



MELTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP

No. AOO4OO49F

A.B.N 47 411575097

PO BOX 481 MELTON 3337

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER JUNE 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>;

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 18th June 2014.

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

MAY

The warm days of April ended abruptly as the beginning of May ushered in the cold of winter. However mid-May brought a return to warm weather, on the heels of a northerly wind.

Over eleven consecutive days over 20°, a record for May!

One warm night even enticed a Marbled Gecko from its home in a north facing window frame. It resumed its summer vantage point on the outside of the window; no doubt lying in wait for moths.

MEG EVENTS IN MAY

Planting with Brookfield residents



John & Don planting at Brookfield

On Tuesday 6th May Brookfield residents met to plant at the site between the laneway & the freeway. We replaced several plants that did not make it through the dry summer. John, Don & Daryl planted about 45 plants. These were mainly spiny Melicytus & equally spiny Bursaria. These should offer protection for small native birds from cats & raptors. Hopefully we may see Blue Wrens return to Brookfield & the presence of spiny bushes should facilitate this. We also planted blue

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

flowering Wahlenbergias as well as Golden & Lightwood Wattle, Kangaroo Apple, Fragrant Saltbush & Lomandra.

Most plants are doing well Losses were surprisingly light, no doubt helped by the mulch. . Some trees we planted last year are almost a metre tall.

Residents have been keeping the weeds down here, especially in the 'island' nearest the gate, as the photos clearly show!



Planting & weeding at Brookfield

Bird walk at Hannah Watts Park



On Saturday 10th May MEG hosted a birdwalk at Hannah Watts Park. Despite threatened rain five people participated; Nora, Flo & Daryl of MEG, Josephine & Dave observed a total of 21 bird species. This is an impressive tally for a park in the middle of town, surrounded by retail & industrial precincts.

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. 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.

Bird species seen were:

Black Duck	Wood Duck
Domestic (Mallard) Duck	Muscovy Duck
Dusky Moorhen	Purple Swamphen
Gang Gang Cockatoo	White Cockatoo
Long-billed Corella	Rainbow Lorikeet
Crested Pigeon	Masked Lapwing
Indian Mynah	Noisy Miner
White-plumed Honeyeater	Red Wattlebird
Welcome Swallow	Mudlark
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Little Raven
Willy Wagtail	



Gang Gang Cockatoos at Hannah Watts Park

A surprise was the sighting of 4-5 Gang Gang Cockatoos! These small grey Galah-sized Cockatoos are more commonly seen in the hills to Melton's north, in the Macedon Ranges. An occasional Gang Gang Cockatoo is seen in Melton

from time to time, but a group of 4-5 is most unusual. Their unusual squeaky call gave them away as they moved between the golf course & Hannah Watts. Their grey camouflage was broken by the bright red crests of the male birds. Some birds appeared to be juveniles as their crests had only a few red wisps.

Another surprise sighting was a Noisy Miner with a taste for bourbon & coke! We found the bird drinking from a discarded can. It flew off at our approach but kept returning for more drinks from the can. Hopefully it was the sugar in the can residue that was the attraction.



Noisy Miner drinking bourbon & coke

The group was surprised to see about 20 freshly planted 2-3 metre non-indigenous trees, rather than the indigenous trees more usually planted along Toolern Creek,



Non-indigenous trees beside Toolern Creek

We also met a lady who regularly walk her dog here. She pointed out a hollow log placed in a tree

as a nest site. She said that she often sees a possum here. Nora returned a day or so later & discovered a Ring-tailed Possum in residence.

MEG birdwalk details are on:
<http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/>;

Melbourne Water 2013 Grant:
plants arrive for Arnolds Creek at Brookfield
In late May MEG picked up 1200 plants from Western Plains Indigenous Nursery, funded by Melbourne Water, to be planted beside Arnolds Creek at Brookfield.

Acacia provincialis	50	Gold-dust Wattle	100
Melicytis dentatus	100	Red Gum	100
Dodonea viscosa	50	Poa labilliere	400
Lomandra longifolia	200	Carex tereticaulis	200

COMING MEG EVENTS

Bird walk at Toolern Creek (Big Red) **Saturday 15th June 9.00 – 11.00**

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 & sunscreen.

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 21st June 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.

Bird Walk at Toolern Regional Park **Saturday 19th July 9.00 – 11.00** *Bridge Rd (beside bridge) Melway 343 Ref B5*

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 kindergarden carpark here & access is very easy. The site is very child friendly.

Free indigenous plants will be given away to participants! Hot & cold drinks, & snacks will be supplied. Melways Map 336 Ref G11.

Bird Walk at Arnolds Creek: Brookfield Saturday 23rd August 9.00 – 11.00

MEG will host a bird walk beside Arnolds Creek 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 Melways Map 336 Ref G11.

Blackwood: BBQ & picnic Sunday 7th December

MEG will have our end of year BBQ & picnic at Blackwood this year on Sunday 7th December. Sausages & bread supplied by MEG. Meet at Blackwood Hotel corner at 10.00. BYO salads & dessert. We will have our customary walk.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Twitching in Toolern Vale



Interior of Naturalists Cabin

On Saturday 3rd May 2014 Linda Bradburn (City of Melton's Environmental Educator) led a heritage visit to the historic Naturalists' Cabin at the Wood family property 'Norwood' at Toolern Vale, as part

of City of Melton's Heritage Week. The Naturalists' Hut was built by Vern Davey in 1933. Vern Davey was an apiarist with a property at Melliodora Park in Toolern Vale. Mr Davey was also a passionate bird lover & established the Toolern Vale Bird Sanctuary at his property in the 1930's. At about this time he also constructed the Naturalists' Hut on the property, so that naturalists & bird watchers could stay there to better observe the wildlife of Toolern Vale.



Bryan Campbell at Naturalists Cabin in 2008



Bryan Campbell at Naturalists Cabin 2014

The Toolern Vale Bird Sanctuary is described in detail in 'Birds of the Long Forest 1889–2005' pages 102-110

'At his own expense. Mr Davey constructed a cabin, which was officially opened in October 1933 for the use of visiting bird watchers, & the area was frequently visited from that date up to the 1960's.'

Birds of the Long Forest 1889 – 2005 page 11

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 Alexandra St (beside Ambulance Station) at 7:30

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

'The Toolern Vale Bird Sanctuary was a place of constant activity, but never more than during the Gould League's Bird Days, when school children visited for a day of nature study. The children were escorted in groups around a series of birds' nests, with a 10 minute talk given at each station by a knowledgeable birdwatcher.with up to 1000 children attending

Birds of the Long Forest 1889 – 2005 page 106

A description of the Toolern Vale Bird Sanctuary & a photo of the hut in 1934 was recorded by John Gray in the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union's magazine 'The Emu' Vol XXXIV October 1934:

'Even in winter one can record between fifty & sixty species of birds without any difficulty in this 240 acre sanctuary, whilst in the spring & summer months, visiting & nomadic species often bring the bird list up into the neighbourhood of seventy.'

http://www.publish.csiro.au/?act=view_file&file_id=MU934120.pdf;

The hut was 'rediscovered' & visited in 2008 when it was showing the effects of time & termites. However it is now in the process of being restored by Roger Wood, with the help of a City of Melton Heritage Grant. The hut is now looking more like it did in the 1930's, with new (upright!) stumps, refurbished front doors & the patio restored.

We sometimes think that interest in our natural environment is a modern phenomenon but bird watching & natural history were clearly popular with many people over a long period of time.

Melton has been in the forefront of interest in the natural environment for a very long time. Bird watchers have been coming here to observe birdlife in Long Forest Mallee, as well as at Toolern Vale, since the 1890's. In the days before privately owned vehicles became commonplace, bird watchers would travel to Melton by train, then travel overland to Long Forest Mallee or Toolern Value. The Werribee Gorge has also long been a magnet for naturalists & bird lovers since the 1890's.

Melton has a long historic connection with bird watching & natural history. Field Naturalists Club of Victoria member & early ornithologist A J Campbell was a member of the Pinkerton family, early settlers at Melton. His interest in birds &

natural history was no doubt fuelled by many visits to Pinkerton Forest & the nearby Werribee River. He advocated the creation of 'Wattle Day' to commemorate these well-known Australian flowers; & as a celebration of Australia. A J Campbell's son, AG Campbell, (a foundation member of the Bird Observers Club) visited the Naturalists Hut many times in the 1930's. Bryan Campbell, grandson of AJ Campbell, continues an active interest in local historical matters

Birdlife Australia continue this long tradition of bird watching in Melton as they conduct quarterly bird surveys in Pinkerton Forest, Bush's Paddock & Eynesbury Forest. Analysis of these records will enable more targeted & effective bird conservation. Their next survey is on Sunday 17th August (see *Birding at Pinkerton & Eynesbury below*).

MEG also conducts monthly bird walks in & around Melton (see *Coming MEG Events above*)

The Naturalists Hut is a priceless piece of Melton's heritage, not merely relating to our local history but a valuable reminder of the activities of pioneering naturalists, as well as highlighting the activities of both local & Victorian birdwatchers.

John Gray made this comment in the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union's magazine 'The Emu' Vol XXXIV October 1934:

'It behoves Melbourne ornithologists to see that interest in this fine area is not allowed to wane'

http://www.publish.csiro.au/?act=view_file&file_id=MU934120.pdf;

Birding at Pinkerton & Eynesbury

On Sunday 18th May Birdlife Australia's Dave Torr led a group of 15 birdwatchers birding at Pinkerton Forest, Bush's Paddock & Eynesbury Forest. The group saw 74 bird species!
An impressive tally!

Dave writes:

'Good turnout of around 15 people (7 new people) on a good if windy day. Pinkerton was initially very quiet but near the graves we had Jacky Winters. Lots of Flame Robins. Low numbers of Diamond Firetails. There were also claims of Swift Parrot and Olive-backed Oriole at Eynesbury but in each case only one person saw them so they were discounted.'

Bird species seen were:

Black Swan	Wood Duck
Black Duck	Shoveler
Chestnut Teal	Grey Teal
Blue-billed Duck	Hardhead
Cattle Egret	Straw-necked Ibis
Australasian Grebe	Hoary-headed Grebe
Little Black Cormorant	Little Pied Cormorant
Kestrel	Hobby
Black-shouldered Kite	Brown Falcon
Brown Goshawk	Whistling Kite
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Black Kite
Little Eagle	Coot
Purple Swamphen	Dusky Moorhen
Common Bronzewing	Common Pigeon
Crested Pigeon	Masked Lapwing
Long-billed Corella	Galah
White Cockatoo	Rainbow Lorikeet
Crimson Rosella	Eastern Rosella
Red-rumped Parrot	Kookaburra
Brown Treecreeper	Noisy Miner
White-plumed Honeyeater	Red Wattlebird
Brown-headed Honeyeater	New Holland Honeyeater
Spotted Pardalote	Striated Pardalote
Blue Wren	Speckled Warbler
Weebill	Yellow Thornbill
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Magpie
Dusky Woodswallow	Crested Shrike-tit
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Grey Shrike-thrush
Golden Whistler	Willy Wagtail
Gray Fantail	Magpie Lark
Little Raven	Jacky Winter
Flame Robin	Welcome Swallow
Tree Martin	Little Grassbird
Silvereye	Mynah
Starling	House Sparrow
Zebra Finch	Diamond Firetail
Red-browed Finch	Eastern Yellow Robin
Goldfinch	

Bird watching is alive & well in Melton, especially considering its long history in this region.

COMING ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Community Planting Day: McNabbs Weir Keilor 10am-12.30 pm Saturday 14th June

Come and help plant trees and shrubs along the beautiful escarpments of the Maribyrnong River. Wander along the river lined with ancient River Red Gums. Information & Directions: Biodiversity Officer Brimbank CC 0408 319 742, McNabbs Weir, Koronis Rd, Keilor [Melway 14 F1]

Birding at Pinkerton & Eynesbury:

Sunday August 17th 09.15

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 0458 035 896 (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.

Reconciliation Walk in Melton Botanic Garden



Alan Partridge describing Koorie Garden

On Friday 30th May Friends of Melton Botanic Garden (FMBG) celebrated Reconciliation Week by hosting a Reconciliation Walk in the Botanic Garden. Over 50 people participated & FMBG members guided several parties around the garden. They focussed especially on garden beds where plants of significance to local Wurundjeri people had been planted by local school children.

Participants had an opportunity to see the wonderful work done by the Friends group in only a few years. A largely weed-infested paddock has been transformed into a fast growing Botanical

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Garden largely featuring both dry land & local species.

Local grasslands were rich sources of food, exploited for tens of thousands of years by local Koorie people. Many of the beautiful wildflowers that once covered these vast areas are also food plants. Less than 1% of local grasslands are left, & those small remnants remaining are still under threat by increasing development. Several plots of the garden are being planted with local grassland species. These will give some impression of the original grasslands of the western basalt plains.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Waste dumper ordered to clean up

According to 'e-WEST a weekly review of what matters to business in Melbourne's West':

'A Melton West man was ordered by the council to clean up illegally dumped materials in Arnolds Creek after being identified by witnesses.

The illegal dumping occurred earlier this year at the Arnolds Creek Estate in Melton West and was reported to Melton Council by a local builder.

Witnesses were interviewed by a council authorised officer and provided the registration of the tipper witnessed dumping large quantities of unconstrained refuse on private land.

A Melton West man was interviewed in relation to the alleged dumping, resulting in a request to remove unconstrained refuse, rubbish, demolished and discarded materials from the Arnolds Creek Estate.

The clean-up resulted in the removal of over five tip truck loads equivalent to 11 hard waste collections.

'e-WEST a weekly review of what matters to business in Melbourne's West'

barbaramclure@ozemail.com.au;

Hollow branches as wildlife nest sites

Nora Peter's photo below illustrates that the hollow branch placed in this tree is providing a perfect nest site for a Ring-tailed Possum. Natural hollow branches are much better than manmade nest boxes as nest sites. MEG have placed nest boxes made by Melton Mens Shed in trees at Brookfield, but hollow branches placed in trees would make nest sites vastly superior to manmade boxes.

Usually the use of hollow branches is not recommended as it is preferable that hollow

branches be left in situ in the tree. Hollow branches are therefore not readily available for this purpose because of the undesirability of removing hollow logs from the bush.

However, as old trees are removed to make way for development, as will inevitably be the case as more development takes place in & around Melton in coming years; then perhaps some arrangement could be made to acquire the hollow branches (or even tree trunks!) for environmental purposes. Instead of being mulched, or used as firewood (adding to carbon release into the atmosphere) perhaps the felled trees or branches could be made available for environmental purposes. The least complex proposal could be to simply remove the hollow branches for placement into trees for use as natural nest boxes! A more complex proposal may be translocation of the felled trunks to a local woodland. This could greatly enhance the biodiversity of our woodlands.

There is a precedence for this in Melton whereby Western Water relocated felled trees that had to be removed to allow placement of water pipes. They were placed in Upper Pinkerton Forest to enhance its value as wildlife habitat.

MELTON WILDLIFE

Ring-tailed Possum at Hannah Watts



During our bird walk in Hannah Watts Park in May we met a lady who regularly walks her dog here. She pointed out a hollow log that had been placed in a tree as a nest site. She said that she often sees a possum here.

Nora later returned where she photographed the tail of this Ring-tailed Possum in the hollow. The possums more usually seen in Melton are the larger Brush-tailed Possums. These are common along Melton's creeks, wherever there are hollow trees. Another new species for Melton!

Diamond Firetails return to Harkness Road !



In May 2014 Nora Peters discovered several Diamond Firetails in Melton Gilgai Woodland, in Harkness Road. These birds were last reported in Melton Gilgai Forest ten years ago, in a 2004 Flora & Fauna Survey. It is good to see that these beautiful but threatened finches have returned. Hopefully they will stay! Especially as they are declining elsewhere. The fairly close proximity of Melton Gilgai to Long Forest Mallee, linked by wooded paddocks, no doubt enabled their return.

Their main stronghold in the Melton area is Eynesbury Forest, but they can also be seen in Pinkerton Forest & Long Forest Mallee, & less frequently in Bush's paddock. They have also been seen in Toolern Vale, as well as Ryans Lane.

Threats to Diamond Firetails

- Clearing and fragmentation of woodland, open forest, grassland and mallee habitat for agriculture and residential development, and firewood collection.
- Poor regeneration of open forest and woodland habitats.
- Invasion of weeds, resulting in the loss of important food plants.

- Modification and destruction of ground- and shrub layers within habitat through: removal of native plants, litter and fallen timber; introduction of exotic pasture grasses; heavy grazing and compaction by stock; and frequent fire.
- Predation of eggs and nestlings by increased populations of native predators such as the Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina*.
- Risk of local extinction due to small, isolated populations.

Activities to assist this species

- Retain dead timber on the ground in open woodland areas.
- Reduce heavy grazing by domestic stock in areas of known or potential habitat, to enable flowering and subsequent seeding of grasses and forbs that this species requires.
- Control weeds in areas of known habitat, especially the exotic, winter-fruiting shrubs such as cotoneasters, hawthorns, firethorns and privets that support Pied Currawongs.
- Retain and protect woodland, open forest, grassland and mallee habitat from clearing, fragmentation and disturbance; areas of 200 hectares or greater within woody vegetation are particularly significant.
- Expand and reconnect smaller fragments of habitat, by fencing and encouraging natural regeneration or applying revegetation techniques where regeneration fails.
- Ensure remnant populations remain connected or linked to each other; in cases where remnants have lost connective links, re-establish links by revegetating sites to act as stepping stones for dispersal.

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspeciesapp/profile.aspx?id=10768>;

