



MELTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP

No. AOO4OO49F

A.B.N 47 411575097

PO BOX 481 MELTON 3337

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER APRIL 2013

Winner of Melton Shire's 2009 Community Achievement Award for Community Project of the Year:
Arnolds Creek Biolink: creating a wildlife corridor through Melton

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 Facebook

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

NEXT MEG MEETING

MEG's next meeting will be Wednesday 17th April at 7.30 in Don Nardella's office in Alexandra Street (beside old Fire Station)

LONG HOT SUMMER(& BEYOND!)

According to the Bureau of Meteorology: 'In terms of both maximum and mean temperatures, summer 2012-13 was the warmest on record for Australia.' Also, 'Summer rainfall was below average for most of Australia, except for most of Western Australia and a strip extending along the east coast and adjacent hinterland from Mackay to southern New South Wales.'

<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/current/season/australia/summary.shtml>;

Summer temperatures continued well into March. We even had another Total Fire Ban Day!

According to 'The Age' (March 12th 2013) 'Melbourne's March is already deep into record heat territory.....All four previous events over the past 156 years happened in January or February, & the last one 52 years ago.

'Weatherzone senior meteorologist Brett Dutschke said warmer-than-normal ocean temperatures & a southerly shift in the jetstream meant there was little sign of autumn for much of southern Australia.'

Read more:

<http://www.theage.com.au/environment/weather/relief-on-its-way-at-last-but-not-for-long-20130312-2fx7k.html#ixzz2NeRcC3aT>;

Despite the dry, hot summer, our plant losses have not been excessive, possibly due to mulching & watering. Rain at the end of March finally relieved the situation, although these were followed by brief but violent storms.

MEG EVENTS IN MARCH

Clean Up Australia Day



Lunch at Hannah Watts Park

On Sunday 3rd March MEG participated in Cleanup Australia by cleaning up at our planting

President
Treasurer/Secretary
Meetings:

Daryl Akers Phone: 0438 277 252

Doug Godsil Environmental Consultant: Peter Sell
3rd Wednesday of the month, at 7:30, at Don Nardella's office in Alexandra St (beside old Fire Station)

email: darylakers@gmail.com

Facebook: Melton Environment Group

site at Brookfield. A total of 11 people participated, including Carmen, Jenny, Peter, Doug & Daryl of MEG were joined by visitors Karen, Khloe, Judith, Mehmet, Mayette & Aida. We picked up a total of 16 bags, mainly from storm drains, close to the road & close to fencelines. This was one more than last year's total of 15 bags.



Judith, Karen & Khloe



Mayette & Aida



Karen & Khloe

Again, takeaway food wrappings & drink containers comprised the bulk of the rubbish collected. An unusual discovery was a small pet

dog buried beside the creek had been uncovered by floodwaters. Fortunately only dried skin & bones remained in the mouldering pillow cover that was its shroud! There was even a discarded broken boogie board beside a neighbouring fence.



'Blame it on the boogie'

All adjourned to Hannah Watts Parks afterward for a BBQ supplied by City of Melton.

Birdwalk along Toolern Creek



On Sunday 24th March 10 people met at 'Big Red' beside the Western Freeway, for a bird walk along Toolern Creek; hosted by MEG & Friends of Toolern Creek. Flo & Daryl represented MEG, Linda & Chris represented FOTC & Nora brought her bird & photographic expertise. The walk along the creek was an easy one & we enjoyed a magnificent autumn morning. The shared bike/footpath accompanies Toolern Creek all the way through Melton, to Bridge Road, through Toolern regional Park as far south as Strathtulloh Woodland at Exford. Flo suggested that we organise a picnic here in the near future.

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 Alex&ra St (beside old Fire Station) at 7:30

email: daryljakers@gmail.com
Facebook: Melton Environment Group

We saw a total of 23 bird species, including:

Little Raven	Magpie
Galah	Long-billed Corella
Eastern Rosella	Red-rumped Parrot
Little Lorikeet	Rainbow Lorikeet
Black Duck	Wood Duck
White-plumed Honeyeater	Red Wattlebird
New-Holland Honeyeater	Brown Goshawk
Blue Wren	House Sparrow
Welcome Swallow	Starling
Mynah	Turtledove
Blackbird	Magpie Lark
Willy Wagtail	

A highlight of the walk was a sighting a pair of endangered Little Lorikeets. They were at first hard to identify due to sun glare & their position high in a tree. A local resident, Pam, who lives nearby thought they were Little Lorikeets. A close-up of a photo taken by Nora Peters plainly confirmed this identification. These tiny lorikeets are distinguished by their all-green colour & red faces, & no red underwings visible in flight. As these lorikeets are one of several declining & vulnerable woodland bird species it was good to see them here.



Little Lorikeets by Nora Peters

Pam observed after learning that these birds are declining:

"I had no idea the Little Lorikeets were endangered: remember enjoying a sighting of a pair near a nesting hollow last year, whilst walking along Little Blind Creek. Binoculars confirmed that they were little and not musk lorikeets: also I notice their call is different.

I was quite shocked and saddened to learn of this beautiful little bird's endangered status: over my years of walking along Little Blind Creek I can recall seeing and hearing, what appeared to be fairly substantial groups of them, chattering in the big hollow gum tree.

They were hard to distinguish with the naked eye from musk lorikeets, that they often seem to associate with, but with binoculars I spotted their little red faces. Also their high pitched call was quite noisy! They are spectacularly fast little flyers, too, quite a challenge to catch as they moved between the high branches.

Must admit I haven't seen or heard these groups over recent months, but I was hoping I would again this year. So when I saw and heard the pair on Sunday it was a treat for me."



Beneath the rock wall at Toolern Creek

We walked through a variety of landscapes, ranging from neat green parkland, beneath ancient gnarled Red Gums beside long deep pools & beside tall rocky cliffs. Toolern Creek is rich in biodiversity & is by far the most impressive of the Melton waterways. It forms a picturesque 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. Toolern Creek has been restored over several years, with many thousands of indigenous plants

having been planted by Friends of Toolern Creek. To date about 60 bird species have been observed along Toolern Creek. The large Rainbow Lorikeets were a conspicuous feature of the walk.

The sighting of the endangered Little Lorikeets demonstrates how valuable Toolern Creek is as wildlife habitat. The lower reaches of the creek are also home to the Platypus.

The next birdwalk will be at Eynesbury, Saturday 27th April 9.00 – 11.00

BIRDWATCHING IN MELTON

Eynesbury	Saturday 27 th April.
Strathulloh Woodland	May
Melton Botanic Garden	Sunday 30 th June
Toolern Regional Park	July
Melton Gilgai Woodland	August
Long Forest Mallee	September
Pyrete Forest	October
Westlakes	November

The MEG bird walks are for beginners, who have had no prior involvement in serious bird watching. All sites are easy walking, with no bushwalking involved.

MEG EVENTS IN APRIL

Working Bee at Brookfield

Saturday 20th April 10.00 - 12.00

Cleanup & weeding at Brookfield, prior to commencement of 2013 planting. 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 child friendly, with no steep slopes. Melways Map 336 Ref G11.

Birdwalk at Eynesbury

Saturday 27th April 9.00 – 11.00

There will be a birdwalk at Eynesbury, around the ornamental lake to the historic shearing shed & back, along the gravel walking track (no bushwalking required). Possibly finish at the bluestone cafe for snacks. We should see a variety of both wetland & woodland birds. Wear hats, walking shoes & sunscreen. Meet in the carpark beside the Discovery Centre. Melway 226 Ref H2 (or just follow the large roadside signs to Eynesbury)

PLANET ARK NATIONAL TREE DAY

MEG will again be participating in 2013 Planet Ark National Treeplanting Day on Sunday July 28th.

WATTLE DAY

MEG will be participating in Wattle Day by planting wattles at Brookfield on Sunday 1st September.

MEG CALENDER OF EVENTS

Tidy up at Brookfield	Saturday 20 th April
Birdwalk at Eynesbury	Saturday 27 th April
Birdwalk Strathulloh Woodland	May
Birdwalk Melton Botanic Garden	Sunday 30 th June
Birdwalk Toolern Regional Park	July
Treeplanting Day	Sunday 28 th July
Birdwalk at Melton Gilgai	August
Wattle Day tree planting	Sunday 1 st September
Birdwalk Long Forest Mallee	September
Birdwalk Pyrete Forest	October
Birdwalk Westlakes	November

All events are at Brookfield unless stated

COMING ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

VNPA Naturewatch

Grassland Monitoring Season

Plains Yam Daisy monitoring – April 2013

If counting frogs and moths isn't enough, you'll have a chance to survey the culturally significant Plains Yam Daisy in April 2013. The survey, to be led by Merri Creek Management Committee, will open to registration early next year. Stay tuned.

This project is supported by funding from the Australian Governments Caring for our Country Community Action Grants. NatureWatch is the Victorian National Parks Association's community monitoring program. The VNPA is dedicated to the protection of Victoria's unique natural environment and biodiversity'

Birding at Pinkerton, Bush's Paddock & Eynesbury: Sunday May 19th 9.30 – 3.00

Birdlife Australia & PLEG invites 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 80 at Eynesbury to date.

Dave Torr: 9749 5141 or davidtorr@gmail.com, Mob 0400 566 656 (BLA) or Daryl Akers: 9743 2495 (PLEG), or www.birdlife.org.au/events; Gates open 9.15am, walk starts 9.30

Meet at Pinkerton Gate - Pinkerton Forest
Pinkerton Forest is on Mt. Cottrell Rd (Melways Page 7 near the right side about 1/3rd the way up or Map 221 on newer Melways), which runs between Greig's Rd and Boundary Rd. From Greig's Rd there is a group of 2-3 houses on the right after about 2km – entrance to the forest is IMMEDIATELY after these.

If approaching from the south (Boundary Rd) Pinkerton Forest is IMMEDIATELY before the 1st house on the left.

Landcare & Biodiversity Walk: Werribee River Exford, Sunday 26th May 9.00 – 1.00

Join Western Water, Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group in partnership with Melbourne Water for a walk along the spectacularly beautiful Werribee River volcanic gorge at Western Water Recycled Water Plant & Exford. Everyone is welcome!

This is an opportunity to view massive weed control and revegetation works which have been ongoing since 2005. The results are now evident for everyone to see and enjoy.

Viewing highlights and short presentations by Melbourne Water, weed control contractors and Landcare members along the way will discuss:

- Plains grassland restoration
- Various methods of noxious weed control
- Monitoring of flora and fauna
- Rabbit control
- Natural regeneration of local plant species
- Aboriginal heritage

Morning tea at 11.00am will be provided at the halfway point (2km) at Exford Lookout. Meet at Western Water Recycled Water Plant car park, Butlers Rd, Melton at 8.45am for a 9.00am start Melway 221 Ref C5

Walk details:

Short Walk - 2km

for those finishing at morning tea time, transport will be arranged back to car park.

Longer Walk - 4km

There are two steep sections of 100 metres each on the walk, so a reasonable level of fitness is required for these sections; elsewhere the terrain is flat.

Sturdy walking shoes should be worn. Bring cameras, binoculars, water and hat, if required.

For information call 1300 650 422 or visit us at WesternWater.com.au; or Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group at: www.pinkertonforest.com; RSVP by 17 May Nicole (Western Water) on 9218 5522 or email feedback@westernwater.com.au; or Daryl Akers (PLEG) on 0438 277 252.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Unfortunately, the recycling message is not getting through to everyone. Despite the best efforts of most Australians, it seems not everyone is getting into the spirit of Cleanup Australia.

According to Greenpeace Australia:

'beverage and packaging producers led by Coca Cola have stopped effective government action across Australia and have even taken the Northern Territory Government to court over their system which has already seen increased recycling rates. In the coming weeks Environment Ministers will decide whether to make a recycling refund scheme national.'

<https://www.greenpeace.org.au/action/?cid=35&sr=c=fb>;

According to the *Herald Sun* (March 5th 2013) *'COCA-Cola has won a court battle to dismantle a Northern Territory recycling scheme, but not before things turned nasty and police were called.'* *'Clean Up Australia chairman Ian Kiernan yesterday led a small group of environmental activists, including Greenpeace CEO David Ritter, in trying to dump 4000 beverage containers at Coke's Sydney headquarters. The containers had been collected on Clean Up Australia day at the weekend.'*

'The company called police to block the band of high-profile protesters. Police threatened to arrest the group for littering if they left the containers at Coke's North Sydney headquarters.'

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/coca-cola-calls-police-over-sydney-protest-against-dismantling-of-northern-territory-recycling-scheme/story-fndo317g-1226590261310>;

&

<http://www.news.com.au/business/companies/coca-cola-wins-federal-court-case-cash-for-containers-recycling-found-illegal/story-fnda1bsz-1226590179763>;

The *Business Spectator* (4th March 2013) states: *'Coca-Cola Amatil Ltd, Schweppes Australia and Lion Pty Ltd took the case against the NT government over the scheme, which is similar to a*

long-running one in South Australia and involves a 10 cent deposit on drink purchases, refundable when the container is returned to a recycling agent.'

<http://www.businessspectator.com.au/bs.nsf/Article/Drink-companies-win-recycling-challenge-5G8LJ?OpenDocument&src=hp7;>

However, according to a media release on 27th March the Northern Territory announced that it was appealing the decision.

'Minister for Lands, Planning and the Environment, Peter Chandler, announced today that the Government is appealing against the judgment over the legality of the Territory's Container Deposit Scheme.

"The recycling scheme is extremely popular, we are defending it on behalf of Territorians.

"That's also why the Territory Government is paying refunds from today for eight weeks on containers collected by Territorians.'

"We are lodging an appeal because the scheme is environmentally a winner and too many families, businesses and community groups rely on collecting containers for the 10c refund.

"Meanwhile, we are confident of gaining a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) exemption from the operation of the Mutual Recognition Act, which will finally guarantee the operation of the Container Deposit Scheme in the Northern Territory."

Media Release 27th March 2013: Appeal Lodged over container deposit scheme

<http://newsroom.nt.gov.au/index.cfm?fuseaction=viewRelease&id=10552&d=5;>

Perhaps it's time for the Australian Federal Parliament to pass national beverage container deposit legislation!

Climate Commission: 'The Angry Summer'

The Climate Commission released a report 'The Angry Summer of 2012/13' on 4th March.

'Key facts:

1. *The Australian summer over 2012 and 2013 has been defined by extreme weather events across much of the continent, including record-breaking heat, severe bushfires, extreme rainfall and damaging flooding. Extreme heatwaves and catastrophic bushfire conditions during the Angry Summer were made worse by climate change.*

2. *All weather, including extreme weather events is influenced by climate change. All extreme weather events are now occurring in a climate system that is warmer and moister than it was 50 years ago. This influences the nature, impact and intensity of extreme weather events.*
3. *Australia's Angry Summer shows that climate change is already adversely affecting Australians. The significant impacts of extreme weather on people, property, communities and the environment highlight the serious consequences of failing to adequately address climate change.*
4. *It is highly likely that extreme hot weather will become even more frequent and severe in Australia and around the globe, over the coming decades. The decisions we make this decade will largely determine the severity of climate change and its influence on extreme events for our grandchildren.*
5. *It is critical that we are aware of the influence of climate change on many types of extreme weather so that communities, emergency services and governments prepare for the risk of increasingly severe and frequent extreme weather.'*

[http://climatecommission.gov.au/report/the-angry-summer/;](http://climatecommission.gov.au/report/the-angry-summer/)

Melton Community Supported Agriculture

This website describes an amazing local permaculture venture, right on our own doorstep! Hopefully initiatives like this may become more commonplace in the future. Local schools are now creating eggie gardens in which the students may participate, as well as having chooks for the kids to look after; thereby teaching the kids responsibility & demonstrating to them where their food comes from.

An initiative like this demonstrates that permaculture is sustainable out here, even in a rain shadow area like Melton. Ventures like this deserve our support. Perhaps MEG could visit here some day. Details on: Melton Community Supported Agriculture: [http://meltoncsa.org/;](http://meltoncsa.org/)

ODD SPOT

Whatever happened to the Easter Bilby? It seems to have disappeared.

Wildlife Crossings vs Road Kill

The following story illustrates the conflict between urban development & wildlife. Sandra, a Park Orchards resident, recently described a situation whereby wombats are wandering onto a major road. Park Road is a very busy road that dips down steeply into a valley where it crosses Mullum Mullum Creek; whereupon the road steeply ascends the hill on the other side. Mullum Mullum Creek Bridge is at the bottom of a steep descent. Unfortunately Wombats are in the habit of crossing Park Road here, where they run the gauntlet of quickly moving traffic. As well as being themselves killed by traffic they also pose a hazard as motorists run the very real risk of vehicle damage, injury or worse if they hit a Wombat at speed.

A local resident describes the situation:

“Just before Christmas on a rainy night we tried to rescue a wombat which had tried to cross the road here but then got caught on the actual road and was walking down towards the bridge and was caught because of the safety railings on both sides. Unfortunately the young couple down there screaming were too scared to get close and the wombat got hit several times by cars tearing down the bend. Chris and I pulled it off the road but it was too late and it died. Anyway a second wombat ended up on the bridge a few days ago. Visibility was better and a car managed to stop and let it wander off. I would like to see about an under road tunnel for wildlife to use so they can wander up and down Mullum Creek without coming up onto Park Road as once they get on the road they tend to wander down and are then trapped on the road. Do I call up an agency or do I apply for a grant to have a tunnel constructed?”

A variety of suggestions have been made by many people. These include:

- Advice from DSE who may have some knowledge of wildlife versus motor traffic, & how to address this
- Perhaps contacting local council engineers or Vic Roads for their ideas.
- Animals need large box culverts for passageway under roads, the small round culverts are only good for rabbits and often get silted up.
- Better lighting on & before the bridge may help motorists see wombats on the bridge, & hopefully slow down to avoid hitting them.
- An advisory speed limit on approaching the bridge perhaps

- Another approach would be to write to the regional road safety committee – as wombats can destroy a small car – and may cause a fatal accident (human).
- Perhaps warning signs may also help a bit. ‘Warning: Wombats Crossing’.
- Community awareness could be canvassed

Although this particular issue concerns the outer eastern suburbs, we have similar concerns here in our own region.

Expanding urban development in our region will result in many local roads being upgraded in coming years. There is an existing local population of about 30 kangaroos on Mt Cottrell. The adjacent Mt Cottrell Road will be one of many local roads that will be upgraded to take vastly increased traffic. Kangaroos that will inevitably cross this soon to be busy road will pose a similar traffic hazard to fast moving traffic. Also, the proposed new Outer Ring Road will be adjacent to a promised new 5,000 hectare grassland reserve. This will result in more kangaroos crossing more busy roads.

The issue of kangaroos crossing busy broads will need to be addressed here also. Perhaps Frances’ suggestion of large box culverts for passageway under the new roads, combined with fencing, may be appropriate.

NATURE OUT WEST

NatureoutWest is a blog that has been created to highlight the beauty & diversity of Melton’s flora & fauna, as well as its more spectacular landscape. Everyone is invited to contribute or add photos our native wildlife & vegetation. <http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/>;

MELTON WILDLIFE

Eynesbury Birds

These 2 Nankeen Night-herons were recently seen perched in a tree on the island in the ornamental lake at Eynesbury. The drab looking bird is a juvenile, indicating that the birds have been breeding in the area. These birds are usually quite cryptic & a seldom seen so it was a surprise to see them perched so conspicuously. The long crest feather trailing behind the head of the adult bird is a distinguishing feature. Many of these birds can

be seen in the wetlands of Melbourne Zoo, but they are not often seen in the wild.



Nankeen Night-herons at Eynesbury

Nankeen Night-herons are regularly seen along the nearby Werribee River so perhaps the birds may have nested here. Extensive environmental restoration work has been done along the Werribee River adjacent to Western Water treatment plant by a partnership of Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group, Western Water, Melbourne Water & Vision for Werribee Plains over many years.



Red-browed Finches in Eynesbury

This Whistling Kite was photographed at Eynesbury recently. These large raptors regularly breed here, in a large nest on the edge of the forest overlooking the growing village. They are conspicuous because of their loud whistling call. Other large raptors such as Little Eagles & Wedge-tailed Eagles also nest in the deeper recesses of Eynesbury Forest.

Woodlands like Eynesbury (& other remnant woodlands such as Pinkerton, Bush's Paddock & Melton Gilgai) are valuable remnants of the larger

Grey Box woodlands that once covered much of this region. Many threatened woodland wildlife species need these remnant woodlands to survive.



Whistling Kite at Eynesbury

This Australasian Grebe was observed on its floating nest in Eynesbury ornamental lake. These small diving birds regularly nest here, as do several other wetland birds.



Australasian Grebe on nest at Eynesbury

Kingfisher in Melton Garden

In February MEG member Flo reported a Sacred Kingfisher dead in her yard. This is a small long-billed bird with strikingly blue plumage, often seen in Melton in summer, about the size of a starling. It is more usually seen along watercourses but sometimes in gardens. The tiny Azure Kingfisher is also very occasionally seen here in summer. These kingfishers are 2 of several migratory birds that visit us in summer. The more commonly seen Kookaburra is our largest kingfisher. Details of these spectacular small birds are on:

<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Todiramphus-sanctus>; &
<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Ceyx-azureus>;