

# MELTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP

No. AOO4OO49F

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PO BOX 481 MELTON 3337

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2014

Volume 103

### 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

### DECEMBER

The first day of November brought a chilly return to winter, with cold wind & driving rain, following the last hot summery day that ended October! Meaningful rain has been lacking for almost a year & a long dry El Nino summer is now feared. Lots of watering to come! We are definitely in a drought! We had 26mm of rain on 16<sup>th</sup> November (per John Bentley) followed by a 40 ha grass & bush fire at Toolern Vale on 18<sup>th</sup> November. A timely warning of the imminent fire season & a hot dry summer!

### MEG EVENTS IN NOVEMBER

#### Long Forest Mallee Bird Walk

On Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November Linda & Daryl participated in a bird walk in Long Forest Mallee hosted by MEG. Unfortunately we saw few birds. A few Grey Currawongs, Little Ravens, a Black Duck & several unseen honeyeaters & pardalotes. Perhaps the previous hot day caused the birds to feed earlier then rest by 9.00.

#### Presentation to Brookfield Lifestyle Village



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)

On Monday MEG participated in a presentation to Brookfield Lifestyle Village residents. MEG gave a presentation of the work done beside Arnolds Creek at Brookfield since 2007, showing before & after photos.

David Tepper, a farmer from Yarriambiack Shire, & (uncle of Ros Mohr) gave a presentation on fifteen years of Landcare activity & environmental restoration (known as 'Yarrilinks') in his region; donating 4 hectares of his own farm to the project for restoration. As David says: *'We take too much. We need to give some back'*.

Paul Kean of 'Science Teachers for Climate Awareness' a presentation demonstrating the science behind climate change. Details of the Climate awareness presentation on: [scitca@optusnet.com.au](mailto:scitca@optusnet.com.au);

## COMING MEG EVENTS

### 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.

## OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

### Restoring Biodiversity on the Werribee River



Andy & Frances describing works at Blue Box Flat

On Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group hosted a walk along the Werribee River volcanic gorge beside Surbiton Park to demonstrate environmental works. This has involved extensive landscape work applied

incrementally to the Werribee River environs, including innovative rabbit & weed control, natural regeneration and planting of native species.

Environmental contractor Andy Scanlon of Central Land Management Services & members of PLEG explained the process undertaken in two stages over three years. Andy explained that weed control at this challenging site involved specialised skills on steep, rocky slopes. Everyone enjoyed the magnificent views over this beautiful section of the Werribee River.

### Birding at Pinkerton & Eynesbury:

On Sunday November 16<sup>th</sup> Birdlife Australia & PLEG invited the community to join them birding at Pinkerton & Eynesbury Forests & Bush's Paddock. About 140 bird species have been recorded at Pinkerton & about 100 at Eynesbury to date.

Dave Torr reports:

*'In general numbers were pretty low in the forests, but evidence of breeding Diamond Firetails and Brown Treecreepers in Eynesbury. Freckled Duck and Sharp-tailed sandpiper were new for Surbiton Park and Pied Cormorant was new for Pinkerton. Good numbers of Dotterels on the Upper Pinkerton pond. Disappointing (and this seems true generally in this area) that we have no summer migrants such as Trillers or Songlarks yet.'*

### Birds seen were:

Swan	Australian Shelduck	Freckled Duck
Wood Duck	Pink-eared Duck	Black Duck
Aust Shoveler	Grey Teal	Chestnut Teal
Hardhead	Blue-billed Duck	Great Crested Grebe
Hoary-headed Grebe	Straw-necked Ibis	White-faced Heron
Little Pied Cormorant	Little Black Cormorant	Pied Cormorant
Brown Falcon	Black Kite	Whistling Kite
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Little Eagle	Purple Swamphen
Coot	Dusky Moorhen	Masked Lapwing
Red-kneed Dotterel	Black-fronted Dotterel	Reed-necked Stint
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	Common Pigeon	Spotted Dove
Crested Pigeon	Galah	Long-billed Corella
White Cockatoo	Crimson Rosella	Eastern Rosella
Kookaburra	Sacred Kingfisher	Brown Treecreeper
White-plumed Honeyeater		Suberb Dairy-wren
Red Wattlebird	New Holland Honeyeater	Striated Pardalote
Weebill	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Magpie
Dusky Woodswallow	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Shriketit
Rufous Whistler	Grey Shrike-thrush	Willy Wagtail
Grey Fantail	Magpielark	Little Raven
Jacky Winter	Welcome Swallow	Tree Martin
Golden-headed Cisticola	Little Grassbird	Reed Warbler
Mynah	Starling	Blackbird
House Sparrow	Diamond Firetail	Zebra Finch
Red-browed Finch	Goldfinch	

Bird species seen in this precinct to date:

Pinkerton Forest	120	WW Sewerage works	92
Bush's Paddock	95	Eynesbury	128

## COMING ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

### Summer Surveys:

#### Growling Grass Frogs & Golden Sun Moths

Christine Connelly, NatureWatch /Community Projects Coordinator writes:

*'The start of summer is the perfect time to explore the grasslands around Melbourne. This December, we need your help to monitor Golden Sun Moths and Growling Grass Frogs. Help us collect important scientific data, while learning about the lives of these threatened species & how to survey them.'*

#### **Golden Sun Moths Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> December 9.30am-4pm Campbellfield**

Details: NatureWatch and Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) are teaming up to carry out vegetation assessments in Golden Sun Moth habitat. If the weather conditions are right we will also run a sun moth survey.

Dates: TBA over summer

Usual start 10am Campbellfield or Craigieburn

Details: MCMC invite NatureWatch volunteers to join them in their annual Golden Sun Moth surveys. Golden Sun Moths are very particular creatures - they only fly when the weather is warm and still, meaning we can only carry out surveys when weather conditions are perfect for the moths. Therefore we can't set activity dates in advance, but will send registered volunteers an SMS the day before a survey - you can decide then if the date suits you. If you'd like to be added to our SMS list, please email your mobile phone number to Christine.

#### **Growling Grass Frogs Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December Evening survey, Epping**

Join us for an evening survey of Growling Grass Frogs in the City of Whittlesea's Epping Quarry. Learn about the species and help out with different frog survey methods. Registration: Simply email [christinec@vnpa.org.au](mailto:christinec@vnpa.org.au); to register. Full details provided on registration. See you out in nature!' Christine Connelly, NatureWatch /Community ProjectsCoordinator, Email: [christinec@vnpa.org.au](mailto:christinec@vnpa.org.au); Phone (03) 9341 6510 (Thu/Fri)

## ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

### Platypus Surveys

#### 'systematic visual survey method'

Stefanie Wabnik of Melbourne Water suggests that the local community consider "systematic visual surveys" as a way of recording platypus data in area unsuitable for Fyke Net captures. *'It's not that difficult to do as long as there are willing participants. It's just a matter of getting people to sit next to the river for ~30 mins before sunset, spread out through the area, in a position where they have a good view of a length of river (pools are best) and record any platypuses seen. This would be repeated ~4 times (or as many as you can get people to do, over a month) in the same positions. Ideally, this would be repeated annually to see how things change over time. In reality, this type of technique will only detect major changes. You could start with a bbq and info session for people interested and outline what is expected, reason for project etc. The results could be presented and distributed to residents in the area to raise awareness of the presence of platypus, issues, and how they can help.'*

'Cesar (Ecological Consultant, performing Platypus surveys on behalf of Melbourne Water <http://cesaraustralia.com/>) have created "Platypusspot" - a website that allows you to report Platypus sightings. The website can be found here: <http://platypusspot.org/>. I encourage you to report all sightings.' – Stef

### Australia in the red on environmental balance sheet: Living Planet Report.

Disturbing reading!

*'The tenth edition of World Wildlife Fund's Living Planet Report, launched at the United Nations in Geneva today, is a stark call to action for a world living beyond its means.'*

*'The report reveals that humanity's demand on the planet is more than 50 per cent greater than what nature can sustain, with dramatic declines in biodiversity since 1970.'*

*'Global wildlife populations have declined by more than half in just 40 years as measured in WWF's Living Planet Index.'*

*"We are cutting trees faster than they mature, harvesting more fish than our oceans can replenish, and emitting more carbon into the atmosphere than forests and oceans can absorb. "This ecological overshoot leads to diminished resource stocks and waste accumulating faster*



than it can be absorbed or recycled, such as with the rising level of carbon pollution in the atmosphere. The consequences are dangerous climate change, water scarcity, food insecurity and ongoing wildlife declines.”

*‘Habitat loss and degradation, and exploitation through hunting and fishing, are the primary causes of decline. Climate change is the next most common primary threat, and is likely to put more pressure on populations in the future.’*

For more information: Charlie Stevens, Senior Communications Specialist, WWF-Australia, [cstevens@wwf.org.au](mailto:cstevens@wwf.org.au), 0424649689. <http://www.wwf.org.au/?11020/Australia-in-the-red-on-environmental-balance-sheet-Living-Planet-Report>;

### **Great Forests National Park proposal**

There is growing demand for a new, greater national park to Melbourne’s northeast. The proposal is even supported by Sir David Attenborough & Jane Goodall!

*‘The Great Forests National Park proposal is a vision for a multi-tiered parks system for bush users and bush lovers alike. It is a Parks system that protects and maintains important ecosystem functions critical for our way of life*

*‘The tallest flowering trees on Earth grow north-east of Melbourne. In their high canopies dwell owls, gliders and the tiny Leadbeater’s (or Fairy) Possum. Victoria’s precious and endangered faunal emblem lives only in these ash forests of the Central Highlands.*

*‘Montane ash forests flourish along the Great Divide receiving high rainfall. They harvest water from the air and provide most of Melbourne’s drinking water. Research has shown these forests to be among the most carbon-dense forests on Earth due to their rapid growth and relatively slow rates of decay in the cool, wet climate.*

*‘The Park, stretching from Kinglake through to the Baw Baws and north-east up to Eildon, will host a range of activities such as bike riding, bushwalking, fishing, bird watching, four-wheel driving, motor biking, camping, zipline tours and much more. ‘*

<http://www.greatforestnationalpark.com.au/>;

& <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/victoria-state-election-2014/labor-faces-backlash-over-dumped-national-park-plan-20141115-11nfpi.html>;

### **Climate Council: No-one likes to be left behind**

Amanda McKenzie, CEO Climate Council, writes:

*‘ It’s common sense to most of us that as one of the sunniest and windiest countries in the world Australia has unrivalled renewable energy potential. But our latest report finds that we’re losing out on opportunities and investment to countries like China and the US - who are surging ahead with renewable energy.*

*‘In the past year alone investment in Australian renewables has dropped back 70%.*

[Read our latest report to see more about how Australia’s efforts to tackle climate change measure up against the rest of the world.](#)

*‘The good news story globally is that China consolidated its position as the world’s renewable energy powerhouse in the past year with 2.6 million people employed in renewable energy jobs and renewables providing nearly one fifth of China’s annual electricity generation.*

*‘China installed more renewable energy capacity than fossil fuels in 2013. It also retired 77 gigawatts (GW) of coal power stations between 2006 and 2010 and aims to retire a further 20 GW by 2015.*

*‘The US is also rapidly exploiting the global shift to renewable energy, coming second only to China for installed renewable energy.*

[Read our latest report for more on the global response to climate change and how Australia measures up.](#)

*‘What’s clear is that the world is building towards a tipping point of action and nations are now fiercely competing for low carbon investment. The global energy transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy is now underway.*

*‘Whereas in the past China and the US may have been viewed as laggards, today they have stepped up to the plate and are providing substantial global leadership.*

*‘Australia continues to lag behind the rest of the world on tackling climate change. There is much more to be done if we are to protect Australians*

from a changing climate.'

Amanda McKenzie, CEO Climate Council

### **Australia's second hottest October**

According to the Bureau of Meteorology, October 2014 was the second highest on record.

*'October was a very warm, and generally dry, month for Australia. Maximum temperatures during October were warmer than average across nearly the entire continent and highest on record across parts of the southern mainland. All States and the Northern Territory, except Tasmania, observed monthly maxima in the top ten records for October. Minimum temperatures were cooler than average for large parts of northern Australia, especially in the Top End, and warmer than average elsewhere; with a large area of southeastern Western Australia recording its warmest October monthly minima. The national maximum temperature anomaly of +2.76 °C was the highest on record for October (previous record +2.63 °C in 1988), while minimum temperatures were the eighth-warmest on record at 1.06 °C warmer than average. This yielded Australia's second-warmest October on record in terms of mean temperatures, with an anomaly of +2.13 °C.*

*Rainfall was below average over all mainland States except Western Australia and also below average for parts of Tasmania. Nationally, it was the seventh-driest October on record (area-averaged rainfall 59% below mean). It was especially dry across South Australia, which recorded its driest October on record, while large areas of central Australia and the southeastern mainland recorded October rainfall in the lowest 10% of records. '*

<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/current/month/aus/summary.shtml>;

### **Werribee River Volcanic Gorge Environmental Restoration Project:**

In 2014 PLEG, in partnership with Port Philip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and Western Water conducted extensive work beside the Werribee River. This major project covers the whole cross section of the gorge; from riverside and river flats, escarpments & up to the grassland at the top of the valley. Work at this site has been challenging: involving rabbit & weed control, and planting on a very steep escarpment.

The on-going Werribee River Volcanic Gorge Environmental Restoration Project has been underway since 2005. A broad aim of the project is to improve the quality of water downstream. This will result in cleaner water flowing into Port Philip Bay. It will address local food sustainability by improving the quality of the water flowing to the Werribee South market gardens, improving both the reliability & quality of fresh food grown locally. This ambitious project addresses major objectives. It will protect the Werribee River with its precious native vegetation & wildlife, as well as providing a wildlife corridor through this region. It will link local woodland remnants, preventing these from becoming isolated & biologically unviable "islands". It provides a link to Toolern & Arnolds Creeks, providing wildlife corridors through Melton. It should provide a link to a future wildlife corridor along the Melton Reservoir to Long Forest Mallee, through Bacchus Marsh to the Lerderderg Gorge. This corridor will protect habitat of local wildlife, including Koalas, Platypus, Rakali, Kangaroos & Wallabies. It also protects corridors along which birds migrate. Many birds from northern Australia (including Rainbow Bee-eaters, Woodswallows and Kingfishers migrate here in the warmer months. They need these corridors so that they can travel through our increasingly urbanised region.

Work along the river began in 2005 at Exford when the group received a Port Philip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority Grant of \$10,700. Western Water contributed a further \$10,000 for boxthorn control works.

Works funded by this latest CMA grant have involved rabbit control by baiting, fumigation of warrens, shooting, & destruction of rabbit harbour, repair of a one kilometre rabbit proof fence prior to regeneration & revegetation of the area; as well as a rabbit proof fence 600 metres down the escarpment to the water's edge. Control also involves blocking warren entrances with rocks held down by wire netting. A new rabbit-proof fence has been placed around portion of steep slope above the Werribee River to allow the native vegetation to be restored. This is below a section of grassland along the top of the escarpment that was similarly rabbit-proofed three years previously. These complement a large rabbit-proof site built beside the river several years ago. A selection of indigenous plants have been planted here, safe



from marauding rabbits. It also involves seed collection of local native species to hold down soil, such as Kangaroo Grass for the Plains Grassland Area, Redleg Grass & native bluebells for the steep Escarpment, and Common Tussock Grass & river wattles for the Flood Plain. This has been followed by ongoing maintenance of the site.

The project also involves vigorous control of weeds such as Boxthorn, Aloes, Agaves, Prickly Pear, Serrated Tussock, Chilean Speargrass, Phalaras, Artichoke Thistle, Galenia, Prairie Ground Cherry, Blackberry, Spiny Rush & Sand Rocket.



Weed control above Blue Box Flat!

This project is a successful partnership between Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group, Western Water & Melbourne Water over several years. This year's project extends work already completed along almost three kilometres of the gorge & the completion of this stage will mean that most of the difficult terrain will have been treated.

This project could be the longest stretch of river (over 3 kilometres) restored in the region involving a community group in partnership with government

agencies. This is an ongoing project & is expected to continue into the future. The philosophy of restoration is to restore a functioning ecosystem whereby where natural regeneration will take place without relying simply on planting trees.

In 2014 Western Water & Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group were awarded the Keep Australia Beautiful / Sustainable Cities Award for Protection of the Environment for both environmental restoration & community education work along the river. This is PLEG's second Protection of the Environment Award, as they previously were awarded this in 2010.

### MELTON WILDLIFE

#### Strange cormorant at Eynesbury



Nora Peters writes:

*'I found this odd looking bird at Eynesbury Lake at lunch time today, any ideas? Little Pied Cormorant X ....the neck looks like a Darter, body Little Pied, white feathers at ears, beak shape as Little Pied, but facial skin very pale like a Little Black*



*Cormorant, feet webbed! I was looking at the Little Pied Cormorant in the nest and I saw two babies but couldn't get a sharp enough image, just a 30 video!*

Dave Torr of Birdlife Australia states:

*'Very strange - looks a bit like a juvenile Little Pied but that should have white on the neck. I can find no evidence of any hybrids of this species.'*



Strange cormorant at Eynesbury

### Bearded Dragon at Pinkerton



Bearded Dragon at Pinkerton

This large Bearded Dragon (*Pogona barbata*) was recently found in farmland adjacent to Pinkerton Forest. About 40 cm in length it was sunning itself on a gravel track, before running off into a Melicytus bush growing over a rabbit warren, beside the track. Their smaller relatives are found locally; Jacky Lizards in Eynesbury & Mountain Dragons in the Pyrete Forest. The Bearded Dragon is larger & more robust than the smaller local dragons, with more pronounced head spines (& expandable beard). These fearsome looking lizards are both inoffensive & harmless!

This would appear to be outside their usual range as according to DEPI 'Bearded Dragons are generally found in the warmer parts of Victoria, north of Melbourne'. 'The preferred habitat of Bearded Dragons are trees in woodlands and dry sclerophyll (*Eucalyptus*) forests where they can observe their territory, catch prey, bask in the sun and sleep.'

[http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/205858/Bearded\\_Dragon.pdf](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/205858/Bearded_Dragon.pdf);



Bearded Dragon found by Nora Peters in Melton

Perhaps this may be an escapee? Nora Peters also photographed one a year or so ago between Melton & Toolern Vale, so perhaps their range may extend further south than maps allow. Photos on Nature out West:

<http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/melton-nature-out-west/>;

*'Hic sunt dracones'*

### Koel at Brookfield:

#### **New bird species for Brookfield (& Melton)**

Roslyn Mohr, Community Manager of Lifestyle Brookfield writes:

*'Not sure if this is an unusual observation but last Friday morning we heard the distinctive call of a Common Koel here in the community. I know they're not a regular visitor to Victoria (I commonly hear them on my brothers property near Brisbane) but wondered if they've been sighted in the area before? I didn't see the bird but do know the call well, unless you know of another bird call that's similar.'*

As Roslyn states, they have a distinctive call. A loud, penetrating 'coo-ee' call. A description of these birds, & their call, can be found on: Birds in Backyards:

*'Most Koels migrate from Australia to New Guinea and probably eastern Indonesia and even further*



north, but some remain in northern Australia. During breeding season, they are found in northern and eastern Australia, south to about Nowra, New South Wales, although occasional birds are encountered further south.'

<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Eudynamys-orientalis>;

Later in the month Ros heard the Koel once again. Dave Torr of Birdlife Australia writes: 'they are becoming fairly regular around Melbourne in summer now'

Not only a new species, but a new summer migrant to Melton.

### Kangaroo sighting from Melbourne train



Kangaroos beside Exford Road at Melton South

MEG birdwatcher Pam writes:

'Saw a group of wallabies? About 4 or 5, hopping along near Atherstone (seen from train going in towards Southern x just now). Are wallabies smaller than kangaroos and white underneath? Always worry about kangaroos or wallabies near houses and roads ... I hope this group will be ok!'

Probably the group of kangaroos that have been wandering around the area for a couple of years. They may have been a group of young ones. Wallabies don't usually live in groups & don't usually move overland in open country. Wallabies are more usually very dark, & yellowish underneath. They usually move singly along the creeks & rivers. There is a pair living in the lower Arnolds Creek gorge; as well as lower Toolern Creek & Werribee River volcanic gorge.

### Trail camera photo of the month:

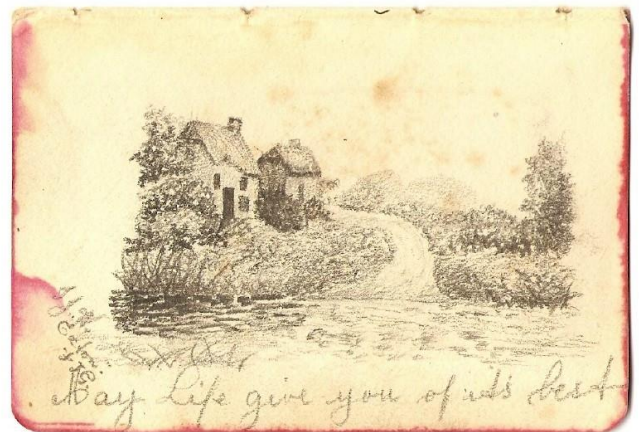


Simon Jolly of Parwan writes:

"This month we put the trail camera in front of a sheep carcass hoping to attract some of the eagles that are always hanging about. No eagles but we did get a lot of ravens up close."

### HAPPY CHRISTMAS

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year.  
Take care on the road!



*'May life give you of its best'*

Old pen drawing ca1908

