

MELTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP

No. AOO4OO49F

A.B.N 47 411575097

PO BOX 481 MELTON 3337

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER MARCH 2014

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](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 Wednesday 19th March 2014.
- MEG's annual Social Day at Blackwood will be on Sunday 23rd 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

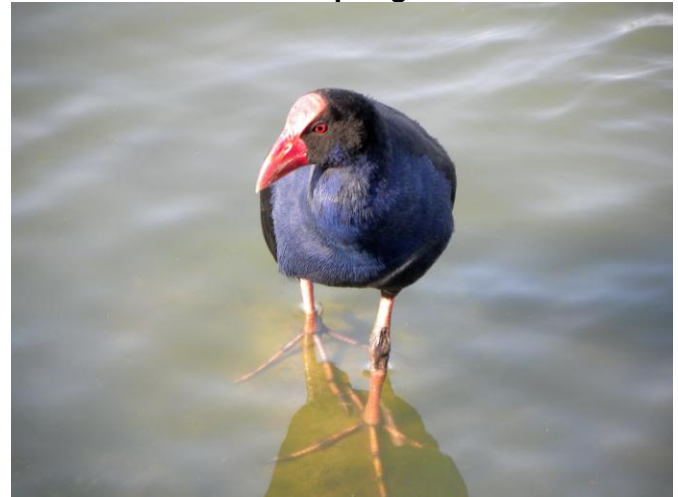
Ring: 13 000 94535

FEBRUARY

More hot weather! More heat waves & major fires engulfed municipalities not far north of Melton. The dense cloud of smoke that blanketed Melton during the fires was a dramatic reminder of the fires that were all too close. Some rain late in the month but not nearly enough! A second very dry summer comes to an end.

MEG EVENTS IN FEBRUARY

Bird Walk at Caroline Springs wetland



Purple Swamphen at Caroline Springs

Nora & Daryl of MEG had our first bird walk for 2014 at Caroline Springs wetland in February. As was the case with our inaugural walk here last year, the morning was hot! Very hot!! Last year we saw 32 bird species, in two hours, in a site totally surrounded by suburbia. This year we saw 35 bird species. This wetland continues to an excellent place to see birds, in fact one of the best & most easily accessible birding site in Melton, especially

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

for those living in Caroline Springs & nearby suburbs.

Again, the waterbirds were quite tame, reflecting the large numbers of walkers & joggers along the creekside tracks. The only extremely shy bird was a Great Cormorant. Noticeably absent were waders (ie herons, egrets etc).

Bird species seen:

Great Cormorant	Little Pied Cormorant	
Little Black Cormorant	Wood Duck	Hardhead
Black Duck	Chestnut Teal	Mallard hybrid
Purple Swamphen	Coot	Moorhen
Silver Gull	White Ibis	Pelican
Crested Pigeon	Turtledove	Domestic Pigeon
Rainbow Lorikeet	Little Corella	Starling
Mynah	Little Raven	Magpie
Welcome Swallow	Mudlark	Greenfinch
House Sparrow	Tree Sparrow	Blackbird
Little Wattlebird	Red Wattlebird	Reed Warbler
White-plumed Honeyeater	New Holland Honeyeater	
Little Grassbird		



Male Hardhead Duck & Coot at Caroline Springs



Female Hardhead Duck at Caroline Springs

Funding for planting of trees in Melton South

On Monday 24th February MEG's Daryl met Amelia Fisher of Djerriwarrh Health Services & Adam Weise of Melton Model Railway Club to discuss supporting a program planting out nature strips & parks in Melton South. As discussed on previous MEG meetings MEG is willing to support Djerriwarrh Health Services in seeking funding from DEPI to purchase plants. MEG will provide a Letter of Support as funding for projects such as these needs to demonstrate community involvement. Mt Carberry & Melton Station were discussed as possibilities for planting, as well as Jimmy Melrose Park near Arnolds Creek. Perhaps other sites suitable for planting may be found.

Bench for Brookfield

MEG's Peter Sell has had a garden seat donated to MEG. We have approval from Melton Council to place it at Brookfield, by a qualified contractor, after we have cleaned it up & painted it.

Navan Park

We decided that we should return to Navan Park to plant trees around the lake. Perhaps we could also do some replacement planting for those trees that have died during drought & heatwaves.

COMING MEG EVENTS

Clean Up Australia Day

Sunday 2nd March 10.00 – 11.30

MEG will once more be participating in Clean Up Australia Day this year. BBQ afterward at Hannah Watts Park. We will be cleaning up at our planting site at Brookfield. 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 on: <http://www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au/>

Bird Walk in Eynesbury Forest

Sunday 8th March 9.00 – 11.00

Melton Environment Group Bird Group will host a bird walk 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. 133 bird species have been found here to date. Details of Eynesbury birdlife on:

<http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/melton-nature-out-west/>;

Wear hats, walking shoes & sun cream. Walk will be cancelled if a Fire Ban Day is declared. Meet in the carpark beside the Discovery Centre. Melway 226 Ref H2 (or just follow the large roadside signs to Eynesbury).

Social Day at Blackwood:

Sunday March 23rd 10.00

MEG will have our annual BBQ at Blackwood this year on Sunday 23rd March, to avoid fire danger. Sausages & bread supplied by MEG. Meet at Blackwood Hotel corner at 10.00. BYO salads & dessert. After lunch we will have our customary walk.

Brookfield Working bee

Sunday 13th April 10.00 – 12.00

MEG will have a working bee at Brookfield, prior to beginning planting again this winter. Probably removing Galenia or moving mulch (depending upon rainfall).

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.

MEG BIRD GROUP 2014

Beginners who have had no prior involvement in bird watching are welcome on Melton Environment Group bird walks. All sites are easy walking, with no bushwalking involved. Walks in bushland (Eynesbury, Strathtulloh, Melton Gilgai) will be cancelled if a Fire Ban Day is declared. Other suggestions for bird walk venues in the local area are invited.

Details of MEG birdwalks are on:

<http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/>; & <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Melton-Environment-Group/139259387879?fref=ts>;

Strathtulloh Woodland

Saturday 12th April 9.00 – 11.00

There will be a birdwalk at Strathtulloh Woodland, along the paved walking track (no bushwalking required). We should hopefully see a variety of woodland birds. Walking will be easy (no bushwalking required). Please wear appropriate clothes and sturdy shoes.

Drive south from Melton along Exford Road, to Exford
Turn left at T intersection at bottom of the hill
Drive up the hill to Red Gum Road (1st road on left – opposite Butlers Road)
Turn left into Red Gum Road then turn left at T intersection into Strathtulloh Circuit
Continue along Strathtulloh Circuit past Greens Road
Meet in Strathtulloh Circuit in: Melway Page 343 Ref A12

Hannah Watts Park

Saturday 10th May 9.00 – 11.00

Toolern Creek (Big Red)

Sunday 15th June

Toolern Regional Park

Sunday 20th July

Arnolds Creek: Brookfield

Saturday 23rd August

Melton Gilgai Woodland

Saturday 13th September

Eynesbury Forest

Saturday 11th October

Long Forest Mallee

Saturday 15th November

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Birding at Pinkerton, Bush's Paddock & Eynesbury

On Sunday 16th February Dave Torr of Birdlife Australia led a bird survey walk in Pinkerton Forest & Bush's Paddock in the morning & Eynesbury Forest in the afternoon. About 140 bird species have been recorded at Pinkerton & about 125 at Eynesbury to date.

78 bird species were observed on the day:

Australian Shelduck	Pink-eared Duck	Wood Duck
Australasian Shoveler	Black Duck	Chestnut Teal
Hardhead	Musk Duck	Great Crested Grebe
Australasian Grebe	Hoary-headed Grebe	
Australian White Ibis	Straw-necked Ibis	White-faced Heron
Australian Pelican	Little Pied Cormorant	Great Cormorant
Little Black Cormorant	Australasian Darter	Nankeen Kestrel
Australian Hobby	Brown Falcon	Black-shouldered Kite
Whistling Kite	Swamp Harrier	Spotted Harrier

President: Daryl Akers
Secretary: Doug Godsil
Meetings:

Phone: 0438 277 252

Environmental Advisor: Peter Sell

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email: darylakers@gmail.com

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

Wedge-tailed Eagle	Little Eagle	Purple Swamphen
Dusky Moorhen	Eurasian Coot	Masked Lapwing
Australian Black-winged Stilt	Black-fronted Dotterel	Common Pigeon
Crested Pigeon	Galah	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	Musk Lorikeet	Eastern Rosella
Red-rumped Parrot	Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo	
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Brown Treecreeper	Superb Fairywren
White-plumed Honeyeater	New Holland Honeyeater	Noisy Miner
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Brown Thornbill	Dusky Woodswallow
Black-faced Cuckooshrike	Varied Sittella	Crested Shrike-tit
Rufous Whistler	Willie Wagtail	Grey Fantail
Magpielark	Restless Flycatcher	Leaden Flycatcher
Little Raven	Jacky Winter	Welcome Swallow
Tree Martin	Rufous Songlark	Little Grassbird
Golden-headed Cisticola	Australian Reed Warbler	
Common Myna	Common Starling	Common Blackbird
House Sparrow	Diamond Firetail	Red-browed Finch
European Greenfinch	European Goldfinch	Zebra Finch

Dave reports:

'Pinkerton was very busy, with new birds Noisy Miner (not welcome!) and Leaden Flycatcher. Bush's was very quiet and Eynesbury was average, with only low numbers of Diamond Firetails and no Speckled Warblers found.'

PLEG Exhibition of Environmental Art



Dolores Skowronski-Malloni, Bob Turner, Tom Sell, Richard Rowe, Judy Allen & Alexandra Newman

During the month of February 2014 Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group (PLEG) held its inaugural Exhibition of Environmental Art at the Melton Visitor Information Centre. The exhibition was a celebration of the natural environment of the Melton region, featuring a depiction of Melton's local wildlife, wildflowers, scenes and nature in all sizes shapes and forms; including local landscapes. The exhibition consisted of paintings, drawings, collage & photographs. The exhibition was part of the Sustainable Living Festival,

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Australia's largest and oldest sustainability festival. The artworks were judged by leading botanical illustrator Dolores Skowronski –Malloni.

On Wednesday 6th February Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group hosted an awards ceremony at the Melton Visitor Information Centre. PLEG President Richard Rowe opened the show by first discussing PLEG & its activities in protecting Melton's natural environment. Richard then introduced art judge Dolores Skowronski –Malloni & Melton Mayor Cr Bob Turner. Awards were presented to the prize winners by Melton Mayor Cr Bob Turner.



Bob Turner presenting awards



'Pinkerton Forest in the Rain' by Judy Allen

First Prize was awarded to Judy Allen for her photograph *'Pinkerton Forest in the Mist'*. Judy received a four day Botanical Art Beginner Workshop (valued at \$350). The judge also decided to award a Highly Commended award. Dolores awarded this to MEG's Florence Roche,

email: darylakers@gmail.com

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

for her drawing of a Scarlet Robin. There was also a Peoples' Choice award, judged by visitors to the exhibition over the month of February. The popular choice for this award was also Florence Roche. It was decided to award Junior Encouragement awards to the two children who submitted artworks. They were awarded to Thomas Sell (aged 6) for his texta drawing of a Superb Lyrebird and to Alexandra Newman (aged 12) for her drawing of an Owl.



Scarlet Robin by Flo Roche

As well as the artworks submitted to be judged, there was also an extensive collection of photos showing the wide diversity of wildlife, vegetation & landscapes in & around Melton.

Details of exhibition on:

<http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/author/natureoutwest/>; & soon <http://www.pinkertonforest.com/>;

COMING ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Wider Geelong Flora Lecture - Geelong Field Naturalists Club 7.30pm Tuesday 11th March

Ben Zeeman is our speaker and his topic is Vegetation Dynamics of a long unburned Woodland - Changes from 1971 to 2012. This work is based on his studies at the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve and the findings formed a thesis for his work at Latrobe. Friends' Meeting rooms at the Geelong Botanical Gardens. Friends' Meeting rooms entrance is at the intersection of Holt Road and Eastern Park Circuit in Eastern Park Melway 452 G4. Information: John Bell 03 5261 3543, solea1@bigpond.com; <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~gfnc/>;

Koala Conservation Volunteer Days - You Yangs Regional Park Sunday 23th March

Help create koala habitat & learn about koalas! Meet Melbourne's most famous wild koalas! Learn

how koala researchers identify koalas. Part of the day is spent assisting our Koala Researcher to find wild koalas in their natural habitats. Once found, each koala is photographed, GPS located, their behaviour and tree species noted. Most of the koalas in the area are known to your hosts and all are part of a 15 year citizen-science Koala Research Project. Results of these studies are delivered to Parks Rangers, Wildlife Carers, Hospitals & Veterinarians, Field Naturalists and Wildlife Scientists for the betterment of wild koalas.

Bring lunch, drinking water, gardening gloves, binoculars and your passion for nature and wildlife! Free! Although donations to assist Koala Research are welcomed. Information & bookings: Echidna Walkabout Nature Tours 03 9646 8249, enquiries@echidnawalkabout.com.au; (book early)

Bird Monitoring Workshop – late March Expression Of Interest encouraged

Loddon Plains Landcare Network is taking expressions of interest from individuals who are interested in taking part in a training workshop to undertake bird monitoring in the Loddon plains. Training with ecologist Chris Tzaros will enable participants to undertake volunteer bird monitoring as part of the Loddon Plains Community Bird Monitoring Project. This project will form a baseline for ongoing data collection to observe trends and changes in bird numbers and biodiversity.

The workshop will be run in late March and will include:

- A background of bird fauna of the Loddon Plains
- Bird identification
- Bird monitoring methods of the monitoring project
- The role of community volunteers in ecological monitoring projects

The survey will be undertaken 4 times per year for 2 years, ongoing if funding allows. Some experience in bird watching is desired, although a good eye and bird book will suffice. Information: Anthony Gallacher 0447 095 501

facilitator@lpln.org;

THREAT TO LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Ancient Red Gums threatened by bulldozers

Once again Melton's natural environment is under threat. There is a proposal to develop the land bounded by Federation Drive, High St & Ryans Creek. The plan proposes, among development details, '*native vegetation removal*'. The '*native*

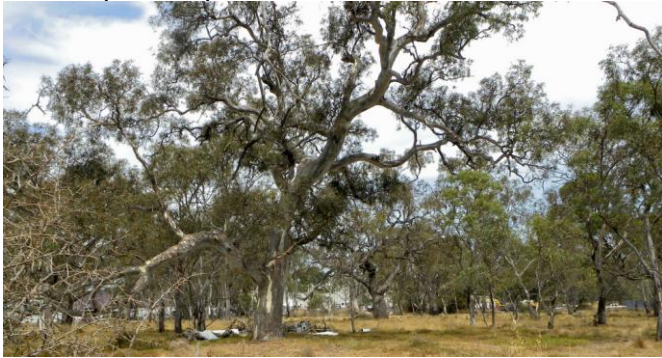
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vegetation' here consists of a number of ancient, old growth Red Gum and Grey Box trees, several centuries old. Melton Council has refused the application but the developer has taken the matter to VCAT, to overturn Council's decision. MEG has submitted a statement supporting Melton Council's decision not to grant the permit.

All three local Melton newspapers chose to run articles about the matter. This illustrates that they consider this matter to be of considerable community opinion. Local community papers are astute judges of local community values, concerns and sensitivities. Their commercial survival depends upon this. In fact, their ability to thrive in a climate where major newspapers are declining and possibly in danger of extinction, reflects their ability to read public opinion.



Ancient Red Gums threatened by bulldozers

VCAT Reference Number: P99/2014
Subject Land: 1 and 3-39 Federation Drive Melton

Statement of Grounds by MEG

'MEG strongly supports Melton City Council in its refusal to grant a permit to clear remnant Red Gum – Grey Box woodland beside a small reserve at Ryans Creek.

This proposal is entirely inappropriate.

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The proposal concerns a very large tract of land beside Federation Drive. The plan proposes, among other development proposals, 'native vegetation removal'. The native plants here consist of many ancient, old growth Red Gum and Grey Box trees, several centuries old.

The remnant woodland is but a tiny proportion of the land subject to this proposal.

The vast bulk of the land at this site between Federation Drive, Ryans Creek and High Street is of little environmental significance. The small remnant woodland worthy of protection, with its many ancient old growth trees, occupies only a small corner of the land. The remainder of the site (excluding the small woodland remnant) could be developed with little environmental harm. The remnant woodland could easily be excluded from the remainder of the development.

The ancient Red Gums and Grey Box trees here are of enormous environmental value

Old trees with nesting hollows are necessary for the breeding and continuing survival of hollow nesting birds such as parrots, cockatoos and kookaburras. Melton's creeks are now the only places where old trees of this nature survive. As more of these old trees are removed, we will lose more and more of our birdlife. Those few old growth trees remaining are of vital environmental importance. We have already lost the vast majority of trees in and around Melton. Visitors to Melton invariably ask "Where are the trees?"

Endangered Species issues

A few hundred metres downstream, in Melton Botanic Garden, Ryans Creek is a valuable resting place for endangered Latham's Snipe. These endangered migratory birds regularly rest here on their annual migration to and from this region. Ryans Creek adjacent to the Federation Drive property has similar large Cumbungi (*Typha* sp) beds, favoured by Latham's Snipe as habitat and refuge. Creeks with suitable vegetation are used by migratory birds.

Latham's Snipe are subject to several levels of legislative protection, reflecting their endangered status.

These include:

- Section 248 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 - List of Marine Species (Commonwealth of Australia)

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- List of Migratory Species) (Commonwealth of Australia),
- Migratory species prescription - Melbourne Strategic Assessment (Victoria Department of Sustainability and Environment (Vic. DSE)
- Listed as Near Threatened (Advisory List of Threatened Vertebrate Fauna in Victoria

Wildlife issues

Although this small remnant woodland is in the town of Melton itself, it is a small but valuable wildlife habitat, with its old trees with their many nesting hollows. Melton's creeks, including Ryans Creek, are valuable as wildlife habitat. Melton's creeks are also vitally important as wildlife corridors.



Dusky Woodswallow in threatened woodland

Environmental values of Ryans Creek.

Ryans Creek, after it passes beneath High Street, flows into Melton Botanic Garden. The sector of Ryans Creek between High Street and Melton Botanic Garden is subject to major environmental enhancement works. This sector of Ryans Creek consists of a concrete drain at present Melbourne Water, in partnership with Friends of Melton Botanic Garden, plan to remove this concrete drain and restore it as a creek. This will involve much environmental planting. Restoring this concrete drain to a natural creek will create a new link in a wildlife corridor along Ryans Creek. As well as restoring habitat for native wildlife, this will add a new link into the already existing biolink along Ryans Creek.

Community Values

The Ryans Creek reserve immediately adjacent to the proposed development site is a public park, situated among ancient picturesque red Gum trees. There are wooden benches and table here for public use. There is a viewing platform allowing

views across the deep reed-fringed billabong, allowing visitors to view native wetland birds here. The small remnant old growth woodland immediately adjacent to this reserve complements the natural beauty of this small public reserve. It is vital this small woodland remnant be retained, for community amenity value, as well as for its value as wildlife habitat.



Ryans Creek reserve

Melton has gained a hard earned reputation for environmentally responsible development, to the envy of other local municipalities. This has been demonstrated by Melton being awarded many Sustainable Cities awards over the last couple of years. An example of this is the proposed new Toolern precinct development area that will be accompanied by the newly created Toolern Creek Regional Park: 'A new park for a growing community'. 60,000 residents are expected to be living in this precinct in a few years.

The western region is becoming more attractive as a place for people to live. Melton is set to expand greatly over the next few years, especially on the eastern and southern fringes. More and more people will want to live in and around Melton. We need to retain green areas of natural beauty for community amenity value. We should be encouraging people to think Melton is a better place to live.'

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Heat map shows at-risk Melbourne suburbs: *Melburnians living in the western, inner northern and southeastern suburbs are most at risk to the dangers of heatwaves.*

News.com February 06, 2014

According to the Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities, '*Melburnians living in the*

western, inner northern and southeastern suburbs are most at risk to the dangers of heatwaves. ‘

‘The Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities professor Nigel Tapper said the map identified areas based on risk factors including housing types, age, health and socio-economic status of the population.

"Our research found a clear association between suburbs with extreme heat vulnerability and the number of hospital emergency visits or ambulance callouts on extremely hot days," Mr Tapper said.

"Key factors that raised the risk of sickness or death in heatwaves included older people living alone, ethnicity and the proportion of land covered by buildings."

‘Paramedics were called to almost 500 heat-exposure cases during the heatwave last month while a Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) report linked 374 deaths to the 2009 heatwave leading up to Black Saturday.

‘Chief executive of the Water Sensitive Cities (CRC) Professor Tony Wong said green initiatives such as planting trees and providing water could reduce radiant temperatures and health risks.

"Prior research found daytime shading provided by street tree canopies improves human comfort by significantly reducing mean radiant temperatures," Prof Wong said.

"Urban street tree monitoring has shown that during Melbourne's heatwaves, a person's physiological equivalent temperature can be up to 18 degrees lower near midday in areas with tree canopy shading."

<http://www.news.com.au/national/breaking-news/heat-map-shows-at-risk-melbourne-suburbs/story-e6f7ku9-1226819108503>;

The evidence seems clear: **keep planting trees!!!**

Koala at Eynesbury

This Koala was seen resting in a tree beside the Eynesbury ornamental lake, beside the Discovery Centre, during the February heat wave. A Koala had been reported at the lake during the January heat wave days, so presumably this may be the same one. It must have decided to remain in the vicinity of the lake. Along with other animals, Koalas suffer when the temperature exceeds 40° C, just as we do. Although its fur coat would be invaluable in cold weather, it must be highly

uncomfortable in extremely hot weather like this. How much can a Koala bear? Koalas are seen from time to time in Eynesbury; hopefully there is more than one. As well as being a scenic asset to the Eynesbury village, the lake is also a crucial water source for Eynesbury wildlife.



Snake-necked Turtle at Eynesbury



This large Eastern Long-necked Turtle (*Chelodina longicollis*) was photographed basking on a log in the middle of the ornamental lake at Eynesbury in January. These turtles are found in nearby Werribee River & Toolern Creek. They are also reported in the Western Water treatment lagoons at Surbiton Park. Turtles often bask in warm weather, on logs or rocks totally surrounded by water. A new species for Eynesbury! However, wild turtles usually have a healthy growth of green algae on their shells; like lush green fur! The absence of such a green coat may indicate that its arrival here may have been recent.

