CITY OF SYDNEY

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

INTERVIEWEE: Judy Christie

INTERVIEWER: Jo Kijas

PLACE: Forest Lodge

DATE: 28 April 2012

TRANSCRIPT

0.00 **JK:** **This is an interview with Judy Christie and Jo Kijas on the 28th of April 2012 at Judy's home in Forest Lodge for the Shared Terrain Oral History Project on behalf of the City of Sydney History Unit.**

And just for the tape, Judy, can I have your full name and your date of birth?

JC: Yes. Full name's Judith ******** Christie and I was born on ******** in 1952 out in Dubbo.

JK: **Great, thanks. Well, Judy, I've come to talk to you today partly because of your passion for birds and, if I've understood it correctly, habitat within the urban area. But so that we can just start with a bit of a context and background for you, can you just tell me a bit about yourself and where you've come from and something about your work situation?**

JC: O.K. So, I was born in the country and grew up there, a little town called Gilgandra, not on a farm but my mother was on a farm out of town and so we spent a lot of time on that farm on the weekends. Came to boarding school in the eastern suburbs for six years when I was twelve, went to Sydney University just across the way, did a bit of travelling and then basically wanted to come back into the inner west because, don't know, I think that's where you wanted to be in the '70s and it was just sort of coincidence that I ended up in the Glebe area, really. It wasn't "I must live here" but we'd had a house here when I was a student with some friends and I had another flat when I came back from overseas.

2.11 It's a nice area, Glebe, although I was never particularly part of the academic community or anything, or the Glebe society; I've probably always been a bit of a loner but I've been in this tiny little house on the edge of a cliff in Forest Lodge for about twenty eight years, mainly because I don't know where else to go now. And there are things I really don't like about it and a couple of things I really like. The one thing I really like is the aspect; sort of you're on top of a hill and you're looking out. You have a view, which I've mainly put trees to block off now. Yes, and I've watched the suburb evolve. In the mid '90s met up with some people living nearby who were very passionate about keeping a little wild kind of gully that we had and that took about – I think it was about '96 – a long time to resolve.

JK: That's probably a whole story in itself.

JC: Yes.

JK: So I figure that we'll spend a bit of time on that if we can.

JC: O.K, on the gully, yes.

JK: Yes, on the gully. So what have you been doing workwise here since you settled in?

JC: Well, I was a high school teacher for many years and then I worked in mainly teaching Indonesian/Asian studies – I was sort of interested in that – and history; that's the sort of area I was interested in.

4.05 And then I worked in the Adult Migrant English Service for about another, I don't know, six, seven years or something, did some books. So I was interested in language and culture, I guess, and how people communicate, where they come from, different people. Always been interested in different cultures, particularly Asian cultures but also quite interested in, I guess, gardening. Didn't really know – I think always kind of looking for something.

JK: An interest in the outdoors?

JC: Well, yes, I'd never bushwalked or never camped or anything till I went overseas in my twenties, mid twenties, late twenties. We didn't do that in my family. We went on holidays; we certainly didn't pitch a tent.

JK: Did you have things in your background that you now look back on that you think influenced your interest in habitat and birds?

JC: No, it's funny really. I think it's really just something you take for granted and I think that's why it's so frustrating to see the built environment, the concrete taking over and a really limited suite of plants being put back. I don't think there was anything in particular in my background except that we were outside and just you took it for granted that you were outside and there were trees and nobody knew the names of the birds or anything but they were there and I think it was just being able to be part of that and I think you just took it for granted and I think just it's there.

6.12 I mean, I've got friends who have similar interests to me and they had quite different upbringings, some of them. They spent a lot of time bushwalking and camping; I didn't. I think I probably always wanted to know things. My interest in birds is interesting. I've tried to work out where it came from and I think it was a boyfriend I had who was a funny sort of a fellow but he knew the names of birds and he loved animals. And I can remember going and staying with his brother up on the North Coast and they had the Reader's Digest Book of Birds and I was just so impressed at these people who weren't particularly well educated and were hippies mainly, sort of weren't in well-paid jobs or anything but they knew the names of the birds and what they were and I thought "Well, that's a really nice thing to know". So my interest was almost a want to know, a knowledge. It wasn't something in my soul or anything, it was almost an intellectual interest but nonetheless an interest in the same way and I think people can come to things in all different ways. I don't think there's one pathway to caring about the environment; I think people can come to it from all different ways and in all different sorts of places. And so I'm sure there are people who can have a very urban upbringing who can still be quite passionate if the opportunity's there and I think that that's important.

8.12 So, yes, so I decided I wanted to know about birds, so I sort of self-educated, joined a few clubs and so I have continued to be interested in birds and got involved with other people who did and that's nice.

JK: And I was just wondering, when you said that people can come to appreciate nature, birds, etcetera, from all sorts of different angles, do you say that because – obviously you've been thinking about it but do you say that because you sometimes have a sense that some people think that one should come from a certain background?

JC: Yes.

JK: Have you had some pressures?

JC: No, I haven't personally but I think there are stereotypes and the greenie thing is a really problematic stereotype. I think the sort of thing – suddenly I'm into politics – Christine Milne [Greens leader] saying "I'm going to go out and engage the farmers", I think that's a fantastic kind of thing because I think having come from the country – and we still have a family farm. So we don't run it or anything; we have a manager, we don't really have any kind of – but we do have a link to it – so you understand how people who are stewards of the land for productive purposes they care about it but they care about it differently. I was sort of distraught out at our farm a couple of months ago when I saw that our manager had set up a little feedlot and there were two trees that I really liked that were dead.

10.02 But I thought, "Well, you know, he's looking after this land in the way he knows best" and it wasn't down to me to say "You should have fenced those two trees off". I wish he had, though.

JK: Yes.

JC: I can't remember what we were talking about.

JK: Just the sort of ……..

JC: Yes, so I think that "You're just a greenie" is a really problematic concept and I think people who say it are very ignorant of kind of what it means to care about the environment because you can care about it in all sorts of different ways and we'd be better to have a different name for an environmental organisation or the political group; it's not useful in some ways. Poor little bird out there; I've chopped down half his tree. It's always a compromise in the inner west between space and sun and nature and that conflict I have daily in this backyard as to how much I can leave to enjoy a few birds and how much I can – I just took out a tree last month because there was no sun at all and I couldn't see anything and it was a bit hard to do and I think the birds have probably suffered a little.

JK: Actually, we didn't also talk about what your current job is and your last.

JC: Yes.

JK: And then we'll get to the backyard.

JC: O.K, all right. So, that's right, so I couldn't work out what to do with myself and teaching I didn't think I was very good at and it certainly was very challenging although I enjoyed the English Migrant stuff but I kind of had to make a choice.

12.07 So I started doing horticulture, three years at TAFE, so I'm a horticulturalist, did a bit of gardening, a few gardening jobs, but I kept my teaching work going as well. And then one year I had to decide whether to do another course in bush regeneration or to do some postgraduate work in linguistics and the letter that came back first was the bush regen one, so I went down that pathway. I probably should have gone down the other pathway – I'd have been financially a lot better off – but instead I took that sort of bush regen pathway. And once you do bush regeneration as a course – which in those days it was a TAFE course for about six months - - -

JK: And when was "those days"?

JC: About 1995. It's a bit like a religion, it gets you. And because I had the birds, because I'd sort of been following the birds, getting involved in birds as a hobby – I thought I needed a hobby – I kind of had that already there and then I was starting to learn the plants and understanding ecosystems. I haven't got a science degree or anything like that but if you observe enough – and having observed birds and birdlife and pursued them and seen where they were you can intuit a lot about ecosystems and the environment and so then I learnt about plants - well, I had learnt about plants from a horticultural point of view prior to that. So I think I've got quite a broad practical knowledge and I find a lot of my colleagues have science degrees but they actually don't know what plant is what. I find a lot of people out there working in councils [local government] don't either.

14.13 **JK: And when you say "colleagues" - - -**

JC: O.K, yes. So after I sort of took a voluntary redundancy from the Adult Migrant English Service when contracts dried up there in '98, I worked for five years at Greening Australia, so that was quite practical sort of work. The job that allowed me to segue from writing books on literacy to planting trees was a small grant which was to

involve people of different backgrounds, culturally diverse backgrounds in environment improvement activities.

JK: Around this area?

JC: No, western Sydney, western Sydney, yes, but I'd already worked in Cabramatta. My literacy book - they told me they'd do a small publication and ten years on it's still out there – I wrote in Cabramatta, so I kind of had some links out there so I put on my Greening Australia shirt and my boots and went out and kind of did stuff out there. It was interesting. I'd had a fear and horror of western Sydney, particularly those of us who started teaching with the Department in 1975, there were all those great big high schools out there in the western suburbs and it was kind of "Ugh". But it was interesting to go back out there fifteen years later, working on – there's a whole lot of public land, the western Sydney corridors, which is the rump of land that was supposed to sort of be the green belt around Sydney which has got chewed almost to non-existence but there's still a bit of it and in those days Greening Australia had the contract to do sort of improvement on that land which was owned by the Department of Planning.

16.23 I kind of started looking at it with different eyes and I can remember saying to the guy who was my manager, I said "It's interesting. There must be something in my memory because the trees" – it's boxwood land – "looks like where I grew up". It's boxwood land. I mean, I never knew it was boxwood land when I grew up in Gilgandra but by now I did and I realised and I felt quite comfortable in some of that landscape that we used to work in in western Sydney and I decided it was because it hit something in your memory. It's interesting, isn't it? And so I've actually always thought about that, you know, what imprints into your memory. Now, there's nothing here that imprints into my memory, I don't think. I think it's just that I've been here a long time and so it's like a place you've lived in for a long time: there's just something comfortable about it even though you might hate the bloody plumbing and that you can't park anywhere and the noise but there's other things that are comfortable. So after five years of working in an NGO, planting trees and working with different cultural groups as well, I did a lot of that, so that was nice because I had those skills from the Adult Migrant English Service and I had the contacts and I was able to kind of do something useful.

18.03 But I then got a job with the newly formed Catchment Management, Sydney Metro Catchment Management Authority, so pretty much it's been nine years and it's been pretty much up and down but the bulk

of my work has been sort of what they call community engagement, community support, like a Landcare support type activity. Some of it's been, a lot of it's been project management, which is pretty boring but a lot of it's been working with people and because it was a new organisation and it was a new position and a new role I have been able to sort of create it a bit and create things. So we run an annual community forum which I first conceived of in 2007. So we've just had our sixth one so it's been really good and everyone talks it up and it's seen as the one thing that people all over Sydney do; I've set up some baseline surveys of volunteering. So I've done a little bit of research just for presentations and things at conferences on why people volunteer in the environment, so professionally I'm interested in that. And, of course, with the birds I've also been very privileged to have worked with what's now Birdlife Australia but was then Birds in Backyards, Birds Australia, with Richard Major and Kate Ravich and that's been fantastic. So I've always just done that as a volunteer thing and it's been wonderful to have that contact with scientists and people who are passionate about educating others about the love of birds. And so I have my work.

20.05 I mean, a lot of it's just day to day stuff, putting together project ideas, doing newsletters, that sort of community engagement stuff, putting on events, but the interesting thing and I think the thing I really like is that it's all over Sydney, it's regional, and so I've observed the passion people have for their patch but I often feel I'm standing apart from it a little bit.

JK: Why is that, just an observer?

JC: I don't know. Because I think I've lived everywhere, I know all different parts of Sydney. While I've lived here, I wouldn't say I'm passionate about this part of Sydney.

JK: Right. So maybe this is also a good time to tell me about your patch, though. And could you actually describe, for somebody who just doesn't know this area at all, tell us where your house is and looking out onto your backyard where we're located?

JC: O.K. So Forest Lodge is a really densely inhabited part of the western side of Glebe. It's all old houses. This house is a hundred years old, it's tiny, it's falling apart, it's on the edge of a sort of sandstone cliff. But there was an opportunity when I first came here to sort of plant a few trees. I don't know how you describe it. People live very close to each other but it's not high-rise, although high-rise is coming on all sides of me now.

22.08 We used to have a hospital, the Children's Hospital, which was like a lot of places in Sydney: it was sprawling, there were sort of hidden gardens, you could wander around it, there were little wild places, there were sort of old gardens, there were old trees, there were new trees. And there was a fence; there was a sort of an area on the edge of it that looked like it was a no-man's land but when they decided to sell the Children's Hospital to a developer it turned out that all of that land did belong to the Children's Hospital and so they were going to develop it all. But certainly when I first sort of came to live here in the '80s and early '90s there were lots of nice little wild places. They hadn't put a fence along the concrete creek; it kind of had a sense of being part of the landscape. There were lots of little wild places, there were lots of birds, things hadn't been manicured to death. And I think even twenty years ago if you went into a nursery there were more plants, there was more diversity, and that's been frustrating to see the limited kind of opportunities from commercial nurseries to plants. So you walk along, you'll see about three species of plants and that's about all everybody uses. It's awful.

24.10 **JK: Now, tell me why it is awful.**

JC: Well, for a start diversity, to get more insects, to get more birds, to have different niches for different small urban creatures you need diversity, diversity is what keeps life going. You know, if we were all a single genetic strain we'd all probably be dead. I mean, diversity, genetic diversity and species diversity, that's what keeps the world going. And it's almost why I think I'll probably have to leave here, is because there's almost nothing left of that diversity any more, it's become so uniform, there are no wild bits left. Actually, that's not true. There are wild bits but what's happened is a couple of species, plant species, have taken over and so there's a particular tree which Joel Johnson [Manager Parks, Trees and Aquatic Facilities for the City of Sydney] might have been referred to as a problem in Glebe, which is the celtis, which has just weeded everywhere and now it dominates all the tall tree canopy and so they're taking out eucalypts right, left and centre. Yes, you don't even have some of those, or they're putting in the wrong ones. Like you see a eucalyptus maculata put in under power lines.

26.02 You go "No. This is a big tree. What are you doing?" It's just like, I don't know - - -

JK: Let's go back, let's be historians.

JC: O.K.

JK: And take me through the pathways that went from the hospital, so the Camperdown - - -

JC: Yes, Children's Hospital, yes, O.K.

JK: - - - and take me through that process.

JC: Yes, that's a good story. It's interesting. So there was this sort of wild area – it's about five minutes' walk from here – and one occasionally used to walk through it. I didn't much, didn't take much notice of it, but I think you take for granted some of those places, that they exist; you know, it's just a bit of a wild area, didn't have a name, wasn't named or anything.

JK: But where was it?

JC: Just about five minutes' walk, just on the back of the hospital, so the back fence of the hospital, if you like. And one day a partner who was living here at the time came home and he said "Oh, I've seen a notice up there and there's a group" – I think they might have announced they were going to sell the hospital grounds - "there's a group having a walk through the area down there to tell them what's there". And I was busy doing something, so he went and he said "Oh, it's quite interesting". I think by that stage – had I done my bush regen? – I don't know, can't remember. I think I did, yes, I think I sort of knew what I was talking about, thought I knew what I was talking about. He said "Oh, no, it wasn't too bad". So then there was this local meeting called, so we went to that and there were a couple of interesting little groups.

28.06 The way these sort of groups form in any area, really – doesn't have to be a city – so they were a couple of people who lived across the road and they wanted to form a group and they wanted to protect what they called "the gully" and so that was all right, so I sort of got involved with them. So again you find people don't know much about plants but they said "Oh, there's birds" and so what I did was I helped run a monthly survey. So for about a year and a half on, I don't know, the fourth Sunday of the month or something we'd do a walk through. So I've got all the data from that year and a half and they got a reptile guy to come out and had a list of the reptiles. So the idea that we formed was that if we showed that this actually was a little urban wilderness of value in terms of the wildlife that it supported then they would keep it or restore it.

JK: "They" being -?

JC: The developers.

JK: O.K, yes.

JC: But in those days that was South Sydney Council and Leichhardt [Council]; it was on the boundary. Yes, hundreds of hours, hundreds of hours spent putting in submissions and doing stuff.

JK: And what sort of trees were there?

JC: Just weeds, yes, privet, a few celtis - nothing like now though - palms, privet, lantana, olive. Yes, they were the main ones, I think.

30.04 **JK: And the birds?**

JC: Birds were good. They were a lot of honeyeaters; I can remember seeing nine or ten White Plumed Honeyeaters there once. There were a few Superb Fairy Wrens but I used to have Superb Fairy Wrens here as well in the backyard in the early '90s, I used to have them nesting here. After the bushfires, '94, summer of '94, '95, in Lane Cove, a couple of years after that there were a lot of small birds came around. Spinebills you'd see in the street, I had it in the garden, I had White Plumed Honeyeater trying to nest in a murraya and the bulbul used to nest in a prickly little conifer that I had. Now, they weren't native trees. It's not so much about being a sort of native Nazi and saying "You only have natives", it's about diversity and creating habitat niches – that's what I think, because I've seen it, I mean, birds and reptiles and bees. Like yesterday there's a lovely little Teddy Bear Bee which is a native - he buzzes; he's a solitary native bee – and I've seen in the last couple of days – is that him? No – he's really gorgeous – coming to the basil. So it's like I get a real pleasure out of seeing something unique and really gorgeous that has managed to stay in this urban environment.

32.09 And again it's having lots of little places for it and niches and different plants, different spaces. I'm not even sure where they nest. There's the Blue-banded Bee that I get nests in between bits of sandstone, so I think it's probably in the foundations of the house. So you can see I've just about lost all the small birds here. What I've got are the bees.

JK: And do you have a problem with big birds?

JC: Yes. Well, it was the birds that ate all the bulbuls. The bulbuls in Glebe were gorgeous. That was the first bird I ever identified and I was up the North Coast with that Reader's Digest Book of Birds when I first decided that maybe birds would be interesting – about 1986 – and I can remember turning the pages and there was the bulbul, which is not a native. I thought "Oh, I know that bird. That's the bird

that comes into my garden". And they nested every year for about ten years in this tree, this prickly conifer, and I can remember in winter down near Arundel Street seeing like fifty, sixty bulbuls but every year the currawongs used to come and eat them. I used to hate it. I actually chopped down the tree because I couldn't bear to look at it. And the currawong would just wait and they'd wait until the babies were born and then they would eat the babies and even in winter I'd see a currawong going in and putting his beak in to see if there was anything in the tree and it was horrible so I chopped the tree down. It was a prickly, horrible thing anyhow but the bulbul liked it and actually a Superb Fairy Wren's nested in it one year too.

34.03 But there's now one bulbul left, I think, in Boyce Street, and it seems to be on its own; they've all gone, all gone. And they were a caged bird from China and they adapted very well to the inner west. I think they were around sort of in a circle from about Paddington to Glebe, out to here.

JK: They were a bit of an issue for some people, weren't they?

JC: Well, they weren't native and you get a few on the edge. You do get a few in the edge of bushland but they're mainly in disturbed areas.

JK: So they weren't a bird that chucked other birds out of nests or colonised areas?

JC: No, no, I don't think so. No, they were pretty, they were pretty and they had a pretty call.

JK: So, what happened to them?

JC: They got eaten by the currawong, yes, I'm sure, I'm sure.

JK: So currawongs - - -

JC: Why have we got currawongs?

JK: M'mm.

JC: Because of the obsession with fig trees. I really hate the obsession we have with fig trees in Sydney, starting with that Botanic Gardens. Was it Maiden, who was the - - -

JK: It did start a while back, yes.

JC: It started in the 1850s or something, whoever was the director of the Botanic Gardens - - -

JK: It was Maiden.

JC: - - - who decided fig trees were the go. There are fig trees everywhere. And still "It's a Victorian era, so we'll plant Victorian. O.K, we'll plant more fig trees". And what do we end up with? Bats and currawongs.

JK: And seeing as we're on currawongs, that's an indigenous bird, etcetera - - -

JC: Yes, yes.

JK: - - - what are your thoughts on how we deal with indigenous birds like currawongs that are in fact highly destructive?

36.01 JC: Yes, now it's pretty hard, isn't it? I mean, I don't dislike them. I mean, there was a little one – it looked quite young – in my tree yesterday. So that's all I've got now, so I've got to enjoy them because I haven't got anything left.

JK: I see you've got some native miners out there, the old Noisy Miner, as well.

JC: I don't mind. Yes, there's no choice, that's what we've got; they're part of nature. I'd much rather have had the bulbuls and the Superb Fairy Wrens but, hey, I haven't. I'm just looking at the raven.

JK: Or that was a crow probably.

JC: That's it. We've created the environment for these species to predominate and I don't see anyone chopping down the fig trees, so I don't think it's going to change.

JK: And do now they really are the birds: currawongs, Noisy Miners?

JC: Yes, that's what we've got.

JK: Anything else?

JC: No, not much, not much.

JK: The old crow.

JC: The ravens are very clever, they're very clever. This lovely friend of mine who really was the one who started the passionate gully, Orphan School Creek Gully story, she send me a whole email the other day about her raven and about how clever it was and the interactions with her cat. So, I mean there's pleasure from those birds, not the same pleasure that one had before but I'm not about shooting them or killing them and I actually don't mind even my Indian

Mynas. I mean, I've got a pair; they're here, they don't displace anything. But the Noisy Miners, it is a shame that they throw things out. What I've got, because I'm on the cliff and because you do sometimes get things that just pass through and so my pleasure from nature is really that serendipitous visitor that just happens for two seconds even to rest up in the acacia decurrens at the back of the yard.

38.23 **JK: The acacia what?**

JC: Well, I've got a few acacias but there's an acacia decurrens. That's the big tree up there, planted in 2002 after the Department of Housing chopped down all the other trees that I planted outside the fence. I know that because my neighbour rang me. It was World Environment Day and she said "You may not be happy but someone's come and chopped down all the things that you've planted". "Thank you". That happens a lot; that's happened about three times over the last twenty five years.

JK: Big trees?

JC: No, no, nice dense shrubs that would have provided habitat for lots of things. And I said to these guys – they were netting the cliff for pigeons – I said "Why did you chop down this grevillea?" "Oh, well, just so I could get past it".

JK: And a grevillea, which obviously is a - - -

JC: It was a dense, prickly grevillea that would have held the cliff together and I never was able to get anything to establish again after that but anyhow. So I do sometimes get little things. Like a couple of weeks ago – gee, it might have been only last week – I was sitting here and I heard a bird call and I thought "That's an Eastern Rosella" and I went out and he was just over across the lane; there was an Eastern Rosella for about five minutes. I haven't ever recorded an Eastern Rosella here in twenty seven years, so it was the first Eastern Rosella I'd ever seen in Upper Road, but it's the call.

40.12 Two winters ago there was an immature Golden Whistler that spent about three months in this part of Glebe and again I came out one morning and heard this whistle in the garden. I thought "That's a Golden Whistler. What's it doing?" and rushed out and there was this little brown – so sometimes the young ones, they disperse in winter before breeding – and it's the second time it's happened in about fifteen years; it's not like it's that common. But he was lovely and he used to kind of whistle in the morning, just was around the garden,

and I heard him a few times also in the other trees around. So that was always what we thought about the gully too, in terms of revegetating it, that it was really to provide passing habitat; if there is another catastrophe, if there is another fire it's there. So you do get some of that migratory – I had a male Leaden Flycatcher one afternoon a couple of – spring or autumn, can't remember, might have been autumn – no, it was spring, I think. Again, it's the call I heard; you can hear an unusual call. I think that's what I love most about birding now – and I'm not musical, I've got a shocking ear, I can't sing – but after a while you do pick up calls and you can hear something's different; it gives me a lot of joy. So there is a lot of pleasure in that and I think if I was in an ordinary backyard that wasn't on top of a cliff and falling down I probably wouldn't get those sort of birds coming in.

42.10 **JK: And because you've made sure that even though you've knocked down a few trees you've still got plenty of trees out there.**

JC: I've still got plenty. That's right, I've still got plenty.

JK: And diverse.

JC: That's right, and mostly acacias but there's a lot of grass and there's bits and pieces and structure too - I think something for the birds to sort of rest on because they'll come north/south and they can sort of rest up.

JK: So should we go back, though, to the Orphan School Creek?

JC: Oh, I suppose we should, yes.

JK: With just migratory birds and things.

JC: It's a bit depressing. It was so hard and for so long we worked with the developer. I remember writing the submission, asking for a setback to the master plan at the master planning stage. So we put in a submission, I think asking for a twenty metre setback along what we called "the creek" to sort of be a habitat area, based on the evidence that we'd collected of what was there and I think we got a fifteen metre setback. And we also asked that it be pulled down incrementally, that we maintain the habitat.

JK: Right. What would be pulled down incrementally?

JC: Well, it was all fill. They'd tipped out all the contents of the incinerator over the back fence, so this was basically over the back fence of the

hospital, so it was just contaminated fill, so it had to be removed and so all the vegetation had to be removed and it took about fifteen years.

44.17 **JK: So they did take it out bit by bit?**

JC: No, they just bulldozed the whole bloody thing.

JK: So hence lost all of that habitat in one go.

JC: We lost ……. …….. then and then there was other land that belonged to Westmead Children's Hospital and there was land next to it that belonged to Leichhardt Council. One was a park, one was, I don't know, something, and they argued for about five or six years about how much to pay. It was a land swap and in order to get this land swap so that we could continue to create sort of a habitat corridor I think Westmead Children's Hospital wanted money, wanted the land valued as if it was going to be developed. Leichhardt said "Well, no, it's going to be parkland. Therefore we only want to pay so much". So they argued and argued and argued and nothing happened and the weeds kept growing and we all felt pretty disillusioned and then the boundaries changed and we became part of the City of Sydney and we got all terribly excited. We thought "Oh, it's now going to be all sold. This'll be good", and certainly the City of Sydney – it still took a while; I think Westmead Children's Hospital was a pretty tough negotiator but they eventually got the land swap. So we thought "Oh, right. Now our plan for the sort of vegetated corridor and trying to create the gully again" and we had a landscape architect who had lived locally who was working for the developer – it was very complex.

46.07 I must say I kind of lost the plot after a while. I couldn't remember who was supposed to be doing what, and you had different contractors looking after different bits of it and it was drought time as well, so a lot of stuff died - we were trying to get local provenance planting – and then there was this god-awful outcome. And I don't know. The City when it first took over this area wasn't very communicative about issues and, look, I don't know, it wasn't possibly an agenda, it was just the way things were, so people got letterboxed and it sort of said they're going to be developing this habitat area. And the plan was appalling. It had this zigzag path destroying it all and we had really very nasty, unpleasant kind of scenes with the City; we all felt that our vision had been kind of totally compromised. It's been a couple of years now and a last month I got a couple of people who live nearby who were passionately involved and we did go back

and do a little weeding and I think it's almost possible now to get a few people to go back and we may try and get a group back together again to look after it but it was such a painful experience that people – we had to walk away from it.

48.10 And it's a hard thing for, I guess, a new council like the City of Sydney to sort of come in and without understanding the time and the passion that had gone into creating this habitat concept and for whatever reasons plans had gone ahead without consultation. There were individuals who were perhaps hard to talk to and other issues came up about possums. But, look, I think ultimately we'll end up with something but we don't have anything living there any more; there's no small birds or anything there.

JK: No lizards?

JC: There might be the odd lizard but there's no other patches anywhere, it's all so isolated and there's this great big bloody bike path going in down there; they're taking out all the vegetation that was there.

JK: So just below you that Orphan School Creek goes for a long way, does it?

JC: No, that's Johnstons Creek.

JK: That's ……. ……..

JC: Our creek's just over to the left.

JK: I see.

JC: And, I mean, it was great the way people found out that it had a name, that it was called Orphan School Creek, and there's quite a lot of history in this area. You know, it was a farm, it was a forest lodge, I think in the 1790s it was an estate of some of the early officers that came on the First Fleet or soon after.

50.17 So it's a very old area. It's hard to see the landscape – what I was talking to you before we started taping – it's hard to see the landscape now and it frustrates me that we don't try and put some of it back when we can. For example Harold Park, that actually has a creek going through the middle of Harold Park, so I wrote a submission at the early planning stage and it had been mentioned in one of the reports that it was a possibility that you could actually put that creek back. They never do it, they just concrete it over. They could have, they could put the creek back.

JK: In an urban area – you talk about a bike path down there - - -

JC: It's huge. It's a great, big wide thing.

JK: Yes, so is that the problem rather than the idea of being able to have a shared space?

JC: Yes, you've got to have that. It's what they did with the gully as well: they took so long, they got incompetent contractors, they planted the wrong trees. I had to email about five times to get the City to come and take out the acacia salignas which were planted by mistake. They're a weed, they're a West Australian plant – you might know them from South Australia. They've taken off in Sydney; they take over, they're a nightmare.

52.00 There were how many? Eight or nine were planted over here. They were supposed to be a habitat area with a small playground. It became a big playground with no habitat and acacia salignas. I mean, God. And then all these other horrible trees, these hybrid things.

JK: Yes. So I would also like to go back to some of that that we were talking about, the landform and the landscape because I came not actually knowing this part of Glebe or Forest Lodge. I really didn't realise that there was such a slope down to that. That's Johnstons down there?

JC: That's correct.

JK: Johnstons Creek.

JC: Yes.

JK: So talk to me a little bit about that.

JC: Yes, yes. So you've got the creek lines. So Orphan School Creek was a waterway and the Glebe Society has a lot of this history and it's great and it was the Glebe Society who said when as a group in the mid '90s we're trying to sort of work out what this bit of wild area over the back fence of the Children's Hospital was. They found, they said "It was a creek, it was called Orphan School Creek, it was piped underground in 1915 or something" because of typhoid or something, so it was a waterway. And then it goes into Johnstons Creek which sort of rises over about Parramatta Road, comes down and goes into Rozelle Bay and it is quite a steep drop. When I was growing up in Gilgandra, my grandmother would come in to town on Fridays and whenever it was raining she'd say "Oh", she'd say to my aunt "we'd better go. The creek'll be up, creek'll be up" and that was always a sort of "You'd better go, grandma. You won't get home, the creek'll

be up". I've always enjoyed kind of the creek down there; I always sort of think when it rains and it's high tide "Oh, the creek'll be up".

54.17 **JK: And does it come up?**

JC: No. It flooded the first couple of years I was here in the late 1980s, 1980s it flooded down into those but it hasn't flooded since.

JK: There's a lot of houses down there now.

JC: Oh, yes. The whole of Sydney's built on floodplains everywhere; it's appalling.

JK: And so I think you were saying that especially in your own job and really looking at that whole Sydney landscape, it's a complex landscape, isn't it?

JC: Oh, yes, yes. So here you've got these creeks, short little creeks running into – they're little estuarine creeks running into the bay. There's Rozelle Bay, then you've got Johnstons [Creek] and then you've got Whites Creek and so it's very steep and quite rugged. But your ridgelines are sort of shale, so Glebe Point Road runs along a ridgeline. I've spoken to people and it certainly had a big impact on me but there was a book that came out in 1990 – you said you've interviewed Doug Benson.

JK: Yes.

JC: This was a seminal publication, I think, for a lot of people in Sydney.

JK: This is the 'Taken for Granted: the bushland of Sydney and its suburbs'?

JC: 'Taken for Granted', yes. It was a seminal publication and I think at that time, certainly around here, that was when people were starting to go "Well, what was here before and how can we get it" – well, I don't know if there was even a sense of wanting to get it back but a sense of kind of recognition of what the landscape might have been.

56.14 And there were people who lived in this area who started community nurseries, who often they weren't necessarily terribly scientific about what they did but they had a passion and you can see it and then so the community drove the councils – this is sort of Leichhardt Council - and I guess a lot of the people here enjoyed – the community liked taking that initiative and did a lot of planting. But Doug's book, Doug and Jocelyn's book, it's so typical of Sydney that it looks at the suburbs and the LGAs and so people go "Oh, my suburb. Oh, right, O.K. It was shale, sandstone or transition forest" or whatever. And it

actually was quite inspirational and picked out remnant trees and things like that and this sense that you could put back and that was what bush regeneration and that sort of ecological restoration concepts were quite strong, had been strong for a long time in Sydney from the 1960s, different from say Europe and America too, in that we still had something that was remnant here. Now, here you haven't got any remnant. I was always amused at that very first meeting I went to with the gully and this bright young man said "Those trees, they might be remnant" and I thought "My God, you're an idiot".

58.07 I mean, they're ten year old hybrid, I don't know what they were, but I thought "Oh, God". So people wanted this. There was a sort of hope that maybe but it isn't. This is been settled for two hundred years. You're not going to find – you haven't got remnant soils, you haven't got remnant vegetation but we've got remnant rocks, although of course they've excavated. Most of these cliff lines aren't natural cliff lines, they've all been quarried out. What have we built Sydney with? The buildings in there, we built it with this sandstone.

JK: So this cliff that you're on - - -

JC: Yes, would have been a quarry, yes, it would have been quarried but, I mean, it still would have, the drop to the creek line, it still would have been quite hilly but it might have been more of a hill rather than less of a cliff line. And cliffs are really good for habitat and for little things. One year, mid '90s, I think that was sort of after the fires. We had pardalotes. I think there was so much burnt landscape that they were spreading out into the suburbs and had Spotted Pardalotes and I can remember seeing one sort of investigating over the back of my fence, looking at where it was sort of chopped down. It probably got eaten by a rat, a cat.

60.03 **JK: What other wildlife do you see around the place? Obviously bees.**

JC: Bees are nice, native bees are nice. I've got lots of skinks. Spiders can be very enjoyable to watch and they're everywhere. Here comes the raven. Hello raven. What are you doing here today? I've got a book where I've sort of wrote down all the birds I've seen since 1987, which was when I started birdwatching, so I've got a continuous list of what I've seen here since 1987. And so your small birds have gradually sort of gone, the honeyeaters are gone now. There seems to be a single New Holland Honeyeater over in Boyce Street as well which is kind of weird, along with the bulbul. I don't think they're

breeding. What do they call that one? Yes, they'll all drop off their perch soon enough because they're not breeding – they extinction debt, that's right, extinction, Harry Recher's extinction debt. Dragonflies are nice, the bees are nice, the little skinks are fun and then you've got the birds popping in and out. And, see the wattlebirds are still around. I mean, they're big birds but they were breeding quite successfully. Last year I had two young ones in the garden in early summer and this year I'm sure they bred again because for a while there the wattlebird was just going back and forth and back and forth.

62.07 Because I've got a lot of sort of lush greenery, you get a lot of those little sap sucking insects, some little kind of triangular shaped, pale green sap sucking insects. They seem to really like that cupaniopsis I've got there and the wattlebirds, particularly when they're feeding young, they'll go for those insects, so you get a lot of them coming through. So, you need the trees to have the insects, to have the birds. And the wattlebirds are quite nice.

JK: Yes. I like wattlebirds.

JC: Right, yes, they're quite nice.

JK: So what were some of your favourites? Well, I'm not sure that's a very useful question seeing as they're not there any more.

JC: Well, obviously we all love the Superb Fairy Wrens and I guess the thing is you sort of took it for granted because they were around; they were popping in and out to your birdbaths. Yet by the time, really, when the Children's Hospital went that was really - all of those little hidey-holes, all of those little niches and I think even if we'd have got the gully, even if we'd have got what we wanted and it had all happened quickly, I still don't think it would have been enough because what we lost were all those wild areas and those sort of little corners of wildness and a sort of rampant plumbago here and a bit of briar rose over there and a climbing this and a bit of wild wisteria - - -

JK: All those things where the little birds could hide and live.

JC: Yes. So they've gone and so if you go over there now in the housing, it's concrete, it's rows of buxus hedges.

64.06 **JK: What sort of hedges?**

JC: Buxus. You know, that Chinese box hedge. It's boring as all get-out and it has no habitat value at all although I'm sure something must live in it but I don't know what; I've never seen anything in it. So

there's nothing, none of that creative kind of spaces. And you could do it; it's not that hard to do. And that's why I'm frustrated with Harold Park. I mean, they have said they're going to have – what have I said? – bird habitat, a bit, but I don't know where they'll put it but we did get something. I've sort of burnt out, really, because the Children's Hospital, sort of a fifteen year battle does burn you out.

JK: Absolutely. But I was taking to Katie Oxenham - - -

JC: Yes, so Katie's great. She's got energy and she's also a scientist, she knows what she's doing and she's come out of an organisation that was very bureaucratic as well, so I think she seems to have the capacity to deal with a bureaucracy that obviously has to be a complex bureaucracy that is the City of Sydney. So we're all delighted that Katie has got that job; took us a long time to get it, yes.

JK: When you say "we" -?

JC: Well, we lobbied very hard to get somebody employed, an urban ecologist, to get a biodiversity officer. There was one councillor – and I can't remember who she was now – she didn't stay long in the council but I can remember an email from her saying "If it's the last thing I do I'll get a biodiversity officer for the City of Sydney".

66.15 Because I could remember sending Marrickville – I had the brief. Through my work I sort of am aware of what different councils do, what sort of staff they have, how they support them. So somewhere like North Sydney is just brilliant. They have habitat officers; they have a big bush care programme. Now they've got the Coal Loader Sustainability Centre it's just fantastic. So they're a model but they've got a lot of money.

JK: But it is different, isn't it? Don't they have more - - -

JC: They've got a bit of bush.

JK: Yes.

JC: Yes, they do have a bit of bush, yes.

JK: That they have to look after in a different way than - - -

JC: That's true, that's true, Jo, yes. Marrickville's probably closer but then they have the Cooks River but Marrickville is probably a better comparison but it's obviously not a big city council, whereas at least North Sydney has that city to look after as well, the CBD type thing. So I guess it will happen gradually. There's plenty of knowledge in Sydney as a whole of what we can do but until we can ask

developers to create some of these spaces it's only going to be tiny. And look, what is it? A couple of square metres is my backyard, I mean it's nothing.

JK: Although I think it was Doug who was saying that he really thinks it's important that even small backyards can have - - -

68.00 JC: Yes, that's nice of you to say, Doug. I've heard him say that about Cumberland Plain and I think it is important in Cumberland Plain but, yes, it'll keep a skink or two, it'll keep somewhere for the spiders but nothing's going to breed, although the wattlebirds breed here but they breed everywhere - I think that might be a gum tree over there - but if we don't put gum trees back somewhere we've got problems. I've got acacias but they're getting a bit - - -

JK: They only have a certain lifespan, don't they?

JC: Yes. I'm worried about what's going to happen with that. Because I don't have any real sun any more, because the north's to that side and everyone's trees are that, so I really don't have any sun any more, I can't really put native shrubs in any more; I've got a bit of a rainforest coming down the right hand side. So there's only so much you can do.

JK: I'm just wondering who's in the tree next door.

JC: Yes, that's just my neighbour.

JK: A person.

JC: No, he's got a chair hanging from it.

JK: And you said something about the possums, that possums were seen to be an issue.

JC: There was a friend of mine was feeding the possums and so they were breeding up and she had a great big camphor laurel in her backyard and they were sort of living in the house and, yes, they did overbreed.

JK: They can do that.

JC: Yes, yes, and we all saw possums for a while after she left. We called it "Roberta's diaspora". They started spreading out in the garden and one of Roberta's possums because she left the area and was no longer feeding them.

70.21 **JK: Talking about being able to develop habitat, what are your thoughts on Barangaroo then?**

JC: Well, I haven't looked into it in great detail but to put back a headland, I think, and to restore a landscape I think is such a wonderful concept. Just nobody seemed to want to talk about it. I really feel very frustrated that there's that sense that just "It's the city and keep nature somewhere else". I think we can put nature back into the city but it needs some sort of commitment and it also needs – we have so much trouble with the landscape architects who just don't seem to have a sense of kind of having some spaces that aren't just for people to be in, spaces for other things, you know, because we're all part of the environment. People are part of it, so are the spiders, so are the ants, so are the birds and let's make some spaces for them somehow. So, I mean, if they can do something at Barangaroo – and I think again something about getting the topography and understanding it might be the city but there are creeks, there are hills, there are kind of ridges and there are headlands.

72.03 And Sydney's particularly special like that and it would be a shame to lose that. And there are some nice leafy places still in Sydney, yes.

JK: We've been talking around my next question, I think, but nature in the city, how do you conceptualise nature?

JC: Well, it's obviously different. It'll be like what Tim Low talks about in his 'Feral Future' and it probably is a feral future. Just I've been looking at the Spotted Turtle Dove out there the whole time I've been talking and certainly nature will not necessarily be the original nature, it will be a construct of some sort. But my concept of kind of a shared space, really, I think that's a good way to conceptualise where we're going, is that rather than having nature out there and people here, that we do have to kind of conceptualise a shared space so people see themselves as part of an ecosystem that has birds in it and plants in it and insects in it.

74.07 It makes it richer, it makes life richer and more complex and I guess that's what I think. And it's possible.

JK: And it's possible, right.

JC: Yes, it's possible. It doesn't happen as much as you might like to think it could. I was going to tell you about the most dramatic bird story from the backyard - it was only a couple of years ago. The ivy had got completely out of control down along the fence, so it was pretty densely vegetated. And there definitely was a rat - I could hear

it at night sort of running up and down the fence in the ivy – and one Saturday morning I was sitting out there and this bird seemed to sort of dive down onto the fence and I thought "Oh, that's a bit strange. I wonder what that is?" – a big bird. It happened a couple of times and I thought "Oh, I wonder what that is?" and I sort of got a glimpse of it and I thought "Oh, it's a bit late for a koel", because it seemed to be stripey. I didn't really think about it and then I went out. When I came back a couple of hours later – that's right, and the bird had come down and had knocked over a rake on the table and sort of seemed to have dived down into the middle of the table, flew off, but I had to go. I came back and it was like this scene of destruction.

76.04 There was sort of blood and there was sort of the rat's tail hanging down between the rungs of the chair and then I found the stomach of the rat and I found this sort of patch in front of the mirror on the left where obviously a large bird had sat and eaten the rat and there was this scattering and the skull and I sort of thought then "What was it that I saw and I walked away from?" and it was a goshawk and a Brown Goshawk, which I then looked up. In early autumn young Brown Goshawks are known to come into urban areas and they skulk, they just hang out in trees. You don't see them sort of flying around; they hang out in trees, they skulk, they see something. So this Brown Goshawk had actually taken a rat in the middle of that tiny little garden and it was quite a shock. Because I'd gone off with a friend and she'd gone home and I'd gone home and then I sort of saw this massacre. And I rang her. I said "You'd better come and have a look at this" and it was quite extraordinary. And I actually saw the bird again about a week later; I was sitting down the bottom and it skimmed through the trees. I've never had a Brown Goshawk before or after come into the garden. So, it does happen and I guess I'd be saying to people "Observe. Keep your eyes open. There's experiences out there that are really quite special and the fact that you have a rat running up and down your backyard is not nice but, hey, it can bring you a Brown Goshawk". Yes, it was amazing, it was quite extraordinary.

78.10 **JK: That's a lovely story.**

JC: It's bizarre, yes. But I'll tell you about the blue wrens, shall I? Completely different.

JK: Yes. Well, just before we do, because we'll remember about the blue wrens, I'm sure. We were just looking at the photo from 1983 of your backyard and looking out over the - - -

JC: Yes, very different, isn't it?

JK: Yes, because we can see out into the buildings but one of the things beyond, you said also that one of the differences in that view now is it is much greener and I can see that when you look out.

JC: Yes.

JK: Well, what is it? Are they not the right sorts of trees that have populated that landscape of roofs that we can see in that 1983 photo, compared to today?

JC: They're a mix. There are some good trees out there. The units that are sort of down on the creek sort of below me were built, just been finished when I bought here, so they were built about 1983 as well, and they planted quite a good range of native shrubs. If you look at the styles, fashions of planting in Sydney it's quite fascinating. In the 1950s, '60s, it was all eucalyptus microcorys, so tallows became – and you can see a lot of tallows now planted around Sydney, which don't seem to have great habitat value but there's a few tallows down there. But one of the other ones is a eucalyptus – it's a yellow bloodwood, kind of creeper. No, it's not a creeper. I've forgotten – anyhow, it's a yellow bloodwood and they're lovely and that gets a lot of habitat.

80.04 So, yes, there are some good ones there and some bad ones. There's a lot of plane trees which you can see starting to change colour down through there. There was massive fashion for planting – they're everywhere – but it's a North Coast rainforest tree. When I saw it on the North Coast I thought "What a gorgeous tree". What a terrible thing to do to these trees, to make them become street trees in Sydney. But, yes, look, the trees are O.K. but it's what's underneath them that's the problem and I guess because we plant so many trees we have got sun problems and they're such tiny backyards. It really needs a different concept in terms of how we manage kind of landscaping, I think. I mean, people talk about the parkland, the savannah landscape and, you know, "This is what people are comfortable with and it goes back to our caveman days" and there's all sorts of theories about what sort of landscape people are comfortable with but again I'd come back to diversity, I think, as kind of a core principle for our landscaping and lots of little niches. I mean, everyone talks about corridors but I don't know whether corridors are going to work particularly. I think it's more those sort of patchy, really good patchy stuff and it is unfortunate what's happened

in Glebe with the celtis. I can see a real – I've lived here off and on since 1974, for goodness sake, so I didn't know one tree from another, though, in 1974, nor did I when I lived here in 1977, I have to say, or even in 1979 but I do now and I can see a real difference, just the fact that this particular tree has just taken over every kind of little wasteland corner.

82.25 And the City has decided that canopy is what they're going to be used to measure. I wrote a submission with a colleague, with a friend, to the Master Street Tree Plan, just asking for diversity, asking for some eucalypts and saying "If you're going to measure canopy, why not try and have some other measures as well, some understory measures?" To just measure canopy is, I think, useless as an indicator of anything except shade. And if that's all they want to measure, they're not measuring biodiversity, they're measuring shade, which in actual fact we've got a lot too much shade in some of our places, so it's frustrating.

JK: It's complex, very complex.

JC: Yes, it is complex, it is complex, yes. So it's greened. I think the greening is certainly nice. It's probably brought more Noisy Miners and currawongs but, hey, in the 1980s there was a lot of eucalypts planted too and they were great big ones. A lot of them are being taken out now and you get this kind of neighbours all standing, fighting the removal of a tree but the poor person who's got the tree in the front yard whose house is being tipped over by the roots of the tree's going "Look, I've got to get rid of this tree". Yes, people love trees as long as they're not sort of, you know - - -

84.11 **JK: Uprooting their house.**

JC: - - - uprooting their house. And it is tricky, it's really tricky, which is why the public spaces need to be really carefully planned. And we were very upset with what the City did, with what we thought was going to be a habitat garden with a small playground and they handed it over to the children's playground landscape architects who took over the whole space and then said "Oh, it's all right. We'll put a few shrubs over there. It'll be all right". I mean, I guess, yes, it's a densely populated area, they have to kind of make compromises and they'll always have to make compromises. But I guess communication, improved communication can never go astray.

JK: So, can you tell me then about the blue wrens?

JC: Yes. So I sort of developed a reputation as somebody who knew something about birds over the years and one day this woman who I'd met through work, who lives down the other part of Glebe, came running up and said "We've got these blue wrens at the back of our yard. Could you come down and have a look?" And so down I went and there in a yard much smaller than mine were some wrens being fed; they were breeding. And I had given up on wrens breeding. I knew this particular area because I'd seen wrens feeding a cuckoo down there '91 or something like that, so I knew – it's a park just this side of Glebe Point Road – so I'd known it as a place where there had been a family of Superb Fairy Wrens for a long time.

86.10 And I had sort of said to people I didn't think there were any more Superb Fairy Wrens breeding in Glebe, because there used to be some down in another part of Glebe. If you walk around you can hear them, you know. So they'd pretty much gone so it was very exciting when we saw these – it was about 2005 or something – and that was the first year the City then announced environmental grants. So the same lady who'd taken me down there said – must have been 2006 - - -

JK: 2006.

JC: - - - yes, it was 2006. "We can do something for our wrens". And I'd just had my first hip replacement – I've had three. So, yes, nobody should have to have three hip replacements, no. Any rate, so I'd had to have a couple of months off, so mentally I was kind of more open to doing something. So I pretty much wrote the grant, got a few people 'round the table and we wrote the grant and then the Glebe Society said they wanted to actually run the project, which was fine – I've never joined the Glebe Society. I can't remember now why not but it seems like because they ……. ……. …… So that was fine and so this other lady eventually found some people who were members to run it but I've always been involved as a technical adviser. And it was a bit of a struggle but I got a friend to be engaged as a contractor and she wrote the report and then the group sort of consolidated as the Blue Wren Group.

88.14 And it's now pretty much the Blue Wren Group, it has its own rationale to look after biodiversity and small bird habitat but not just small bird habitat, also sort of biodiversity in the area and it runs planting days and I think it's a wonderful thing.

JK: And how do they feel they're going, I suppose? Are you still part of it?

JC: Yes, yes. Well, it's sitting within the auspices of the Glebe Society, so it's a subcommittee of the Glebe Society. Oh, look, it's one step forward and three steps back and another step forward. So we had a planting day at this Paddy Gray Reserve for National Tree Day, which was part of the project that I'd originally written and then a year and a half later contractors came in and removed all the plants. They were sort of Irish backpackers. That's possibly the problem with Glebe that Joel alluded to. So, yes, so these contractors just removed most of the native plants that we'd planted. It's happened a couple of times because they don't have the skills and knowledge to know what's what. So it's a problem of outsourcing contractors. I don't know why. They've now got a new officer who I think has a background in bush care and hopefully Rae'll kind of move us towards what we want out of the City of Sydney.

90.09 But certainly a meeting we had with Joel last year as part of the Blue Wren Group and the Glebe Society, he said he couldn't see getting a bush care officer – and a bush care officer meaning a person who's going to work with the community to facilitate activities on an ongoing basis on sort of managing restoration works in some of the parks, sort of habitat restoration activities. So really the contractors they've used and even the bush regeneration contractors they've used are the cheapest and actually they've got a pretty bad reputation at the moment around the industry traps.

JK: I guess if people are pulling things out that can't go well in communities' perspective either.

JC: No, no. So it is gradually kind of – there've been internal ructions as well as relationship breakdowns with the City but there's a planting day this week, I think, actually, on Wednesday at Paddy Gray's. So, yes, it's nice to see. I think it's good and it's interesting that the group coalesced around this concept of the wrens. Now, the wrens are pretty much gone but the group's still there and I think they have seen the odd wren. I think probably the Sydney University family of wrens is probably the core and I think sometimes they cross over Parramatta Road, which is an extraordinary concept but we think that that's probably what happens because they pop up every now and again in Glebe but we can't sort of see them sort of anywhere here.

92.06 **JK: We were talking earlier, off the tape, about how Sydney has community patches, you stick within your own patch, etcetera, and even within the LGA that's the case.**

JC: Yes.

JK: But I was wondering if you have any familiarity with any of the other parks or when you're doing birdwatching have you been to other places?

JC: Yes. Certainly started out in Centennial Park, Lane Cove National Park. Within the City of Sydney you're thinking of, yes, because obviously this is what you're writing about. I haven't really spent as much time as I could have in Sydney Park. I think it's got great potential but, I mean, any park you build on a garbage dump has its challenges landscapingwise. But, yes, it's good, I have stopped; if I'm driving past I sometimes stop in. I always have a pair of binoculars in the car and I've seen sort of a couple of interesting birds there, yes.

JK: Like what?

JC: The little manakins, one of the manakins, I can't remember. Grieves, some of the water birds are interesting. Elsewhere it's always been nice to see White-faced Herons; they're around the waterways, the foreshore. And there was an egret on ANZAC Day down in Johnstons Creek and I emailed Katie and I said the last one I recorded in Rozelle Bay was 1991 but she said she'd seen one in 2010, so there we go. Look, down here in the park started about - - -

JK: What's the park?

JC: Well, it's Federal Park. Part of it's Leichhardt but then it goes into the City of Sydney, so Johnstons Creek is not quite the dividing line though because it moves out. And in Wentworth Park there's always been Willy Wagtails there and over summer I was walking back from the fish markets and there was a little Peewee and it must have been a juvenile Peewee because its colour was different; I came back and checked and their eyes are a different colour. But that was nice and the Peewees are breeding down there and Peewees and Willy Wagtails are quite happy with that open sort of grassland. And you often see the Welcome Swallows and things like that; there are little birds around. And elsewhere in the city, well obviously the Botanic Gardens, not as much as there used to be; I guess again more people, less wildlife.

JK: And they've had that Powerful Owl there.

JC: Yes, yes. I still have never seen it down there but I know Richard's seen it a few times; obviously anyone who's around there would. I don't think Centennial Park's part of the City of Sydney.

JK: A little bit. Not very much but a bit.

JC: Yes. So that's a great resource for an urban park. But it's more the incidental sightings, I think, that are nice and again it'd be nice to think people could be more observant and kind of recognise that nature's with us, not out there somewhere.

96.20 **JK: Yes, absolutely.**

JC: I think that's kind of the message that those of us who sort of care about wildlife would like spread, that sense, but how you do it is obviously very challenging and you're never going to be able to bring back what we had but I think there's still a lot of potential in all these new developments to try and do something. But you have your birdcage displays. I think that's a bit sad, really. Angel Place where the City of Sydney's got - - -

JK: I haven't seen it yet.

JC: I mean, it's nice as an art piece but it's kind of sad. To me it's sad. And I guess the challenge is when you've been in a place a long time is to reconcile with the change. Yes, I'm not sure whether I'm reconciled or not.

JK: Yes, I can see that. Well, anything else?

JC: I think that probably covers most of the things that I have to say that may be of interest.

JK: It's all been quite fascinating.

JC: Yes, I think I've probably covered everything, really, Jo.

JK: Thank you. That's great.

Interview ends