MELTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP

No. AOO4OO49F A.B.N 47 411575097 PO BOX 481 MELTON 3337

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

MAY 2014

CORPORATE MEMBERS

Western Land Services

³ : H V W H U Q Services are specialists in environmental management techniques, weed & Y H U P L Q F R Q W U 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 by MEG to K L J K O L J K W W K H E H D X W \ G L Y H U V L W \ R I 0 H O W R Q ¶ V I O R U D fauna, as well as its more spectacular landscape. http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/;

NEXT MEG MEETING

0 (* ¶ Vex Qmeeting will be Wednesday 21th May 2014 (International Day for Biological Diversity).

MEG meetings are on the 3rd Wednesday of the P R Q W K D W D W ' R Q 1 D U G H O O D ¶ V R I I L F H L Q 0 H O W R Q & R X Q F L O ¶ V (Q Y L U R Q P Alexandra St (beside Ambulance Station).

WILDLIFE RESCUE

Ring: 13 000 94535

APRIL

Despite rain at the very end of March, this was almost immediately followed by warm northerly winds, drying out the soils once more. However generous autumn rain before & after our working bee seems to have broken the back of the dry weather. Hopefully.

A Lunar Eclipse a week prior to Easter resulted in the moon turning a blood red colour. In ancient days a blood moon was thought to presage biblical plagues or apocalyptic cataclysms. However the event came & went without drama. The blood moon failed to appear to local observers, thwarted E \ 0 H O E R X U Q H ¶ V R Y H U F D V W V N L H \

MEG EVENTS IN APRIL

Signage for MEG trailer

Q R Z H Q V X U H G W K D W 0 (* ¶ V W U D L O H anonymous. The MEG trailer finally has signs, fore & aft! We also have a large 3 metre banner & a new A ¶Frame sign. Many thanks to City of Melton!

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

The panoramic valley below provides a contrast with the Grassy Grey Box Woodland.

Bird watching against Toolern Creek panorama

We were pleased to see that the tiny Grey Box seedlings beside which MEG placed brightly painted stakes last winter have been spared by grass slashing operations. Although still small some are almost half a meter tall. The tree seedlings previously cut by slashing operations are now regenerating. With winter rains they should show vigorous growth, creating better habitat for our vulnerable & declining woodland birds.

Greybox trees protected by stakes placed by MEG

Planting at Brookfield

On Sunday 13th April Geraldine, Flo, Doug, Jenny, Daryl & Thomas met at Brookfield beside Arnolds Creek to take advantage of early autumn rains to begin planting early this year. The soil was moist & still warm as winter is not here yet, although we were surprised to discover that there were still some dry spots. Hopefully we will have follow up rains soon. It gave us the chance to plant some of the many plants we had left over from last year; especially those we received after it had become too dry to plant.

As well as the usual understory plants, we also planted 10 Bulokes besi G H W K H µ L V O D Q G ¶ 7 declining woodland trees should add to the mix of trees at this site. Our mascot, the Willy Wagtail without a white eyebrow, accompanied us as usual, looking for worms & grubs we uncovered. We will be returning soon to plant the creekside plants funded by Melbourne Water, when they become available.

Flo, Doug & Geraldine planting Bulokes at Brookfield

We planted about 130 plants, including:

Melicytus	Buloke	Wahlenbergia
Bursaria	Bluebush	Inland Pigface
Lightwood Wattle		

Geraldine, Flo, Jenny & Doug: Lunch at Brookfield

Tom with newly planted Bulokes

COMING MEG EVENTS

Planting with Brookfield residents
Tuesday 6th May 11.00
Brookfield residents will be planting at their site between the laneway & the freeway. We will be replacing those plants that did not make it through the dry summer. We will be planting a variety of trees, bushes & wildflowers. MEG members (& others) invited to participate

Hannah Watts Park
Saturday 10th May 9.00 – 11.00
0 (* ¶ V May birdwalk will be in Hannah Watts Park. Hannah Watts Park is a popular picnic & BBQ site LQ 0HOWRQ ,W KDV VHYHUDO XQGHUFRYHU %%4 ¶V DV ZHOO DQ LPSUHVVLYH NLGV¶ SOD\JURXQG [illegible] familiarity, it is also home to a surprisingly impressive diversity of birdlife. Large numbers of Crested Pigeons, Red-rumped Parrots, Black & Wood Ducks are common here. Large numbers of the smaller lorikeets (Musk & Purple-crowned) come here in early evening to roost. Hot & cold drinks, & snacks will be supplied by MEG. MEG birdwalk details are on: http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/; Hannah Watts is in High St, just east of the shopping centre, opposite the golf course. Melway Page 337 Ref D9

Toolern Creek (Big Red)
Saturday 15th June
There will be a bird walk in South Melton, along Toolern Creek. There is a footpath that runs along the creek. The creek forms a corridor for birds & other wildlife through Melton, from Toolern Vale in the north to the Toolern Regional Park in the south, thence to the Werribee River. Toolern Creek has been restored over several years, with many thousands of indigenous plants having been planted by Friends of Toolern Creek. Easy walking along a paved footpath & child friendly! Wear hats, walking shoes & suncream.

Meet at 'Big Red' beside the Western Freeway. Corner of Tamar Drive and Raymond Street, Melton South. Melway 337 Ref A12

Planting at Brookfield
Saturday 24th May 9.00 – 12.00
MEG will be planting trees 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.

Planting at Brookfield
Saturday 21st June 9.00 – 12.00
MEG will be planting trees at Brookfield.

Planet Ark Treeplanting Day
Sunday 27th July Brookfield
MEG will be participating in Planet Ark Treeplanting Day once more planting 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.
Free indigenous plants will be given away to participants! Hot & cold drinks, & snacks will be supplied.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Birding at Pinkerton, & Eynesbury:
Sunday 18th May 0915
Birdlife Australia & PLEG invite 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. For more info: Dave Torr: 9749 5141 or davidtorr@gmail.com; Mob 0400 566 656 (BLA), 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.

RYANS CREEK

Clearance of Native Vegetation
VCAT Reference Number: P99/2014

1 and 3-39 Federation Drive Melton Vic 3337

Old growth Red Gum and Grey Box Woodland

There is a proposal to develop the land bounded by Federation Drive, High St & Ryans Creek. The original plan proposed, among development detail, the removal of 2.251 hectares of native vegetation consisting of several ancient, old growth Red Gum and Grey Box trees, several centuries old. Melton Council did not approve the application but the developer took the matter to VCAT, to overturn Council's decision.

MEG submitted a statement to VCAT supporting Melton Council's decision not to grant the permit.

An amended permit application was submitted, after objections were made & before going to VCAT; this was prepared by a variety of consultants. They take into consideration concerns raised by both Council and third parties. The amended plans result in an improved design response outcome from a town planning, traffic, landscaping and ecological perspective.

All 2.251 hectares native vegetation were originally proposed for removal. 0.910 hectares will now remain intact, as a result of this amendment.

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, Owls, Cockatoos, & Kookaburras; not to mention bats. Melton's trees 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. We have already lost the vast majority of trees in and around Melton. Visitors to Melton environment ask: "Where are the trees?"

Under new environmental guidelines, recently amended under the guise of "efficiency", it seems only "endangered" flora and fauna are considered when environmental destruction of this nature is proposed. The presence of other native species that are dependent upon old hollow trees such as these are of **NO** relevance. Much loved native birds such as parrots, cockatoos, rosellas, owls, kookaburras etc that are entirely dependent upon these trees are of **NO** value when these developments are being considered. If there are no endangered species present: then these environmentally valuable old, hollow trees are of **NO** value, even though they are home to non-endangered native wildlife. How long before these "non-endangered" species become endangered or disappear from Melton completely as their habitat is chipped away, bit by bit, by insensitive development?

Melton's trees, including River Red Gums, are important as wildlife habitat. They are also vitally important as wildlife corridors. The prime cause for rarity and extinction of wildlife is habitat destruction! The Koorkaburra is Melton's most iconic bird species. However, the Kookaburra is now only rarely seen in Melton due to declining habitat, food sources and nest trees. How long before even our most familiar birds like Rosellas or Galahs become extinct in urban areas due to habitat destruction?

Melton residents see an impressive variety of native birds in Melton, especially Parrots, Rosellas, Lorikeets, Galahs, Corellas and Cockatoos, in our parks, gardens and sports fields. However, their continued survival in Melton depends entirely upon the retention of old, hollow trees, in which they need to nest.

Old hollow-bearing trees are almost entirely restricted to remnant trees many hundreds of years and they continue to be present in a locality long after their nest sites are destroyed. Each time a stand of these trees is removed, even just a small one; more nest trees are also lost. However, the surviving population of parrots after their breeding sites are removed is an ageing one, with no new birds being hatched to replace them;

a 'ghost' population if fact!

When they finally disappear, many years after, SHRSOH VXGGHQO\ ZRQGHU µZKHUH KDYH DOO WKH ELUGV JRQH"´

It is not only large forests or pristine wilderness areas that are of value and in need of protection. Small remnant stands of trees such as this one are also of vital importance to local communities. Small stands of old trees are crucial in retaining birds in our towns and community. These small green places are of vital importance as they are part of our community amenity. As these small remnants are destroyed we are in danger of becoming just another unplanned suburban wasteland

With a modicum of imagination, and environmental sensitivity, this development could so easily have been designed in a manner that would keep these valuable old trees intact, thereby avoiding the odium of riding roughshod over local sensibilities, avoiding the local reputation of environmental insensitivity and destruction, avoiding being party to further removing the dwindling habitat and nesting sites of local native wildlife & avoiding having a retail precinct under a public opinion cloud

Destroying these old trees may be legal but is certainly not ethical or environmentally sound! Especially in a social environment where consumers are increasingly demanding that producers, manufacturers and retailers sell goods and services that are sustainable, and environmentally sensitive. Needlessly destroying a number of old trees that are habitat for much-loved local native wildlife will not be regarded as HQYLURQPHQWDOO\ VHQVLWLYH E\ ORFDO VKRSSHUV

VCAT decision
The tribunal ruled that the amended plan submitted by the developer be approved.

Outcomes
Although the original proposal would have removed all native vegetation, the amended proposal will retain 0.910 hectares. It would have been preferable to keep all these ancient trees, however some vegetation has been retained. The outcome could have been worse, especially if no objection had been made to the original plan.

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OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

We need to let 'zombie' species go extinct!
There is considerable media debate recently about whether we should let VR FDOOHG µ]RPELH¶ go extinct rather than make the effort to save them; as this will be too expensive or too difficult.
µ6FLHQWLVWV UHVLJQ OLYLQJ GH FDOO IRU WULDJH GHEDWH¶
ABC Lateline Thursday 20 March 2014
http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-19/australian-species-facing-extinction-living-dead-triage/5331908;
µ'RQ W JLYH XS RQ $XVWUDOLD V H
The Guardian Thursday 20 March 2014
http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/20/endangered-species-ecological-triange;

Much of this so-called debate seems to ignore the blatantly obvious fact that continuing habitat destruction is a major factor in the continuing disappearance of our threatened plant & animal species. All the protection in the world given to a VSHFLHV WKUHDWHQHG ZLWK H[WL it has no viable habitat. Our native forests, with their threatened wildlife, are still being logged relentlessly. There is now even the threat to log national parks, & to reduce the forests under SUHVHQW SURWHFWLRQ µ7RR PDQ up!¶ LV WKH FDWFKFU\

Those few remaining remnant native habitats also need to be linked by viable wildlife corridors. Not the tiny 10 metre corridors along creeks often demanded by developers. Developers often claim that wider (more effective) corridors DUH µWRR RQHURXV¶ D UHVWULFWLRQ DIIHF

Moorabool Landcare Network's Website
Stefanie Wabnik of Melbourne Water writes:
µ,I \RX ZDQW WKH ODWHVW XSGDW happening/planned in the Upper Werribee/ Lerderderg/ Parwan, Moorabool Network Website has been launched; http://www.mln.org.au/;
Stefanie Wabnik, River Health Officer (West) Waterways, T 9679 7561 M 0405 492 686, 990 lsTrobe St, Docklands Vic 3008 PO Box 4342 Melbourne Vic 3001, melbournewater.com.au;

OTHER COMMUNITY MATTERS

2014 Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll
Nominations for the 2014 Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll are now open. The closing date for nominations is 5pm on Friday 23 May 2014. Each year the Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll

acknowledges & celebrates the wide ranging achievements of Aboriginal Victorians past & present. To make a nomination please visit: www.dpc.vic.gov.au/vihr; or Toly Sawenko**,** Senior Project Officer, Community Programs, Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria Department of Premier and Cabinet Department of Premier and Cabinet Level 9, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000 http://www.aboriginalaffairs.vic.gov.au/; ¶ Angela Singh, Executive Director, Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.

MELTON WOODLANDS

Strathtulloh Woodland

Natural bush regeneration assisted by MEG

On Saturday 12th April the MEG Bird Group returned to Strathtulloh Woodland. City of Melton is keen to ensure that the endangered Grassy Woodland is protected, along with its vulnerable woodland bird species.

Grey Box seedling

6HYHUDO µLVODQGV¶ KDYH EHHQ F tree saplings contained within. &UHDWLRQ RI µL containing tree saplings should ensure that future mowing operations will not mow down the hundreds of juvenile regenerating Grey Box trees. This should ensure that the endangered Grassy Woodland is better protected, along with its vulnerable woodland bird species. More such µLVODQGV¶ ZLOO ensuring the long KRSHIX term survival of the woodland.

µ,VODQG¶ FUHDWHG WR SURWH

We were pleased to see that current mowing operations now allow the many regenerating Grey Box trees to grow uncut. Last year MEG placed bright orange stakes beside the tree saplings in danger of being mowed. Islands were created containing these saplings to protect them, to allow the Grey Box Grassy Woodland to regenerate. These habitat enhancement measures in this threatened Grassy Woodland remnant should ensure that its equally vulnerable birdlife is also protected.

Regenerating Grey Box saplings in Strathtulloh

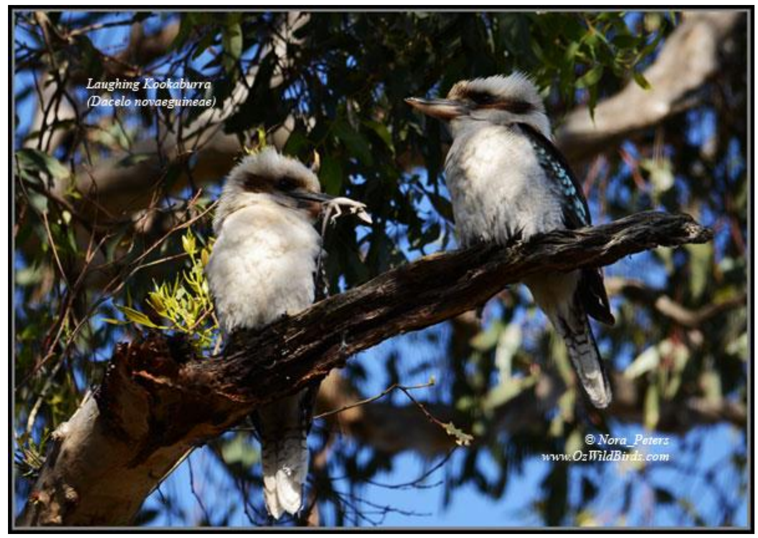
MELTON WILDLIFE

Hollow nesting birds in Melton

Rainbow Lorikeets

Musk Lorikeet

Local birds such as parrots, cockatoos, lorikeets, galahs & rosellas need tree hollows in which to nest. Without these they cannot breed & will ultimate disappear. Old hollow bearing trees are almost entirely restricted to 0 H O WdReQk¶.V Although these birds are seen throughout Melton gardens, parks & streets, they must have these tree hollows to continue to survive!



Kookaburras

Sulphur-crested Cockatoos

Wood Duck