



# MELTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP

No. AOO4OO49F

A.B.N 47 411575097

PO BOX 481 MELTON 3337

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2014

Volume 101

### CORPORATE MEMBERS

#### Western Land Services



*"Western Land Services are specialists in environmental management techniques, weed & vermin control."*

Champion Agribusiness at the Victorian Small Business Champion Awards for 2007 & 2008 & 2007 Melton Business Excellence award, 2009 Powercor Melton Business Excellence Awards & 2009 Apprentice of the Year award.

### MEG ONLINE

**Website:** <http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au/>;

**Facebook:** check for coming MEG events;  
: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/Melton-Australia/Melton-Environment-Group/139259387879>;

**Nature out West** is a blog created by MEG to highlight the beauty & diversity of Melton's flora & fauna, as well as its more spectacular landscape.  
<http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/>;

### NEXT MEG MEETING

MEG's next meeting will be Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> July

MEG meetings are on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, at 7:30, at Don Nardella's office in Alexandra St (beside Ambulance Station).

### WILDLIFE RESCUE

Ring: 13 000 94535

### SEPTEMBER

Spring began in typical fashion. It was windy & raining! The magnificent sunny weather that ended August (& Winter) ended with the start of Spring. The first day of Spring (Wattle Day September 1<sup>st</sup>) was grey & drizzly. The rain however was very welcome as the soil was still quite dry in places exposed to the wind.

### MEG EVENTS IN SEPTEMBER

#### Planting at Brookfield on Wattle Day



MEG & Brookfield residents planting at Brookfield,

On Monday 1<sup>st</sup> September Brookfield residents & MEG planted in the new residents' planting site between the lane & the freeway. These three islands, initially planted last year, were recently sprayed by Western Land Services to ensure that weeds do not compete with our new plants. We planted about 35 plants, including wattles, before rain halted work.

*These included:*

Gold-dust Wattle  
Melicytus

Varnish Wattle  
Bursaria

Hop Bush  
Blue Box

Winner of Melton Shire's 2009 Community Achievement Award: Arnolds Creek Biolink

Winner of KABV / Sustainable Cities Award 2013: Protection of the Environment: Arnolds Creek Biolink

*Category Winner*

Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria  
Sustainable Cities Awards 2013



[sustainability.vic.gov.au/KABV](http://sustainability.vic.gov.au/KABV)

## Planting at Brookfield with CVA



On Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September, a team of eight volunteers from Conservation Volunteers Australia & their leader Adam planted at Brookfield beside Arnolds Creek. MEG supplied hot & cold drinks as well as morning tea. Many thanks to Melton Council who funded this CVA work day.

We planted *Lomandra longifolia*, *Carex tereticaulis* & *Poa labilliere* beside the creek to enhance the creekside wildlife habitat; where we began planting on Planet Ark Treeplanting Day. We also planted *Bursaria*, *Dodonea* & *Melicytus*, as well as a few *Lightwood Wattle*. Afterward, we planted the same plant mix (apart from *Carex*, *Lomandra* & *Poas*) in the central 'island', & among the *Bulokes* planted earlier this year & the *Yellow Box*. We also planted *Chocolate Lilies* & *Blue Grasslilies* here.

After lunch we planted in the Village residents' site on the opposite side of the lane. Brookfield resident John had returned here plant in the morning, with some other residents.



Volunteers planting in the rain at Arnolds Creek

About 550 plants were planted. These included:

Gold-dust Wattle	Lightwood Wattle
Varnish Wattle	<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>
<i>Melicytus</i>	<i>Bursaria</i>
<i>Indigofera</i>	<i>Poa labilliere</i>
Spiny Lomandra	<i>Carex teretifolia</i>
<i>Dodonea</i>	



Wood Ducks on nest box at Brookfield

The day was cold & rainy but the volunteers were keen. Again, Brookfield was literally alive with birds, especially during the short bursts of sunlight. Almost above our heads were a pair of Wood Ducks, perched on one of our painted nest boxes. These were constructed for us by Melton Mens Shed & painted by students from Coburns Primary School. The ducks remained at the nest box for some time before finally leaving. They remained close by as we planted, clucking their displeasure in the trees above.

## Vandalism at Brookfield!



Our seven year vandal free honeymoon at Brookfield appears to be over. Tree guards & stakes have been snapped. A group of 3 pre-teen boys were recently observed hiding in the bushes



beside the creek. Coincidentally, the damage was found shortly after. The guards & tree guards were immediately removed to prevent further damage. Accordingly, we will discontinue further use of stakes & guards.

Some years ago when we were planting beside Little Blind Creek our work was subjected to vandalism on an almost industrial scale. We immediately discontinued using guards & stakes. We have only been using stakes & tree guards at Brookfield to define the limits of our plantings, to prevent their being mown. We may need to find an alternate means of excluding grass cutting operations from our plants.

### Bunnings Spring Launch



On Saturday 13th September Geraldine, Jenny & Daryl of MEG participated in Bunnings Spring Launch again this year. This event gives local community groups to socialise with each other & also represent themselves to the general community.

### Planting with Melton Christian College



On Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> September Flo, Geraldine & Daryl of MEG & Lois & John of Brookfield Residents Landcare Group planted with students from Melton Christian College. We worked with Linda Badburn (Melton City Environmental Education Officer), teachers Natasha & Namrathi, & were assisted by Jaim of Western Land Services (funded by Melton Council) & Melbourne Water's Gerard Morel.



Again, we planted in the rain but the students were young & energetic. We planted 78 plants in 2 of the 3 'islands' that we created back in 2007, replacing understory plants that have died over the past few years. The Kangaroo Apples sown by Carmen that grew so quickly & luxuriantly have long died off, being a short-lived pioneering species; creating more open spaces to be filled now. The trees planted in 2007 are now several metres tall & home to many birds. Red Wattlebirds & Red-rumped Parrots were feeding noisily among the trees; possibly feeding on Lerps.

We filled the gaps with a selection of understory plants:

Stipa scabra (Speargrass)	Hop Bush
Varnish Wattle	Gold-dust Wattle
Bursaria	Melictytis
Dianella	

The day was a success & the students seemed unfazed by the rain. Jaim of WLS stayed behind & watered all the plants again to empty the water tank. The plants will be watered over the coming warmer months.

A very successful day. Plenty of plants & hopefully the students will have positive feelings about their efforts also, in later years. Being able to see the success of work done by their schoolmates only a

few years ago should also demonstrate that whatever efforts they do can make a difference.

### Bird Walk in Melton Gilgai Woodland



On Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September MEG hosted a walk by six people, Flo, Geraldine, Daryl, Ingrid, Brian & Barb, in Melton Gilgai Woodland in Harkness Road. Despite the cold bleak morning we saw 15 of the 83 bird species we have observed here to date. We also saw about 100 kangaroos that have their home here, as well as a fox & two hares.

We were fortunate to see a White-winged Chough on its mud nest. At one point when the mother bird hopped off the nest Geraldine made out the heads of two chicks. Choughs are a vulnerable woodland species threatened by habitat destruction. They are found in nearby Long forest Mallee & the nearby dry hill forests near Toolern Vale. They are however absent from other Melton woodlands such as Pinkerton & Eynesbury Forests.

#### *Birds seen were:*

Brown Goshawk	Long-billed corella
Eastern Rosella	Red-rumped Parrot
Willy Wagtail	Jacky Winter
White-plumed Honeyeater	Red Wattlebird
Noisy Miner	Striated Pardalote
Magpie-lark	Dusky Woodswallow
Magpie	Little Raven

Wildflowers consisted mainly of pea species: orange *Eutaxia microphylla*, *Eutaxia diffusa* (both small & upright) bright yellow & brown *Templetonia* & a few purple *Indigofera*. Inland Pigface (*Carpobrotus rossi*) hugged the ground with their purple flowers & a few *Wahlenbergias* were beginning to appear.

### WATTLE DAY: SEPTEMBER 1<sup>st</sup>

Wattle Day commemorates Australia's most well-known flowers, the wattles & is acknowledged as a day of national significance by environmentalists. The Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) was declared Australia's official floral emblem in 1998, hence our national colours of green & gold. Wattle Day is a fitting day for Australia's environmentalists to celebrate! MEG commemorated Wattle Day by planting at Brookfield.

### COMING MEG EVENTS

#### Bird Walk at Melton Botanic Garden

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October** Part of Bird Week activities

#### Eynesbury Forest Bird Walk

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October** Part of Bird Week activities

#### Long Forest Mallee Bird Walk

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November 9.00 – 11.00**

On Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November Melton Environment Group will host a bird walk in Long Forest Mallee LFM. *Long Forest Road* Melway 335 Ref E3

#### Blackwood: BBQ & picnic

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December**

MEG will have our end of year BBQ & picnic at Blackwood this year on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December. Sausages & bread supplied by MEG. Meet at Blackwood Hotel corner at 10.00. BYO salads & dessert. Please advise of special dietary requirements. We will have our customary walk.

### BIRD WEEK

#### Bird Week in Melton

**20<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> October**

MEG will be conducting bird awareness activities during Bird Week, funded by City of Melton's Environment Day grant & Melton Council. Every October, BirdLife Australia organises & promotes Bird Week with the goal of inspiring Australians to take action & get involved in bird conservation efforts. As people become more aware of our local birdlife & wildlife this will also hopefully create a desire to protect it.

MEG Bird Week details on Melton Events Calendar,

[http://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Out\\_n\\_About/Events/Events\\_calendar](http://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Out_n_About/Events/Events_calendar);

or MEG website

<http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au>;



### **Bird display at Melton Information Centre**

MEG will have a bird awareness display in the Melton Information Centre over Bird Week.

#### **Other MEG activities in Bird Week:**

- Education about local rare & endangered birds
- Information on local birds in digital format
- Education about local birds & wildlife
- Why our environment is important
- Birdlife & wildlife requirements
- Information about nestboxes
- Why old trees are important
- Bird watching in Melton
- Plants to attract birds
- Guest speakers

### **Monday 20<sup>th</sup> October 4.00-5.00 PM**

#### **Opening of Bird Photo Display at Melton Visitor Information Centre**

See pictures of most of the birds around Melton. Free plant & bird poster to all who attend. Light refreshments & drinks. Win a pair of binoculars. RSVP Melton City Council Visitor Information Centre 9747 7300 [visitor@melton.vic.gov.au](mailto:visitor@melton.vic.gov.au);

### **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> October 10.00-12 noon**

#### **Children's' Week Melton Community Hall**

The Connies & Volcano Dreaming display & much more no RSVP required. 232 High St;

### **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> October 10.00-12 noon**

#### **Twitching at Toolern Vale**

See the Vern Davey Hut. Free bus trip- limited numbers. RSVP Melton City Council Visitor Information Centre 9747 7300 [visitor@melton.vic.gov.au](mailto:visitor@melton.vic.gov.au);

### **Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 10.30 am**

#### **My Nest is Best**

Storytime & craft activities at the Melton Library  
No RSVP required

### **Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 7.00 pm**

#### **We Are Dinosaurs**

Talk on the evolution of birds by Travis Park, Paleontologist (Monash Uni). Free bird posters & light refreshments. RSVP Melton City Council Visitor Information Centre 9747 7300 [visitor@melton.vic.gov.au](mailto:visitor@melton.vic.gov.au);

### **Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 10 – 12 noon** **Childrens Week Taylors Hill Youth & Community Centre**

Bird scavenger hunt & many other activities  
No RSVP required

### **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October 10.30 am**

#### **My Nest is Best**

Storytime & craft activities at the Melton library  
No RSVP required

### **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October 10.00 – 12 noon**

#### **Bird walk & talk at Melton Botanic Garden**

Bird talk by Nora Peters & walk with Geraldine Kelly. Beginners & families welcome. Light refreshments & drinks. RSVP Melton City Council Visitor Information Centre 9747 7300 [visitor@melton.vic.gov.au](mailto:visitor@melton.vic.gov.au);

### **Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October 11.30 – 1.30**

#### **Bird walk & talk at Eynesbury**

Chris Luniardi (local Eynesbury resident)  
Beginners & families welcome. Eynesbury Discovery Centre. RSVP Melton City Council Visitor Information Centre 9747 7300 [visitor@melton.vic.gov.au](mailto:visitor@melton.vic.gov.au);

## **OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS**

### **Latham Snipe: expert discussion**

On Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> September Friends of Melton Botanic Garden hosted a talk by bird expert Dr Birgita Hansen on the Lathams Snipe, in conjunction with their AGM at Melton Library. Lathams or Japanese Snipe is an endangered bird protected under Federal Law that migrates every year from Japan. They been recorded over several years in the Melton Botanic Garden. Melton people had the opportunity to hear an expert talk about this bird, how to recognise it, who to report the sighting to, and what their significance is.

Geraldine Kelly reported on this talk:

*'On Wednesday 10 September Dr Birgita Hansen from Federation University Australia, replaing David Wilson who had accepted a job in Mongolia, gave a talk on the Latham's Snipe at the Melton library. Birgita is an environmental scientist committed to improving the management of waterways, wetlands & estuaries for the conservation of birds especially waders. She showed a short video of snipe at the Powling St Wetlands in Port Fairy where over 70 snipe have been recorded in their regular surveys. These*

numbers make our counts of up to 5 birds in & around Melton recently, mainly in the Botanic Gardens, seem insignificant but very common.

*These birds migrate between Australia & Japan each year, breeding in Japan during our winter & joining us for our summer. They feed on insects, earthworms & seeds mainly at night but can be seen feeding during the day in their preferred freshwater wetlands, roosting in long grass surrounding the wetlands. While here in Australia they feed constantly to double their weight so they have the strength for the long journey back to Hokkaido in Japan. They can be confused with the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper which have a shorter, thinner bill & the Australian painted snipe which have a shorter, slightly curved bill & a brown head.*

*The snipe leave Australia late February using the East Asian - Australian Flyway. This is the route migratory birds use to fly from Australia to as far as the northern Arctic Circle, arriving in Japan early April to May, stopping off at staging points resting & feeding spots in northern Australia or New Guinea. Little is known of their route or staging points as they haven't put tracking devices on them or banded any recently. They breed in Hokkaido, up to 500 pairs, then begin their migration back to Australia in July to early August, arriving late July to October. They can be seen in Melton from September.*

*Latham's Snipe are considered near threatened in Japan & vulnerable here in Australia due to habitat destruction, urbanisation, land reclamation & domestic predators. According to the handbook of the Birds of the World they are considered to be of Least Concern. The wetlands in Powlett St Port Fairy are protected but the grassland surrounding the area where the snipe roost is privately owned & up for development. There are already houses surrounding the area so there is a lot of human intervention, domestic cats & dog disturbance. At the staging points in the Yellow Sea area where there's a lot of tidal reclamation the mud flats where the birds feed are being built on. There is very little government support for the protection of habitat & if not for volunteer groups such as BirdLife Australia fighting for the protection of habitat the situation would be much worse.'*

## COMING ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

### Platypus Festival

**11<sup>th</sup> October 12pm to 4pm**

Friends of Toolern Creek will host their 6<sup>th</sup> Platypus Festival on October 11<sup>th</sup> Toolern Creek alongside Big Red. There will be Jumping Castle, Face Painting, Animal Farm, Pony Rides, Snake Man and lots more. Contact Lyn Holdsworth, President, Friends of Toolern Creek. The Platypus Festival is the biggest environmental festival in the western region!

### Bird Walk & Talk: Truganina Park

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October 10.00 – 12.00**

Friends of Truganina Park, with help of Hobsons Bay City council Conservation Ranger, are conducting a walk around Truganina Park checking out local birdlife & getting a close-up look at the diverse range of plants that make it possible for these birds to survive. FREE family event followed by a BBQ. Meet in Truganina Park car park, Andrew Park Drive, Altona Meadows. Libby Rigby, Acting Senior Conservation Ranger Parks, T: 9932 1261; M: 0439 110 830; F: 9398 1009; NRS users phone 133 677 and quote 03 9932 1000

### Spring Wildflower and Bird Walk, Bushes Paddock (Mulla Mulla Grasslands)

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October 10.00 am -12 noon**

Expect to see a range of wildflowers in native grasslands & Grey Box woodland, & identify the birds that live in the grasslands. Everyone welcome, morning tea supplied. Meet at Mt. Cottrell Road entrance, Mt. Cottrell 3024 Melway Map 221 Ref H5. Contact Daryl Akers 0438 277 252, [www.pinkertonforest.com](http://www.pinkertonforest.com);

### Restoring Biodiversity on the Werribee River

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November 10am - 12.30pm.**

Meet at the Mt. Cottrell Road entrance, Mt. Cottrell 3024 Melway Map 221 Ref H5. Extensive landscape works have incrementally been applied to grasslands, escarpment, flood plain & stream bank on a one kilometre section of the river, members of PLEG will explain the process undertaken in two stages over three years. Everyone welcome, morning tea supplied.

### Discover Doreens Grassland

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November Grieve Parade Altona**

Wildflower walk starts at 10.00 am at Doreens Grassland, at the north end of Grieve Parade in

Altona. RSVP Colleen Miller 0401 645 468  
wildflowerwalks.com.au;

**'grass-land sun-moth human': an ecological performance by Flame & Sky Theatrics**

Fina Po writes:

*'This Melbourne Fringe Festival special event is happening out west. Please feel free to forward among your networks :*

*"grass-land sun-moth human' is a special site-specific ecological performance experience taking place by a beautiful but often overlooked endangered grassland reserve in the Western suburbs of Melbourne. It invites audiences to experience and appreciate nature, art and performance in ways they usually wouldn't!*

*Audience members will meet at the Isabella Williams Memorial Reserve in Deer Park and will be lead through an array of sonic and performance interventions that will be fun, stimulating and meditative. Expect to see some performance art, handmade instruments and bass clarinet. The event ends with a picnic by the Kororoit Creek*

*Artists Fina Po and Robert Jackson have assembled a mutli-disciplinary team of artists under the collective name Flame and Sky Theatrics. They include musician Sarah McCall and dancers Bronwen Kamasz, Ben Ardley and Gretel Taylor.'*  
*Thanks, Fina'*

Bookings: 9660 9666, Tickets: \$15/\$13  
2th, 21<sup>st</sup> 27<sup>th</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> September/ October 4<sup>th</sup> 4.30  
<http://www.melbournefringe.com.au/fringe-festival/show/grass-land-sun-moth-human/>:

**Bacchus Marsh Horticultural Show  
Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October 12.00 – 4.00**

@ Public hall main street Bacchus Marsh  
Adults \$6 Pensioners \$5 Children free Exhibitors \$5. Entries open now close on the day 9.30 sharp  
Adults \$2 per entry Children \$1 per entry  
➤ Roses, cut flowers, floral art, natives, pot plants, cacti- succulents, vegetables, junior section  
➤ Displays & demonstrations  
➤ Craig Castree as seen on Vasili's garden  
➤ Raffle, cuppa, sales  
Schedules & entries 0438 900 182  
[joce@scottiehouse.com](mailto:joce@scottiehouse.com); Proceeds to Indoor Aquatic Centre in Bacchus Marsh

**Cruelty Free West Expo**

**Caroline Springs Sunday 23rd November**

Rana Hales of Caroline Springs Animal Welfare Network writes:

*'Hi Everyone,*

*Our 4th annual Cruelty Free West Expo is on Sunday 23rd November 2014 from 10am to 3pm at WestWaters Hotel in Caroline Springs.*

*The expo is, as always a fun, interactive day, with plenty of delicious food, great people and lots to learn.*

*Help us make this expo bigger and better than the last one. Plug the expo to everyone you know! Our brilliant promotional flyer is on its way, I'll send it to you soon. Do you know if your favourite animal organisation or ethical business is exhibiting? Ask them and remind them to register;*

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/W6GG9P5>;

*If you have an ethical business and would like to sponsor the event, contact us for a sponsorship pack- sponsors get plenty of promotion and plugging in return!!*

*As always, we appreciate your ongoing support,'*  
Rana Hales, President/ Coordinator, Caroline Springs Animal Welfare Network, P: 0410 315 808  
E: [csawnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:csawnetwork@gmail.com); [www.csawn.org](http://www.csawn.org); PO Box 3682 Caroline Springs 3023; Join us on [facebook](#), Follow us on [Twitter](#)

**MELTON WILDLIFE**

**Cunningham Skinks at Toolern Creek**



Six Cunningham Skinks at Toolern Creek

These Cunninghams Skinks, were observed recently sunning themselves in the late morning sun. No less than six lizards, of various sizes, were there, some small ones lying on top of larger ones. These large spiny-tailed skinks (300mm) are common in rocky outcrops above our local creeks.

President: Daryl Akers  
Secretary: Doug Godsil  
Meetings:

Phone: 0438 277 252  
Environmental Advisor: Peter Sell  
3rd Wednesday of the month at Don Nardella's office in Alexandra St (beside Ambulance Station) at 7:30

email: [darylakers@gmail.com](mailto:darylakers@gmail.com)  
Website: <http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au/>



Their colour matches the dark basalt cliffs in which they live, making them very hard to see. They are omnivorous, & fond of Boxthorn berries. Info on Cunninghams Skinks on:

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/Cunninghams-Skink>



Close-up of Cunningham Skinks

### Dusky Woodswallows arrive in Melton

In late August about 20-40 Dusky Woodswallows were observed in Strathtulloh Woodland, milling around, actively feeding on the ground & in the air. Perhaps newly arrived from up north? A few days later Nora Peters observed a similar number at Melton Gilgai Woodland. They arrive here in late winter- early spring to breed in our region. They leave again in autumn. Their more brightly coloured relatives, the White-browed Woodswallows, should arrive here in November, only to leave again in February; again after breeding here.

### Trail camera photo of the month

Simon Jolly (Parwan Landcare) writes:

*'There are a number of inexpensive motion-activated cameras on the market these days, commonly referred to as "trail cameras". Hunters and wildlife researches use them to monitor the activity of game and they are increasingly used for farm security. We use them on our property at Parwan and often capture interesting images. The picture quality is not great, especially at night, but I thought readers of this newsletter might be interested in seeing some candid photos of the wildlife of Melton. We could make it a series - Trail Camera Photo of the Month. We will start with two photos of an eastern grey kangaroo who clearly has a joey in her pouch. She notices a trail*

*camera that wasn't there yesterday and comes over to investigate.'*



Kangaroo investigating trail camera

Other people with similar cameras on their properties are invited to forward wildlife photos. As Simon suggests, we could see some interesting photos.