

MELTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP

No. AOO4OO49F

A.B.N 47 411575097

PO BOX 481 MELTON 3337

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Volume 105

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 March

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

FEBRUARY

A grey drizzly day to begin February. But not much rain since then. However, widespread rain resulted in a happy Valentines Day! Again not much until violent thunderstorms swept across the state later

in the month, giving us about 5mm. The last day of February had a sting in its tail, with thunderstorms, rain & destructive winds.

MEG EVENTS IN FEBRUARY

Birdwalk at Caroline Springs



On Saturday 28th February MEG Bird Group hosted its first bird walk for 2015. Nora Peters led Annette, Wayne & Ricky on a bird walk along the wetlands at Caroline Springs, beginning at the lake beside the Western Highway.

'We arrived at the carpark at 8.45. Masked Lapwings were resting on the ground & a Purple Swamphen & lone Silver Gull were sifting through the rubbish on the ground. The building seems to be uninhabited. The weather wasn't so good, grey & spitting with rain, but it brightened up later! Birds to note near the car park were Welcome Swallows flitting around, White-plumed Honeyeaters & a few Willie Wagtails!

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

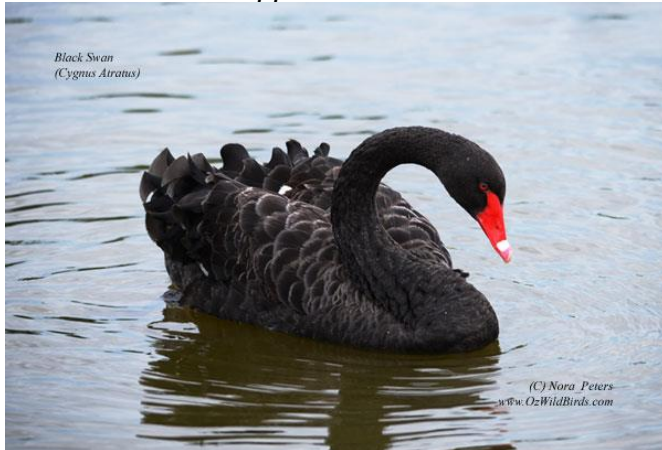


Category Winner

Keep Australia Beautiful Victoria
Sustainable Cities Awards 2013

sustainability.vic.gov.au/KABV

'We started the walk in the rain at the front lake where there were several White Ibis, Eurasian Coots, Chestnut Teal, Grey Teal, Mallards, Black Swans, Dusky Moorhens, Pacific Black Ducks, one white duck! Indian Mynahs, Red Wattlebirds, White-plumed Honeyeaters & Grey Fantails with youngsters. We watched the birds for a while from the landing & saw an enormous carp come to the surface & then disappear.



'We then walked toward the wetlands & saw an Australasian Grebe diving in the water in the first pond. The Ibis were walking around near the houses over the back. A Little Black Cormorant flew past, followed by a Little Pied Cormorant. Listened but couldn't hear any frogs, much to the disappointment of Ricky. He's about 9 years old & very conscious of the environment. As we moved on we saw a female Magpie-lark. There were Mallards, several Coots with their youngsters & two Black Swans that came to see what was on offer.



Lesser Wanderer Butterfly

'Over the bridge a Red Wattlebird flew past & a Little Raven sat high in a tree. We paused on the bridge & watched the baby Black Ducks following

close to mum & dad. A Purple Swampphen perched on the railing, the swans moved in a bit closer then wandered off. We continued over the bridge & along the side of the waterway. Still lots of Coots, Black Ducks & Mallards. Plenty to watch!



Purple Swampphen



Juvenile Grey Fantail

'Ricky spotted a Tiger Moth in the reeds by the edge of the water & a Lesser Wanderer Butterfly. I've only encountered this butterfly once before, here at home [Toolern Vale] & a Black Christmas Beetle. He also spotted Harlequin Bugs, Soldier Beetles, & two different Damselflies. I showed them a very small native bee on a yellow flower (weed). As we watched the Coots & Ducks, a lone Black-fronted Dotterel was picking its way along the shoreline, but as soon as we got a bit closer it took off! In a Grevillea bush Ricky counted four New Holland Honeyeaters. A few Little Corellas flew overhead & settled in the trees near the houses. At the first cross-over we came back down the other side. Annette pointed out a Little Wattlebird & a male Blackbird scooted under the bushes. Two Loriekeets & a few Goldfinches flew

*across, House & Tree Sparrows, Spotted
Turtledove, Rock Pigeons & Starlings.*

*'Not much else to see but a very enjoyable walk.
32 species of birds- not bad for suburbia!'*
Nora

COMING MEG EVENTS

Planting trees at Navan Park

Navan Park Saturday 6th June 10.00 am

Planting trees around Navan Park lake

Planting trees in Clarkes Road wetland

Clarkes Road wetland Sunday 5th July 10.00 am

Planting trees in man-made wetland beside
Clarkes Road in Melton South TBA

National Tree Day

Brookfield Sunday July 26th 10.00

Meet at Arnolds Creek in Black Dog Drive (near
the Black Dog Drive bridge) just west of the
roundabout at the corner of Coburns Road & Black
Dog Drive. There is a small kindergarten carpark
here & access is very easy. The site is very child
friendly. Melways Map 336 Ref G11. Details:
<http://www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au/>;

Planting at Melton Christian College

Wildflowers beside MCC carpark TBA

Planting beside Church of Latterday Saints

Tree planting at Arnolds Creek at High Street. The
large pile of sludge removed from Arnolds Creek in
2014 has been removed. MEG will be planting
here in the weedless space that has been left.
TBA

Bird Week in Melton 2015

Sunday 18th October – Saturday 24th October

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MEG will be hosting Bird Week in Melton once
again in October.

Opening of Bird Week

Sunday 18th October

Bird walk at Caroline Springs

TBA

Bird walk at Eynesbury

TBA

Birds at Melton Botanic Garden

Friday 23rd October 10.00 – 12.00

Local bird expert Geraldine Kelly (of MEG &
FMBG) will discuss birds & their habitat at the
FMBG depot

BIRDWATCHING IN MELTON 2015

MEG birdwatching events will commence in
February. All MEG walks are easy walking & child
friendly, on defined paths. Other dates & venues
TBA

Sunday 29th March Little Blind Creek

Little Blind Creek flows through northern Melton,
meeting Toolern Creek at Hannah watts Park. It is
home for large numbers of birds. The many old
hollow trees provide nest sites for many hollow-
nesting birds & possums.

Meet in carpark beside Melton Guide Hall at the
corner of Yuille Street & Pinkerton Street on
Sunday 1st August, at 9.00.

Saturday 25th April Toolern Creek: Big Red

There is a footpath that runs along the creek. The
creek forms a corridor for birds & other wildlife
through Melton, from Toolern Vale in the north to
the Toolern Regional Park in the south, thence to
the Werribee River. Mel Ref 337 C9

Sunday 24th May Arnolds Creek: Brookfield

This is MEG's primary environmental revegetation
site. Meet at Arnolds Creek in Black Dog Drive
(near the Black Dog Drive bridge) just west of the
roundabout at the corner of Coburns Road & Black
Dog Drive. There is a small kindergarten carpark
here & access is very easy. The site is very child
friendly. Melways Map 336 Ref G11.

Other proposed Bird Watching venues

Toolern Regional Park
Strathtulloh Woodland
Melton Gilgai Woodland
Eynesbury Forest
Long Forest Mallee

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Birding at Pinkerton & Eynesbury Forest

On Sunday 15th February Birdlife Australia (BLA) &
Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group (PLEG)
hosted a bird survey led by BLA's Dave Torr.

These surveys, held quarterly, attract birders from
all over Melbourne, & sometimes further afield.

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/>

Despite the hot day, eleven people participated in this survey, at Pinkerton Forest, Bush's Paddock & Eynesbury Forest. Pinkerton Forest & Bush's Paddock are not usually open to the public. These sites are home to a large variety of both wetland & dry woodland birds. About 140 bird species have been recorded at Pinkerton & about 90 at Eynesbury to date.



Birdwatching at Pinkerton irrigation dam



Lunch in the shade at Pinkerton

We saw a total 107 bird species:

Pinkerton Forest	40
Bush's Paddock	19
Eynesbury	48

Black Swan	Australian Shelduck	Freckled Duck
Wood Duck	Black Duck	Shoveler
Chestnut Teal	Blue-billed Duck	Musk Duck
Asian Grebe	Hoary-headed Grebe	White Ibis
Straw-necked Ibis	White-faced Heron	Pelican
Great Cormorant	Little Pied Cormorant	Darter
Nankeen Kestrel	Black-shouldered Kite	Whistling Kite
Swamp Harrier	Wedge-tailed Eagle	Coot
Dusky Moorhen	Purple Swamphen	Masked Lapwing
Common Pigeon	Black-fronted Dotterel	Spotted Dove

Crested Pigeon	Long-billed Corella	Crimson Rosella
Eastern Rosella	Sulphur-crested cockatoo	Galah
Red-rumped Parrot	Purple-crowned Lorikeet	
Horsfields Bronze-cuckoo		Superb Fairy-wren
Brown Treecreeper		White-plumed Honeyeater
Noisy Miner		Brown-headed Honeyeater
Red Wattlebird		Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Striated Pardalote	Australian Magpie	Dusky Woodswallow
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Willy Wagtail	Grey Fantail
Little Raven	Welcome Swallow	Jacky Winter
Tree Martin	Little Grassbird	Golden-headed Cisticola
Common Mynah	Common Starling	Common Blackbird
House Sparrow	Reed-browed Finch	Zebra Finch
European Goldfinch		

Dave Torr led the walk:

'Compared to same time last year, the number of species seen changed from 49 to 40 in Pinkerton, 15 to 19 in Bush's and 44 to 48 in Eynesbury. Eynesbury also rather quite good- numbers of the rare Freckled Duck. We spent a LOT of time on a very young cuckoo - and it was rather hot - so didn't survey as much as we normally do. A Diamond Firetail was found later in the day by one of the group'

Dave



Varied Sittella in Pinkerton forest

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Duck Season

Duck season is once again imminent. Once again our native wetland birds will run the gauntlet of duck shooters.

Our most familiar & well-loved ducks can be legally killed. These include: Chestnut-breasted Shelduck, Black Duck, Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal, Hardhead, Pink-eared, Wood Duck, Blue-winged Shoveler.

However not only (*so called*) legal game birds are killed by hunters. The wrath of duck hunters is also

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directed against both protected & endangered bird species. Last year large numbers of our most endangered wetland bird, the Freckled Duck, were targeted by so called 'sportsmen'. Other wetland birds such as Black Swans, Coots, Moorhens are also targeted. Legal protection is no real protection as wildlife officials seemed more concerned about protecting duck hunters from the attention of the wicked wildlife rescuers, than protecting endangered species from indiscriminate shooters. It will be interesting to see how many shooters are prosecuted for killing protected birds!

Ducks are easy marks on open day as they have no wariness of hunters. For most of the year there is very little activity in the wetlands, so ducks have little fear of humans. Duck kills are greatly reduced after open day as surviving ducks have quickly become gun-shy & wary of people.

Perhaps this could be addressed by visiting the wetlands in the weekend or week prior to duck opening. Perhaps even a noisy party or two, prior to opening day morning. During duck hunting season persons not holding appropriate game licenses are excluded from state game reserves, during shooting hours. However, these restrictions only apply during duck season, to reduce conflict between shooters & duck rescuers. Most wetlands are open to the public outside duck season. Even an increased presence of human visitors tends to make ducks nervous, if they are not normally used to people in the wetlands.

Hopefully by open day ducks can be made more nervous of people, giving the unarmed birds the proverbial 'sporting chance' against armed shooters. Make them nervous & gun-shy **before** they face the guns on open day!

According to Coalition against Duck Hunting: *'Tragically, despite very low waterbird numbers across eastern Australia, the new Victorian Labor government has called a 2015 recreational duck shooting season which will commence on Saturday March 21.'*

'According to the Department, approximately 500,000 birds die every year, but this does not include the wounded or illegally shot protected and threatened birds.'

<http://www.duck.org.au/>; &
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Coalition-Against-Duck-Shooting/147897351061>;

The song "Lay down your Guns" graphically illustrates this carnage on Youtube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GP-2R_IK5o&feature=youtu.be;

Letters should be sent to our politicians' letting them know people's views on duck shooting & that our votes will reflect this.

Australian Academy of Science brings climate change closer to home: The Conversation
According to *The Conversation* 16th February 2015:

'The Australian Academy of Sciences today released the new The Science of Climate Change: Questions and Answers. This is an extensively revised update of a similar publication in 2010. Its stated purpose...

'The Australian Academy of Sciences today released the new The Science of Climate Change: Questions and Answers. This is an extensively revised update of a similar publication in 2010. Its stated purpose is to "provide an understanding based on our present scientific knowledge, of some key questions about climate change".

'What is notable about the new publication (on which I was a member of the working group) is the extent to which it has moved to respond to the real-world needs of ordinary people, organisations and communities trying to understand what climate change means to them.

'It represents a determined attempt by scientists to be relevant to the everyday concerns of people and organisations, and to support – through the delivery of up-to-date scientific knowledge – those who want to take meaningful climate action.

Relevant knowledge, or 'what does it mean for me?'

'Both the 2015 and 2010 versions of the Q&A have sought to answer questions about climate change by bringing the best science to bear. But some of the questions in the earlier version, for example about climate change in the distant past, might only be of limited interest to the general public and

wouldn't contribute in obvious ways to debate about present-day climate change.

'So the latest version introduces two new questions that focus on the issues people talk about in the pub and on the train when they are trying to get their heads round climate change. How are extreme events changing? And how are sea levels changing?

'These are the things that people can easily see are likely to affect them personally. And they want to understand their exposure – how big is the risk, when will it affect me, how will it affect me?

'By bringing climate change firmly into the realm of people's everyday concerns about their and their family's well being, this new version will get people to think about taking action to address the challenge. This is crucial, because it is increasingly becoming clear that it is at the grassroots level that meaningful action is going to take place.

'Who will act?

We have spent years, even decades, arguing at the [highest international levels](#) about climate mitigation – who should be reducing their emissions, by how much and when, how can technology be transferred to help less-developed countries cut their emissions, and a million other esoteric and detailed questions that have really, in the final analysis, achieved very little.

'At the same time, the sceptics have had the ears of the great and the good at a domestic level, so that in Australia and many other countries very little, if anything, has been achieved to mitigate climate change. We will have to adapt to the [inevitable impacts](#).

'Yet although there is a vacuum in leadership at national and international levels, at the grassroots levels of households, community organisations and local governments, there is a growing recognition of this need to adapt. People and organisations begin to see that there's likely to be a financial penalty if they fail to act, and that there might be a commercial advantage in being an

early adopter. It is very clear to local governments along the coast, for instance, that they must act to ensure that today's [planning decisions](#) take into account future risks of flooding.

'These groups can almost be defined by their desire to keep their heads below the parapet – they are utility companies, farmers and agricultural enterprises, local governments and their employees. They are moving to protect their businesses and their stakeholders against the present and future effects of climate change and, where they can, to turn a profit through these early actions.

These people need and deserve information to support their willingness to undertake action and to provide them with authenticity and the authority to act. This new publication from the Academy has moved a considerable distance from the 2010 publication to address these needs. There is a much greater emphasis on present-day and future climate change. The question from 2010's version "What are the consequences of climate change?" has been replaced in the 2015 edition by the much more succinct "What are the impacts of climate change?". The answer, with the benefit of five years' extra knowledge, has been much extended.

'By delivering information on present-day and future changes, and how these will affect people and their environments, it provides those who are willing to act with the scientific evidence to justify action.

What do I need to do?

Finally, the new publication recognises that people and organisations want to know what they can do, what their governments can do, and what it might be unwise to do to address climate change impacts. A final, and new, question has been added: what does the science say about options to address climate change? This question provides a very introductory exploration of the triumvirate of mitigation, [geoengineering](#) and adaptation.

'The booklet also includes a very brief case study demonstrating that adaptation is possible and is already taking place, taking the example of the

response of Western Australia's [Water Corporation](#) to persistent drought and declining water resources.

'Although these elements are only a small part of the booklet (and indeed of the wider issue), they do show that action is possible, and that there can be penalties for making unwise and ill-considered choices.'

'Disappointingly for some, the booklet shows clearly that there are unlikely to be technological quick fixes. It highlights some of the potential pitfalls of geoengineering, for example, that solutions such as creating a shield in space totally fail to address ocean acidification. It won't come as news to many people, but there are no simple or easy solutions to climate change - if we don't change our ways, the world of our grandchildren and their children will be a very different one from ours today.'

<http://theconversation.com/australian-academy-of-science-brings-climate-change-closer-to-home-37529>;

Booklet on:

<https://www.science.org.au/climatechange>;

LOCAL WILDLIFE

Native Bees in Bacchus Marsh



Native Bee (*Homalictus megastigmus*)

These tiny but beautiful native bees (about 5mm in length) were discovered flying in & out of a tiny nest hole (about 2mm diameter) in the ground in Bacchus Marsh, by Paul Stephens. At least three such burrows were detected in the space of about half a square metre, in the sandy margins between pavers.

'There is a nest under our washing line with at least several hundred coming and going, around 2mm to 3mm long.'

Linda Bradburn (Melton Council Environmental Education Officer) referred the photo & description to Ken Turner of Melbourne Museum, who kindly identified them as *Homalictus megastigmus*, as follows:

'There is only one group of native bees in Australia that carry their pollen load on the underneath of their abdomen (as shown arrowed below) - most carry pollen on their legs.'

'This abdomen pollen carrying group belongs to the Family Halictidae & in the genus Homalictus. The green thorax & dorsal black coloured abdomen tells me this species is Homalictus megastigmus.'



Mr Walker's enhanced photo of bee carrying pollen



Pavers between which bees excavated their nests

'These bees are semi-social which means between 10-20 females will share a single nest entrance & they will share the duty of the digging & excavating the main vertical tunnel but then each

female will branch out laterally & dig their own network of up to 10 brood cells. Into each brood cell she will deposit a "pollen pudding" which is a mixture of pollen & nectar. She then lays an egg on top of the pollen pudding & seals up the cell & begins to provision the next cell. 'Mother never meets daughter & there is no division of labour as occurs in a fully social colony such as in the European Honeybee.'

Mr Turner adds that 'These bees are great pollinators so your vegie garden will love having these local bees.'

Many thanks to Linda Bradburn & Ken Walker for this identification. Details of these bees also on: <http://www.padil.gov.au/pollinators/pest/main/138371>;

<http://bie.ala.org.au/species/urn:lsid:biodiversity.org.au:afd:taxon:686122a5-fe09-437d-aae1-753df7d8f24d>; &

<https://sites.google.com/site/insectsoftasmania/hymenoptera2/suborder-apocrita---aculeate/superfamily-apoidea-bees/halictidae-burrowing-bees/genus-homalictus/homalictus-megastigmus>;

Birds at Eynesbury ornamental lake

Once again local bird photographer (& driving instructor) Nora Peters has taken some spectacular photos of birds at Eynesbury ornamental lake. Chestnut Teal, as well as several other ducks species, will be targeted by so called 'sportsmen' during this coming duck season.



Chestnut Teal (& Australasian Grebes behind)

The Freckled Duck is Australia's most endangered wetland bird & is rightly protected. However, legal protection will probably not be enough to spare

them from the hunters' guns. Last year many Freckled Ducks were targeted by ignorant or irresponsible shooters & killed. No hunters have been charged for this. The authorities seem to be more concerned about harassing duck rescuers than protecting critically endangered native birds.



Freckled Duck



Hoary-headed Grebe (juvenile)



Little Grassbird (juvenile)

Congratulations on the beautiful photos, especially of the Little Grassbird as these are hard to see & harder to photograph!

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