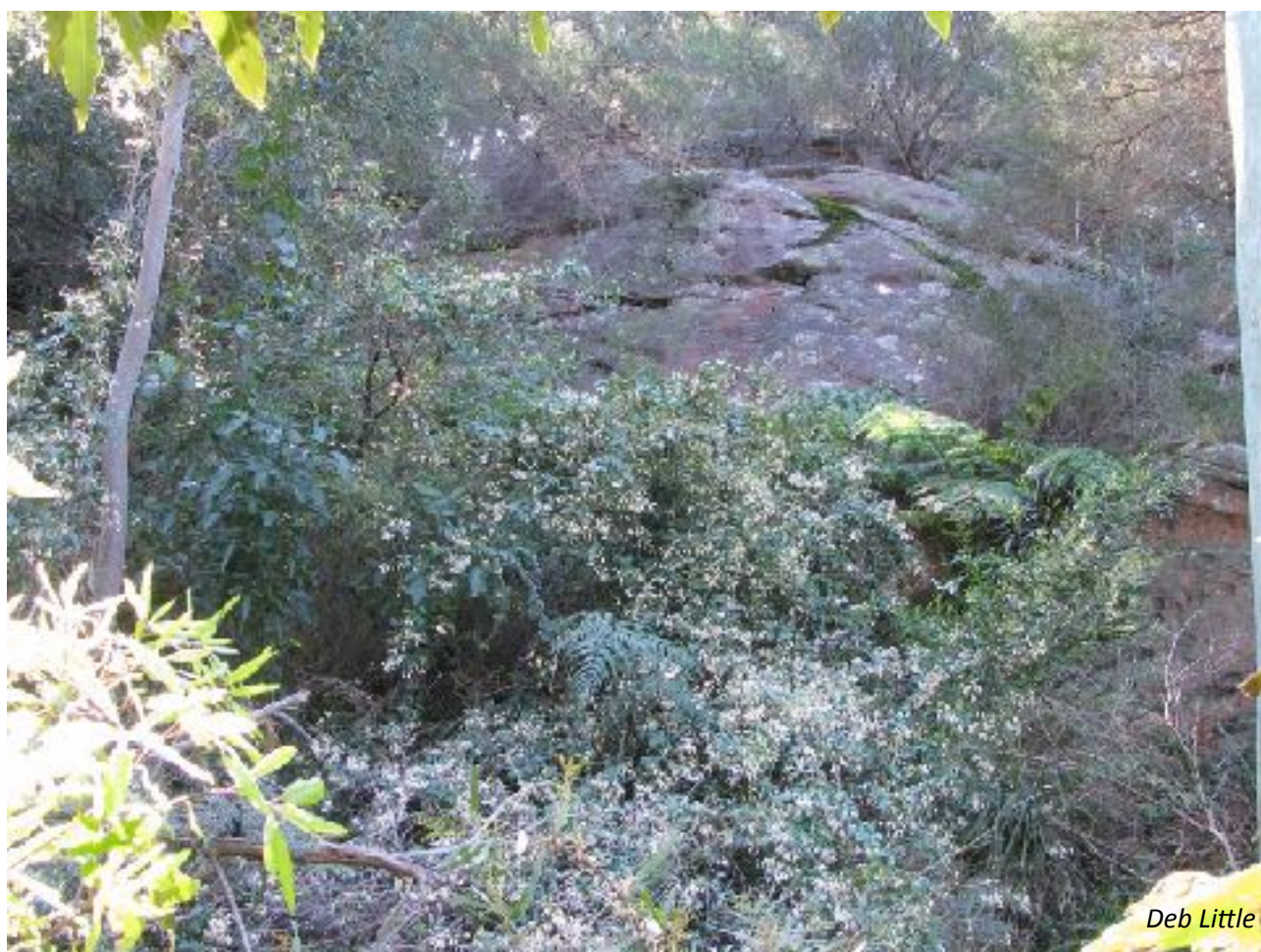
“Unwin Street OCU has been closed out as a delivery project.”

However, that doesn't mean that we have yet gained the land next to the sewer aqueduct for the Park. There is a sting in the tail of the message we have been given: “Sydney Water still needs to maintain enough land around its current assets at Unwin Street for ongoing operation and maintenance activities as well as any future asset upgrades.”

WCPS is urging that the land needed for these purposes should be State-owned vacant land at 22 Unwin St, adjacent to the aqueduct on the eastern side, finally enabling the whole of the SW land inside the Park to be made over to NPWS.

On a more positive note, Sydney Water has been undertaking extensive bush restoration work on its land adjacent to the sewer aqueduct on the western side, with much weed material removed and considerable planting undertaken. So that when the land is included in the Park, it will be in much better condition than that in which Sydney Water had previously maintained it.

And, in a Stop Press moment, \$13m has been allocated in the State budget to complete Wolli Creek Regional Park. *Peter Stevens*



Deb Little

Wolli Bluff would have had this rock face chopped through to accommodate the Odour Control Unit.

2023 Referendum on an Indigenous Voice to Parliament

At its July meeting, the Committee of the WCPS discussed the upcoming referendum on the Voice to Parliament. We agreed that the referendum is an historic opportunity to make a modest but important change that will promote the self-determination of First Nations people. We also agreed that the Voice to Parliament will enable all Australians to benefit from Indigenous cultural heritage and knowledge. You can read and download the Committee's full statement at <https://www.wollicreek.org.au/wcps-supports-a-yes-vote>.

Members of the Committee carried the WCPS banner at the "Walk for Yes" rally on Sunday 17 September. All members of the Society were invited to join us. *Christopher Jordens*



2023 Annual General Meeting

WCPS held its Annual General meeting on 23 August 2023. The outgoing President, Peter Stevens, tabled a jam-packed report on the Society's activities during the previous year. Members were emailed a copy of the report on August 8. If you missed out, ask for a copy from info@wollicreek.org.au.

All positions on the Committee were declared open. Deb Little is taking a break from the Committee after 34 years in various roles including President, Vice-President, and Secretary. In 2023, the Executive will consist of Abi Curtis (Treasurer), Gina Svolos (Secretary), Peter Stevens (Vice President) and Christopher Jordens (President). Julie Deady, Kitty Hauser, and Laura Zusters will stay on as Committee Members, and Susie Cornish will join them as a new Committee Member.

The Committee thanked outgoing member Valerie Atkinson for her efforts, and more formally thanked Deb Little for her outstanding service to the organisation, to WCPS, and to the environment of the Wolli Creek Valley. Committee meetings are held bi-monthly online. Members are welcome to attend. See Calendar on page 12 for dates and arrangements. *Christopher Jordens*



WCPS volunteer makes Hansard!
Deb Little receives a copy of her citation in Hansard as an exemplary volunteer. Well deserved!

Annual Dinner 2023

It's September already and the date for our Annual Dinner is coming up fast! Thursday 19 October. We are looking forward to starting another lovely Spring evening on the balcony overlooking a golf course and the Bardwell Valley. Join us there from 6:30 for entrees, with drinks available from a cash bar.

We'll be gathering again at Bardwell Valley Golf Club, this year with new caterers: Dai Romani. Many will remember Dai Romani from Marrickville Golf Club, or their earlier restaurant in Earlwood. Join us to mark 40 years of the Society's work.

Our guest speaker will be Peter Ridgeway who is a conservation ecologist who works with Aboriginal communities, farmers, community and government to conserve and restore the Cumberland Plain as both a human and natural landscape. You may know his book "A Wide and Open Land" about walking the Cumberland Plain through the last of Western Sydney's Woodlands. It's a great read.



Peter's topic: **Made by Nature: How Sydney's wild landscapes made us**

Sydney is a diverse city - a crucible of cultures within a jumble of geologies and ecosystems. Too often we see these human and natural worlds as independent. But the wild has always entangled the people of our region, from Aboriginal communities to colonial settlement and even today. Much of what we consider our cultural history has surprising roots in the geography, geology, and ecology of our natural landscapes. We will explore a wide range of topics, from the origin of our towns and cities to the deep questions such as 'Why do Westies have an accent?' and see how our cultural world originates from the remarkable and often bizarre natural world of the Sydney basin.

We're going to have a fun evening; an opportunity to catch up with old friends and make new ones. There will be the usual Wolli Creek Trivia Quiz, raffles and a silent auction. Don't forget to bring your cash to purchase raffle tickets as we have limited card facilities.

For dinner bookings (and payment) there are two main options:

- <https://events.humanitix.com/wcps-annual-dinner> The cost is \$70 plus booking fee of \$2.25
- Direct deposit: WPCS Inc, BSB 032 067 (Westpac), a/c no 288295. The cost is \$70. Please include your surname and 'ADin' as identifier, and send an email to info@wollicreek.org.au including the names of those attending and if a gluten free or vegan meal is required. The menu has vegetarian options.

If you have any questions, please contact us on info@wollicreek.org.au. Julie Deady

Linking the 'green corridors' of Wolli and Cooks

Between the bushland of the Wolli Creek Regional Park and the more open spaces of the Cooks River Valley lie Unwin St, Earlwood, and Waterworth Park. There has been significant NSW Government interest in promoting green corridors and the Dept of Planning has funded Council development of corridor plans for both valleys. WCPS has commented extensively on the one for Wolli, out of which has developed the [Unwin Green Street](#) proposal to provide a series of stepping stones for native wildlife, especially birds, to Waterworth Park. *Peter Stevens*

Waterworth Park

WCPS recently wrote to Canterbury-Bankstown City urging that known plans to increase vegetation on Waterworth Park be brought forward to further improve vegetation cover and connectivity between Wolli and Cooks. The Mayor has advised that Council is planning for some 800 trees of the Cooks River Castlereagh-Ironbark Forest vegetation community, plus some shrubs and ground covers, to be planted in Waterworth Park between Spring 2024 and Autumn 2025. This is good news, though we will have concerns about the provenance of the plants and the mix of plants. We will seek to be involved as plans develop. *Peter Stevens*



Unwin Green Street

WCPS continues to work with the residents of Unwin Street, Earlwood, on a joint campaign to turn Unwin Street into a “green street” connecting Waterworth Park to the Wolli Creek Regional Park.

One of the key issues in the campaign concerns three vacant blocks of land on Unwin Street that were formerly set aside for the M5 freeway. The NSW government has plans to sell them for residential development, but campaigners want to see the blocks retained as bushland for the “green street”. As well as providing a sanctuary and corridor for the movement of small birds and other wildlife, the bushland would enhance the eastern entrance to Wolli Creek Regional Park.

In 2022, the then Minister for Planning, Anthony Roberts, doubled down on the decision to sell off the blocks. However, hopes for the “green street” alternative were renewed in March 2023, when a new Labor government was elected.

In April 2023, [as reported by the ABC](#), residents of Unwin St called the Dept of Planning to account for its lax management of asbestos contamination on the three blocks.

In May 2023, The Mayor of Canterbury Bankstown Council, Bilal El Hayek, wrote to the new Minister for Planning, Paul Scully, asking him to urgently rezone the three blocks (and several others) from residential use to public recreation.

Since the election, the new Labor government has put a pause on the sale of land by its departments, and until it completes a review, the future of the vacant blocks on Unwin Street remains uncertain. In the meantime, residents and WCPS have met with officials from the Dept of Planning and the contractors that the department has engaged to remove dumped asbestos.

When the loose asbestos sheeting has been cleaned up, Department officials will meet with WCPS to discuss how to minimise the removal of vegetation before proceeding with further remediation of the blocks. This is to prevent additional disruption to the small birds and other wildlife that currently shelter there.

In summary, the “Unwin Green Street” project has wide support not only among residents and at the level of local government, but also now at state government level. Much depends on decisions that now lie with the NSW State Government. *Christopher Jordens*



Christopher Jordens

Unwin Green Street from Wolli Bluff - artist's impression *Gavin Gatenby*

Wolli Riparian Zone

In 2012, WCPS worked with Councils on either side of the creek (then Canterbury and Rockdale), state agencies, and the then Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority, to develop a Wolli Creek Riparian Corridor Management Plan. Although the plan has yet to be implemented, it sets out goals that remain good guidance for us. WCPS wants to see a riparian zone of 30m on either side of the creek, which is the width Government standards set for a creek of Wolli's size alongside the Regional Park. This is largely in place on the northern bank, but is very much not the case on the south side, where the railway corridor is not managed at all as part of a riparian zone. *Peter Stevens*

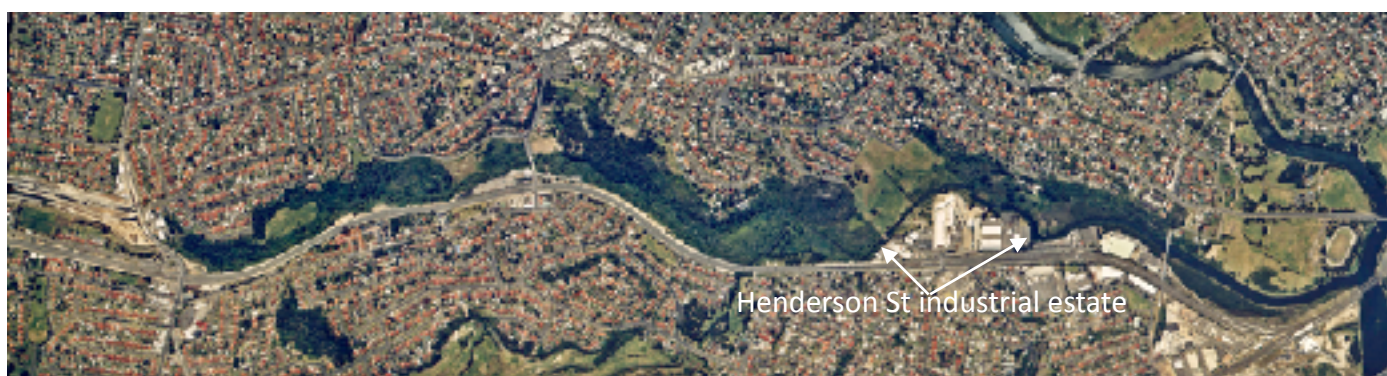
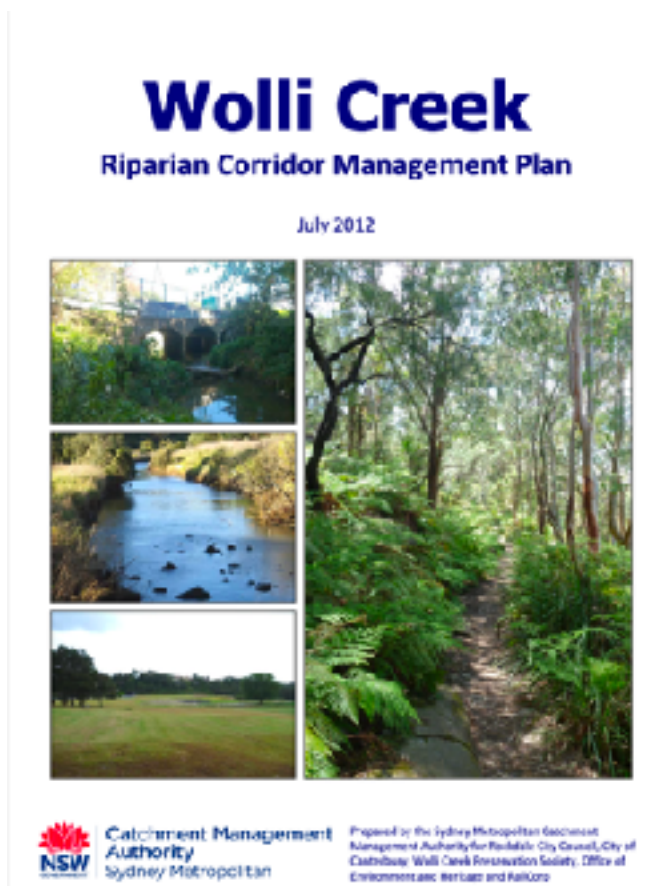
Henderson St Turrella

And then there is the Henderson St industrial area, at Turrella. This industrial land borders Wolli Creek, very closely. In most cases, the property boundary

property extends into the present course of the creek, and the whole property, including the riparian zone, is available for use. This is an arrangement not acceptable today, but, rather amazingly, the NSW planning laws allow it to be maintained, except when a new development or use is proposed, and if that is refused or withdrawn then the previous approval (on old standards) is allowed to continue. WCPS believes that the system should require current knowledge and community standards to be reflected when any development application is submitted, whether proceeded with or not.

Even where Rockdale Council had established something approaching what we seek, it has proven a long and arduous struggle over more than fifteen years (yet to be won) to have that enforced over a site where an existing riparian zone was obliterated and is yet to be restored.

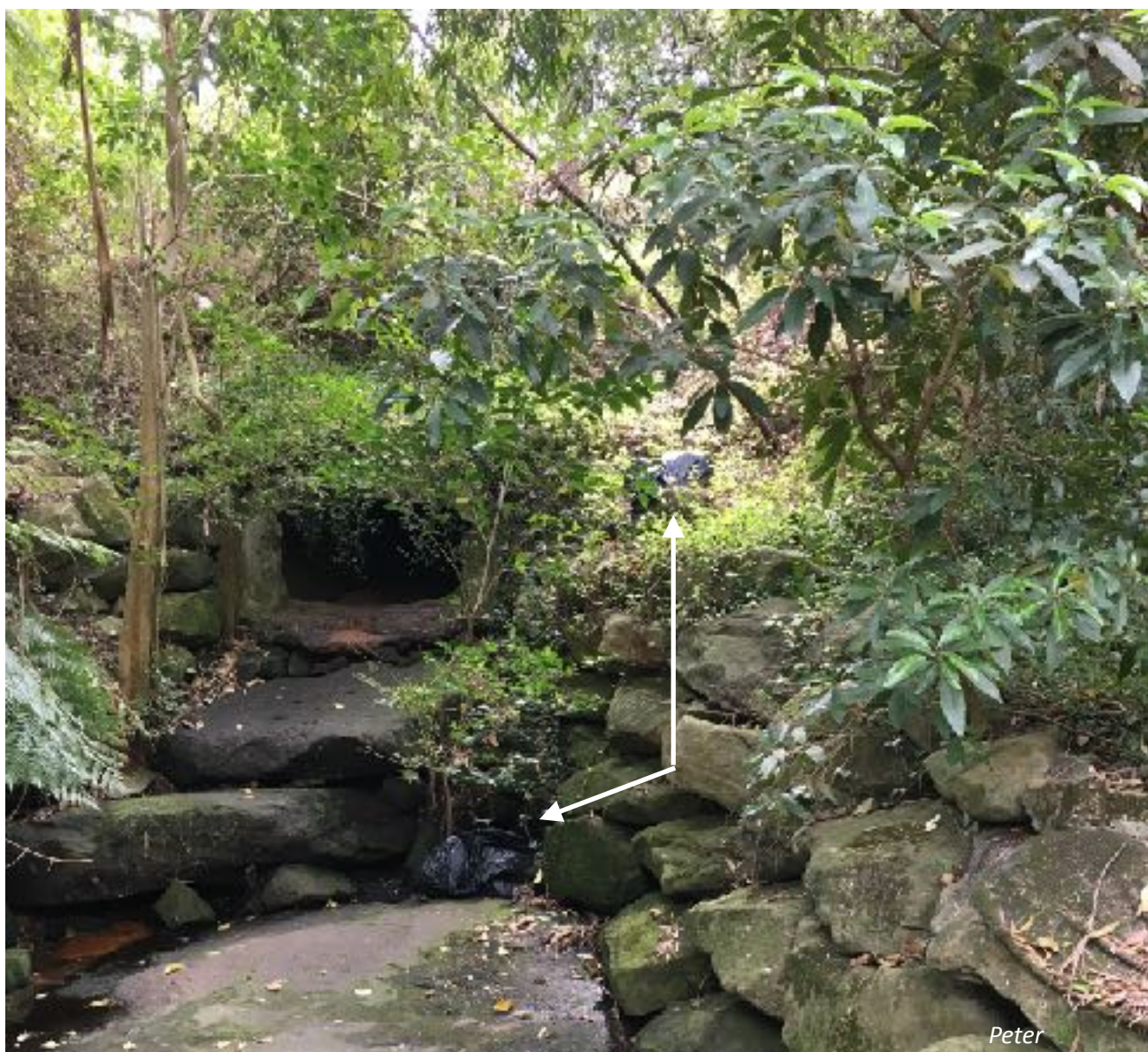
WCPS aims to monitor new Development Applications as we learn of them (not automatic) and to press for the needed riparian zone across the whole estate. We would welcome support from members with some understanding of the planning laws to work with us on advocating for the riparian zone. There is much to be done. Contact info@wollicreek.org.au if you can help. *Peter Stevens*



Bushcare News

Following Peter Semple's move to the North Shore, we now have a **new Bushcare Co-ordinator**. A long-time WCPS member, Paul Ibbetson was formerly a Senior Field Officer with NPWS and worked extensively in Wolli, often on his own time, undertaking bush restoration work. His long experience and knowledge of the Wolli bushland make him a natural fit with this role. It's great that he's been willing to take this on.

There is to be a **planting session** on Illoura Reserve on Wednesday October 4. This will involve D4C (partners with Sydney Water on construction and maintenance) and is a follow-up from the destruction of some bushland below Johnston St by their contractors over a year ago. If you would like to join in planting some 600 tubestock, please contact bushcare@wollicreek.org.au.



Looking upstream from the footbridge over Paperbark Creek. Some **vile miscreant** had dumped two plastic bags of offal and other remains (perhaps from home butchering), over the edge from Bray Avenue above, the lower one already split open. An early spotting (thanks to Rose Collins) and report to NPWS led to prompt removal. Another reason why we need more members to monitor and report to info@wollicreek.org.au when bad or unusual or really good things are seen. *Peter Stevens*

Protecting the bushland from government and private actions occupies much time. Here are three examples.

‘Illoura Creek’

In an unwelcome addition to Wolli sidestreams, water was flowing into and across Illoura Reserve for a couple of months. Walkers may have noted the boggiess or tried crossing on makeshift logs. Noted by track monitor Alan Mitchell in late June and reported by him and by Deb Little to Council and to Sydney Water. After various follow-ups and a bit of buck-passing as to whether it was stormwater or mains water, by late August it was fixed, having proved to be just where we reported and from a main water pipe where it connected to a house in Forrest Avenue. That’s two months of potable water used to irrigate some grass and provide a dozen or more Ibis with more natural foraging grounds for a while. If you’re a frequent Wolli walker and could help monitor the track, please be in touch with info@wollicreek.org.au for some basic guidance.



M6 Cable

Walkers elsewhere will have noticed during August and early September the re-routing of the Two Valley Trail at Bardwell Park. This is to enable contractors to drill twin tunnels under Wolli Creek and the railway from Bray Avenue to Shaw Street to carry high voltage cables for the fans needed for the M6 tunnels further south. Failure to consult fully with WCPS led to misleading maps for walkers (currently in their third iteration) and inadequate protection for regenerated bushland (mostly rectified). Yet another motorway impacting on our bushland. Yet another case of poor consultation by private contractors to government agencies. Much rehabilitation work will be needed for the damaged grass areas. Thanks to new member Cem Akkok for monitoring the goings on there.



Dumping in Bray Avenue

Fly-dumpers save money by illegally dumping in a quiet spot - though Bray Avenue doesn’t really qualify. Nonetheless, we had to report to Council that someone had dumped a tipper load of soils and rubbish on the grass verge at Bray (nothing to do with the cable contractors). Reported on August 13, it was still there on September 11. We can’t have too many eyes open and reports made.

Spring Ecopaddle

It was a perfect day for the recent Wolli Creek Eco-Paddle on Saturday 9 September, with warm sunshine glittering on the still water and dragonflies darting here and there. Ten very enthusiastic paddlers took to the water to explore Wolli Creek and to learn about its history and ecology. Launching at the River Canoe Club, the group ventured up the creek to the Henderson Street Weir, stopping along the way for an informative talk, and returning to the clubhouse for afternoon tea. This popular activity booked out weeks in advance. Another paddle is planned for Saturday 4 November, from 3:30pm See Calendar on p12 for booking details. *Kate Flannery*



Wildflower walk

On Sunday 27 August we held a Wildflower walk from Girrawheen to Turrella Reserve. This walk led by Deb Little and Maggie Aitken was attended by eight members. There were lots of flowers out and we learnt about the diversity of native plants in the Wolli Valley, some of their names and how to identify them. Its amazing how much you do see when you walk slowly and look closely at the bush. So often I miss these when I just walk without stopping. It was a very informative morning and we all learned new things about the plants in this area. *Gina Svolos*



Upcoming events

Walks in the Wolli Creek Valley this Spring

A story of survival - Walk from Bexley North to Tempe - SATURDAY 30 September 8:00am – 12:30pm – 5km

Explore the full length (5km) of the Wolli Creek Valley Walking Track. For more information and to register for this walk please go to <https://events.humanitix.com/a-story-of-survival-walk-from-bexley-north-to-tempe>

Nature connection and wellbeing walk – Saturday 14 October – 10am to 12 noon

Being in nature is restorative and often inspiring; on this walk we may not travel far, but we will see and sense more. For more information and to register for this walk please go to <https://events.humanitix.com/nature-connection-and-wellbeing-walk>

Walk from Bardwell Park to Tempe Sunday 29 October 9am - 12.30 - 3.5km

Would you like to find out more about the Wolli Trail section of the Two Valley Trail?

For more information and to register for this walk please go to <https://events.humanitix.com/walk-in-the-wolli-creek-regional-park-from-bardwell-park-to-tempe-3-5km>

Fighting for Wolli - Sunday 12 November -11am – 1pm – Turrella to Tempe – 3km

Would you like to find out more about saving the Wolli Creek Valley from neglect, motorways, development and other threats to this precious bushland?

For more information and to register for this walk please go to <https://events.humanitix.com/fighting-for-wolli-how-the-wolli-creek-valley-was-saved-a-short-guided-walk> *Gina Svolos*

Picnic for Nature October 21, 11am - 3pm

An enjoyable family event last year, even bigger this year. More details in Calendar on page 12.

Bat Watch Picnic returns in March 2024

After a break of a few years, due to Covid, we are planning on holding the popular bat watch picnic at Turrella Reserve on Friday March 1, 2024.

Started in 2014, this event is a great, fun, family event with batty-related craft activities for kids as well as educational information about Flying-foxes and other bats. Hundreds have come in the past (and we don't mean the bats!).



Deb Little

To get a feel for the event watch [Wolli Creek Batwatch Picnic 2016](#). We run the event during Australasian Bat Month, which in turn is an awareness-raising and educational activity of the Australasian Bat Society <https://www.ausbats.org.au>.

We would be very keen to hear from WCPS members and friends who could help out with this evening event. The event lasts for about three hours and there is no prior experience or even particular talent needed to help with the craft activities on the night - except perhaps for the face painting! If you are a crafty person and/or reasonably good with scissors, there may also be some easy jobs to help us with in the lead up to the evening. Cutting out can be very meditative!

Please email us at bats@wollicreek.org.au if you can volunteer your time, and help us make this 2024 event a success. *Deb Little*

Calendar

WCPS Annual Dinner

Thursday October 19 from 6:30 pm. Talk by: Peter Ridgeway. For details see page 4 of this issue.

Bushcare

October 1, 5, 8, 11, 20, 21. November 4, 8, 12, 16, 17, 18. December 2, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16. To get involved contact bushcare@wollicreek.org.au or phone Paul Ibbetson on 0490 838 663. Bushcare info at <https://wollicreek.org.au/protecting/bushcare/#bushcare>.

Bat Count

Standardly on the third Friday each month, just after sunset. Sign up to the bat group email via bats@wollicreek.org.au to join the counting or just drop by to the Turrella Reserve footbridge to watch the fly-out. Bat info at <https://wollicreek.org.au/about/plants-wildlife/flying-foxes/>

Bird Surveys

Nine teams along the valley do monthly survey to their own timetable. To get involved contact birds@wollicreek.org.au. Bird info at <https://wollicreek.org.au/about/plants-wildlife/birds/>

Other Citizen Science

There are occasional opportunities to join visits by the [Sydney Fungal Studies Group](#) and the [Society for Insect Studies](#). Dates are advised to members.

Eco Paddles

In conjunction with the River Canoe Club. Next paddle up Wolli Creek on 4 November from 3:30pm. Details for this trip at <https://wollicreek.org.au/event/wolli-creek-eco-paddle/>, registration at <https://events.humanitix.com/november-wolli-creek-eco-paddle>

Interpretive Walks

Details of upcoming walks are on page 11 of this issue. Dates: September 30. October 14, 29. November 22. General info about walks and the Two Valley trail at <https://wollicreek.org.au/happening/activities/#walks>

Committee meetings

Currently held bi-monthly by Zoom. Members are welcome to attend, please contact info@wollicreek.org.au three days ahead. New dates: Sept 27, Nov 22, Jan 24, Mar 24.

Picnic for Nature

11am-3pm Oct 21. Meet in Girrahween Park, off Fauna St, Earlwood. All welcome! BYO food and drink (and something to sit on) and enjoy the day with friends, family and the local community. Details: <https://wollicreek.org.au/event/earlwood-picnic-for-nature-21-october-2023/>

Editing and Layout by Peter Stevens
Photos attributed where known.

Wolli Creek Preservation Society

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