



MELTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP

No. AOO4OO49F

A.B.N 47 411575097

PO BOX 481 MELTON 3337

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2013

CORPORATE MEMBERS

Western Land Services



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

Champion Agribusiness at the Victorian Small Business Champion Awards for 2007 & 2008 & 2007 Melton Business Excellence award, 2009 Powercor Melton Business Excellence Awards & 2009 Apprentice of the Year award.

MEG ONLINE

Website: <http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au/>;

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

Nature out West is a blog created to highlight the beauty & diversity of Melton's flora & fauna, as well as its more spectacular landscape.
<http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/>;

NEXT MEG MEETING

- Our next activity will be MEG's Christmas Breakup on Sunday 15th December.
- There will be a working bee / meeting on Sunday 19th January.
- MEG's next meeting will be Wednesday 19th February 2014.

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).

OH&S

Recently Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) sent copies of their OH&S Policy Conservation (In Safe Hands Toolkit) to volunteer environmental groups for suggested use. At our November meeting MEG discussed the plan & as it was very detailed, & tailored to the type of activities MEG undertakes, we decided to adopt this as our own OH&S policy. Peter Sell will be MEG's OH&S officer due to his extensive experience in his professional capacity as a contractor with Western Land Services. We will have an executive meeting in the near future to fine-tune this OH&S policy to MEG's requirement.

MEG CHRISTMAS BREAKUP

Sunday 15th December at Navan Park 11.00

MEG will have its breakup & BBQ on Sunday 15th December at Navan Park 11.00 at the BBQ shelter overlooking the lake. Sausages & bread supplied by MEG. BYO salads etc.

END OF SPRING

Spring has once again lived up its reputation for wild weather. The last weeks of spring brought violent drying winds which were followed by bitterly cold rain. Hopefully this summer will not be scorching hot & dry like last summer!

MEG EVENTS IN NOVEMBER

Djerriwarrh Festival

Melton held its 34th Djerriwarrh Festival on Saturday 9th & MEG once more participated in the in Melton's biggest community festival. The festival offers the opportunity for all community groups to display their activities, as well as providing the entire community the opportunity to have fun! We will shortly have our new signs & banners for

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

display, compliments of Melton Council World Environment Day grant this year.



Planting wildflowers at Brookfield



On Wednesday 14th November Brookfield residents Bev, Don, John & Lois planted almost 100 local wildflowers beside the fence, between the laneway & the freeway. After two days of heavy rains, following the Djerriwarrh Festival, it was decided not to waste the opportunity to plant some last wildflowers for the year. This year, in partnership with Brookfield residents, we began revegetating this somewhat barren site (three beds planted with a selection of trees, bushes, ground covers & wildflowers, & one specifically wildflower bed, we will return next year to continue the process of environmental restoration of this site that faces the Western Freeway.

We are looking to create a prominent display of wildflowers so we planted a multicoloured selection of: yellow Podolepis, Clustered Everlasting, & Bulbine Lily, scarlet Running Postman, blue Flaxlily Wahlenbergia (Native Bluebells), Linum Chocolate & Vanilla Lily, white Rhodanthe & Pimelia glauca,

The residents placed mulch from the large pile deposited some time ago by Melton Council, onto the freshly planted wildflowers to conserve moisture in the ground; as well as onto one of the plots we planted last month. Lifestyle Brookfield provided a tractor & trailer, with two staff, to assist moving the mulch. Many thanks to Melton Council & Lifestyle Brookfield!

Birdwalk at Hannah Watts Park



On Saturday 23rd November Nora, Daryl, Gillian, Pam & Mike participated in hosted a birdwalk in Hannah Watts Park, hosted by MEG. Hannah Watts Park is a popular picnic & BBQ site in Melton. It has several undercover BBQ's as well as an impressive kids' playground. Despite its familiarity, it is also home to a surprisingly impressive diversity of birdlife.

Masses of Musk Lorikeets were noisily feeding in the gum trees beside the BBQ area. Black & Wood Ducks, Noisy Miners, Little Ravens, Crested Pigeons & a Dusky Moorhen milled around feeding on bread thrown to them by visitors.



Rainbow Lorikeets in hollow at Hannah Watts

A pair of Rainbow Lorikeets was investigating hollows in a very old Red Gum overhanging the creek. This was about 4 metres from where we were standing & the hollows were at eye level. As we watched a Rainbow Lorikeet rolled a blue egg from a hollow branch onto the ground below! We investigated & found the blue egg of either a Mynah or Starling in the grass beneath the hollow.

The only Melton population of Noisy Miners is centred here. These are more commonly seen in Long Forest Mallee & Melton Gilgai Woodland. They are noticeably absent from other Melton woodlands (ie. Pinkerton & Eynesbury Forests). Indian Mynahs & Noisy Miners are completely unrelated. The exotic Mynahs are related to Starlings whereas the native Noisy Miners are honeyeaters.



Little Raven feeding young bird (photo by Nora)

22 bird species were seen, not a bad total for a town park!

Domestic Duck	Black Duck	Wood Duck
Rainbow Lorikeet	Musk Lorikeet	Little Lorikeet
Red-rumped Parrot	Long-billed Corella	Little Corella
White Cockatoo	Galah	Crested Pigeon
Dusky Moorhen	Red Wattlebird	Noisy Miner
White-plumed Honeyeater	Mynah	Starling
Welcome Swallow	Willy Wagtail	Magpie
Little Raven		

Photos & detail of this, & other MEG birdwalks are on: <http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/>;

There will be no bird walk in December but in January we will have a late afternoon / evening walk beside the lake at Melton Botanic Garden, possibly a Saturday evening at a date to be determined by Bird Walk members.

COMING MEG EVENTS

MEG Christmas breakup

Sunday 15th December at Navan Park 11.00

MEG will have its breakup & BBQ at the BBQ shelter in Navan Park.

Working Bee at Brookfield

Sunday 19th January 10.00 – 12.00

MEG will be removing weeds at Brookfield

Evening Bird Walk at Melton Botanic Garden

We will have a late afternoon / evening walk beside the lake at Melton Botanic Garden in January, possibly a Saturday evening, at a date to be determined by Bird Walk members. We should hopefully see a number of waterbirds as they come in to roost for the night.

GRANTS

MEG successfully applied for a Western Water Frances' Environment grant, for in kind support & \$1,100 for plants & restoration works at the Arnolds Creek Biolink Project at Brookfield. This grant also includes the offer of Western Water staff participating in environment work at Brookfield.

MEG has also applied for two separate Melbourne Water grants, for \$5,000 each.

- Grant 1 is for environmental works along Arnolds Creek at Brookfield.
- Grant 2 is for the Brookfield Residents Group, in partnership with MEG, for environmental works on Arnolds Creek (West).

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Friends of Melton Botanic Gardens:

addressed by Birdlife Australia's Dave Torr

On Wednesday 13th November the Friends of Melton Botanic Gardens monthly meeting was addressed by bird expert Dave Torr, of Birdlife Australia. Dave discussed Melton's several local woodlands, with their variety of birdlife. However many local woodland birds are quite vulnerable. There is a danger that woodland remnants may become 'islands' separated by either open farmland or urban development. Many woodland birds may become isolated when confined to these small islands. Genetic diversity may be lost & if a population of birds is lost to local disaster such as bushfire, their long distance from other woodland remnant may well prevent their returning from other woodlands. Some of our beautiful local

woodland birds such as Diamond Firetails or Jacky Winters may be lost if our local woodlands are not adequately protected. Corridors connecting remaining woodland remnant will be essential if we wish to keep our woodland birds.

Wildflower Walk in Doreens Grassland (Altona)

On Saturday 16th November, Western Melbourne Catchments Network (WMCN) hosted a wildflower walk in Doreens Grassland in Altona. In a secluded corner of Altona, hidden between the railway & some houses was a small grassland remnant. A sea of Kangaroo Grass waved in the breeze, while masses of Lemon Beauty-heads were in bud, about to blossom in a week or so. A rare & endangered *Pimelia spinescens* was also hidden in the grass.



Doreen's Grassland in Altona



Doreen's Grassland Friends facebook page states: *'A paddock of native grassland is being conserved & planted with flowers indigenous to Altona.'*

Doreen Eddison identified many beautiful local flowers when she rambled in this place during the 1940's. Doreen created a book with pressed flowers & coloured sketches. Now the Grasslands Friends are using her book as the starting point for fresh planting on the paddock.

'Doreen has been resident of Altona for many years and as a child she collected, pressed and painted the local wildflowers. Her book of wildflowers has been the inspiration for the conservation and re vegetation of one of Altona's local grasslands.'

<https://www.facebook.com/DoreensGrassland>;

We also looked at the spectacular Jordans Street Grassland, which lies just around the corner from Doreen's Grassland. This grassland has an astonishing diversity of indigenous grassland species, including enormous numbers of the critically endangered *Pimelia spinescens*. Unfortunately most of this small precious grassland remnant is doomed to go under the bulldozers, like so many of our remaining grassland remnants in the western region.

At another site nearby we were shown several Sunshine Diuris orchids (*Diuris fragrantissima*). These beautiful snowy white orchids were once common in local grasslands, but they are now one of Australia's most endangered native orchids.



Sunshine Diuris orchid (photo by Colleen Miller)

President: Daryl Akers
Secretary: Doug Godsill
Meetings:

Phone: 0438 277 252
Environmental Advisor: Peter Sell
3rd Wednesday of the month at Don Nardella's office in Alexandra St (beside old Fire Station) at 7:30

email: darylakers@gmail.com
Website: <http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au/>

Details on the rare Sunshine Diuris on:

http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/103401/Sunshine_Diuris.pdf; <http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/national-recovery-plan-sunshine-diuris-diuris-fragrantissima>; & <http://www.victorianflora.wmcn.org.au/plantDetail.php?plantno=137.00000>;

other photos on Nature out West:

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

Bird Survey at Pinkerton, Bush's Paddock & Eynesbury Forests

On Sunday 17th November, Birdlife Australia & Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group (PLEG) hosted a quarterly bird survey into Pinkerton Forest, Bush's Paddock Woodland & Eynesbury Forest, led by bird expert Dave Torr. Birdlife Australia (formerly BOCA) has been conducting quarterly bird surveys here for over five years. These surveys have built up a database of bird species found in these three woodlands, reflecting a rich diversity of birdlife here. Pinkerton & Bush's have both been environmentally restored over many years by a partnership of PLEG, Western Water & Melton Council, enabling the protection & return of birds & other native wildlife.



Birdwatchers at Pinkerton Dam

A sound recording of numerous Spotted Marsh Frogs was also taken at Pinkerton Dam by Melbourne Water's Richard Akers, as part of Melbourne Water's Frog Census. Four frog species have been heard at Pinkerton Forest to date, (Spotted Marsh Frog, Pobblebonk, Common Froglet & Southern Spadefoot). A lizard, tentatively identified as a Jacky Lizard (aka Tree Dragon), scurried from between Dave's feet, vanishing into a brushpile, in Eynesbury. Reptiles as well as birds are seen in these woodlands!

An impressive total of 157 bird species have been found in these three woodlands to date:

Pinkerton Forest	115
Surbiton Park Sewerage Works	88
Bush's Paddock	94
Eynesbury Forest	129

Dave reports:

'A quiet start at Pinkerton but some good birds at Bush's and good numbers of birds at Eynesbury. We added Hardhead, Hoary-headed Grebe and Pelican (flying over) to the Pinkerton list, Reed-warbler to the Bush's list and Australian Pipit and White-winged Triller to the Eynesbury list.'

A Crested Shriketit was one of the first birds we saw as we entered Bush's Paddock woodland. These spectacular small birds, with their bold black, white & yellow colours can be regularly found in this one corner of the woodland.



Crested Shriketit in Bush's Paddock

At one point in Bush's Paddock a pair of Grey Fantails chattered their displeasure at our presence. After a while one of the pair dived into a small tree, thereby giving away the location of a tiny nest of grasses bound together with cobwebs; in the early stages of construction.



Gray Fantail nest under construction

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email: daryljakers@gmail.com
Website: <http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au/>

Other highlights were Diamond Firetails & Jacky Winters (Pinkerton & Eynesbury Forests) & Speckled Warblers (Eynesbury Forest). The Speckled Warblers were only found after a long search in the undergrowth. A White-bellied Sea-eagle was also seen soaring over one of Western Water's treatment lagoon. The Sea-eagles nested successfully in Pinkerton Forest in both 2009 & 2010.

A total of 78 bird species were seen on the day.

Stubble Quail	Black Swan	Australian Shelduck
Wood Duck	Grey Teal	Pacific Black Duck
Hardhead	Chestnut Teal	Musk Duck
Australasian Grebe	Hoary-headed Grebe	Straw-necked Ibis
White-faced Heron	Australian Pelican	Little Pied Cormorant
Nankeen Kestrel	Brown Falcon	Whistling Kite
Brown Goshawk	Little Eagle	White-bellied Sea Eagle
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Purple Swamphen	Eurasian Coot
Masked Lapwing	Black-fronted Dotterel	Common Pigeon
Crested Pigeon	Long-billed Corella	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Galah	Purple-crowned Lorikeet	Rainbow Lorikeet
Red-rumped Parrot	Crimson Rosella	Eastern Rosella
Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo		Shining Bronze Cuckoo
Kookaburra	Sacred Kingfisher	Brown Treecreeper
Superb Fairywren	White-plumed Honeyeater	Red Wattlebird
Brown-headed Honeyeater	Spotted Pardalote	Striated Pardalote
Speckled Warbler	Weebill	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Yellow Thornbill	Australian Magpie	White-browed Woodswallow
Dusky Woodswallow	Black-faced Cuckooshrike	White-winged Triller
Varied Sittella	Crested Shrike-tit	Rufous Whistler
Willie Wagtail	Grey Fantail	Magpie-lark
Little Raven	Jacky Winter	Welcome Swallow
Tree Martin	Golden-headed Cisticola	Little Grassbird
Australian Reed Warbler	Common Myna	Common Starling
Common Blackbird	House Sparrow	Diamond Firetail
Red-browed Finch	Zebra Finch	Australian Pipit
European Goldfinch		

Other details & photos on Nature out West

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

COMING ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Marine activities for school groups

Williamstown Dec – end of Feb

'Parks Victoria in Williamstown manages Jawbone Marine Sanctuary and Point Cooke Marine Sanctuary. Over the summer period (Dec – end of Feb) we will have an experienced Marine Biologist named Jacqui Pocklington working for us who will be performing the duties of a Marine Intern. I would like to invite you to take advantage of this rare opportunity and book in a date for activities such as Rockpool Rambles, Sea snail measuring or any other beach activities with an environmental focus.

Activities would be tide dependent (low tide), so if you are interested, please contact me with a date and I will inform you of the time of low tide. If you

have any other questions, please feel free to contact me.'

Toby, Acting Marine Ranger, Parks Victoria, Williamstown: Toby.Stringer@parks.vic.gov.au;

Cruelty Free West Expo: Caroline Springs Saturday 7th December from 10.00 to 2.00

Rana Hales of Caroline Springs Animal Welfare Network writes:

'Hi Everyone

CSAWN's annual Cruelty Free West Expo will take place on Saturday, 7th December from 10.00am to 2.00pm at WestWaters Hotel and Entertainment Complex, Caroline Springs.

We have some guest speakers lined up, vegan fingerfood, animal ambassadors from Edgar's Mission, raffles, showbags, kids' activities/entertainment and plenty more!

Come and check out the variety of exhibitors including cruelty free businesses and animal organisations. Entry is by gold coin donation.

Thanks for your continued support and see you there!'

Rana Hales, President, Caroline Springs Animal Welfare Network, Phone: 0410 315 808, Email: csawnetwork@gmail.com; www.csawn.org
PO Box 3682 Caroline Springs 3023.

Join us on [facebook](#)

PLEG Exhibition of Environmental Art Melton Visitor Information Centre 4th – 28th February 2014

Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group invites artists to contribute works of art to an Environmental Art Exhibition in February 2014, with a focus on our local natural environment.

The Art Exhibition will be a celebration of the natural environment of the Melton region. The art exhibition will be part of the Sustainable Living Festival, Australia's largest and oldest sustainability festival. The exhibition will be a depiction of Melton's local wildlife, wildflowers, scenes and nature in all sizes shapes and forms; including local landscapes: Grasslands, Grassy Woodlands, escarpments, gorges, volcanoes etc. The medium can be by paintings, drawings, collage, mixed media & photographs.
(Note: only one artwork per artist)
(deadline for submissions 31st January 2014)

One artist will receive a 4 day Botanical Art Beginner Workshop (cost \$349).

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email: darylakers@gmail.com
Website: <http://meltonenvironmentgroup.org.au/>

There will also be a Peoples' Choice award, judged by visitors.

Melton Visitor Information Centre, 323 High Street, Melton, VIC, 3337 (Mel Ref: 337 B9) Open daily 9am - 5pm 9747 7300; visitor@melton.vic.gov.au; www.melton.vic.gov.au/visit; Application Form on <http://pinkertonforest.com/>; or contact Daryl Akers phone: 0437 277 25; darylakers@gmail.com;

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Australia set for the hottest year on record ABC Online-13/11/2013

'Australia's record breaking hot summer has helped push average global temperatures higher this year.

A World Meteorological Organisation report says 2013 is on track to be among the top ten warmest years since modern records began in 1850. And the most extreme hot temperatures were experienced here in Australia.

Weather bureau climatologist Blair Trewin says this is likely to be Australia's hottest year.

'The year so far in Australia has been the warmest on record by a fairly substantial margin,' he said.

'Up to the end of October we were running 0.24 of a degree ahead of the previous record year, which means that unless November and December are significantly cooler, 2013 will be Australia's warmest year on record.'

http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bush_telegraph/climate-report/5092094;

Off the Charts: Record breaking October heat & climate change

According to the Climate Council:

'This has been a record breaking year for Australia. The 2012 / 2013 summer was the hottest on record, & we have just experienced the hottest September on record.

Climate change influences our weather. In Australia, this means hotter days, & more frequent & intense heatwaves. These conditions increase the frequency of bushfires, which in turn affect our communities, economy, & flora & fauna.'

<http://www.climatecouncil.org.au/2013/11/14/october-heat-report/>;

MELTON WILDLIFE

Crimson Jewel Beetle at Toolern Creek

This large 4 cm crimson coloured Jewel Beetle

Temognatha sanguiniventris) was found by Lyn Holdsworth at Toolern Creek.



Jewel Beetle at Toolern Creek

Another similar beetle was found at Brookfield in January this year (*MEG newsletter March 2013*). The discovery of two of these at two of Melton's creeks in one year indicates that these large, spectacular beetles are Melton residents.

We had tentatively identified the original Brookfield beetle as a Variable Jewel Beetle, (*Temognatha variabilis*). However, entomologist Allen Sundholm identified it as *Temognatha sanguiniventris*, after having seen the photo on Nature out West! Details on Jewel Beetles (Buprestidae) can be seen on: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buprestidae>; & <http://www.ces.csiro.au/aicn/system/bupresti.htm>;

Photos on:

<http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/2013/01/29/variable-jewel-found-beside-arnolds-creek-at-brookfield/>;



Jewel Beetle at Arnolds Creek

Mud nest builders in Lerderderg Gorge

These different wasp nests made from mud were found in the Lerderderg Gorge, under a rocky underhang that protected them from direct rain.



Potter Wasp nest in Lerderderg Gorge

The Potter Wasp builds a mud nest that closely resembles an earthen pot.

'Potter wasps make mud nests for their eggs and larvae or use abandoned burrows of other insects. They stock the nests with caterpillars and other grubs, which they seal in with mud.'

Australian Museum:

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/Potter-wasps;>



Mud Dauber nest in Lerderderg Gorge

The Mud Dauber Wasp (*Sceliphron* sp) nest is much less decorative to our eyes but no doubt just as effective as providing a home for its young.

According to Queensland Museum *'Mud Dauber and Potter wasps'*:

'Many species of predatory wasps build nests from a mixture of mud and saliva. Many are large, conspicuous, black and yellow or black and orange wasps. Mud dauber wasps fill their nest cells with paralysed spiders as a food source for their larvae. Potter wasps fill them with paralysed caterpillars.'

<http://www.qm.qld.gov.au/Find+out+about/Animals>

[+of+Queensland/Insects/Wasps+and+bees/Comm on+species/Mud+Dauber+and+Potter+wasps;](#)

Parrots in London!

Linda Bradburn (Melton's Environment Education Officer) is on holidays overseas & has emailed this photo of a parrot in London!

'I have had lots of adventures including going to the Natural History Museum in London and the Kew Gardens. I thought you might enjoy this picture of a parrot in Kew !!! Evidently they are breeding and quite happy (although the local bird enthusiasts are less than impressed at the weed species).'

warm regards, Linda Bradburn



Parrot in London (photo by Linda Bradburn)

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR

Merry Christmas to everyone from MEG & take care on the roads!

