

Wolli Creek Preservation Society

Update #102

February 2024



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

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THE BAT PICNIC RETURNS TO TURRELLA RESERVE FRIDAY MARCH 1ST 6PM TO 8PM



Bring the kids and a picnic to see the Grey-headed Flying-foxes stream out from their Wolli camp in their thousands

Join us again to celebrate our amazing city wildlife
Enjoy creative and crafty batty activities for the kids
Get dressed up in your best bat-themed outfit
Learn about these vital long-distance pollinators

For more info wollicreek.org.au/event/bat-watch-picnic-friday-1-march-2024-6pm-8pm/





— March 14 - April 7, 2024 —

ALSO COMING UP GUIDED WALKS IN THE VALLEY

In March the Wurridjal Festival celebrates the strong communities and ecologies along the Cooks River. It will be held from March 14 to April 7, with events from Gamay Botany Bay to the Yana Badu wetlands in Chullora. The events range from guided walks, river clean ups, bushcare, and cycling, to cultural workshops and panel discussions.

The festival marks the start of a season when thousands of mullet fish— known as ‘Wurridjal’ in the Aboriginal languages spoken in the Sydney region – enter the Cooks River during their pre-spawning migration along the east coast of Australia. For thousands of years the river was healthy and a source of food for Aboriginal people. Wurridjal Festival aims to reconnect communities with First Nations knowledge and care for Country.

The Wollie Creek Preservation Society has partnered with Canterbury Bankstown Council to conduct two guided walks of the Wollie Creek Regional Park to celebrate the Wurridjal Festival. Wollie Creek is a tributary of the Cooks River. This is a great way to experience one of the inner west’s natural gems! The walks are graded medium and will take walkers through sections of the two-valley trail to learn about the natural wonders of the Wollie Creek. With guides from the Wollie Creek Preservation Society this is a great way to learn about the valley and how it has been preserved by the actions of community volunteers.

Walk from Bexley North to Turrella Reserve - March 9 @ 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Walk from Girrahween Park to Tempe - April 7 @ 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

See the [upcoming events page on our website](#) for further details about these walks and how to register.





Kate Flannery brought her friends to the Annual Dinner to celebrate her birthday. She shows off the fabulous woolen shawl she won in the silent auction.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING ANNUAL DINNER

It was a beautiful evening, the atmosphere was relaxed and it was a great chance for friends to catch up. Last October, 85 WCPS members and friends turned out for another lovely Annual Dinner at Bardwell Valley Golf Course, with delicious food supplied by the club caterers.

A lot of fun was had as tables competed to win the annual Quiz, based on facts about the Wolli Creek Valley. The prizes in the popular raffle and silent auction were hotly contested and many winners were seen clutching their winnings on the way back to their tables with big grins on their faces.

A big thanks to Julie Deedy and Gina Svolos for organising another very successful fundraising evening for the Society. Abi Curtis, Kate Flannery and Deb Little again deserve praise for sourcing such great prizes from local business and others. General thanks to everyone else for contributing to the amazing prize pool. Finally, thanks to everyone who helped to make it such a successful evening.

Highlight of the night was the talk by Peter Ridgeway “**How Sydney’s Wild Landscapes Made Us**”. His talk was stuffed full of interesting facts about the natural and cultural history of Sydney, particularly the Cumberland Plains of Western Sydney. Many members were keen to buy his book after the talk. Peter explained that most of Sydney is shale. This so-called Ashfield shale, which supports Turpentine forests, goes all the way to Springwood, so fertile open woodlands provided feed for settler horses all the way to the Blue Mtns. In contrast, the Wolli Valley is mostly a tiny patch of sandstone and, having several caves, it would have been great for Aboriginal habitation. It was apparently the best place to camp in the whole Botany area. But being alluvial sandstone, supporting Ironbark forests, the soil was not fertile, and so not great for settlers to grow food.

Peter explained that ‘Wolli’ is a Dharawal name ‘wull’ayi’ meaning ‘camp’. The first syllable should rhyme with ‘wool’. Maps from the 1800s spell it ‘Woolli Creek’ which suggest its only in recent generations that it has corrupted to pronounce ‘wohl-eye’. The name refers to the middle-upper sections of the creek. The downstream end of the creek is Goolay’yari, a Dharawal name for Pelican.

Laura Zusters



Peter Ridgeway explains ‘How Sydney’s Wild Landscapes Made Us’



Discussion going on during the picnic



Artists at work

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING NCC PICNIC FOR NATURE

The Picnic for Nature held in Girrahween Park was a happy and relaxing event. We had 25 guests approximately. Some people who were just walking through the park anyway stopped and joined in. Members of the Sydney Nature Journal Club spent their time exploring the local area and then making drawings and notes about details of the plants.

We had planned to go on a leisurely bushwalk, but it was very pleasant just to sit in the park instead and chat or wander around the immediate area. Greg from the Australian Plant Society pointed out some interesting plants to be seen close by, including one of the largest elk horn ferns (*Platycerium bifurcatum*) I've ever seen, growing on a Magenta Lilli Pilli (*Syzygium paniculatum*). Greg regards this as one of the loveliest trees in the bush. He also spotted an unusual variety of Cheese Tree (*Glochidion ferdinandi* var. *pubens*) with very velvety leaves.

I put up some posters about bird surveys and studies based on those surveys, which some people found interesting. We had an interesting array of environmental groups attending the picnic, each with their own particular concerns. There was some discussion about the need for all of the groups to work together, because after all we're all addressing the same problems from different directions. Even though we are all busy, we can certainly support each other in such areas as signing petitions & passing information on. My objective is for people (including me) to have a relaxing time & maybe learn to recognise a plant or two and a bird or two. That builds a connection with nature.

Dorothy Luther

Katy Wall, from the Sydney Nature Journal Club

It was such a wealth of biodiversity here. We are going to explore other areas of the track for some of our meetups next year. It was great to have input from Greg about the cheese tree, and the list of species helped us identify some of the plants in the area - a resource we don't normally have. One of the group is doing a PhD in vegetation management, adding to the knowledge bank.



Some drawings by the Sydney Nature Journal Club at the NCC Picnic for Nature at Girrahween Park



The children embraced drawing with enthusiasm, inspired by their walk

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING WALK AND SKETCH FOR KIDS

One Sunday morning last November the Wollli Creek Preservation Society ran a Drawing Walk under the expert guidance of artist educator Robyn Chiles. Walking from Turrella Reserve, a group of children and family members experienced some of the sights, sounds and smells of the Wollli Valley, before congregating in the picnic area below Girrahween Park.

There, using a magnificent range of coloured pencils and other materials they made concertina-style sketchbooks filled with an array of drawings of birds, rubbings from leaves, and cartoons of bats.

The participants in this walk were all associated with the Heads Up Alliance, a network of local families from Our Lady of Fatima Primary School and St Ursula's Kingsgrove, which seeks to encourage children to spend more time in the real world instead of on their devices. Families that participated in the WCPS walk enjoyed a picnic together afterwards in Girrahween Park. We're hoping that this will be the first of many drawing walks, free of charge and open to all.

Robyn Chiles runs drawing programs and workshops at Addison Road Community Centre, Marrickville. Have a look at drawntoseeing.com.au.

Kitty Hauser

Dad of three small children, Kelvin said, *"Being in the bush was so good for their balance and curiosity. They're now loving the drawing. We need to do this more often!"*



Artist educator Robyn Chiles provided beautiful materials for the children to work with

WOLLI CREEK BIRD SURVEYS IN 2023

Presented by Dorothy Luther



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING BIRD SURVEY DATA

In recent years, our bird survey teams have noted that the numbers of small birds have been dropping in the Valley. Previous analysis of bird survey data has shown that some small birds, such as Superb Fairy Wrens, Spotted Pardalotes, Red Browed Finches & New Holland Honeyeaters, are still occurring regularly in surveys. But why are other numbers dropping?

We based our analysis on the number of recorded occurrences, but did not include the count, as Neil Rankin's original surveys, unlike our current surveys, recorded only sightings of birds, but not how many sighted. We grouped all the small birds into four groups, based on their current populations.

THE URBAN DWELLERS – those that are prospering

THE SURVIVORS - those that seem to be doing OK

THE BATTLERS - those that are not doing so well

THE MYTHICALS – those that were recorded by Neil Rankin, but not since then

We looked at commonly identified THREAT SPECIES as two groups.

NOISY MINERS - aggressive towards other birds and considered to be one of the threats

LARGER BIRDS that eat small birds and eggs – Currawongs, Magpies, Ravens and Butcher Birds

My Macquarie Uni undergraduate students put in a great deal of effort, including literature research and an extensive critique of the data quality and survey methods. They found some interesting facts.

The prospering URBAN DWELLERS are a group of 13 small birds, with the Silveryeye, New-Holland Honeyeater and Superb Fairy-wren topping the list. Red-browed Finch, Welcome Swallow, Spotted Pardalote, Willie Wagtail, Grey Fantail, Yellow Thornbill, Eastern Spinebill and Eastern Yellow Robin are also all classified as Urban Dwellers. Big growth species are the White-browed Scrubwren and Grey Fantail.

10 small birds were classified as SURVIVORS, 25 as BATTLERS and 9 as MYTHICALS.

The 4 THREAT SPECIES have increased in occurrence and abundance across time. We found that small birds are most abundant in surveys when predatory and aggressive birds have an abundance of less than 15, and are least abundant when predatory and aggressive birds have an abundance which is greater than 31. So, their numbers are certainly affected by the numbers of the Threat Species.

Significantly, the data showed that Currawong and Magpie populations have actually not increased very much. But, the Grey Butcherbird and Noisy Miners have seen rapid growth since the 20th century, so it looks like these are the main culprits partly responsible for small bird decline, rather than Currawongs and Magpies.

Dorothy Luther



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING BRAY AVENUE CABLE WORKS

The lower Bray Avenue section of the Regional Park has now been formally 'handed back' to NPWS after extensive cable works over several months. The works undertaken used far more of the Park and caused much more disruption than we were led to expect in early consultations.

They also imposed a substantial re-routing of the TVT and effectively prevented on-going mowing regimes needed to keep grass area weeds at bay.

WCPS undertook regular monitoring and had to make frequent requests and follow-ups to gain improvements. Several meetings were held on-site with NPWS and the various bodies involved, such as government department, consortium handling contracted work across the whole route, specific contractors and subcontractors carrying out the work within WCRP. On reasonable assumptions each of these would have cost well over \$1,000 in staff time alone.

PROBLEMS REMAIN

The mulched slope over the cable route from Bray Avenue is an invitation to walkers and cyclists and the very temporary fencing provides inadequate protection.

The mulch area is hindering access for mowing machines.

Areas left bare and compacted on the flatter areas are being rapidly taken over by weeds, including some that will not be controllable by mowing.

No trees or shrubs can be allowed to grow over the route of the cable because of potential root damage to the cable.

Protective fencing around bush regen areas has been left in place to avoid impacts when mowing recommences.

Peter Stevens

WOLLI CREEK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Protecting the natural and cultural values of the Wolli Creek Valley

ABOUT US

JOIN US

Remember to check out our new website
at wollicreek.org.au

WCPS T-SHIRTS

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

T Shirts are \$30 each
Children's \$25



You can order from [our online shop](#).

We currently have a range of sizes available for adults
See website for further details.

CALENDAR

Bush Regeneration

Feb 3, 11, 14, 16, 17. Mar 2, 10, 13, 15, 16. Apr 6, 10, 14, 19, 20.
May 4, 8, 12, 17, 18. Details of locations via bushcare@wollicreek.org.au,
website calendar, or phone 9554 3176.
Always check in case of changes at short notice.

Bat Counting

Generally third Friday of each month, just after sunset Meeting at the foot-
bridge, 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
Teams work to their own timetable, but we can get you involved in a team
if you contact birds@wollicreek.org.au

Bat Picnic

Friday 1st March, 6pm for sunset.
For more information, [Upcoming Events](#)

Eco Paddles

Currently in planning.
Check [Upcoming Events](#) in coming weeks for dates.

Guided Walks

From Bexley North to Turrella Reserve – Saturday 9 March.
From Girraheen Park to Tempe – Sunday 7 April.
For more information, [Upcoming Events](#) or contact info@wollicreek.org.au

Committee Meetings

February 28, March 27, April 24.
Currently held by zoom. If interested to attend please contact
info@wollicreek.org.au

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wollicreek.org.au/about/publications/publications/

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