



MELTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP

No. AOO4OO49F

A.B.N 47 411575097

PO BOX 481 MELTON 3337

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER JULY 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-Australia/Melton-Environment-Group/139259387879>;

NEXT MEG MEETING

MEG's next meeting will be Wednesday 16th July. MEG meetings are on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, at 7:30, at Don Nardella's office in Alexandra St (beside old Fire Station)

ARRIVAL OF WINTER

Autumn ended & winter began with a downpour, hopefully ending the nine month drought that extended over spring, summer & autumn. According to the Herald Sun (June 3 2013) *'Melbourne CBD recorded the wettest June day on record after 48.6mm fell since 9am yesterday.'*
<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/flash-flood-warning-as-storms-sweep-melbourne-and-parts-of-victoria/story-fni0fit3-1226654344923>;
Local creeks rose quickly in response to heavy rains & also due to increased stormwater running off the many new housing developments in Melton.

MEG EVENTS IN JUNE

World Environment Day

City of Melton Environmental Grants



On World Environment Day three local community environmental groups MEG, Friends of Toolern Creek & Friends of Melton Botanic Gardens were awarded grants of \$1000 each. Brett Luxford, Manager Business Growth & Sustainability at Melton City Council stated that World Environment Day is forty years old, originating in 1973! Melton Councillors Lara Carli, Nola Dunne, Sophie Ramsey, Bob Turner & Mayor Kathy Majdlik. MEG will be spending the \$1000 on signage & promotional material, while last year's went toward creation of our new website (soon to go live).

Winter Solstice: Planting at Brookfield

On Saturday 22nd June MEG commemorated the Winter Solstice by resuming planting at at Arnolds Creek beside Brookfield. Participants were Carmen, Geraldine, Jenny, Doug, Daryl & a visitor, Rick. We had delayed our planting until rain made this viable. Despite all our recent rain the soil around the Grey Box trees was still dry & hard in many places, although like the curate's proverbial egg, some spots were better than others. Planting in this landfill soil is a perpetual challenge. We also

President
Treasurer/Secretary
Meetings:

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

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Environmental Consultant: Peter Sell

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planted in the central 'island' in which we began planting last year.



Carmen, Geraldine, Doug & Rick at Brookfield

We planted a variety of shrubs, ground covers & wildflowers, to complement the shrubs we planted in previous years & to create an understory to the small number of remnant Grey Box trees that remain on the site. We planted about 200 plants, included those supplied by Melton City, Melbourne Water & those grown by women at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, under the direction of horticultural teacher Judy Allen.

These included:

Gold-dust Wattle	Senna
Kennedia	Chrysocephalum
Linum	Bidgee Widgee
Ruby Saltbush	Eutaxia microphylla
Melicytus	Plantago
Indigofera	Dianella longifolia
Eutaxia affinis	Lomandra micrantha
Prickly Moses	Turkey Bush
Clematis	Indigofera
Bursaria	Atriplex semibaccata
Grevillea latrobei (1)	

Further planting at Brookfield

In May Peter & Daryl had a meeting at Brookfield with Brookfields residents (Bev Dutton) & Melbourne Water (Alanna Wright & Brendan Martin). The residents are keen to start a group so that they can clean up along the creek & plant some trees, hoping for some assistance from Melbourne Water. We mentioned that any practical involvement from MEG would depend upon

assistance from the residents. Taking on another intensive planting & revegetation project on this large site may well be beyond the capabilities of MEG. However, the residents are keen to begin planting. After some discussion they are keen to join MEG. The residents would like to plant on the bare paddock between the internal Village Lane & the freeway.

On Wednesday 26th June Daryl of MEG met with Linda Bradburn (Melton Environmental Education Officer) & Barry of Village Lifestyle Village. About beginning planting on the new site Linda & Daryl marked out a large planting site to begin the project. This should effectively act as both a windbreak & a sound barrier between the village & the freeway. Arnolds Creek can be something of a wind tunnel in high north winds.

About 6-10 trees would be plenty for this initial 'island'. This would be complemented with about 25 understory plants. Trees could include Yellow Box & Bulokes. Understory plants such as Senna, Eutaxia (bush pea) & local wattles should ensure both biodiversity & a colourful splash of different colours. We could drill planting holes a couple of days prior to planting. This makes for much more time-effective planting days, & we get more trees planted this way.

We should begin planting here on Planet Ark National Tree Day on Sunday 28th July.



Linda & Barry & new planting site at Brookfield

Birdwalk at Melton Botanic Garden

On Sunday 30th June, 14 people participated in a bird walk at Melton Botanic Garden, hosted by Friends of Melton Botanic Garden & Melton Environment Group. We enjoyed a beautiful sunny morning with brilliant blue skies.



Birdwatching at Melton Botanic Garden

There was a flurry of nesting activity in the garden. Large numbers of Rainbow Lorikeets were noisily squabbling around nest hollows. A pair of Red-rumped Parrots were nesting in a tree hollow, a few metres below a hollow occupied by a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets. Hopefully a pair of Black-shouldered Kites mating in a tree may nest here.



Red-rumped Parrots at Melton Botanic Garden

We saw a total of 26 bird species:

Rainbow Lorikeet	Eastern Rosella
Red-rumped Parrot	Darter
Kestrel	Black-shouldered Kite
Mallard Duck	Domestic Goose
Wood Duck	Black Duck
Crested Pigeon	Spotted Turtledove
Purple Swamphen	Dusky Moorhen
Coot	Magpie-lark
Magpie	Little Raven
Willy Wagtail	Noisy Miner
Red Wattlebird	White-plumed Honeyeater
Welcome Swallow	Indian Mynah
Starling	Blackbird

There has been massive revegetation & environmental work done here over several years by the Friends of the Botanic Gardens. Large numbers of Rainbow Lorikeets & Red Wattlebirds were noisily feeding in the Eucalyptus Arboretum. The large variety of eucalypt species means that there are eucalypts flowering virtually all year round, creating a year round food source for nectar feeding birds. The large number & variety of nectar-rich Eremophilas recently planted here will similarly lead to an increased nectar source for birds. Both numbers & diversity of birdlife is expected to increase as the plants mature.

The Friends have placed a number of batboxes in trees along Ryans Creek, financed by a Melton Council, to provide habitat for microbats. Although for the most part invisible, bats are a major component of our wildlife. They have a major impact due to the vast amounts of insects they consume each night.



Bat boxes at Melton Botanic Garden

Notably absent was the former rich diversity of wetland birds that were formerly here. Large rafts of ducks, as well as cormorants, ibis, swans & spoonbills were a prominent feature of the lake only a few years ago. However, they are now conspicuously absent. The large flock of aggressive feral geese that ran rampant around the wetland would have been a major cause for the disappearance of native water birds. Also local advice is that the presence of large numbers of off-leash dogs, not restrained from chasing waterbirds has had a major impact on massively reduced waterbird numbers. Melton Council has since removed most of the geese. Hopefully this may make the park more hospitable to native birds; leading once more to a variety of wetland birds in the lake & creek.

FMBG president John Bentley suggested that we could return here in summer for an evening walk, to observe the water birds as they come into the dead trees in the lake to roost. Sounds like an excellent idea.



Josephine & the geese

COMING MEG EVENTS

Planet Ark National Tree Day

Brookfield Sunday 28th July 10.00 – 12.00

MEG is hosting a National Treeday activity at Brookfield. Hot & cold drinks, & refreshments supplied.

Planting at Brookfield

Saturday 17th August 10.00 – 12.00

Planting at Brookfield, at Arnolds Creek in Black Dog Drive

Wattle Day

Sunday 1st September

MEG will be participating in Wattle Day by planting wattles at Brookfield on Sunday 1st September. Hot & cold drinks, & refreshments supplied.

MEG BIRDWATCHING WALKS

Toolern Regional Park	Saturday 20 th July
Melton Gilgai Woodland	Saturday 31 st August
Pyrete Forest	Saturday 28 th September
Long Forest Mallee	Saturday 26 th October
Hannah Watts Park	Saturday 23 rd November

The MEG bird walks are for beginners, who have had no prior involvement in serious bird watching although all birdwatchers are invited to participate. All sites are easy walking, with no bushwalking involved. When our long awaited website is operational Melton bird records will be placed here.

MEG PLANTING DAYS

Treeplanting Day	Sunday 28 th July
Planting at Brookfield	Saturday 17 th August
Wattle Day tree planting	Sunday 1 st September

All events are at Brookfield unless stated

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

PLEG planting Bush's Paddock & Mt Cottrell

On Sunday 2nd June Frances, Irene & Daryl of PLEG planted a number of wildflowers in Bush's Paddock & Mt Cottrell. Among these were a number of rare & endangered Button Wrinkleworts grown from local seed by Irene of PLEG.



Frances & Irene planting at Bush's Paddock

Toolern Vale Primary School:

Birds in Backyards by Grade 5/6 2013



On Monday 3rd June Toolern Vale primary School & students from Grade 5/6 made a presentation of the results of a bird survey they had conducted over eight weeks, under the guidance of Annette Cooke of Birdlife Australia. The survey was part of the Birds in Backyards program

[http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/;](http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/)

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: darylakers@gmail.com
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Participants in the presentation included representatives of Melton Council & local environmental groups. Among those present were: Daryl & Jenny (MEG), Nora & Kelly Peters (local wildlife photographers), Annette Cooke (Birdlife Australia), Linda Bradburn, Adrian Murphy, Brett Luxford, (City of Melton), Melton Councillors Lara Carli & Bob Turner, Richard Akers (Melbourne Water) & Lyn Holdsworth (FoTC)

Annette Cooke of Birdlife Australia gave her expertise for the survey & the program was supported by Linda Bradburn (City of Melton Environment Education Officer). The school project also consisted of hand drawn & written bird posters. Observations included species, habitat & numbers. Results were displayed as a slideshow presentation. The various students gave a verbal commentary on each slideshow. As well as observing birds in the school ground the students also at the end of the 8 weeks the students made a number of statements & recommendations

Statements

- Toolern Vale & District PS provides a diverse environment for a large range of birds
- 81% of the bird population that the survey suggested would be found were recorded
- Birds in flight are extremely hard to identify
- Two surveys were not recorded which may have affected our results
- The surveys indicated only a small percentage of grass birds
- Our habitat survey indicated very few bugs & insects so we may have to make changes to encourage more insects
- We had only a small number of scavenger species but House Sparrows were by far the most abundant bird

Recommendations

- There is a need for more flowering plants & bushes to attract the nectar eating birds
- We need to consider water features & bird baths to encourage water birds & generally it would attract all birds
- We could have some feeding boxes in the yard for seed eating birds
- We need to research if sparrows restrict the abundance of other local birds or preferred birds
- We need to conduct a habitat audit of the whole school to ensure that we continue to provide a secure & productive environment for our birds

Summary

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- Toolern Vale has a healthy environment for a large variety of birds
- By studying these birds we as a community are better able to identify the birds & their survival needs
- This case Study will enable us to make more informed decisions about the future development of our school in regard to our local ecosystems

During a Q&A session Richard of Melbourne Water asked "*Now that the survey is finished, what now?*" The students replied that they would be asking the school to provide more trees & shrubs to attract native birds. Also they would like to provide a water source for the birds. Later the students guided the visitors around the school ground, pointing out the various survey sites. The Crested Pigeon was nicknamed *the 'bird with the mohawk'*! We were lucky to see a Wedge-tailed Eagle soaring over the hill overlooking the school & even luckier to see a Diamond Firetail by the creek!

The amount of work done by the students was impressive, as were the recommendations made as a result of the survey. Follow up action resulting from the recommendations also shows considerable thought & planning for the future. Projects like this are not only useful for wildlife awareness & learning how to protect & create wildlife habitat, but also show the students' future leadership potential. Activities such as this give us confidence in the young people who will ultimately inherit our world!

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Queens Birthday Honours List 2013

Lyn Holdsworth OAM

Congratulations to Lyn Holdsworth for her listing in the Queen's Birthday honours list 2013: Medal (OAM) in the General Division *'Lynette Margaret HOLDSWORTH, Melton West, Vic. For service to conservation and the environment, and to the community of Melton.'*

Lyn is well known for her role as President/Coordinator of Friends of Toolern Creek. FOTC have transformed their 'Big Red' precinct from a rubbish dump into a beautiful people-friendly park. They are also busily creating a wildlife corridor along Toolern Creek.

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

Lyn also tirelessly campaigns for a host of other community issues, almost too many to keep up with. Just a few of these include:

- disability services
- community garden
- Melton South community centre
- Environmental planning for proposed Toolern development
- the need for a hospital in the western region to service the ever growing population here
- the need for more doctors in Melton
- funding for environmental work in Anthony's Cutting

Lyn is not afraid to approach people in authority & ask *'What can you do to fix this?' or 'What can you do to address this issue?'* We need more people like Lyn to act as a community conscience & to spur large corporations into action or contribution.

Leo Johnston OAM

Congratulations also to Leo Johnston, also listed in the Queens Birthday Honours Medal (OAM) in the General Division Mr Leo Stanley JOHNSON *'For service to the community of Melton through a range of employment, education and social welfare organisations.'*

Leo has also been active in working for the environment, being an active member of Friends of Melton Botanic Garden, as well as his service to the Melton community including Djerriwarrh Employment & Education Services, Melton Water Trust, & Australian Red Cross.

Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities Awards 2013

Linda Bradburn, Environmental Educator, Melton City Council writes:

*'Congratulations to Melton Environment Group for becoming a finalist in the 2013 **Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities Victoria.***

"We have heard from Sustainability Victoria that the following projects from Melton have become finalists in the 2013 Keep Australia Beautiful Sustainable Cities Awards:

- Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden-*Growing Plants Growing People* (Community Action and Leadership)
- Melton Environment Group - *Biolinks, birds and*

blogging about Creekline Grassy Woodland (Protection of the Environment)

- 1st Caroline Springs Scouts-*Grasslands, creeks, lakes and dingoes*-Caroline Springs Scouts educate a community (Young Leaders)
- Waste Service Department Litter Education and Prevention Officer with St Vinnies and Salvos-*Helping the helpers to prevent Litter in the City of Melton* (Litter Prevention)
- Waste Services Department Waste Education Officer and Melton Waves –*Special Recycling Bins for a special place* (Resource Recover and Waste Management)
- Engineering Service Department and Melton Valley Golf course-*Hole in one-Saving and treating water on the Melton Valley golf course* (Pam Keating Environmental Sustainability.)
<http://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/www/html/2891-sustainable-cities-awards.asp?intSiteID=4;>

Clean Up Australia:

Message from the Chairman Ian Kiernan AO

"Volunteers are the backbone of Clean Up Australia – the unsung heroes who take to your streets, parks, beaches and waterways to clean up. Our ability to support your efforts is directly tied to the financial support we attract from our wonderful [partners](#) and [donors](#). Our YOU Donors are recognised by our [roll of honour](#). After a highly successful Clean Up Australia Day that saw a 5% increase of community sites, we are on track to blitz the number of everyday clean up sites across the country. Next up is the Great Northern Clean Up. Registrations open 1 July. September is also the month where we celebrate the scope and range of [Clean Up the World](#) activities.

And our ranks continue to swell as we progress our fight for the introduction of a national container refund scheme – giving people an incentive to raise recycling rates around the country.

My commitment is to maintain our energy, supporting the efforts of volunteers, agitating for waste management reform and encouraging the development of new initiatives that reflect your concerns. I do this knowing that we have your support".

Ian Kiernan AO, Chairman

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COMING ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Grow West 2013 Sunday 21st July 2013

Grow West is a major landscape change project around Bacchus Marsh which aims at protecting the values of the natural assets of the area, including the Werribee River. Grow West's vision is to rejuvenate 10,000 hectares of the upper Werribee catchment, west of Melbourne by connecting large areas of public reserves: Brisbane Ranges National Park, Werribee Gorge State Park and Lerderderg State Park, through a mosaic of restoration works on private property. Join with Friends of the Werribee Gorge and Long Forest Mallee in this annual tree planting. More information: Helena Lindorff 0437 195 511 <helena.lindorff@ppwcm.vic.gov.au> <http://www.growwest.com.au/>

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

New platypus sighting web-site

Linda Bradburn, Environmental Educator for Melton City Council advises that there is new platypus sighting web-site: <http://platypusspot.org/>;

Strathtulloh Woodland

On Saturday 25th May the MEG birdwatching group enjoyed a highly successful birdwalk in Strathtulloh Woodland, at the far southern end of the Toolern Regional Park. We saw 24 bird species including several vulnerable declining woodland species (Diamond Firetail, Brown Treecreeper & Jacky Winter). Over 60 bird species have been recorded here.

City of Melton is keen to ensure that the endangered Grassy Woodland is protected, along with its vulnerable woodland bird species. Future mowing operations will ensure that the hundreds of juvenile regenerating Grey Box trees are able to grow. Creation of 'islands' containing tree saplings as well as some individual saplings removed unmown. Also. Buloke trees may be planted to add to the limited numbers of Bulokes in the woodland. MEG has a number of these threatened trees, grown for us by Judy Allen & women of the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre from locally collected seeds. These habitat enhancement measures in this threatened Grassy Woodland remnant should hopefully ensure that its equally vulnerable birdlife is also protected.

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 of our native wildlife & vegetation.

<http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/>;

Another wildlife site onto which wildlife photos may be downloaded is Naturescreatures, on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Naturescreatures/?fref=ts>;

ODD SPOT

Ignorant Folk at large in Caroline Springs!

A local resident describes an unpleasant incident at Caroline Springs recently:

"after work I went down to Caroline Springs to check on the birdlife in the front lake, I had been getting a few decent shots of the Chestnut Teals a couple of days earlier and wanted to see if I could get anything better! Also on the previous visit at around 4pm I had found a Eurasian Coot with blood on its feathers only to discover that it had broken its upper beak, (perhaps it had broken it when it had been in a feeding frenzy? Who knows?) As it didn't seem too distressed I thought that if I reported it to the 'persons in charge of their welfare' they might not have been able to catch it to check it anyway! (Couldn't see it on this occasion)

As I wandered around the lake I got some more beautiful images of the Chestnut Teals and the Hardheads, Coots, Little Black Cormorant, Grebes, Dusky Moorhens, Eurasian Coots, Pacific Blacks and of course the Black Swans. A Black Swan had been chased out of the water by the two resident Swans near the decking so I thought to get a few close-up shots, it was quite obliging, but I kept my distance! (Knowing that one swipe of their wing can break an arm or a leg!!)

As I continued taking photos, I observed the lady and the man (people in their later years) had bags of bread with them and they promptly started to throw full pieces of bread to the birds in the lake. There was a frenzied activity with all the species fighting for some morsel, I was horrified but still kept taking pictures in the hope that the people would go away! Silly me!

I had moved away off the path on to the platform outside the building as the birds were trying to get their pieces of bread, afterwards, when their bags of bread were empty the lady moved over towards me and shouted in my ear "You should stop

filming and go and buy some bread to feed the birds as they are starving!"

I felt very threatened by her body language and tone of voice and ignored her and her companion (I was trying out my newest camera/lens and felt she could have either smashed both or thrown me and my equipment into the water)

By the time that I was calling it a day the sun was fading behind the houses causing long shadows, the couple had walked on around the lake with their dog and were leaving, going past the building with the lady was still watching me standing on the platform! (I was quite sure she wasn't saying anything nice about me!)

It is not in my make-up to confront people, especially when on my own, so feel that letting you know of the circumstances in an open letter and hope that 'signs' can be erected around the lake or in the local newspapers to make residents more aware of the dangers of feeding bread or anything else to the wildlife that live in their locale, however much enjoyment they get out of getting these beautiful creatures to come up to them! 'Look but don't touch!'

A scenario:-What if they (or anyone else) stop feeding the birds and a child comes up to have a look and the birds' think that they have food and then attack the child for 'Not' having any? How would this couple feel then?"

When people feed birds with bread the charitable view is that they are usually well-meaning but misinformed; not realizing that processed food like bread is actually bad for waterfowl. As well as making them overweight & dependent upon artificial feeding, bread is actually bad for their digestion & health. Not to mention the injuries caused by feeding frenzies as described above.

A City of Dandenong website warns against feeding ducks and other birds:

'It can be a pleasurable experience to feed the birds, however we must remember that they are wild animals and feeding can do birds a great deal of harm. The parks and wetlands within the City of Greater Dandenong provide natural food for wild animals. Feeding wildlife inappropriate foods, like bread, can cause dietary problems, and sickness:

- *with a constant supply of unnatural food, the young never learn to forage for themselves, which may lead to starvation*
- *birds can choke on pieces of bread*
- *large numbers of birds in one area can increase the spread of disease among birds and to humans*
- *high nutrient levels in water caused by floating bread can lead to growth of blue-green algae, which is poisonous to wildlife and humans ' <http://www.greaterdandenong.com/Documents.asp?ID=18245&Title=Feeding+birds+and+ducks>;*

Similar information on:

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~greenlnk/duck.pdf>;
<http://birding.about.com/od/birdfeeders/a/feedingducksbread.htm>;

However, for people to aggressively approach people & abuse them for not feeding ducks is not only misguided but downright ignorant & rude. Unfortunately there are a lot of aggressive, rude & ignorant people out there! Rude aggressive behaviour like this reflects badly on us all. Perhaps a sign could be placed advising people not to feed the birds, with reasons why they should not be fed. Or perhaps a sign advising against aggressive & rude behaviour!



Coot with broken bill at Caroline Springs

