



MELTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP

No. AOO4OO49F

A.B.N 47 411575097

PO BOX 481 MELTON 3337

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2015

Volume 104

CORPORATE MEMBERS

Western Land Services



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

Phone 03 9747 0855 or email info@westernland.com.au;

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 February 21st 2015. 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

A rainy beginning to Summer! Very much appreciated after a very dry year. John Bentley of Friends of Melton Botanic Garden advises we had 38.6mm from 3 - 7 December. Unfortunately followed soon after by bushfires in Central &

Northern Victoria. 2014 has seen virtually drought conditions. Anecdotal advice has it that we expect a hot dry summer. Again, very challenging conditions & no doubt lots of watering.

MEG EVENTS IN DECEMBER

Blackwood: BBQ & picnic cancelled

MEG's end of year BBQ & picnic at Blackwood on Sunday 7th December was cancelled this year due to the wet weather. Even if the rain stopped the ground would have been muddy, slippery & hazardous underfoot. We will re-schedule the BBQ in the New Year.

Weeding at Brookfield



On Wednesday 10th December Daryl of MEG joined Brookfield Landcare members Lois, John & Ray at a working bee organised by the Brookfield members, to weed the wildflowers planted in weed matting on Tree Planting Day. Weeds at first looked rampant & daunting but were found to be isolated to holes in the weed mat. Most were easily pulled out due to soft soil after recent rains. Edges will be brushcut to quarantine the matting from the

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

adjacent grass (& to protect it from grass cutting operations).

The wildflowers are doing exceptionally well! Podolepis, Pelargonium rodneyanum, Sticky Everlasting, Basalt Daisy, Wahlenbergia (Native Bluebills) are flowering profusely. Several Eastern Common Froglets (*Crinia signifera*) were found living under the weed mat, among the bases of the plants in holes in the matting; illustrating that the matting is providing wildlife habitat as well as protection for the wildflowers. The success of the wildflowers demonstrates the worth of the weed mat.

Many thanks to Melbourne Water as this project was funded by a Melbourne Water River Health Incentives Grant; & many thanks to Gerard Morel for suggesting this method of planting, & for showing us how to install it!



Sticky Everlasting Daisy at Brookfield



Pelargonium rodneyanum at Brookfield



Drumsticks at Brookfield



Basalt Daisy at Brookfield



Eastern Common Froglet

COMING MEG EVENTS IN 2015

MEG BBQ & picnic

MEG's BBQ & picnic will be re-scheduled in the New Year

Cleanup Australia Day

Brookfield, Sunday, 1st March.

Planting Red Gums in Clarkes Road wetland

Planting at Melton Christian College

Wildflowers beside MCC carpark

Planting beside Church of Latterday Saints

Tree planting at Arnolds Creek at High street

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Werribee Wagtails: Melton Bird Survey

Geraldine Kelly led a bird survey by the Werribee Wagtails a bird survey at several sites around Melton on Tuesday 2nd December (Strathtulloh Woodland, Melton Botanic garden & Melton Gilgai Woodland in Harkness Road):

'Just come back from Wagtail outing. One concerning thing was that there were cattle in the Harkness Rd Woodland I don't know if they should be in there. It was a very successful day enjoyed by all. We saw Diamond Firetails and Brown Goshawk nest with Dad and 2 chicks in it at Harkness Rd. We flushed out 2 Snipe at the Botanic Gardens and saw 3 cuckoo species: Horsfield's, Shining and Fantail at Toolern Creek Park. A wonderful day had by all they were very impressed with Melton.'



Brown Goshawk nestling at Harkness Road

Geraldine also reported cattle in Harkness Road reserve. *'One concerning thing was that there were cattle in the Harkness Rd Woodland I don't*

know if they should be in there' This was reported to Melton Council. Geraldine led a MEG visit to Harkness Road the following morning to check on the cattle. There were no cattle to be seen but fresh vehicle tracks & a (hastily) repaired fence north of the reserve! Well done Melton Council!



Partially repaired fence in Harkness Road

Nora's bird observations

Nora Peters describes a similar walk in the Botanic Garden a few days previous:

'Hi all

I don't know if new species for MBG but 6 days ago I heard a Rufous Songlark (Whichy-poo-whichy-poo) at the far end of Ryans Creek near Alan Mance's. I couldn't get a photo then but yesterday one was on the power lines singing its heart out when I checked out the Willie Wagtail nest, (two babies and one egg yet to hatch, got a better look today). The photo I got of the Rufous Songlark was terrible as taken at 7pm and no lighting! I went back today at 4pm and found it again, got a few shots :) it seems to be staying in the fenced off grasslands at the back of the creek.



Rufous Songlark singing at Melton Botanic Garden

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Secretary: Doug Godsil
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Today I also spooked the Latham's Snipe again but only saw one today where as I saw two yesterday. There was a White-faced Heron in the pond as well as a couple of Masked Lapwings and two Black-fronted Dotterels, (one a juvie, I think) there was a Dusky Woodswallow (J) in the grasslands too. I went down to the big lake several Straw-necked Ibis, Little Black Cormorant. Eight Great Cormorants flying overhead, Loads of Rainbow Lorikeets and all the usual suspects :) haven't had time to process all the species but certainly most enjoyable 1 ½ hours for me'
Regards, Nora

Snipe Count at Melton Botanic Garden

Friends of Melton Botanic Gardens conducted a survey along Ryans Creek for Latham's Snipe, led by Geraldine Kelly & wetland bird expert Dr Birgitta Hansen. Dr Hansen mapped out a transept line so that future such surveys can be carried out in a systematic manner, to ensure consistency of records.

'Did the Snipe count this morning 3 in total but we saw and heard Rufous Songlark in that same position, also heard a kookaburra which is a first for me down there.'

Ryans Creek in Melton Botanic Garden is a hotspot for these endangered migratory birds

Bird Survey at Werribee River



On Thursday 4th December Iain Denham & Dave Torr of Birdlife Australia led a group of bird experts on a bird survey at Blue Box & Pinkerton Flats along the Werribee River beside Western Water's Treatment Plant at Surbiton Park. Iain took this photo of a Southern Boobook Owl in a tree hollow enjoying the morning sun at Blue Box Flat.

Bookook Owl in hollow tree beside Werribee River
Dave Torr writes:

'Attached are the surveys on the river flats we did on Thursday. Unfortunately no Diamond Firetails but lots of other finches. Highlight of the morning was actually when we had morning tea at Exford and we had a Black Falcon fly over being mobbed by a Hobby and a Kestrel!'

A total of 34 species were seen:

Red-rumped Parrot	White Cockatoo	Rainbow Lorikeet
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Whistling Kite	Brown Goshawk
Brown Falcon	White-faced Heron	Black Duck
Wood Duck	Grey Teal	Coot
Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo		Kookaburra
Sacred Kingfisher	Southern Boobook	Darter
Starling	Willie Wagtail	Grey Fantail
Superb Fairy-wren	Red-browed Finch	Magpie
Magpie-lark	White-plumed Honeyeater	Little Raven
Welcome Swallow	Brown Thornbill	Crested Shrike
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike		Skylark
Goldfinch	Blackbird	Zebra Finch

Werribee River Fish Habitat Hotspot

On 4th December fish scientists Renae Ayres & Fern Haymes of Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) with Stefanie Wabnik & Bill Moulden of Melbourne Water gave a presentation on fish of the Werribee River, at the Werribee & District Angling Club in Werribee. Present were a mix of local environmentalists & members of angling clubs, as effective fish conservation needs to involve both anglers & environmentalists!

The presentation was about the fundamentals of fish habitat and why it's important for healthy waterways, as well as on-ground works to improve its condition of the Werribee River. This project is a partnership between government agencies, recreational fishers and community members including ARI, Melbourne Water, Fisheries Victoria, VRFish, Native Fish Australia and the Australian Trout Foundation. It's supported by funding from the Australian Government and Victorian recreational fishing licence fees.

The Werribee estuary is of major importance. The estuary is both habitat, spawning site & nursery for the Black Bream, which is of importance to local fishermen. Estuaries are affected by upstream activities, ie changing land use, urbanisation, pollutions, fires & floods. 45% of Victorian estuaries are modified habitats. Population size of fish is limited by waterway conditions. Degraded

habitat is poor habitat, leading to reduced fish numbers.

Different fish need different habitats & many fish migrate between different habitats. Habitat provides food, shelter, reproduction, dispersal & connectivity. Streamside vegetation reduces erosion & shades the water from the sun's heat & provides food (ie insects), as well as nursery areas. When trees eventually fall into the river they provide yet more habitat. Blackfish for instance need hollow logs for spawning. Drought refuge sites are also crucial as fish need to be able to move into deeper, more permanent waterholes in times of drought.

There is a need to improve habitat conditions by rehabilitating degraded habitat. Improving habitat for native fish helps them compete more effectively with exotic species (especially Mosquito Fish). We need to plant native vegetation & remove exotic weeds (ie elms & willows). Willows have dense roots preventing Platypus from burrowing in the banks. We need to replace snags in rivers to create fish habitat, as well as protect river banks from stock (by creating water points away from the river). Installing in-stream habitat- snags, logs, rocks. This also controls erosion & stabilises banks. Lattices of recycled logs filled with twigs, leaves & root balls provide 'fish motels'! Environmental flows enhance fish habitat & migration. Since 2012, 10% of flows from Lake Merrimu are environmental flows. Water flows are linked to fish spawning cycles. Black Bream may have achieved an equilibrium with nutrients from farmland leaking into the estuary

Many fish species migrate to sea to spawn ie Grayling, Galaxids & Eels. Numerous obstructions to fish movement along the river hinder these migrations, including fords & culverts. Creation of fish ways, designed for different species, can assist fish migration. The biggest obstruction by far to fish migration is the Exford Dam. Eels are able to climb up the dam wall to enter the upper reaches of the Werribee River, but smaller species such as Galaxids are trapped below the weir. Creation of a fishway here should be considered.

We also need to clean up rubbish (as well as not creating it!) Discarded fishing lines are especially hazardous to native wildlife (including Platypus & waterbirds). Education is crucial to address issues

of fish conservations. Angling clubs will have an important role here.



Hoary-headed Grebe drowned in discarded net
(provided by John Forrester)

Illegal commercial netting of Black Bream was discussed by anglers as a major problem affecting fish sustainability. Anecdotal comments at the meeting suggested this was happening at least 6 nights a week! Even undersized fish are not safe as these are said to be minced to make fish patties. There was lively discussion that illegal netting should be given a greater priority in the courts, as well as improved community education.

COMING ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Energy and Sustainability Expo: Melton

Library: Saturday 31st January 10am - 2pm

Linda Bradburn, Environmental Educator, Melton City Council writes:

"Would you like to showcase your group and have a display stall at our Energy and Sustainability Expo?"

Saturday 31 January 10am to 2pm (Opens at 9am, you will need to be set up by 9.30am and not pack up until 2pm)

'You can display information about your group and the activities that you are involved in. This may be an opportunity to recruit new members so bring along membership forms and activity information. You may want to have a plant display, information about bird watching, gardening etc

'We will provide a trestle table and two chairs for each stall area. The expo is in the library and most stalls will be located on the ground floor area (and there is a lift). You can bring your own display boards as long as they fit in your allocated space.

'If you would like to do a short 15 minute talk about a topic of interest to your group then let us know. We will look at how many applications we get.

'Various companies will be displaying energy, sustainability, gardening and related equipment. There will be talks and demonstrations during the day as well as some great prizes to be won.

'I have enclosed the application form. If you are interested in doing a talk please put that in the "stand description" section.

'If you don't want a stall then just come along and enjoy the event. There will be great give aways and lots more so put the date in your diary and invite your group along.

'Please let me know if you have any queries. Thank you.'

Linda Bradburn, *Environmental Educator*, Melton City Council, 9747 7200, www.melton.vic.gov.au;

Platypus Surveys

'systematic visual survey method'

Stefanie Wabnik of Melbourne Water & Josh (Cesar) 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

PLEG Platypus Surveys

PLEG will be conducting 4 Platypus Surveys in 2015 using the 'systematic visual survey method'. This will consist 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", as per Stefanie's suggestion above.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Victorian Government to scrap alpine cattle grazing trial

Environment Minister Lisa Neville says

"This is a policy that we introduced legislation on back in 2005-06

"The evidence that was presented to the Parliament and to the government of the day was that cattle grazing was doing significant environmental harm in our alpine national parks. "We believe the science hasn't changed.

"There's been a lot of work that's been done around reducing fuel loads, and what the evidence says is that it doesn't reduce the fire risk. In fact, it could increase it, because of what it is that cattle will eat when they're in the National Park."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-10/alpine-grazing-trial-scrapped/5956666>;

2014 Hottest Year on record!

According to the Bureau of Meteorology, 2013 was the hottest year on record in Australia.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-01-03/2013-was-the-hottest-year-on-record-for-australia/5183040>;

However a special record breaking effort has seen our hottest day on record in 2014!

14 of the 15 warmest years on record were in the Twenty-first Century!

<http://www.theage.com.au/environment/climate-change/hottest-year-on-record-as-climate-talks-heat-up-20141203-11zfcc.html>;

Duck Season

Duck season is once again imminent. Hopefully the new Victorian Government will not approve a duck season for 2015! Everyone interested in protecting our native wildlife should let the Government aware of their views.

MELTON WILDLIFE

Chequered Copper Butterfly

This Chequered Copper Butterfly aka Grassland Copper Butterfly (*Lucia limbaria*) was recently photographed in Bush's Paddock by Western Land Services environmental contractor & expert (& MEG member Peter Sell). The larvae are cared for by ants. A very impressive little butterfly!



According to Butterflies of Australia (Common & Waterhouse):

'The adults are inconspicuous as they fly close to the ground & settle frequently on the surface & or on herbage. They also feed on flowers of low growing flowers such as Helipterum or Helichrysum. The larvae usually feed during the day, but sometimes in drier more inland localities at night, on Oxalis corniculata (yellow wood sorrel) & both larvae & pupae are attended by numerous small black ants Iridomyrmex sp which excavate tunnels up to five or six centimetres in depth in the soil at the base of the oxalis plant.'

There is interesting information on this butterfly on:

<http://www.butterflygardening.net.au/PDFs/factsheets/ChequeredCopper.pdf>;
<http://www.butterflygardening.net.au/PDFs/luciaLimbariaFS.pdf>; &
<http://www.learnaboutbutterflies.com/Australia%20-%20Lucia%20limbaria.htm>

Kangaroos in Eynesbury

These two female kangaroos with joeys were part of a small mob of Eastern Grey Kangaroos fairly close to Eynesbury Lake. They appear to be becoming more tolerant to the approach of people, as this photo demonstrates. This is not necessarily a good thing as they are safer being afraid of people.



Two Turtles at Eynesbury Lake



These two Snake-necked Turtles (accompanied by a Coot) were seen sunning themselves on a log on a warm summer December morning. One turtle has been seen on occasions throughout 2014, in hot weather. However, this is the first time that two turtles have been seen here. Hopefully they may be a pair.

MEG LIBRARY

MEG has a library of books, reports & CD's which are available for reference or borrowing:

Books

Flora of Melbourne

Australian Plants Society Maroondah

Plants of Melbourne's Western Plains

Australian Plants Society, Keilor Plains Group

Plains Wandering

Ian Lunt, Tim Barlow & James Ross

Attracting Frogs to your Garden

Kevin Casey

A Field Guide to Frogs of Australia

Martyn Robinson

Bush Regeneration: recovering Australian landscapes

Robin A Buchanan

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Attracting Wildlife to your Garden

Rodger Elliot

Habitat Corridors: their role in wildlife

management & Conservation Andrew F Bennett

Birds of the Long Forest 1885 - 2005*Hewish, Ward, Bugg & Munday***Green Guide to Birds of Australia***Peter Rowland***Photographic Guide to Birds of Australia**

Jim Flegg

Long Forest: Mallee at the Back Door*Friends of Werribee Gorge & Long Forest Mallee***Jacks Walk Notes: Day walks in Bacchus***Marsh area* Jack Myers**The Nestbox Book***Gould League of Victoria***Trees of Victoria: an illustrated field guide***L. Costermans***Insects of Australia***E. Riek***Trees of Australia***H. Oakman***Orchids of Bendigo***Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc***Greenpages Directory 2008***Eco-culture & sustainability lifestyle***Australian Native Plants**

A M Blomberry

Native Trees & Shrubs of South-eastern Australia

Leon Costermans

Garden Book of Native Plants

Alan Seale

Trees of Victoria & Adjoining Areas

Leon Costermans

Seed Collection & Propagation

Pentland Hills L&care & Natural Heritage Trust

Macedon Ranges Flora

Riddells Creek Landcare

Environmental Weeds: Guide for SE Australia

Kate Blood

Birds in Frankston & Mornington Peninsular

Larry Wakefield & BOCA

Greeniology: how to live well, & be green

Tanya Ha

Sites of Botanical Significance in the Western

Region of Melbourne Keith McDougall

Moths of Victoria Peter Marriott**Part 1: Silk Moths & allies****Part 2: Tiger Moths & allies****Part 3: Waves & Carpets****Part 4: Emeralds & Allies****All About Australian Bush Gardens**

Maloney, Walker & Mullins

Beginners Guide to Wetland Bird identification

Melbourne Water

Revegetation: what to plant, where & how in the Moorabool Shire area Grow West**Environmental Reports****Extension of Services: Werribee catchment**

Melbourne Water

Melton Sewerage Upgrade

Western Water

Port Philip Native Vegetation Plan

PPW CMA

Western Water 2007 Annual Report

Western Water

Regional River Health Strategy

PPW CMA & Melbourne Water

Kororoit Creek: Regional Strategy 2005-2030

Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Melton Shire

Securing Our Natural Future: land & biodiversity

Victorian Government

Environmental Reports on CD**State of Catchments in the West Seminar 2006**

PP&W CMA

River Landscapes

Australian Government- Land & Water Australia

Kororoit Creek: Regional Strategy 2005-2030

Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Melton Shire

Native Vegetation plan 2006

PP&W CMA

L& Water Australia

Research reports & publications 1990 – 2009

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Happy New Year to everyone!

Take care on the road!



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