

About the Wolli Creek Valley

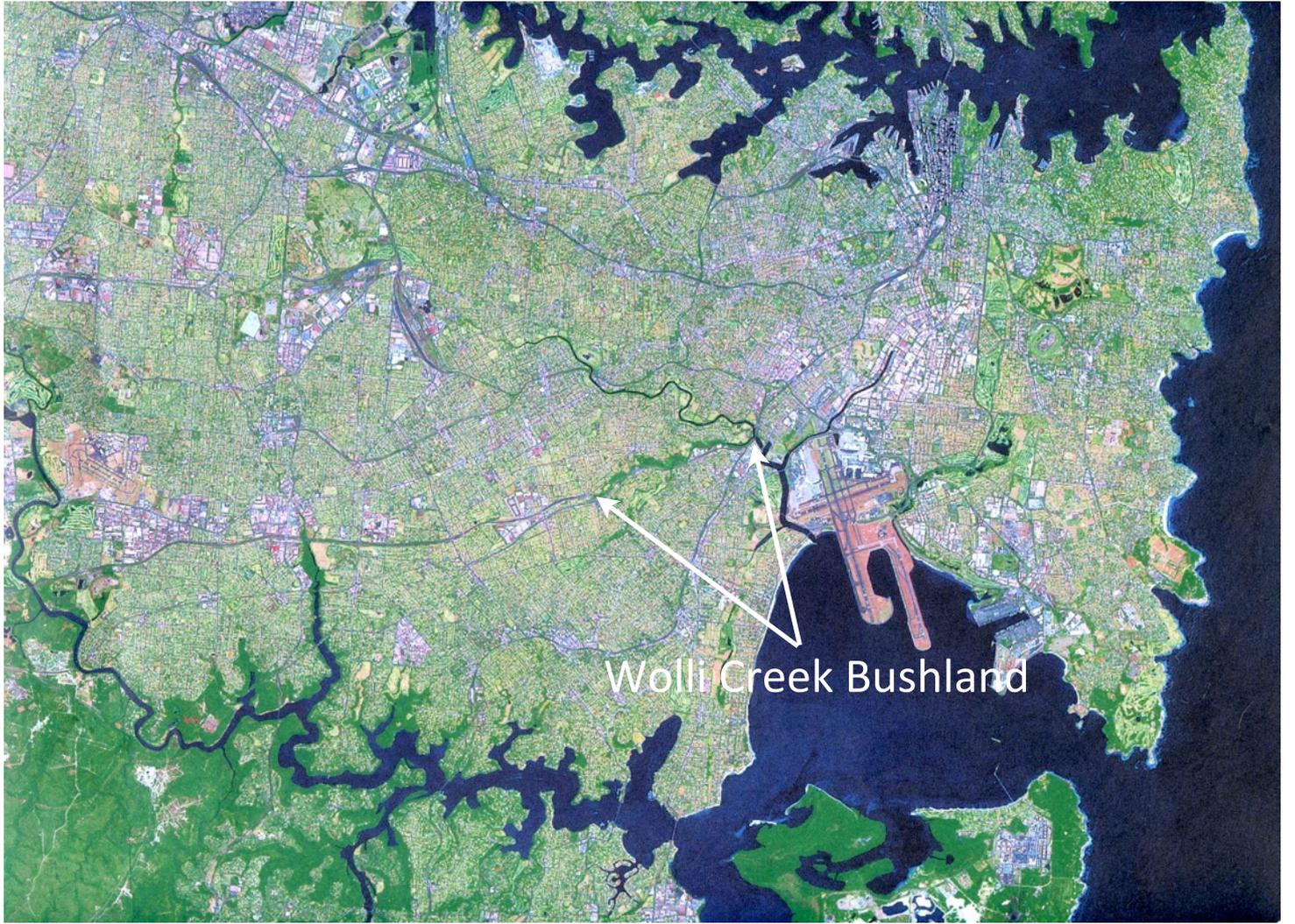
Wolli Creek, with tributary Bardwell Creek, is the major tributary of the Cooks River. The catchment begins in Hurstville and Penshurst, Narwee and Roselands and the creek flows east to meet the Cooks River at Tempe. Between Bexley North and Tempe the creek flows for over four kilometres through bushland in a steep valley. The aerial picture below emphasises its significance across a very wide area of inner SW Sydney, being the largest stretch of remnant urban bushland left between the fringes of the Parramatta and Georges Rivers and between the coast and as far West as Propect.

The survival of the Wolli Valley' bushland into the 21st century is quite remarkable. The valley was used for timber-getting, charcoal burning and near-subsistence farming in the early days of the colony. Later it became a place for noxious industries such as the piggeries of the time, tanneries, tallow factories, and wool scouring. Nonetheless, it avoided major residential and industrial development (though much land speculation took place) because the valley was isolated, narrow and difficult to access. It was also away from the main avenues of development, which took place broadly along the present lines of the Princes Highway and Canterbury Road, themselves roughly paralleled by the early Illawarra (1884) and Bankstown (1895) railway lines.

Not until the East Hills rail line through the valley opened in 1931 did expansion really get under way, and then it occurred only slowly because of the Great Depression of the 1930s, followed by World War II. Then, from 1949, under the County of Cumberland Plan, the valley's bushland was largely within a road reservation (later the M5East corridor), which was only lifted towards the end of the century after community action led to that road going underground to avoid the valley.

The valley is a strikingly beautiful and valuable stretch of rocky bushland adjacent to one of the few remaining inner urban creeks that has substantial lengths of near-natural banks. This bushland (50 ha in all) of regional significance has been long due to be consolidated as the Wolli Creek Regional Park under the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The park area has many different landforms and plant communities and contains an outstanding array of natural environments with sandstone woodland, heathland, mangrove stands, marshland, reed beds open parkland, and remnant rainforest species, all within a compact area. It is home to a wide diversity of flora and fauna, particularly birds and reptiles.

As a relatively isolated bushland ribbon in a well-developed urban area, the Wolli Creek Valley is an attractive haven for birds. Over 150 species of birds, representing over 25% of the bird species listed for NSW, have been recorded in the valley since 1940 - this is impressive for such a small area, a mere dot on the map of NSW. The valley provides food, shelter, a passageway and resting place for migratory species and a niche in its own right for resident birds. It also retains a significant reptile fauna, notably Snake-necked Turtles (under threat from fox predation) and Red-bellied Black Snakes, as well as many lizard species. Grey-headed Flying-foxes set up camp in 2007, with over 24,000 bats recorded at its highest point. A 'virtual walk' through a key part of the valley can be found on our website at <http://www.wollicreek.org.au>.



Wolli Creek Bushland