

COOKS RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20



Striated Heron, hunting amongst plastic trash in the mangroves

Photo courtesy David Noble

COOKS RIVER VALLEY



association

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CRVA Progress Report

Ann Leahy & Jennifer Newman

We begin our Annual Report acknowledging Country. Flowing east, the Cooks River Valley traverses Wangal, Gadigal and Gameygal Country. The river catchment and flow has nourished generations since the beginning of time, and has flourished with the care taken by those who have lived with the river. Today, we work together to refresh and revitalise the Cooks River, mindful of our non-human residents who return to Country in increasing numbers, in return for the physical, social and spiritual nourishment we receive from the River and its surrounds. We are all Cooks River people caring for Country in the Cooks River Valley.

This report is somewhat reduced compared to previous years, owing to the exceptional circumstances we have all lived through during this past year. From July to December 2019 the extended and severe nation-wide drought was taking its toll on our bush sites, with a great number of plants drying up and suffering sunburn. The horrific bushfires across the country were so savage they could barely be believed. With an estimated death toll of over one billion animals nation-wide, these fires were hotter, drier and much more savage than any time in recorded history. Even rainforest areas in northern NSW that have never previously burned caught fire. Many rural towns had already run out of drinking water. Whilst our river and riparian zones were spared this horror, it was painfully dry. Thankfully, some heavy rain arrived around February and caused some localized flooding, but much needed drenching of green spaces and bush sites. The rain even flushed out some small Mudcrabs, and this is the first time we've seen these colourful specimens on the river.



Mudcrab crossing the walking path

Meanwhile, a pandemic virus Covid-19 was sweeping the globe from around March 2020. This has led to a few months of necessary ceasing of activities such as weeding bees and clean-ups. At present our weeding bees and clean-ups have resumed, without the regular shared morning tea afterwards, however the next few months are uncertain if a second wave of the virus starts to emerge in NSW.

Many of our regular and popular events needed to be cancelled. Candles on the River which is a very popular event, held during Earth Hour at the end of March was necessarily cancelled. We hope to be back in action for 2021, provided it is safe to do so. Much of the Wurridjal Festival which celebrates the mullet season and is coordinated by the Cooks River Alliance was also cancelled.

On a more positive note, many of our events and groups were functioning full steam ahead prior to the pandemic closures and have since resumed in a regulated fashion. Here are some of the fabulous events and groups working under the banner of the Cooks River Valley Association that did go ahead this year.

Paddle against Plastic

Now an annual event, the Paddle Against Plastic brings the community together to help focus attention on the ongoing problem of rubbish in our river. The Ocean Crusaders work for days on the river with barges and cranes to remove the heavy rubbish from the river such as bikes,

furniture and all sorts of trash, as well as tonnes of plastic. They are helped by the River Canoe Club, Cooks River Alliance, Canterbury Bankstown Council and other groups as well as lots of volunteers and our own Mudcrabs (special mention to Barney and Brent) who helped over the course of ten days to remove a staggering 12,700 kgs of rubbish from the river. This culminates in a day of information and celebration at the Cooks River Canoe Club for the final tally of the rubbish removed from the river.



Feb 23, 2020 Culmination of Paddle against Plastic at the River Canoe Club

Bush Sites

Full reports from the Mudcrabs bushland regeneration sites follow, and thanks go to the coordinators and volunteers who regularly turn up to work on the river sites, which are continuing to make a huge improvement to the riparian zones of the river. Not only does this provide more habitat for native birds and species, our bush sites are a focus for community involvement and activity. The tireless Michael Childs who can be seen almost every day on weekends at the Sugar Mill site propagates seedlings to add to the site, which keeps growing and looking more beautiful.

River Clean-ups

Mudcrabs coordinator Ranjith, has done an outstanding job again this year and special thanks also well goes to Alison Gibbs who is now coordinating the clean ups at the Canterbury Racecourse site. On Clean up Australia Day at the Close St clean-up site, 45 volunteers collected 65 bags of rubbish. Perhaps that is progress, as we remember a few years ago before the return and earn scheme was introduced, we filled all 100 sacks in the same spot in less than two hours.

The Mud larks:

The monthly bird-watching and monitoring group started by Peter Munro and Jennifer Kent continues to observe and document the huge variety of birdlife along the river. This has been growing in popularity and judging from their brilliant photos, they always see an impressive array of native birds.

Advocacy and Grants

Thanks largely to the persistent and targeted advocacy of committee member Gareth Wreford, the CRVA has made submissions to parliament, written to ministers and councils and successfully gained a number of grants with a combined total of over \$25,000 to continue and expand the work of the Mudcrabs and volunteers along the river. Well done Gareth!

CRVA Advocacy June 2019 to July 2020

Gareth Wreford

As the community voice for the Cooks River catchment and associated open space the CRVA continued to be involved in advocacy work promoting environmental improvements.

Legislative inquiry into the Sydenham to Bankstown line

The CRVA wrote a submission and appeared as a witness at the NSW Legislative Council inquiry into the Sydenham to Bankstown line conversion to Metro. We highlighted the environmental impacts of Metro and associated development plans. Further information including the Committee Report and CRVA submission is available at:

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2551>

Naturalisation of the Cooks River Banks

Replacing ageing steel piling and concrete channeling is an ongoing issue that has been raised locally by Canterbury Bankstown Councilors Linda Eisler and Clare Raffan as well as in the NSW Parliament by Sophie Cotsis MP. The CRVA has written to the NSW Premier asking that the unsafe steel piling be removed and the river banks naturalised. We also asked that Sydney Water be resourced to bring forward its long term plans to replace ageing concrete channeling with more natural riparian habitat. See:

<https://www.facebook.com/SophieCotsis/posts/great-to-see-strong-advocacy-from-councillor-clare-raffan-to-remove-the-hazardou/2713062318712554/>

CBC Connective City Plan

The CRVA made a submission to the Canterbury Bankstown Council long term plan Connective City 2036. Council is proposing many interesting and worthwhile environmental improvements as part of this plan and we proposed bringing forward many of the actions and increasing or setting firmer environmental goals. See:

<https://haveyoursay.cbcity.nsw.gov.au/connectivecity2036>

Canterbury Racecourse

The CRVA advocates for the future of Canterbury Racecourse as public open space. In 2019 we supported the Canterbury Racecourse Action Group (CRAG) to oppose the latest attempt by the Racecourse to sell off the Princess Street carpark for high rise development. See:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community-Organization/Canterbury-Racecourse-Action-Group-CRAG-942077892635098/>

Marrickville Golf Course

The CRVA continued to monitor Inner West Council plans for the future of Marrickville Golf Course and the Dibble Avenue Waterhole. The CRVA is particularly interested in greater public access to the Golf Course and improving the quality of the natural environment on this significant and underutilised site. See:

<https://yoursay.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/marrickville-golf-course-and-dibble-avenue-waterhole>

Wolli Creek Preservation Society

The CRVA supported our sister organisation the Wolli Creek Preservation Society (part of the Two Valleys Trail) to oppose the inappropriate placement of a Sydney Water Odour Control Unit in part of the yet to be completed Wolli Creek Regional Park. See:

http://www.wollicreek.org.au/wolli_valley/other-issues

CBC Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee

The CRVA participated in the Canterbury Bankstown Council Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC) discussing a range of Council led initiatives including weed control, maintenance of native vegetation and rubbish and water quality in the Cooks River.

IWC Tree Policy

The CRVA advocated for better protection of the Inner West Tree Canopy in response to Inner West Council's proposed changes to tree pruning and removal policies.

Grants

On behalf of the Mudcrabs the CRVA has been successful with two Commonwealth grant applications in the Barton electorate (Linda Burney MP) for work to be undertaken from July 2020:

1) Community Environment Program \$20,000

Subject to Council approval, the bulk of the grant will be spent on the Burnett Street Reserve replacing lawn and exotic weeds with heath and bush. We will also be looking to join up the Boat Harbour and Sugar Mill bushcare sites around the Canterbury Sewage pumping station by replacing weeds and lawn with local native plants. Further work is proposed to join the Foord Avenue and Ewen Park sites by extending extensive work recently completed at the Foord Avenue raingarden.

2) Volunteering \$4,000

This grant will be spent on Mudcrabs volunteer training costs in bushcare and first aid as well as first aid and landscaping equipment.

Mudcrabs bush sites

Burnett Street Reserve

Gareth Wreford

Burnett Street Reserve held a volunteer weeding, mulching and planting day in late 2019 (pre-COVID days!) that completed one of the many terraced sections in this steep and rocky reserve. The seedlings survived summer and are doing well. Meanwhile the site continues to expand to the East of the Duntroon Street stairs and also down the terraces. It's a lovely site with some mature canopy trees that creates a link to the open space in Edgeware school and down to the Cooks River. This site like some others now has new signs identifying it as a

Mudcrabs bushcare site supported by Canterbury Bankstown Council. Council are supporting Mudcrabs work by providing mulch, some plants, advice and clearing away green waste.



Weeding bee at Burnett St site



This bushcare site is being maintained by the Mudcrabs Cooks River Eco Volunteers with the support of Canterbury Bankstown Council. For more information about the site or to volunteer please contact the Mudcrabs:
mudcrabs.cooksriver@gmail.com

Boat Harbour

Gareth Wreford

Given the severe drought and harsh summer, little activity happened at this site apart from some light maintenance and planting. The understory continues to do well, especially after welcome rain in early 2020.

Report from Foord Avenue site, Hurlstone Park

Liz Millen & Doug Benson

This year our site was hit pretty hard by the long spell of very dry weather over summer, while bushfires were raging across NSW. We lost most of the larger hakeas from the top of the sandstone cliff, and also a sprawling wattle and a large Banksia serrata tree. Generally Banksias across this site thrive despite the poor and shallow soil. Some of these plants particularly Hakeas may have been getting to the end of their natural life after ten years.

Despite these losses, the site is thriving. The sandstone 'creek' built three years ago is almost invisible under a carpet of Hibbertia scandens; at the eastern end the area between the bicycle path and the Foord Avenue bridge groundcovers are now well established, and at the western end, kangaroo apples are self-seeding, with their colourful flowers and fruits.

During the summer, a new council-sponsored rain garden was built at the end of Foord Avenue, with large retention basins full of plants to filter stormwater before it reaches the river. We have started discussions with council about ways to link the Foord Avenue site and the rain garden with the nearby Ewen Park site, to create continuous habitat at ground and canopy level.

Many thanks to all our regular and irregular volunteers who have put in hours of work to keep the weeds under control, and to develop new areas with enthusiasm!



Pandora (Wonga) vine



Wonderful winter wattles

As I write the rain is bucketing down and will hopefully accelerate growth of the next generation of hakeas, helping to recreate dense and thorny habitat for small birds. The Mudlarks birdwatching group reports that Foord Avenue is one of their best spots for seeing a range of bird species. We are happy to report that the blue wrens are still here and this year we can add a pair of kookaburras and a Horsfield's bronze cuckoo to our bird sightings.



Site visit



Melaluka nodosa



Morning tea, COVID style

Rosedale Reserve summary of major activities 2019/20

Russell Cail

The past 12 months have certainly been very noteworthy to say the least. While we continued our regular battle with weeds we have also had to cope with the disruption to our program by a prolonged dry spell and more recently by Covid-19. On the positive side though, we were able to continue with an active planting program and keep most plants alive while keeping the weeds at bay. Watering was one of the key jobs over the summer period.

Our aim, as always, was to introduce as much native plant variability to the site as possible, consistent with what plants were thought to exist there before white settlement, in the expectation that this variability will encourage other wildlife.

Our major plantings this year have been Shrubs: *Grevillea serica* (unfortunately, many have since died from causes other than drought), *Hakea serica*, Rushes: (*Juncus kraussii*), Grasses: Plume grasses (*Dichelachne crinita* and *Dichelachne micrantha*), hedgehog grass (*Echinopogon caespitosus*). These plantings have been supplemented by some self-sown plants (*A. longifolia* and kangaroo apples – *Solanum sp.*) We have also been growing some of our plants from seed (*Hardenbergia violacea*) and transplanting brackens (largely unsuccessfully) and *Kennedia rubicunda*. We also planted some saltbush plants (*Einadia polygonoides*) grown from seed collected at the wetlands. Our previous plantings of barbed wire grass (*Cymbopogon refractus*), *Kunzea ambigua* and various species of eucalypts to provide a canopy (where there are no overhead power line to worry about) are also doing very well. Consequently, we are increasingly achieving a more bush-like setting and the bush is now supporting flowers through much of the year.

Last year we also requested the council to inspect three very large but very dead *A. decurrens* that were overhanging the shared footpath and cycleway. Unfortunately, although they could have ultimately formed a nice habitat for other creatures, they were a danger to the general public and needed to be removed.



Banksias and a New Holland honeyeater



Male Golden Whistler



Celebrating Hans's birthday

It was great to see everyone at our annual Christmas get together at Rosedale. Fortunately, the weather was much kinder to us than in 2018. We all had an enjoyable time catching up with many other volunteers who we do not always see when we work on our own “patch(es)”. As usual, the main course of food, which was obtained from Jasmin's restaurant in Lakemba and paid for by Council (thanks to Brodie Smith), was excellent and also many thanks to all those who bought some tasty nibbles, cakes, fruit, etc. We were pleased to welcome Councillors Linda Eisler, Clare Raffan and Sophie Cotsis MP. The emphasis on going GREEN worked very well. All the plates and cutlery were washed on the spot and are ready for next year and the organic waste was consigned to worm farms.



Christmas Party at Rosedale, 2019

In February we had a huge amount of rain in the catchment (>400 mm). While the rain was something of a godsend, (and saved a lot of watering), the combined effects of a king tide and the rain, caused flooding almost to the top of the fence (~1200 mm) beside the river. Fortunately, while the flood deposited a lot of rubbish, no major damage was done. A few trees needed to be straightened up and staked, some logs tidied up and some minor pruning was required but otherwise all was pretty good. The frog ponds were full and the frogs sounded very happy, calling for mates and ready to breed!

Early this year we were also pleased to learn that the organization, Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) was successful in receiving funding from the *Communities Environment Program* for a project for the “Cooks River Restoration at Rosedale Reserve.” Unfortunately, this project has been severely disrupted by the virus and we are not certain when it will commence. We are in on-going discussions with the project organisers.

As we all know, in March all working bees and Mucrab's activities were cancelled. A number of other planned activities were also cancelled including our participation in the Wurridjal festival and a family day to be organised in cooperation with the CVA. We held our FIRST post Covid-19 shutdown, working bee in June. We had 9 experienced volunteers and collected 20 bags of weeds. It was great to get going again.

In the next 12 months, in addition to the normal weeding and planting program, we will continue our efforts to remove a large clump of ginger plants that were slowly expanding their territory and we have also decided to control the spread of the phragmites (*P. australis*). Over the years they have spread across a large area of the site and have been a major headache due to the large number of weeds they harbour, sight unseen as it were, until it is too late and the weeds are out of control! We intend to remove about 2/3 of them to give us better and easier control of the weeds. We will then mulch and plant out the cleared areas with appropriate species for each situation. We will also continue our bird watching program and hopefully install some native bee-hives.



Back at work at Rosedale

The Rosedale Group would like to thank Peter Goss from Canterbury Bankstown Council and the CRVA for their help, advice and provision of plants. Joy and I would also like to thank all our dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers who do such great work. Altogether our volunteers put in about 300 hours at our regular working bees, together with a further >350 hours spent during the week by some volunteers. We collected 60 bags of weeds plus we created several very large piles of weeds (which had not gone to seed) which we hope will mulch down.



Famidah and Farrah at Rosedale



Keith, a regular volunteer at Rosedale

Gough Whitlam Salt Marsh at Tempe Report 2019/20

Russell Cail

The Gough Whitlam Saltmarsh was constructed by Canterbury Council in 2007 in an area beside the river that had previously been a marsh but had been used as a tip in the 1950's. Saltmarshes are an important and endangered ecological community that form on the landward side of mangroves, and provide valuable habitat for fish, crabs and birds.

Up until the curtailment of our regular working bees in March this year, the Mudcrabs met on the first Saturday of the month to remove weeds, mulch and then plant trees, shrubs and grasses which are thought to have originally existed in the area. In the past 12 months we concentrated on the "islands" closest to the river, which are dominated by tall, mature casuarinas. The environment on these "islands" is very harsh. The tall trees suck the moisture out of the soil, and the salty winds which sweep across them, seriously impact the growing conditions.

By the end of September last year we had virtually completed a program of heavy papering (cardboard) and mulching of the islands to conserve moisture. These areas have been progressively planted with a variety of coastal plants such as coastal tea trees (*Leptospermum laevigatum*), coastal banksias (*Banksia integrifolia*), native rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*), Australian pig face (*Carpobrotus glaucescens*), *Correa alba* and sea berry salt bush (*Raghadia candolleana*) and coastal *Lomandra spp* in order to fulfil our plan to create an under-story to attract and protect small birds and other fauna. It is hoped that, through a combination of dense planting of shrubs and forming wind breaks with a layered system of branches and sticks, we will protect both the plants in the early stages of growth and provide a habitat for lizards, insects, fungi, etc. So far the plan seems to be working quite well despite losing some of the correas and banksias due to the very dry conditions in the latter half of 2019 and the early part of this year.

The health of the marsh continues to be excellent with a typical mix of salt marsh species predominately; samphire (*Sarcocornia quinqueflora*), austral seablite (*Sueda australis*), streaked arrow grass (*Triglochin striatum*) and marine couch (*Sporobulus virginicus*). It is also home to lots of invertebrates (crabs and snails) which are attracting many wading birds.

We will continue with mulching specific areas and planting more plants on the "islands" as well as concentrating on improving the biological diversity on the margins beside the footpath and the road.

We would like to thank Mr Peter Goss who is our regular contact at Canterbury Bankstown Council and who has provided the plants and much appreciated advice.



Ewen Park Bush Site

Keith Foulcher and Ann Leahy

Now after 11 years of volunteer efforts, the Ewen Park bush site is in a mature state, and many passers-by think that it's just a naturally occurring bushland area by the river. Thanks to the efforts of Keith Foulcher, his weekly maintenance sessions keep things in good shape on a day-to-day basis.

The drought in 2019 killed and burned sections of dianellas and other plants we had been trying to save, but recent rains have improved the outlook for many plants which were teetering. During the Covid-19 shut-down the river banks and surrounds became the new haven for nearby suburbs, and with record numbers of walkers, kids looking for playgrounds and bike riders, the site developed new tracks that had damaged some planted areas, so we have established a large 'area under repair' and re-mulched existing paths to help define established walking tracks and protect bush-garden areas.

Weeding bees have again been added to the Mudcrabs calendar which will be bi-monthly for the remainder of the year.

We are excited about the successful grant application for Mudcrabs sites and the idea of eventually linking up this site with the Foord Avenue bush site. This will create a wildlife corridor next to the river which will provide more sheltered habitat for local birds.

Special thanks go to the site's founders, Nadia Wheatley and Sue Bishop, who have since stepped down from working on the site for their outstanding efforts over the last ten years.

We also wish to thank Peter Goss from Canterbury Bankstown Council for his continued encouragement and support of this site, and for donations of seedlings, stakes and other materials.



Weeding bee, 2020

Wave Rock

Peter Munro

This report covers the strangest 12 months I have ever experienced. The Wave Rock site was hammered by drought through the later part of last year, resulting in the loss of many plants. The drought finally broke early this year, but this was followed by the pandemic – so we could not maintain the site for several months. We finally got back on site in July, to find that there were many new self propagated native plants amongst the weeds – what a relief!!

A big thank you to the dedicated volunteers who work so hard to make Wave Rock such a treasured site. Also thank you to the staff at Marrickville golf course and Tealia Scott from Inner West Council.



Volunteers at the site



Stephen helping with planting

Sugar Mill Site

Volunteers led by the tireless Michael Childs have made a huge difference to the Sugar Mill site again this year. Michael has also been propagating plants for the site, which is greatly increasing the local native species in this area, which in turn creates more habitat for native wildlife, in particular shrub birds such as wrens which benefit from the increased cover provided by dense small to medium shrubs.



Sugar Mill Weeding Bee - Pre COVID, October 2019



Retaining wall looking fabulous

Mudcrabs and Close Street River Clean Up Report

Ranjith Evas

Monthly river clean ups at Close Street continue to remove mainly plastic litter from our river. The combined effect of the NSW Government return and earn scheme, two litter booms installed in the river and the removal of street rubbish by volunteers from the crab walking project have contributed to a cleaner river. Two clean ups in April and May of 2020 were canceled as we were in the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the last CRVA annual report 133 volunteers at Close Street have collected a total of 147 bags of mainly plastic rubbish from the river. See the data by date below.

Date	# volunteers	# bags
03/08/2019	10	15
08/09/2019	14	23
06/10/2019	16	10
03/11/2020	10	4
01/03/2020	45	65
13/06/2020	21	20
11/07/2020	17	10
Total	133	147

The clean-up on 1 March was held as part of Clean up Australia day and was co-hosted by Cooks River Alliance. Thank you to Catarina from CRA for co-hosting the event.



Clean Up Australia Day 2020

Access to the river for volunteers was made a lot safer this year by installing new gates and stairs. Thank you to Lorne Gurney and team at Sydney Water and Catarina Matos at the Cooks River Alliance for coordinating this outcome.

The annual Christmas Party for Mudcrabs volunteers was held on 1 December at Rosedale Reserve. Thank you to Russell Cail for doing the heavy lifting in organising the event and Brodie Smith from Canterbury Bankstown Council for arranging the food for volunteers.



Russell and Jenn at the Christmas Party



Sunny day clean-up

A planning meeting of the Mudcrabs steering group was held on 12 January 2020 at Peter Munro's house. We discussed our calendar and general business for the new year ahead. Thank you to Fran and Peter for their hospitality.

We received a certificate of appreciation from Canterbury Bankstown Mayor Khal Asfour commending the work of our volunteers and site coordinators. Thank you to councilors and staff at Canterbury Bankstown Council for their support for our volunteering activities.

Chris Shanley and Gareth Wreford applied for government grants for Mudcrabs activities and were successful. Your tremendous effort in time and energy spent in getting these grants is much appreciated. These grants will enable us to fund our activities for the coming year.

The Mudcrabs are supported by The Cooks River Valley Association by arranging insurance, tools and advocacy. The Mudcrabs wouldn't be able to do their fantastic job without the support of the CRVA. All the executives of the CRVA deserve special thanks for the support for us over the years.

The fears and anxieties in our minds brought about by the pandemic remind us how much we should value our natural resources like the river and green spaces. Protecting these places is very important for the well-being of our community. Thank you to all volunteers and site coordinators for your ongoing work in protecting our environment.



Rain doesn't stop these die-hard volunteers

Canterbury Racecourse Clean-up Report 2019/20

Coordinator: Alison Gibbs



Before and after clean up

I took over the coordination of the Canterbury Racecourse clean-up site from July 2019. We held three successful clean-ups during the year, attracting 43 volunteers and removing 85 bags of rubbish in total.

Unfortunately, I had to cancel the February 2020 clean-up, as almost all the litter had been washed downstream by floodwaters the previous week. However, the May 31st clean-up went ahead as scheduled, despite strict COVID restrictions on volunteer numbers.

While the litter problem on this site continues, the nature of the rubbish appears to be changing. The reduction in PET plastic bottles in particular has made the average rubbish haul less bulky than previous years, resulting in fewer, but often heavier bags. In May, Sydney Water installed new gates along the site, making access to some areas much easier.



May 2020

I would especially like to thank Ranjith Evans, Mike Alderidge and Hans Beck for their support, as well as our trusty trolley bike riders, Andrew Graf and Moz Le.



August 2019



Andrew Graf and Krankee

Crab Walking

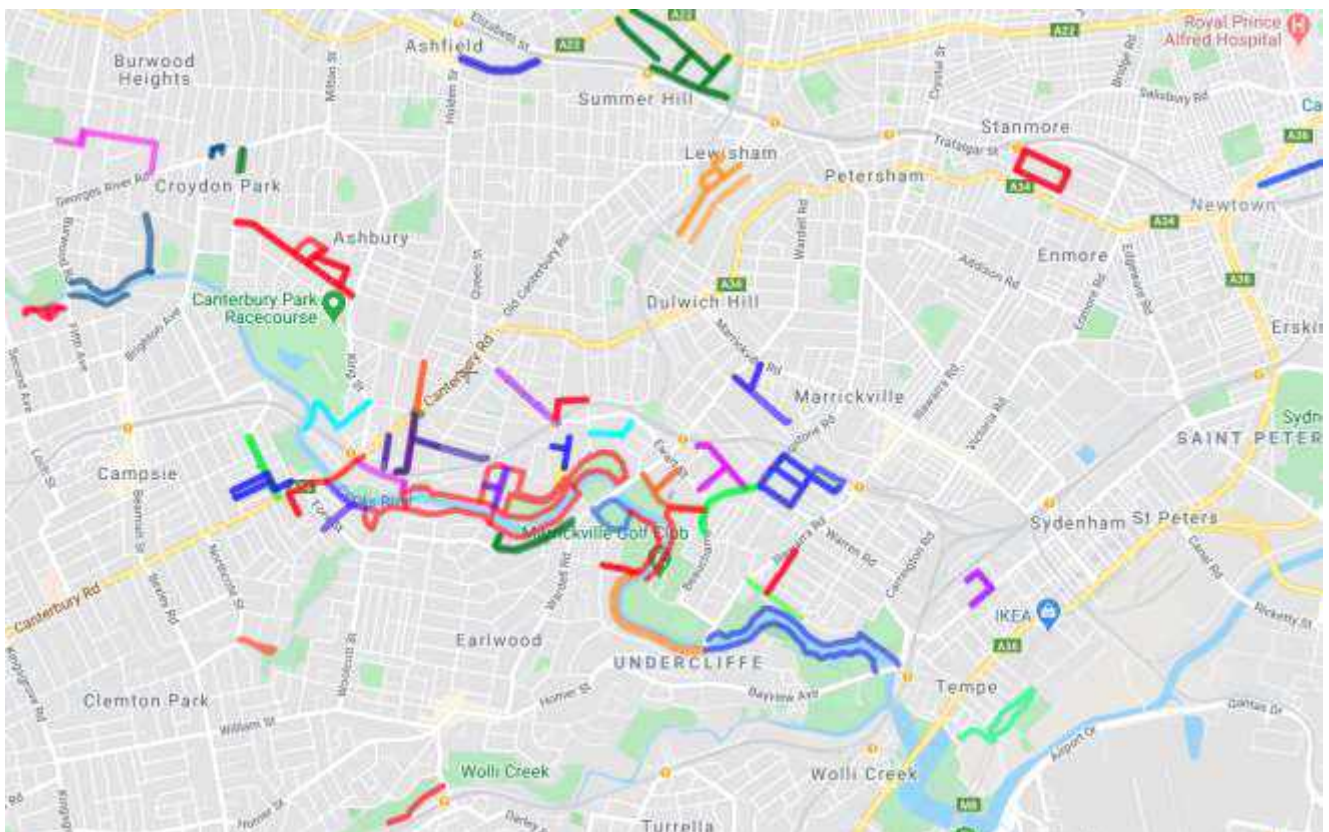
Martin Puchert, coordinator

Crab Walkers are all about reducing the amount of litter polluting the Cooks River. The concept is simple: collect litter from streets in the river catchment so it cannot wash into the stormwater system. Litter mainly gets into the Cooks River through stormwater. It started in December 2017 with a grant from Inner West Council.

The aim is to build a network of volunteers who each collect street litter, over and over again. Each volunteer is free to choose where, when and how often they collect litter. Every bit helps. The combined effort of lots of people doing this will have a big impact.

The project continued to attract enthusiastic new volunteers. Each volunteer was provided with a kit to use in collecting litter: gloves, litter grabber, high-vis vest and bags.

Volunteers record how much litter they collect and report it at the end of each month. The data can be used to map the litter being collected and identify problem areas. Volunteers also report other issues they have noticed. It's been great to see a slow but steady increase in the number of people joining the Crab Walkers, particularly since the start of Covid-19. Fortunately crab walking is something that can be done while working from home and keeping a safe distance from others.



Current Crab-walking routes

The Mud Lark's Report

Jennifer Kent

Despite the Covid-19 and one instance of inclement weather over the past 12 months, the Mudlarks recorded 40 different bird species in their bird surveys along the Cooks River. Seasonal and weather factors, tidal variations and abundance of fish and blossoms influenced the type and number of birds observed. It was pleasing to note that the Tawny Frogmouths, Mudlarks, Masked Lapwings, Dusky Moorhens and Cormorants were consistently seen, as well as the more dominant Noisy Miners, Rainbow Lorikeets and Australian White Ibis. The sighting of Superb Fairy Wrens in dense habitat near Foord Avenue is encouraging. The sighting of White-faced Herons and Spoonbills may also indicate improvement in the water quality. The contributions of all the participants in our monthly surveys are greatly appreciated.



Chestnut teal ducks, great egret, and tawny frogmouth, photos courtesy David Noble

The Cooks River Catchment Coastal Management Plan (CRCCMP)

Peter Munro

CRVA representative (CRCCMP)

The Cooks River Coastal Catchment Management Program (CRCCMP) is a wide ranging and potentially highly significant initiative of the Cooks River Alliance (Inner West, Canterbury Bankstown, Strathfield and Bayside Councils).

A Scoping Study for the CRCCMP was completed last year and was successful in widening the normal coastal zone of this State program, to include the whole of the Cooks River catchment area. Recently an innovative and wide ranging scoring system was developed to more meaningfully assess river health and guide appropriate remedial actions and initiatives.

Once finalised, CRCCMP will include:

- a list of issues facing the Cooks River catchment
- actions to be implemented to enhance the values of the Cooks River
- assessment of actions for technical feasibility, economic viability and community acceptability
- responsibilities of different Councils, State Government agencies and other stakeholders for implementing agreed actions
- a business plan with costs and priorities for implementing each management action
- a coastal zone emergency action sub plan, for dealing with coastal hazards in the Cooks River catchment
- maps showing the area covered by the CRCCMP and the relevant coastal management areas

Stage 1 of the CRCCMP is nearing completion with eight working groups collating data and determining priorities for action. These working groups (Community and Stakeholders Engagement; Biodiversity; Assets and Governance; Stormwater and Flooding; Climate Change and Coastal Hazards; Heritage; Aboriginal; Project Management) will be meeting regularly over the next 12 months.

Once this program is completed, the Cooks River Alliance will be able to access funding through the State Government to action priorities like replacing sheet steel pilings from the River's edge with naturalised riverbanks.

The Cooks River Alliance has successfully engaged many stakeholder in the preparation of this program and will be looking for significant community engagement and consultation in its continued development of the coming year. More information can be found on the Cooks River Alliance website. See

<http://cooksriver.org.au/fact-sheet-cooks-river-catchment-coastal-management-program/#:~:text=The%20CMP%20is%20to%20include,of%20the%20Cooks%20River%20catchment.>



CRMP currently in Stage 1

The Mullets

Bridgit Cleaver

The Mullets are a school of water based eco warriors who are deeply concerned about the health and well-being of the Cooks River. Each month we meet at the River Canoe Club in Marrickville, jump into canoes and spend a few hours collecting rubbish from the river.

The Mullets came out of the “Changemakers” program that the Cooks River Alliance ran in 2019. Participants were asked to develop an environmental project that local residents could get involved in. As a member of the River Canoe Club, and passionate about the environment and the Cooks River, I thought it could be a useful way for the club to not only give back to the River in a really positive way, but also develop closer links to the local community.

Since our launch in September 2019, we have grown from strength to strength with well over 30 regular participants and daily inquiries about how to join. The River Canoe Club is running out of canoes! Over the past 6 months we have collected well over a tonne of rubbish from the river, mainly consisting of single use plastics and household waste.

Everyone is welcome to join us, we are a very friendly and diverse group. Previous experience in canoeing is not necessary. All you require is a love of the Cooks River and a desire to make a positive contribution to the planet.

Caution however - Becoming a Mullet is addictive! Canoeing on the Cooks River is a lot of fun, there is so much joy being out on the water with like-minded people. Everyone who joins us for a clean-up leaves the day with a huge smile on their faces and many new friends.

Those interested in coming along can contact Bridgit Cleaver by email thefabulouspair@iinet.net.au or check out our Instagram: [the_mullets_rcc](https://www.instagram.com/the_mullets_rcc)



Mullets stall at the Ocean Crusaders day



Mullets outside the newly painted RCC building



Rubbish collected from a Mullets Clean-up

Cooks River Valley Association Financial Report 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020

Balance sheet

Brought forward from previous year	11,399.98
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Assets

ING account	11,275.07
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CBA account	4,862.91
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TOTAL ASSETS	16,137.98
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Liabilities	0.00
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Net Assets	16,137.98
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Breakdown of funds

Operational funds	11,693.21
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Grant funds	4,444.77
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Income and Expenditure

Operational Income

Bank interest	77.03
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Membership fees	970.00
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Donations	772.00
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GST refunds	373.00
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<u>Total operational income</u>	<u>2,192.03</u>
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Income from Grants

CBC Community Grant	1,480.00
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Dept of Social Services Volunteer Grant	4,000.00
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<u>TOTAL INCOME</u>	<u>7,672.03</u>
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Operational Expenditure

Insurance	450.00
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Support of affiliated groups	1,314.80
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Post box and stationery	134.00
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<u>Total operational expenditure</u>	<u>1,898.80</u>
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Expenditure on Grants

CBC Community Grant	1,035.23
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<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</u>	<u>2,934.03</u>
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Operational surplus	293.23
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Grants surplus	4,444.77
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<u>TOTAL SURPLUS</u>	<u>4,738.00</u>
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CRVA FINANCIAL REPORT 2019/2020 - NOTES TO REPORT

- Our overall financial situation is stable and healthy.
- Grant management is in surplus in this financial year, as we have received a \$4,000 grant near the end of the financial year but have not started on that project yet. The other CBC Community Grant funds do not have to be spent until mid-2021.
- We have a small operational surplus, largely because we have not spent money on organising events because of COVID-19 restrictions.
- If we continue to support Mudcrabs activities we will need to boost our income by fundraising in some capacity.
- We have been awarded a Communities Environment Program grant for \$20,000 but the money has not been received as yet. This money is earmarked for specific activities tied to the grant.

Chris Shanley - CRVA Hon Treasurer
8 July 2020

CRVA committee for 2019/20

President	Jennifer Newman
Vice-president	Ann Leahy
Secretary	Julie Corkery
Treasurer	Chris Shanley
Public officer	Chris Shanley
Publicity officer	Ann Leahy
Mudcrabs officer	Ranjith Evas
Committee members	Justine Langford
	Martin Puchert
	Barney Solomon
	Gareth Wreford



Cooks River sunset, July 2020