

MELTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP

No. AOO4OO49F

A.B.N 47 411575097

PO BOX 481 MELTON 3337

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2014

Volume 102

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 20th 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

OCTOBER

A month, after the cold driving rain that ended

September. At least we didn't have to water for another week! Followed by a touch of summer mid-month when we did need to water. A gecko was even photographed by a Melton resident on a window, lured out by the summery weather. Followed again by wet wintry weather after the Platypus Festival, again saving us from watering. Followed yet again by heavy thunderstorm activity & rain, unfortunately somewhat negated by drying winds. Just another typical Melbourne spring!

MEG EVENTS IN OCTOBER

Bird Week in Melton: a great success!

Between 20th – 26th October MEG conducted bird awareness activities during Bird Week, funded by City of Melton's Environment Day grant & Melton Council. Every October, Bird Life 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.

Although this was MEG's inaugural Bird Week it has proved an enormous success. The event was funded by a World Environment Day grant by City of Melton. Many thanks to Melton Council, Linda Bradburn (Melton City Environmental Educator), Melton Information Centre staff & volunteers; & MEG members. Details on MEG Facebook page.

Two unexpected highlights of the week involved the discovery of two rare and endangered bird species in Melton, during the two Bird Walk & Talk events.

- Latham's Snipe at Melton Botanic Garden &
- Freckled Duck at Eynesbury.

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

MEG had a display in the Melton Information Centre over Bird Week, featuring photos of Melton birds. Other information included:

- 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

MEG invited visitors to the bird exhibition to participate in a survey to discover Melton's favourite bird. The survey forms went into a draw to win two pairs of binoculars, donated by MEG. The draw was conducted at the Bird Walk & Talk at Melton Botanic Gardens, by Dr Birgita Hansen. The winners were: Ella Parker & James Kellet. The survey showed Melton's favourite bird as the Superb Fairy-wren (aka Blue Wren).

Opening of Bird Photo Display at Melton Visitor Information Centre



On Monday 20th October Melton Mayor Bob Turner opened Bird Week with an exhibition of photos of Melton birds. About twenty people participated in the opening, some from Bacchus Marsh. One lady from Bacchus Marsh recollects meeting Vern Davey when she was a schoolgirl. Vern Davey built a Naturalists Cabin on his Toolern Vale property in 1933. For decades this was a mecca for birdwatchers & many hundreds of school children visited Vern's property, known then as Melliadora. The walls of the Information centre were covered with photos representing some of

Melton's spectacular birdlife. Light refreshments & drinks were served. Visitors to the exhibition over Bird Week were invited to fill in a survey from to discover Melton's favourite bird. Participants in the survey went into a raffle to win a pair of binoculars.

We Are Dinosaurs



On Wednesday 22nd October Travis Park (a Palaeontologist from Monash University & Museum Victoria) spoke to an audience of 33 people about the evolution of birds. The talk was part of Bird Week in Melton, organised by City of Melton & Melton Environment Group, & was introduced by Linda Bradburn, Melton's Environmental Educator. The talk drew people from Bacchus Marsh & Werribee, as well as Melton.



Travis Park discussing birds & dinosaurs

Travis demonstrated a series of similarities between birds & dinosaurs, showing that birds are indeed dinosaurs.

Birds & dinosaurs shared a highly effective breathing system by which air could flow into the lungs, even when exhaling, via air sacs within the bone structure, completely unlike the less efficient manner in which mammals breathe. These spaces, long known from birds, have been recently discovered in dinosaur bones also.

'Birds have extremely efficient one way breathing system, with lots of air sacs. Human lungs are less efficient, with no air sacs. Dinosaurs also possessed these air sacs. Most likely had same efficient breathing system.'

Travis showed photos of several dinosaur fossils recently discovered in China in very fine grained sedimentary rock, plainly showing that they had feathers. Dinosaurs like Microraptor, Caudipteryx & Changyuraptor were related to Deinonychus (the prototype of the Velociraptor of Jurassic Park fame). They were also feathered! If not for the fineness of the rock in which these animals were fossilised, the feathers would not have been visible. In 1969 John Ostrom demonstrated that dinosaurs were warm blooded, like mammals & birds. Fossil evidence shows that dinosaurs brooded their eggs like birds, unlike the majority of reptiles that lay their eggs then leave them. Travis showed photos of fossilised dinosaurs from Mongolia, overwhelmed by sandstorms, while curled protectively over their eggs. Similar fossils show dinosaurs sleeping with heads tucked under a wing, also similar to modern day birds. Birds & dinosaurs also shared a similar bone structure. Dinosaurs shared with birds a Medullary bone, where calcium is stored prior to egg production. These are only found in female birds today.

'Comparisons of bone structure show dinosaur & bird bones of similar structure. Growth lines show dinosaurs grew quickly & reached adult size fast-like modern birds.'

Travis also showed photos of some giant birds, including a large penguin, *Anthrodoroptes* that stood 1.3 metres tall, & once lived in Australia; & *Pelargornis*, the world's largest flying bird with a wingspan of 6 metres & a large toothed bill.

Travis' talk gave everyone a greater insight into the nature of birds & dinosaurs. We all learned a great deal. A couple of young people in the audience were keen to ask many questions. They

were excited to each be given a small dinosaur bone. Travis' highly interesting talk plainly demonstrated that birds are indeed dinosaurs.

Travis' fascinating blog (Blogozoic) can be found on: <http://www.scilogs.com/blogozoic/>;

Bird Walk & Talk at Melton Botanic Garden



On Friday 24th October MEG presented a Bird Walk & Talk at Melton Botanic Garden, as part of Bird Week. A fascinating bird talk by Nora Peters was accompanied by several anecdotes about our local birds. This was followed by a walk through the Botanic Garden led by Geraldine Kelly. Geraldine, with her intimate knowledge of birdlife in the Garden was able to point out its rich diversity of birdlife. She pointed out to the group a Dusky Woodswallow nesting in a tree fork beside a track.



Dusky Woodswallow nest at MBG

However the highlight of this walk was the sighting of two endangered Latham's Snipe!

Wetland bird expert Dr Birgita Hansen of Federation University Australia was present on this walk & was on hand to give a highly qualified & positive identification of the Latham's Snipe. Dr Hansen recently gave a presentation on Latham's Snipe to Friends of Melton Botanic Garden, in September.

These birds migrate between Australia & Japan each year, breeding in Japan during our winter & joining us for our summer. Latham's Snipe are considered near threatened in Japan & vulnerable here in Australia due to habitat destruction, urbanisation, land reclamation & domestic predators. They have been recorded in the MBG for a period of about ten years so the Garden is obviously a site of considerable significance to the snipe.

Latham's Snipe are subject to several levels of legislative protection, reflecting their endangered status. These include:

- [Section 248 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 - List of Marine Species](#) (Commonwealth of Australia)
- [List of Migratory Species](#) (Commonwealth of Australia),
- [Migratory species prescription - Melbourne Strategic Assessment](#) (Victoria Department of Sustainability and Environment (Vic. DSE))
- Listed as Near Threatened (Advisory List of Threatened Vertebrate Fauna in Victoria)

Friends of Melton Botanic Garden also took the opportunity to launch their new "Birds of the Melton Botanic Garden" brochure. A beautiful colour brochure featuring many of the beautiful birds found in the garden. Many thanks to Friends of Melton Botanic Gardens for letting us use their depot for the presentation, & for sharing their magnificent garden (& birdlife) with us! The MBG is one of the best places for watching birds in Melton.

Bird walk & talk at Eynesbury

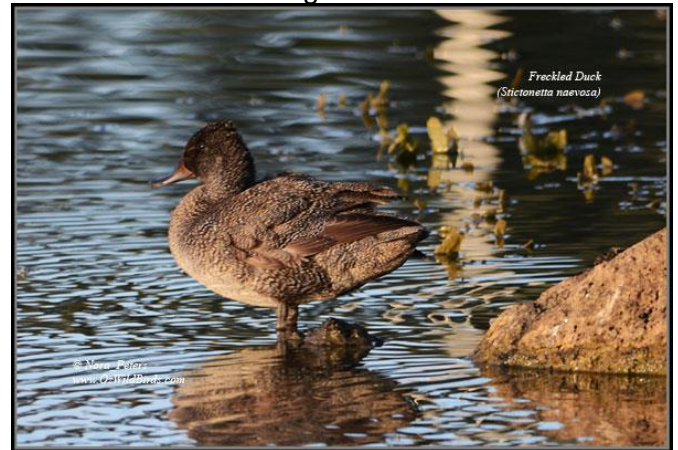
On Saturday 26th October, Eynesbury resident & local bird expert Chris Lunardi gave a presentation on the wide diversity of birds of Eynesbury to a mixture of Eynesbury residents & bird watchers, as part of Bird Week. He told us there are 160 or so bird species found at Eynesbury. This is an impressive total. Birds such as Diamond Firetails, Brown Treecreepers, Tree Martins & Jacky Winters are common in Eynesbury but are not

found elsewhere as they are dependent on woodlands for their survival. Another resident discussed how bird friendly gardens with native plants encourage native birds into their gardens. Chris discussed introduced Indian Mynahs that compete aggressively with native wildlife for nest hollows. Mynahs unfortunately follow humans. Residents here are pro-active about reducing the threat mynahs pose to native birdlife. A mynah eradication volunteer is in charge of trapping & removal of mynahs.

A lively debate ensued among the residents concerning cats! Cats are expressly banned in Eynesbury as a legal condition of buying property here. However it was stated that some residents were flouting the no cat regulation. The primary concern was that cats pose an unacceptable threat to the wildlife of Eynesbury. However another major concern was that it caused conflict between neighbours, ie. those residents who complied with the no cat regulation & those who keep cats in breach of their contractual obligations. There was strong opinion that the issue of illegal cats was not taken seriously enough nor being enforced effectively. Cats pose an unacceptable risk to the many small native birds that make their homes in Eynesbury Forest.

The presentation was followed by a short walk. We saw a few of the 160 or so birds found at Eynesbury.

A highlight was finding a Freckled Duck in the Lake. Chris described these as Australia's rarest waterbird! Many of these rare ducks were seen here in March 2014, indicating the importance of this small ornamental lake! We also saw a Little Pied Cormorant nesting on the island.



Freckled Duck at Eynesbury (by Nora Peters)

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

24 birds seen on the short walk were:

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Hoary-headed Grebe | Australasian Grebe |
| Straw-necked Ibis | Little Pied Cormorant |
| Black Duck | Wood Duck |
| Chestnut Teal | Freckled Duck |
| Muscovy Duck | Crested Pigeon |
| Coot | Purple Swamphen |
| Galah | Sulphur-crested Cockatoo |
| Eastern Rosella | Crimson Rosella |
| Red-rumped Parrot | Superb-fairy wren |
| Brown Treecreeper | Yellow-rumped Thornbill |
| Little Raven | White-plumed Honeyeater |
| Mynah | Starling |
| Diamond Firetail | |



Little Pied Cormorant nest at Eynesbury

Other Bird Week children's oriented activities included:

- The Connies & Volcano Dreaming display at Melton Community Hall
- Bird scavenger hunt & other activities at Taylors Hill Youth & Community Centre
- Story time & craft activities 'My Nest is Best' at the Melton library

COMING MEG EVENTS

Long Forest Mallee Bird Walk Sunday 9th November 9.00 – 11.00

On Sunday 9th November MEG will host a bird walk in Long Forest Mallee. From Melton drive west along High St onto the old Western Highway through Anthony's Cutting. Turn right (north) into Long Forest Road (opposite the turnoff into Hopetoun Park). Meet at picnic ground in Long Forest Road, west (left) side of road, just past Sundew Ave. Melway Map 335 Ref E3

Blackwood: BBQ & picnic Sunday 7th December

MEG will have our end of year BBQ & picnic at Blackwood this year on Sunday 7th December.

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

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.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Platypus Festival



Friends of Toolern Creek hosted their 7th Platypus Festival on October 11th at Toolern Creek at Big Red. There were Jumping Castles, Face Painting, Animal Farm, Pony Rides, Snake Busters & lots more. Also present were local community environmental groups (MEG included).

The festival gives many families their only view of environmental issues at close hand, & the opportunity to meet local environmental community groups. Thanks to a magnificent Spring day it looked like a record attendance once more!



One boy presented a Water Scorpion he had found in Toolern Creek a few minutes earlier for identification. Shortly afterward, a lady showed a

email: darylakers@gmail.com
Website: <http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au/>

photo of a Marbled Gecko she had found on her window beside her hot water service, the previous night. Two large eggs could be plainly seen through the gecko's translucent abdomen, ready to be laid. The hot water service is plainly providing a warm home over the winter months.

The Platypus Festival is the biggest environmental festival in the western region! It was funded by sponsors Wise Employment & Western Land Services, as well as a Melton Council World Environment Day grant.

COMING ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Restoring Biodiversity on the Werribee River Saturday 8th November 10am - 12.30pm

Extensive landscape works have incrementally been applied to the Werribee River environs, innovative rabbit & weed control, natural regeneration and planting of native species has occurred. The contractor & members of Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group will explain the process undertaken in two stages over three years.

Ensure appropriate shoes are worn, as we will be walking on rough ground. 9.50am for a 10am departure, as we plan to travel in a car convoy to the river, morning tea will be supplied. Everyone is welcome to view and enjoy this beautiful section of the Werribee River. Meet at Melton Recycled Water Treatment Plant brick entrance (550m distance from Greigs Road) on Butlers Road, Mt. Cottrell. Melway Map 221 C4. Contact Frances Overmars 9748 1294 or Daryl Akers 0438 277 252 [0438 277 252](tel:0438277252)
www.pinkertonforest.com;

Basalt Plains Flora

Tuesday 11th November Melton Library

Chris Clarke of Australian Plants Society will give a talk on flora of the Basalt Plains. Call Linda Bradburn on 9747 7137 or lindab@melton.vic.gov.au;

Werribee Wetland Bird Workshop: Western Treatment Plant Tuesday 11th November

A day of all you ever wanted to know about wetland birds. BirdLife Australia's Threatened Bird Network, Holcim Australia and the Melbourne Water Biodiversity Project invite you to a FREE day-long workshop where you will learn everything

you ever wanted to know about wetland birds. Learn about the diversity of wetland birds in your region and gain some skills in bird identification. A visit to the Western Treatment Plant with an experienced bird guide will help you put your skills into practice. Tuesday November 11th 10:00am – 3:00pm Western Treatment Plant, New Farm Road, Werribee

What to bring: Binoculars, a scope if you have one, suitable footwear (closed toe) for walking on unsealed paths, long pants, water bottle, sun-smart gear, clothing for inclement weather.

Cost: Free! *Morning tea and light lunch provided.*
Bookings essential: RSVP by November 3rd to Caroline Wilson: 0408 668 070 or caroline.wilson@birdlife.org.au;

Birding at Pinkerton & Eynesbury: Sunday November 16th 09.15

Birdlife Australia & PLEG invite the community to join them birding at Pinkerton & Bush's Paddock in the morning, Eynesbury Forest in afternoon. Toilets & coffee shop at Eynesbury (composting toilet at Pinkerton). These sites are not usually open to the public & are home to a large variety of woodland birds. About 140 bird species have been recorded at Pinkerton & about 100 at Eynesbury to date. For more info: Dave Torr: 9749 5141 or davidtorr@gmail.com; Mob 0458 035 896 (BLA), www.birdlife.org.au/events; Meet at Mt Cottrell Road. Melway Map 221 Ref H8 Gates open 9.15am, walk starts 9.30:

Parwan Grassland Walk

Parwan, Saturday 16th November 10.00 am

Simon & Lorraine are providing a guided walk through the grassland on their 50 hectare property at Parwan. Come & learn about grassland ecology & management or just enjoy the wildflowers. Refer Simon Jolly 8746 2083 assemble 295 Parwan Exford Road, where the road meets the railway line. Melway Map 341 Ref A5

Discover Doreens Grassland

Saturday 16th 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;

More info on Doreens Grassland on:

<https://www.facebook.com/DoreensGrassland>; &
<http://www.wmcn.org.au/projects/401-doreens-grassland>;

OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS

Djerriwarrh Festival

Melton Saturday, 8th November

Melton's major community festival & the major community festival in the west

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 West Waters 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. 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; www.csawn.org; PO Box 3682 Caroline Springs 3023; Join us on [facebook](#), Follow us on [Twitter](#)

Linking Melton South: Party in the Park

Kurrajong Cres Reserve Sunday 30th November

'Hi Everyone,

We are very exciting to be holding our first placemaking event 'Party in the Park' on Sunday 30th November. Party in the Park is an event to not only celebrate Melton South but to also trial some different ways to get more community members using Kurrajong Crescent Reserve and enjoying our public spaces. The event is a FREE event and will include different activities including art activities, sporting area, local kids musical performances and a free BBQ. Sunday 30th November 11am-3pm, Kurrajong Crescent Reserve, Station Rd Melton South (between the Laundromat and Coles). We look forward to seeing many of you at the Party in the Park.'

Amelia Fisher, Melton South Project Officer
Djerriwarrh Health Services Bacchus Marsh,
Melton & Caroline Springs. **Ph** 8746 1187 **Fax:**
9743 8640, **Email:** ameliaf@djhs.org.au

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Duck Hunting

The Victorian State election will be on Saturday 29th November 2014. To date there has been no mention of duck hunting, by either side of politics. Surveys show that most Victorians are against the annual slaughter of our native ducks.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GP-2R_IK5o;
& <http://www.rspcavic.org/issues-take-action/duck-shooting/>;

Ask your local member of their party's policy about duck hunting! Email the Premier at denis.napthine@parliament.vic.gov.au or Daniel Andrews at

daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au;

& tell them you will not stand by and let this massacre continue.

Before the November election!!

Climate Institute: Investment in Australian resources industry likely to decline as climate concerns grow

Erwin Jackson, Deputy CEO, Climate Institute writes:

'The Rockefeller Brothers Fund, derived from the world's biggest and best known oil baron, is refusing to invest in fossil fuels. Stanford University announced in May that its endowment funds wouldn't directly invest any more in coal companies. Norway's sovereign wealth fund, the world's largest, is reviewing its stand and will report back early next year.'

'Here in Australia, large super funds HESTA and LG Super have in the past month announced portfolio-wide decisions to quit or curtail their coal investments. Deutsche Bank, Barclays and HSBC have refused to provide loans for the Abbott Point coal port in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park without UN support. The ANU has said that it will shelve its holdings of seven Australian resources companies. October 18 is "Divestment Day".'

'Investors representing almost half a trillion US dollars' worth of assets last month signed a pledge in Montreal to "carbon footprint" their equity portfolios. This is a first step towards decarbonising their portfolios.'

<http://climateinstitute.org.au/articles/opinion-pieces/investment-in-australian-resources-industry-likely-to-decline-as-climate-concerns-grow.html/section/431>;

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

MELTON WILDLIFE

Reptiles in Eynesbury

Baby Jacky Lizards at Eynesbury

Two baby Jacky Lizards (*Amphibolurus muricatus*), about 8cm in length, were seen at Eynesbury in September. The adults resemble miniature Bearded Dragons & are about 30cm in length (2/3 of this is tail). They are common in Eynesbury, but seldom seen as they are well camouflaged. They were probably hatched last summer.

More info on Jacky Lizards on:

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/discoverycentre/info/sheets/lizards-found-in-victoria/jacky-lizard/>;



Juvenile Jacky Lizard at Eynesbury

Eastern Snake-necked Turtle at Eynesbury



Eastern Snake-necked Turtle at Eynesbury

This Eastern Snake-necked Turtle (*Chelodina longicollis*) was also photographed in Eynesbury in September; sunning itself on the log & enjoying the early spring sun. It was first noticed here during the fearsome heatwave of last summer. Although Snake-necked Turtles are indigenous to this region it would not be found naturally in the ornamental

lake as it is so far from any natural wetland. There are turtles occurring naturally in the Werribee River, Toolern Creek & the Western Water sewerage treatment ponds, but it would not have found its way through several kilometres of dry grassland & forest. Apparently a pet turtle was lost some time ago so this may be the same turtle. It was lucky to have found its way to the lake & not perished in the forest, or been run over on the roads. It has obviously made itself at home here.

More info on:

[http://australianmuseum.net.au/Eastern-Snake-necked-Turtle](http://australianmuseum.net.au/Eastern-Snake-necked-Turtle;);

Trail camera photo of the month:

Fox at Parwan

'This month a fox investigates the camera late at night, and off in the distance - is that a young fox or a cat?' Cheers, Simon



Fox at Parwan (& mystery eyes in background!)

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: daryljakers@gmail.com
Website: <http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au/>