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Cooks River and Botany biodiversity

Life in the Cooks River



JULY 2021 FACT SHEET • 3

Biodiversity is the variety of all forms of life and their interactions. It includes plants and animals across our land, rivers, coast, and ocean including their habitats and connections with other living organisms.

Local biodiversity

The Cooks River and Botany areas contain ecologically sensitive areas and threatened habitats including protected marine vegetation. The region is also home to:

- 11 frog species
- 7 endangered ecological communities
- 6 threatened plant species
- Endangered species including Grey-headed Flying Foxes.

Biodiversity in the region has decreased considerably since European colonisation. Today, local councils and community groups are working to restore and enhance these significant areas to protect the unique animals, plants and other forms of life.

Big city threats

With over 550,000 people living throughout the Botany and Cooks River areas, increasing pressure from population growth and urban development is increasing habitat loss and fragmentation.

Poor water quality, litter and broader threats such as climate change continue to impact the health of our waterways and green spaces, placing further pressure on the plants and animals that live here.

Why is biodiversity so important?

Healthy ecosystems supply us with oxygen, improve air and water quality, and support the continued existence of the countless living things that call them home.

In towns and cities, biodiverse areas are great places for people to recreate and connect with nature.

What can you do?

- **Backyard habitats** – Create wildlife pathways and habitat in your backyard by planting natives.
- **Wash wisely** – Wash your car on the lawn or at a car wash with enviro-friendly cleaning products.



Wolli Creek (Clare Britton)

- **Leave only paw prints** – Pick up after your pets and only let them off-leash in designated areas.
- **Reduce your rubbish** – Dispose of your litter correctly and swap single-use plastics for reusable products.

Connect with nature!

Just 90 minutes in nature can lower your blood pressure, improve your immune system and overall mental wellbeing. Get involved with your local bushcare or environment group, including:

- Cooks River Valley Association
- Mudcrabs and Crab Walkers
- Bird watchers – Greenway Birdos, The Flock, Tempe Birdos, Mudlarks
- Wolli Creek Preservation Society
- The Mullets

To find out more visit: <https://cooksriver.org.au/community-groups/>



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From source to sea – Cooks River biodiversity

The Cooks River Catchment from its headwaters at Yana Badu, Chullora, to the River mouth at Botany Bay has pockets of rich biodiversity with important ecological communities and species.

Upper Catchment areas used to be mainly Clay Plain Scrub Forest, surrounded by Turpentine-Ironbark forest further away from the river¹. The area once supported animals such as kangaroos, possums and bats. Today, Yana Badu wetlands in Chullora and Cocks Creek Bushland Reserve in Greenacre are important ecological refuges in this part of the catchment, with Cocks Creek providing habitat to the endangered Powerful Owl and the Green and Golden Bell Frog.

*Chain of Ponds Reserve, Strathfield
Inset: Powerful Owls have been seen around Cocks Creek*



Mid Catchment ecological communities include Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest, Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest, wetlands and coastal saltmarsh. Bush restoration works over many years at sites such as Bardwell Creek and Greenway Biodiversity Corridor have improved the ecological health of this area. Wolli Creek Valley has the only high-quality bushland of significant size in this part of Sydney. The valley features a diversity of wildlife within its heathland, woodland, trees canopies and wetlands.

Grey-Headed Flying Fox at Wolli Creek (David Noble)



Lower Catchment and Botany Bay's biodiverse areas include Muddy Creek, Landing Lights and Botany Wetlands, as well as Penrhyn Estuary. Native ecological communities here include Sandstone Forest, Banksia Scrub, wetlands, coastal saltmarsh and mangroves. These areas provide habitat and feeding grounds for threatened migratory and Australian coastal bird species.

Black Winged Stilt at Landing Lights Wetland (Chris Rehberg)



Secret
Sanctuary



Penrhyn Estuary is an important estuarine ecosystem with endangered saltmarsh and intertidal mudflats. Penrhyn is the result of reclamation works to build Port Botany and Foreshore Road in the 1970s. The mudflats and saltmarsh are vital feeding and roosting habitat for endangered migratory shorebirds such as the Bar Tailed Godwit and Curlew Sandpiper. The offshore seagrass meadows are an important nursery area for fish and crustaceans.

¹ Benson et al 1999

Find out more

The Cooks River Alliance is a partnership between Bayside Council, City of Canterbury Bankstown, Inner West Council, Strathfield Council and Sydney Water. The Alliance uses the combined resources, experience, knowledge and skills within our partner organisations and the community to improve the health of the Cooks River.

Visit www.cooksriver.org.au or social media channels to find out more.



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