

Primary entry #17: Nords Wharf PS

# NORDSY



# NEWS



**EXPRESSIONS:** Students Sean Hawker and Danielle Hancock display their masks.  
— Picture by James Rudd

## Expressive language unmasked

By **JAMES RUDD**  
and **SEAN HAWKER**

**STUDENTS** at Nords Wharf PS have found a new way to express themselves.

Teacher Lyn Tong and teacher's aide Natalie Proudlock have been working with 17 students to develop a new creative writing project. "We are really excited about it," Mrs Tong said.

"We wanted to come up with an idea to help students write expressive language.

"Natalie and I decided on allowing students to express information about themselves through art and visual medium and then into a written form."

Students were asked a series of questions on their likes and were asked to explain and document their attitudes towards them.

They then expressed these feelings by transferring them to a textual media.

"Natalie came up with the idea of making a mask and a collage to express the student's likes and favourite things," Mrs Tong said.

Mrs Proudlock said that the project served as a stimulus and motivator for student writing.

"The results have been outstanding," Mrs Proudlock said, "with all the students achieving wonderful results."

# Bellbirds wreak havoc

By **AHLIA WILLIAMS, AMBER LEAR**  
and **RILEY WOOD**

**COLONIES** of bellbirds have moved into several new areas around Lake Macquarie in recent years.

According to amateur ornithologist Peter Westcott, there has been an explosion of colonies.

"Bellbirds may sound beautiful, but they are actually a scourge of the bush," he said.

"For most people the sound of bellbirds is a wonderful sound that reassures people that birdlife is abundant in the area. However, this is not the true picture."

Mrs Jane Wood, a Nords Wharf resident, said she loved the sound of bellbirds.

"It makes me think of growing up. It takes me back," Mrs Wood said. "It's a beautiful, distinctive sound."

Mr Westcott said that bell-miners were aggressive birds that attacked and harassed any other species that came into their territory.

"They chase all other birds away," Mr Westcott said. "They seem to be most active against the gentler and rarer birds, but even bigger and stronger birds are not immune."

Dr Jim Shields, a wildlife manager, said that, in certain circumstances, bell-miners could become a part of a systematic forest dieback known as Bell-Miner Associated Dieback.

Bellbirds have been implicated in the death of large areas of eucalypt forest between Victoria and Queensland.

Some estimates suggest that 2.5 million hectares of native forest in NSW is under threat.

"Bell-miners are aggressive, territorial and also very social and that is the problem," Dr Shields said. "Instead of socialising in groups of



**FLIGHTY ISSUE:** Peter Westcott, pictured with one of his feathered friends, is concerned about the way bell-miners have encroached upon areas of Lake Macquarie.

hundreds, they are in groups of thousands and the forests just can't support them."

Ecologist Paul Meek said an imbalance in the ecosystem caused by fragmentation, including the removal of trees or invasion by weeds, attracted bell miners and started the cycle.

"They have a grouping and colonising mentality and keep other birds away so they don't eat the psyllids (small sap-sucking insects)," Mr Meek said.

Peter Westcott is hoping dieback will not occur around the Lake.

"In the last five years there has been a dramatic increase with colonies at Cams Wharf Oval, Swansea South and north of Belmont," Mr Westcott said.

"It is my concern that they will greatly reduce the number and varieties of other birds in our local area and cause the trees to die from dieback."



**READY FOR ACTION:** New recruit Robyn Hellier, left, with deputy captain of the Nords Wharf Rural Fire Brigade, Heather Jones.

— Picture by Anicia Ahrens

## Rural Fire Brigade seeks recruits

By **ANICIA AHRENS** and  
**JORGIA KENWORTHY**

**THE** Rural Fire Brigade is always in need of new members.

"We need recruits," said Heather Jones, deputy captain of the Nords Wharf Rural Fire Brigade.

"We haven't had a big fire here for a few years, so there is a build-up of leaf litter and fallen branches, so there is always a danger of a big fire.

"Although we have had some rain it is still very dry."

Mrs Jones, who has been a member of the fire brigade for 10 years, said the service was looking for new members because they were all volunteers with jobs and families and therefore not always available.

"We hold open days, do letter-box drops and door knocks to familiarise people with the service and to recruit new members," she said.

"Nords Wharf is a small community so when people move away they usually leave the brigade and move to one closer to where they live."

Nords Wharf Rural Fire Brigade has 25 members including eight probationary recruits.

Recent recruit, teacher Robyn Hellier, said that she felt proud to become a member.

"It's a worthwhile commitment and it is important to the community," she said.



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# Bridge over troubled water

## Editorial

By AISHA WILLIAMS and MICHELE HAWKER

RESIDENTS south of Swansea Bridge are frustrated and disheartened by the ongoing saga surrounding Swansea Bridge.

These people wonder: is there anyone out there who really cares? Or will the issue be put in the "too hard" basket?

It has already been revealed ("Swansea's Troubled Crossing", *The Herald*, March 10) that the RTA knew in May, 2004, that the bridge had partially sunk. Then in July, 2004, they were informed that it was in danger of collapsing, yet took one week to close the bridge.

It appears that it was just good luck that no major incident took place. That does not instil much confidence in the community.

As a quick fix, 1200 tonnes of rock was dumped in the water under the bridge, to support the piers. Divers said that this rock impacted on the marine life and was then washed away by strong currents and storms, because the rock used was too small.

Then, in 2006, a further 6000 tonnes of bigger and heavier rocks were dumped under the bridge.

This was done with little com-

munity consultation and had a dramatic impact on the marine environment under the bridge. The RTA is looking at future options for the bridge and has stated that it will consult with the community when considering the long-term options.

Let's hope that this is so.

The population south of the bridge has been disadvantaged by bridge issues for years and would be further greatly disadvantaged by the introduction of a "proposed" toll if a new tunnel or overhead bridge is constructed, as has been previously suggested.

This would mean that everybody on the south side of the bridge would have to pay a toll every time they crossed the bridge, which in some cases is multiple times a day.

There is no doubt that the problem needs to be clarified, a solution needs to be found, and quickly. Community confidence depends on it.

We need this issue to be prioritised and not put on the backburner until another emergency arises.

The people of Swansea have been very tolerant but they now deserve an outcome that is practical, efficient and will finally bring an end to strains of the local tune: "Swansea Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down."



UNDER THE SEA: Diver Corinne Williams is concerned about the impact RTA activities are having on marine life around Swansea Bridge.

# Marine life still missing

By AISHA WILLIAMS and MICHELE HAWKER

DIVERS are disappointed by the continued impact that RTA rock-dumping under Swansea Bridge is having on marine life.

Rocks were first dumped in 2004 to help support sinking piers under the bridge.

"Last year's dumping was preemptive as there was no more obvious sinking taking place," said Robert Hughes, from the Swansea Dive Shop.

"The RTA was concerned in preventing future problems. Many people are upset and disappointed that it happened this way."

Mr Hughes said that although many of the bigger fish had returned

to the area there were only about half the fish there used to be.

"A lot of the bottom had coral and sponges with things living in them," he said.

"Sand eels and flounder were covered with the rocks and destroyed."

"There used to be rare albino octopi and white sea horses, which are a protected species."

Local diver Corinne Williams said that every dive used to be breathtakingly gorgeous.

"I don't think the site will ever be as spectacular as it was," she said, "even though I am delighted to see some signs of regrowth."

See Editorial, left.



— Illustration by Aisha Williams

# Council funds garden

By CALLUM BEASHEL, TOM JOHNSON and CAMERON BURNS-VEITCH

STUDENTS at Nords Wharf PS are delighted with their new vegetable garden, which is being sponsored by Lake Macquarie City Council (LMCC).

The garden was officially opened by Pamela Baker, from LMCC, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"This is my first opening of a garden," Ms Baker

said, "but it looks beautiful, healthy and colourful."

The garden has decorative signage painted by Georgetown artist, Maree Copas, and houses a two-metre tall scarecrow made by the students.

"The school has a number of plans in place for environmental improvements," said Mrs Lindsay, a teacher at the school.

"Construction of the new garden started at the end of last year. We are very pleased with the outcome and the amount of produce we have been able to grow."



GARDEN GUARDIANS: Pamela Baker and students Riley Wood, Aisha Williams and Michele Hawker in the school's new garden. — Picture by Callum Beashel

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