

Wolli Creek Preservation Society

# Update #105

Feb 2025



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

1. *Bat Picnic Friday March 7*
2. *Walks and Eco-Paddles Coming Up*
3. *Turrella Reserve Upgrade*
4. *Track Monitor Reports*
5. *Summer's Catch - Recent Pictures*
- 6, 7. *Bushcare Site Johnston Street*

8. *Bridges and Floods*
9. *Salvation Army DA*
10. *Vale CRVA's John Butcher*
11. *Dancing Peacock Spider*
12. *Calendar of Upcoming Events*

**COMING UP**  
**ANNUAL BAT WATCH PICNIC LIFTS OFF SOON**

## BAT WATCH PICNIC FRIDAY MARCH 7

Australasian Bat Month

**TURRELLA RESERVE  
EARLWOOD, 6PM**

Near new playground



**PUT IT IN  
YOUR DIARY!**



## WE LOVE OUR RIVERS AUTUMN GUIDED WOLLI CREEK WALKS

The Wollie Creek Preservation Society is conducting guided walks this autumn as part of the Canterbury-Bankstown Councils 'We Love Our River' events. We have two walks scheduled.

**23 March - 3.5km from Bexley North to Turrella Reserve**  
**13 April - 5km from Tempe to Bexley North**

This is a great opportunity to come along and walk part of or the full length of the track in the Wollie Creek Regional Park at a leisurely pace. Our volunteer guides will share their knowledge of this bushland and its cultural and environmental history, as well as information about the current issues facing the Wollie Valley and the bush regeneration (Bushcare) work the Society is undertaking.

This walk is sponsored by the [Canterbury-Bankstown Councils We Love Our Rivers program](#). Bookings are essential. For further information and bookings see our [Upcoming Events page](#).

## WOLLI CREEK ECO-PADDLES WITH RIVER CANOE CLUB

We are partnering with the River Canoe Club of NSW (RCC) to run our popular Wollie Creek Eco-Paddles on Sunday 4th May from 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm and 1st June 12.30 to 3.30pm. The paddles will start from the RCC clubhouse, Richardson Crescent, Marrickville, and finish with light refreshments back at the clubhouse.

The RCC will provide paddle guidance, and all the gear including canoes and life jackets. The Wollie Creek Preservation Society will provide an informative guided tour. You will get a very different view of the Wollie Creek Valley from creek level whilst learning about local wildlife, history and the environment. The tour is also a great chance to get a gentle and short introduction to paddling as we cater for beginners.

Ticket price is \$75 per person (incl. single event Paddle Aust.insurance cover) or \$56 for existing RCC members. Young people from 10 – 17 years are welcome if accompanied by an adult. **BOOKINGS OPEN SOON** - <https://wolliecreek.org.au/events/>



New Playground

Photos by Chris Jordens

## TURRELLA RESERVE PLAYGROUND UPGRADE BIG CHANGES FOR THE BETTER

Many of you probably noticed the fencing that was erected around the Turrella Reserve playground last year as work commenced on a long-awaited upgrade. In December, the new and improved playground and facilities were finally opened.

On my walk in early January, I checked out those new facilities. Most notable is the new play equipment, which is distributed between gardens with new plantings and connected by crushed gravel paths. The playground is shaded by mature trees, which have been preserved. There are three new picnic tables under shelters connected by a concrete pathway, as you can see below. Several new park benches have also been installed, as well as two sets of ibis-proof rubbish bins with recycling bins next to them. Four of the older picnic tables are still located nearby.

There are now two unisex toilets in the playground. *Editor's note: These long-awaited toilets are a huge improvement for school groups, track walkers and seniors.* There are also two new electric barbecues with taps and a water fountain with NPWS branding next to the public toilets.

I was baffled by a piece of solar-powered infrastructure facing the toilets, until I took a closer look. The CCTV cameras, siren and red lights indicate that its main function is surveillance. Finally, NPWS have also installed a new walking track sign nearby, at the north end of Turrella Creek, that runs into Wolli Creek.

**Chris Jordens**  
WCPS President



Picnic shelters



Unisex toilets



SWOOS fence fixed



Work begins in Highcliff Road



Council plantings on Unwin Street  
Photos by Chris Jordens

## EYES ON THE VALLEY TRACK MONITOR REPORTS

Several WCPS volunteers regularly walk parts of the Valley to keep an eye on it and report any damage, development or dumping. Thanks to their diligence, we are able to quickly spot problems and report them to relevant authorities like National Parks, Council or Sydney Water.

### WOLLI BLUFF SEWAGE PIPELINE

On her walk in January, member Valerie Atkinson found that the fence around the Sewage pipeline (SWOOS) near Wolli Bluff had been vandalised, then WCPS President Chris Jordens followed up with a report to Sydney Water. The fence has now been repaired.

### HIGHCLIFF ROAD RAIN GARDEN

Chris was also able to report on the rain garden on Highcliff Road, which had collapsed in 2022 during an extreme rain event and poured a deluge of water and rubbish onto the Undercliffe Track. Canterbury Bankstown Council has since developed plans in consultation with WCRP to improve the drainage along Highcliff Road and prevent such events from recurring in future. Chris is happy to report that work is now clearly underway. There is now about 100m of fencing along the southern boundary of Highcliff Road.

### UNWIN GREEN STREET

Canterbury Bankstown Council has developed plans to “green” Unwin Street in consultation with residents and WCPS. The plans include widening the verge on the south side of the street and planting a row of Blueberry Ash trees to help link Waterworth Park to the Wolli Creek Regional Park. Much of this work was completed in the later months of 2024. By the end of the year, grass had been planted on the verge and the council had also planted eight Blueberry Ash trees plus two Banksia Serrata.

Do you frequently walk in the Valley?  
Like to report on good and bad happenings in the bushland?  
Contact us on [monitor@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:monitor@wollicreek.org.au)  
to become a track monitor

Welcome new signage by National Parks  
showing walkers distances and maps





Young Tawny Frogmouth  
David Noble



Cymbidium sauve  
David Noble

## THE SUMMER'S CATCH

RECENT PICTURES BY DAVE NOBLE AND PHILIP LE MASURIER



White-necked Heron at Iloura Reserve  
Check out more at [David-Noble.net/blog](http://David-Noble.net/blog)



Water Dragon  
Philip Le Masurier



Red-browed Finches  
Philip Le Masurier



Julie, Paul and Deb remove dense choking vines on the left to create the open bushland on the right

## JOHNSTON STREET BUSHCARE SITE A DECADE AFTER IT WAS SAVED FROM WESTCONNEX

I recently visited the Johnston Street bushcare site, which I hadn't seen for a year or two, and was amazed at how much work the bushcare team has done there. No longer choked by weeds, substantial areas of regenerating bush now look so open and beautiful. Wrens flit through bushes in dappled light and many turns of the track reveal another open view.

The walking track through the western end of the Regional Park leads from Johnston Street through bushland forest to the western park entrance on Bexley Road. This area was the site of one of the very first bushcare grants that the Society received, in the mid 1990s. Careful removal of vines and weeds in places revealed some brilliant bushland underneath and WCPS knew straight away it was worth saving.

Bushcare Coordinator Paul Ibbetson says,

*"We have worked hard to open up the dense weedy canopy, vines and asparagus fern to let light in and encourage regeneration. Native plants do better in open, dry, sunny conditions. It's a lot of work to manage and control the weeds. The bush does not come back by itself. We are very proud of our small team's results, but we would love some more willing volunteers in our Wednesday morning sessions."*

**Laura Zusters**

Story continues on next page



Contact [bushcare@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:bushcare@wollicreek.org.au)  
if you are interested in helping the team

# JOHNSTON STREET BUSHCARE SITE PROTESTS 7



Deb Little and Peter Stevens, Hug a Tree Day 2012, at the Johnston Street bushcare site

Bushcare team member Deb Little says,

*"We're glad we campaigned so hard to save this bushland from Westconnex in the early 2010s. We were at risk of losing several hectares of native forest to a 'cut and cover' motorway tunnel."*

As part of the Society's protests, Deb organised several National Tree Day events to celebrate this bushland and highlight the threat of Westconnex. Many people participated in her 'Hug a Tree Day' in 2012, 'Inspired by Wollli' in 2013 and 'Tree-mendous Wollli' in 2014.

Bushcare Coordinator Paul Ibbetson,

*"This area was farmed, you can see remains of stone fences and terracing, so the bush was very disturbed, trashed in fact. It's remarkable how much it has recovered. We are now seeing nice patches of native ferns and orchids and even the formerly very rare Cabbage Tree Palms are coming back. We've seen Eastern Yellow Robins and a Tawny Frogmouth too."*



Artworks in the bush for Tree-mendous 2014

See more photos of these events at [flickr.com/photos/wollli\\_events/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/wollli_events/albums)



2015 Anti-Westconnex WCPS protest on Bexley Road, at the gateway to the western end of the Regional Park.



Boulders and original gabions at footbridge



Photos by Julia Frecheville and Council

## BRIDGES AND FLOODS ONGOING WORKS AT TURRELLA FOOTBRIDGE

**There is a long history of bridges over Wolli Creek at Turrella Reserve. And an equally long history of them being swept away or made unsafe by floodwaters in significant rain events.**

The intensity of these events has grown over the years - hard surfaces have increased with house and road development in the catchment area and climate change is producing more intense rainfalls, both heightening flash flooding. Early rickety wooden structures have been replaced by increasingly large and solid bridges. The ground on which they rest has to be protected from erosion. In recent decades this has been done by installing gabions (wire cages filled with rocks) but these have failed several times, with many rocks now in the creek below the weir.

When the latest gabion replacement was proposed by Canterbury-Bankstown City Council, WCPS pointed out the various downsides with gabions, especially their repeated failures and the harbouring of difficult weeds. We argued for the use of large sandstone blocks akin to those used in Kendrick Park on Cooks River. This could also have provided a kayak landing point in the Regional Park.

We were pleased that Council agreed not to use gabions, but alarmed by what was actually done - using much smaller, uncaged sandstone boulders. Many of these are so small that they will be dislodged by the first major rain event, and meanwhile are providing easily-moved materials for kids to practise dam building in the fishway at the weir. Native trees sacrificed, much money expended, but the result is a problem already, and a disaster in the making. It will be interesting to see if Council do deploy the large sandstone blocks we proposed, given what happened at the weir.

Peter Stevens







## LATEST DEVELOPMENTS SALVATION ARMY DA, BEXLEY NORTH

The Salvation Army training college site in Bexley North is the subject of a Development Application to Bayside Council by Mosman Finance on behalf of the Sallies. It was also formerly the site of the notoriously abusive Bexley Boys Home. The DA sought approval for up to 49 new houses, with minimal gardens, and just one house-block-sized patch of open space. The DA admitted to the removal of 52 ‘mature’ trees, but the real number of significant trees is close to 200.

Council received about 70 comments on the DA, including one from WCPS, with an alternative proposal. See page 4 of the July 2024 Update. The vast majority of the submissions were critical of the proposal. [You can find a pdf copy of the WCPS submission on the DA here.](#) Look among Documents dated 20/5/2024. The diagram at top left shows the striking housing density of the proposal contrasted with the WCPS ‘green space’ alternative on the right.

The WCPS proposal seeks to retain the existing open space and most of the trees on the site. These, together with the adjacent grounds of Bexley North Public School, form a vegetated corridor for wildlife, especially small birds, between Stotts Reserve in the Wolli Valley and the bushland of the Bardwell Valley.

Council responded to the developer with comments and conditions covering 15 major areas of concern. The developer treated this as ‘deemed refusal’ and went to the Land and Environment Court. The Court appointed a conciliation officer and a conciliation meeting between developer and Council was held in December 2024.

At the short, on-site public part of this meeting, I and several local residents spoke to our concerns, but were excluded from the main meeting. We have since been advised that the conciliation conference was adjourned and further ‘without prejudice’ discussions are ongoing. There is no timetable for completion of the discussions.

Local Councillors and the local MLA Steve Kamper are no longer allowed any role in the consideration of DAs. On the other hand, in March 2024 the Premier has said that, in the inner suburbs, “we need to preserve and protect as much green space as we possibly can,” and “that means preserving every bit of green space that we can possibly get our hands on.” WCPS agrees, and thinks there are real problems with a planning system if it does not make that possible.

Peter Stevens



## CARING FOR COUNTRY VALE CRVA'S JOHN BUTCHER

**John Butcher was a strong advocate for the Cooks River and President of the Cooks River Valley Association for 7 years from 2012 – 2018.**

Many great initiatives were undertaken by the CRVA under John's leadership, including the annual Candles on the River, the container deposit scheme campaign, the Non-Swimming Carnival, the Steel Park Life Savers Postcard campaign, CRVA water testing program, to name just a few. To fully appreciate the breadth of John's influence, read the CRVA Annual Reports from 2012 to 2018, found on the front page of the [CRVA website](#).

For years, John advocated for the concept of a Pemulwuy Trail – a walking trail along the Cooks River, acknowledging Pemulwuy as a leader of the resistance movement against the English invasion in 1788. John is attributed as the originator of the CRVA slogan –

**“We are all Cooks River People, caring for country.”**

As a respected elder of the Cooks River community, we acknowledge John's enduring legacy in caring for country in the Cooks River valley and will remember him as a man who fought long and hard to improve the health of the Cooks River and its environment. Rest in peace John, we will remember you.

Ann Leahy, President and Peter Munro, Vice President, CRVA

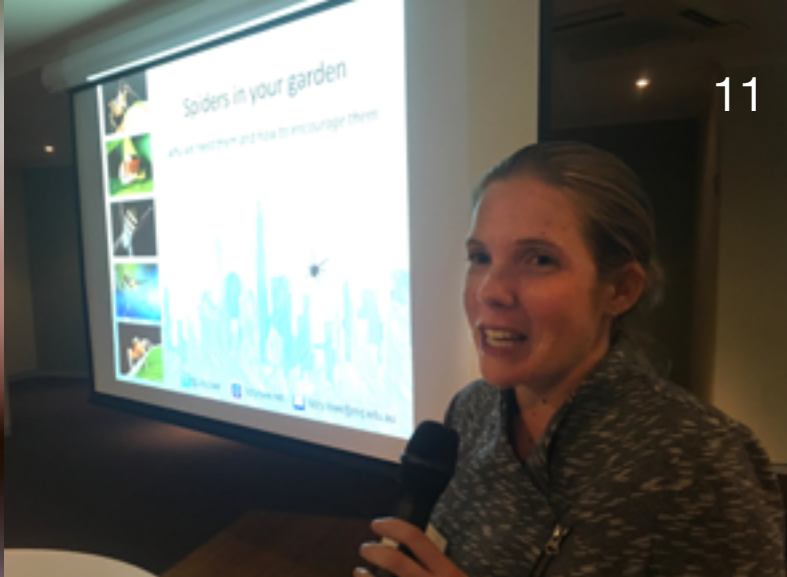
## RETURN AND EARN SCHEME

When you return bottles and cans to the Return and Earn machine, you can help support the Wollie Creek Preservation Society in its work at the same time.

Use the Return and Earn app to donate your eligible bottles and cans directly to us from machines located near you.

Visit [returnandearn.org.au](http://returnandearn.org.au) to locate your nearest machine.





Dr Lizzy Lowe thrilling the audience with her tales of colourful dancing Peacock Spiders in Sydney habitats

## DANCING PEACOCK SPIDER SPOTTED IN THE VALLEY

We were first introduced to Peacock Spiders by Dr Lizzy Lowe when she spoke at our 2017 Annual Dinner and showed videos of males doing their mating dance to a rapt audience. These tiny spiders are only half a centimetre across and spend most of the year a drab brown colour. As a result they are incredibly hard to spot.

As reported in [The Conversation](#), “The males only put on their mating displays during short periods of the year, typically August to September. Their size and habits also make it hard to learn about their populations and preferred habitats. Of the 113 described species, each has distinctive colouring and its own dances. But we know there are more species of peacock spider waiting to be recognised by western science.”

While working with the bushcare team at Paperbark Creek, keen photographer Zik Teo was fast enough to get his camera onto a Peacock Spider in our own valley, seen below on the left. The bushcare team was amazed that this remarkable tiny critter could be found at all, let alone in full ‘mating display’ in the Wolli Creek Valley. You can [watch the dance](#) on our Wolli Creek Youtube Channel.

Have a look at more information on <https://www.peacockspider.org/>, which has photos of many species and various edited videos which show their marvellous dances closer up. Youtube also shows Peacock Spider ‘dance videos’, set to music like ‘YMCA’, or ‘Macho Man’. Well worth a look.



Many species of peacock spider are only known from within a very small area of suitable habitat.

This puts the species at high risk of extinction because a single threat such as a large bushfire or a suburban development can destroy all their habitat at once.

**WANT TO BECOME A MEMBER?**  
[CLICK HERE](#)

## WCPS T-SHIRTS

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

T Shirts are \$30 each



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

Paperbark - Saturday 1st Mar, 5th April, 3rd May  
 Bray Ave - Sunday 8th Mar, 13th Apr & 11th May  
 Johnstone St - Wednesday 12th Mar, 9th April, 14th May  
 Undercliffe - Friday 21st Mar, 18th Apr, 16th May

Turrella - Thursday 20th Mar 8.30am, 24th Apr 9.00am, 22nd May 9.00am  
 Details of locations via [bushcare@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:bushcare@wollicreek.org.au).  
 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](mailto: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](mailto:birds@wollicreek.org.au)

## Bat Watch Picnic

Friday March 7, 6pm at Turrella Reserve Earlwood

## Guided Walks & Eco Paddles

Guided Walks 23rd March and 13 April  
 Eco-Paddles 4th May and 1st June

Book via [Upcoming Events](#) or contact [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au)

## Committee Meetings

**Committee 26 March, 28 May, 23 July**

Currently held by zoom. If interested to attend please contact  
[info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au)

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All articles and photos by Laura unless otherwise  
 credited

See previous issues of the Update at  
[wollicreek.org.au/about/publications/publications/](http://wollicreek.org.au/about/publications/publications/)

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