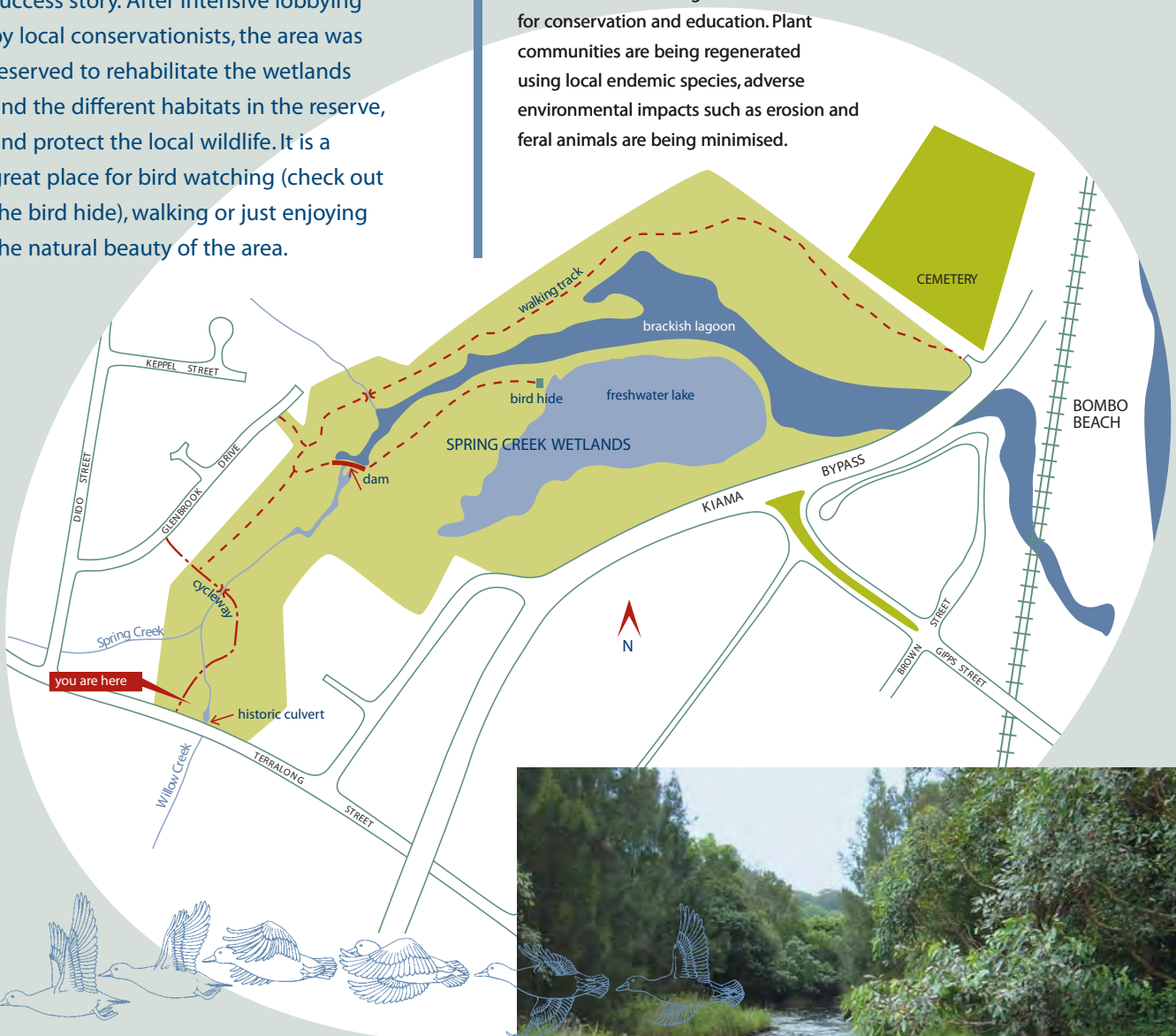
KIAMA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

welcome to

Spring Creek Wetlands

Spring Creek Wetlands is a conservation success story. After intensive lobbying by local conservationists, the area was reserved to rehabilitate the wetlands and the different habitats in the reserve, and protect the local wildlife. It is a great place for bird watching (check out the bird hide), walking or just enjoying the natural beauty of the area.

Kiama Municipal Council has an ongoing commitment to manage the reserve for conservation and education. Plant communities are being regenerated using local endemic species, adverse environmental impacts such as erosion and feral animals are being minimised.



These signs were proudly sponsored by Kiama Municipal Council and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources.

Please take care in the reserve and never leave children unattended.

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changes over time

an evolving landscape

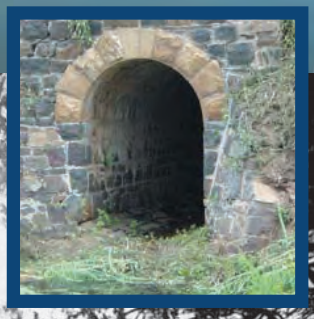
Over millions of years, sediment has been washing down from the surrounding hills and slowly filling the valley. The final stage of evolution, where the valley is almost completely filled, is represented by the wetlands. In recent times land clearing has resulted in loss of habitat and degradation of the site.

The sheltered haven around Spring Creek once provided Aboriginal people with a variety of foods, medicines, raw materials and fresh water. When European settlers arrived, Aboriginal people were forced off their lands and their traditional supplies rapidly diminished as land was cleared for agriculture.

From the 1870s, the Boles family operated a dairy in the valley known as 'Glenbrook Farm'. The business lasted for 100 years. In the early 1900s their neighbours included a Chinese family, who operated a market garden along either side of Spring Creek.

The demand for coastal land for housing has resulted in some farms in the Kiama area being subdivided. The area now known as Spring Creek Wetlands was also subject to a housing development proposal, however most of the land was deemed unsuitable due to periodic flooding. After much lobbying by local environmentalists, Kiama Municipal Council agreed to purchase the land and reserve a large portion of it for public use.

In 1992, work commenced to help protect the catchment and provide a better environment for wildlife. To improve our visitors' experience we have provided viewing areas, a bird hide and accessible walking tracks.



Around 1870, a bluestone culvert was built to channel water under Terralong Street. You can still see this relic of Kiama's engineering history near the Terralong entrance to the reserve.

Kiama Municipal Council has an ongoing program of revegetating the area with local endemic plants.

Glenbrook Farm circa 1900 showing the Chinese market gardens.

Photo courtesy of Weston Print

Please don't pick the flowers; a picked flower does not produce seeds.

Kiama Municipal Council

from farmland to bushland

what grows where?






Before it was cleared for farmland, Spring Creek Wetlands was covered in a variety of different plant communities. Local species are now planted to help re-establish the original vegetation.

Silver banksias grow behind the crests of dunes, buffered from salt-laden winds. These hardy trees hold sandy soils together and provide nesting sites and food for many birds and possums.

dunes

From Bombo Beach to where Bombo Cemetery is now situated, sandy soils would have favoured coast wattle, coast tea tree and silver banksia. As we move inland the dry parts of the sandy area would probably have supported an open forest of bangalay gums.

wetlands

Shallow saline areas near the entrance to the wetland support saltmarsh along the muddy margins. They are the hunting ground for wading birds such as herons and egrets. Spoonbills and ibis sieve and probe for shellfish and worms.

Reeds, tolerant of brackish conditions, border the wetland. They were probably always abundant, and still provide protection and nesting sites for coots, swamp hens and black swans.

Swamp oak forest would have occurred around the margins of the wetland, upstream as far as the tidal limit. Alongside the swiftly flowing freshwater of the creek, swamp oak would have given way to taller, more willowy river oaks. These would have been interspersed with rainforest species.

Freshwater wetlands have been created by damming the creek. Since cattle have been kept out of the area, a diversity of reeds, rushes and sedges has returned.

Broad-leaf cumbungi grow in fresh water lagoons, lakes, creeks and channels.

Port Jackson figs grow in the drier areas of the rainforest. They often start their lives clinging to clefts in rocks or in the forks of trees. They provide animals such as wonga pigeons and grey-headed flying foxes with fruity treats.

rainforest

Rainforest once thickly clothed the hills around the wetland down to the low areas behind the sand dunes. It also grew along the banks of Spring Creek and its tributaries, intermingled with swamp oaks and river oaks. Remnants of the original rainforest can be found in and around Spring Creek Reserve. Hundreds of rainforest species, including figs, lilly pillies, native daphne and cabbage palms, have been planted here with the hope that one day the rainforest will return.

KIAMA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

conserving our environment

why save wetlands?

Australia is the world's second driest continent. In the past 200 years the flow of our rivers and the distribution of water into wetlands has been changed dramatically.

Wetlands are probably the most vulnerable natural systems in Australia. It is estimated that over 60% of wetlands in NSW have been destroyed since European settlement.

what's so special about Spring Creek?

Spring Creek rises in the foothills of Saddleback Mountain. By the time it reaches the reserve it forms an unusual mixture of fresh and brackish water habitats that support a myriad of animal life. The combination of freshwater wetland, remnant rainforest and estuarine wetland makes Spring Creek Wetlands a significant place.

You can observe the different types of water habitats and the animals that live there by visiting various parts of the reserve:

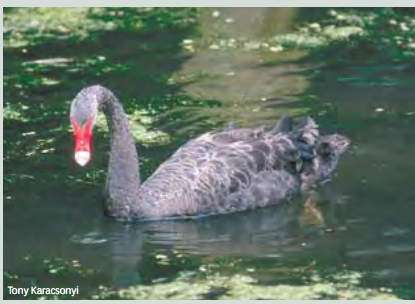
Fresh water creek — upstream of the dam wall

Fresh water lake — formed behind the old dam wall

Brackish lagoon — a remnant of the lagoon that originally comprised the wetland.

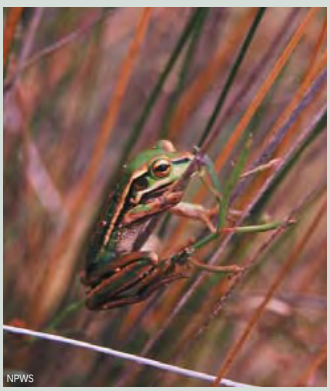
Spring Creek flood plain — the low lying areas in the reserve that are subject to occasional flooding.

The indisputable fact about wetlands, is they provide habitat for birds, reptiles and amphibians. As ponds and dams dry up during droughts, Spring Creek Wetlands provides a vital refuge for birds from the surrounding district.



A range of other waterbirds have been recorded in the wetland including dusky moorhens (left), purple swamphens, chestnut teals, pacific black ducks (above) and little grassbirds. Coral trees seasonally support a roost of cattle egret. Many of these species breed in reeds and rushes around the edge of the lagoon and lake.

A number of threatened species including the green and gold bell frog (right), the Australasian bittern and the square-tailed kite have been recorded at the site. Over 20 species of birds regarded as rare, uncommon or scarce regionally have also been recorded along with five species of birds listed on international migratory bird agreements.



Wetlands act as natural sinks, filtering out nutrients in run-off from the surrounding catchment. They help reduce pollution entering the ocean by filtering sediment and putting oxygen back into the water. They also slow the flow of water thus reducing erosion.

 Spring Creek Wetlands is a refuge for many endangered animals.