



MELTON ENVIRONMENT GROUP

No. AOO4OO49F

A.B.N 47 411575097

PO BOX 481 MELTON 3337

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER AUGUST 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 20th July

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

JULY

After a fairly wet June heralded the arrival of winter, July will be remembered for a couple of wild & woolly weeks, making entry into Melton's local woodlands somewhat hazardous. Trees & limbs were blown down all across the region. Not much rain though, causing the soil to dry out once more! Birds are beginning to engage in aerial dogfights, battling in the skies for nest territories.

MEG EVENTS IN JULY

Jute matting & wildflowers at Brookfield



Gerard, John & Bev laying jute mat at Brookfield

On Wednesday 17th July Daryl was joined Brookfield residents Bev & John, & Gerard Morel from Melbourne Water where we laid two rolls of jute matting 50 metres) beside the small tributary creek of Arnolds Creek (West) behind the Brookfield Village recreation centre. These were funded by a Melbourne Water River Health Incentives Grant. Gerard Morel of Melbourne Water offered to help us lay the matting as he had prior experience in doing this (& we had none!). A bit like laying underlay in the mud! He also drilled

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

about 100 holes for planting as we hammered in pegs to anchor the matting. The bio-degradable jute matting will rot away in a year or so, by which time our plants should be well established & healthy. Prior to this the creekside weeds had been sprayed & brushcut by Western Land Services.

Using jute matting is an entirely new experience for MEG so many thanks to Gerard & Melbourne Water for their assistance!

We decided to plant wildflowers into the freshly dug holes before the holes had a chance to dry out. So we returned after lunch & planted about 100 wildflowers.

These included:

Showy Podolepis	New Holland Daisies
Running Postman	Common Everlastings
Ruby Saltbush	Clustered Everlastings
Senna	Milky Beauty-heads
Basalt Daisy	Wahlenbergia
Eutaxia (Bush Pea)	Pelargonium rodneyanum



Lois, Bev & John planting at Arnolds Creek (West)



John & Bev with shed bought with grant funds

This is a new venture whereby planting has begun along Arnolds Creek (West) by Brookfield Residents Landcare Group, creating a new link in the Arnolds Creek Biolink.

Bird Walk at Toolern Regional Park



Eastern Rosellas feeding on Boxthorn berries

On Saturday 19th July MEG hosted a bird walk along Toolern Regional Park. Geraldine, Nora & Daryl of MEG participated, as well as Jim from Point Cook. We only walked through one shower of rain! Despite the bleak conditions we still saw a total of 25 bird species.

Long-billed Corella	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Eastern Rosella	Red-rumped Parrot
Rainbow Lorikeet	Wood Duck
Chestnut Teal	Kestrel
Brown Falcon	Black-shouldered Kite
Fantailed Cuckoo	Crested Pigeon
Little Raven	Magpie
Blue Wren	Willy Wagtail
Blackbird	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Starling	Indian Mynah
Silvereye	Yellow-rumped Thornbill
House Sparrow	White-plumed Honeyeater
Striated Pardalote	

Brilliantly coloured Eastern Rosellas were feeding on bright red Boxthorn berries: splashes of scarlet in an otherwise grey landscape! Wood Ducks & Long-billed Corellas were squabbling over tree hollows. However Zebra Finches & Red-browed Finches were notably absent, as were the usually diverse raptors. Tiny Silvereyes were picking among bare lichen-encrusted branches, presumably for insects. Many of these birds migrate from Tasmania. Each winter they brave the skies above the stormy waters of Bass Strait to

fly to the mainland, then back again for the return flight. A long & arduous flight for such a tiny bird!

Last year we saw 21 bird species; this year we saw 25. However, last year the weather was much worse. High winds & heavy rains caused us to leave early



Enlarged small tree hollow beside Toolern Creek

Toolern Creek is one of Melton's wildlife hot spots, providing both valuable habitat & a vital wildlife corridor in a rapidly urbanising landscape.

Planet Ark Treeplanting Day



Geraldine, Carmen & Flo planting at Brookfield

On Sunday 27th MEG participated in Planet Ark Treeplanting Day once more at Brookfield. 18 people participated including members of MEG, Brookfield Village Landcare Group, as well as people from Melton & Bacchus Marsh. We were treated to a magnificent morning, with warm sunshine & blue skies. A welcome contrast with the rest of July! However weather over the following week was quite wild!

We planted a total of 400 plants. After the 100 wildflowers we planted there earlier in the month, this makes total of 500 wildflowers along this small creek. The long strip of weed matting looks odd at the moment, punctuated by the new plants. However, as the wildflowers & understory plants grow, & the matting rots away, it will take on a more natural appearance. We expect a colourful wildflower display here in a year or so. The success of these plantings will be closely monitored, to observe the degree of success. We may employ this method at other sites here, especially when inevitable El Nino conditions return.

The local birds seem to have discovered the weed matting. Apparently the magpies are pulling out fibres, presumably to line their nest. Random tufts of fibre lying on the ground seem to confirm this. The resident Wood Ducks also seemed interested in what we were doing as they slowly edged closer to keep an eye on us. They didn't seem too fazed as two-year old Annabelle kept following them; slowly walking just ahead of her!

We planted a variety of wildflowers & small flowering bushes:

Dianella admixta	Dianella longfolia
Chocolate Lily	Pelargonium rodneyanum
Blue Grass-lily	Wahlenbergia
Running Postman	Velleia paradoxa
Common Everlasting	Sticky Everlasting
Podolepis	Bulbine Lily
Billy Buttons (Craspedia & Pycnosaurus)	
Linum	Lomandra
Indigofera	Eutaxia diffusa
Melicytis	Bluebush
Golden Wattle	



Lunch at Brookfield

The usual hot & cold drinks were supplied by MEG; as well as lunch, funded by City of Melbourne. Many thanks to Melton Council.

COMING MEG EVENTS

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.

Melton Gilgai Woodland Saturday 13th September 9.00 – 11.00 The woodland is in *Harkness Road* *Melway 330 Ref B11*

Bunnings Spring Launch Saturday 13th September.

MEG will participate in Bunnings Spring Launch again this year. Brookfield Village resident's landcare group will also be participating. The Brookfield residents are now active participants in the environmental restoration of Arnolds Creek.

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. Please advise of special dietary requirements. We will have our customary walk.

Bird Week in Melton 20th – 26th October

On World Environment Day local community environmental groups were awarded grants of \$1000 each. MEG will use this grant to conduct bird awareness activities during Bird Week (18- 24 October).

Bird Walk at Melton Botanic Garden Friday 24th October Part of Bird Week activities

Eynesbury Forest Bird Walk Sunday 26th October 9.00 – 11.00 Part of Bird Week activities

Long Forest Mallee Sunday 9th November 9.00 – 11.00

On Sunday 9th October Melton Environment Group will host a bird walk in Long Forest Mallee LFM.
Long Forest Road Melway 335 Ref E3

BIRD WEEK

Bird Week in Melton 20th – 26th October

MEG will be conducting bird awareness activities during Bird Week, funded by City of Melton's Environment Day grant. Every October, BirdLife Australia organises and promotes Bird Week with the goal of inspiring Australians to take action and get involved in bird conservation efforts. As people become more aware of our local birdlife & wildlife this will also hopefully create a desire to protect it.
<http://birdlife.org.au/get-involved/whats-on/bird-week>;

MEG activities in Bird Week will include: Bird display at Melton Information Centre

MEG will have a bird awareness display in the Melton Information Centre over Bird Week

Bird Walk & Bird Awareness at Melton Botanic Garden Friday 24th October Meet at the Depot in William Street

Bird Walk at Eynesbury Sunday 26th October 9.00 – 11.00

Meet in the carpark beside the Discovery Centre. Melway 226 Ref H2 (or just follow the large roadside signs to Eynesbury)

Other MEG activities in Bird Week:

- Education about local rare & endangered birds
- Information on local birds in digital format
- Education about local birds & wildlife
- Why our environment is important
- Birdlife & wildlife requirements
- Information about nestboxes
- Why old trees are important
- Bird watching in Melton
- Plants to attract birds
- Guest speakers

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

FMBG: NAIDOC Week Walk

On Friday 11th July Friends of Melton Botanic Garden marked NAIDOC Week by hosting a guided walk through the Melton Botanic Garden to see local indigenous plants from the Melton region. The walk was followed by morning tea. Highlights

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/>

were the natural features & remnant vegetation, Ryans Creek indigenous plantings, the Koorie Garden designed by Melton Koorie primary & secondary students, indigenous plantings at the lake & the Victorian Volcanic Plains garden.



COMING ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

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; Melway Map 221 ref H8 Gates open 9.15am, walk starts 9.30:

Biodiversity in Urban Environments

Knox City Council Friday 29 August 8:30 - 4:30

Hosted by Knox City Council with MC Rob Gell

The Biodiversity Planning Network invites you to a forum to explore:

- Melbourne's predicted population in 2050 is 10 million – how can we integrate biodiversity into the urban context?
- How do we deal with growth, increasing density, infrastructure, competing needs for open space and biodiversity?
- What is the cost of achieving this?

A range of speakers will present throughout the day including: Peter Seamer, CEO, Metropolitan Planning Authority 'Melbourne at 2050' Dr Sarah

Bekessy, Assoc.Professor/ARC Future Fellow, RMIT University 'Reimagining the Suburbs'

Friday 29 August – Registration 8:30am Forum 9:00am -4:30pm: Knox City Council 511 Burwood Highway, Wantirna South: \$50 per person – refreshments and lunch included Registration: Click on Event Registration to book now: <http://events.booking.knox.vic.gov.au/event/pub/EventDetailA.asp?lngEventID=358>;

Latham Snipe: expert discussion by David Wilson, Melton Library 10th September 7.30pm

Linda Bradburn writes:

'Listen to an expert (David Wilson) about Latham Snipe on 10th September

*Latham or Japanese Snipe is an endangered bird protected under Federal Law that has been seen over several years in the **Melton Botanic Garden**. The birds migrate every year from Japan. Please join the Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden and hear an expert talk about this bird, how you can recognise it, who to report the sighting to, and what their significance is.*

David Wilson is an ecologist with over 15 years' experience, specialising in ornithology and field research. David's passion for birds and birding has taken him throughout Australia, and across the world, observing and researching birds. He studied habitat use in the Southern Emu-wren as part of a Bachelor of Environmental Science degree, and then the conservation ecology of pythons on Cape York and Papua New Guinea for a PhD. He has then undertaken a range of research projects, including Great Bowerbird bower ornamentation across northern Australia and penguin population monitoring in Antarctica. David currently works as an ecological consultant, where he has assessed snipe habitat for a variety of developments, including wind farms.'

Melton Library and Learning Hub, 31 McKenzie Street, Melton 10th September 7.30pm. Free with light refreshments and free bird posters. RSVP Linda Bradburn (Environmental Educator) Email: lindab@melton.vic.gov.au; 9747 7200

Please RSVP to me by 6 September for catering purposes.

Linda Bradburn; Environmental Educator; Melton City Council; ph: (03) 9747 7200; fax: (03) 9743 9970; www.melton.vic.gov.au;

Platypus Festival

11th October 12pm to 4pm

Friends of Toolern Creek will host their 5th Platypus Festival on October 11th Toolern Creek alongside Big Red. There will be Jumping Castle, Face Painting, Animal Farm, Pony Rides, Snake Man and lots more. Contact Lyn Holdsworth, President, Friends of Toolern Creek.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Werribee River environmental flows - summer results

Bill Moulden, Environmental Water Planner – Integrated Planning at Melbourne Water writes:

'Two environmental flow releases were made into the Werribee River over the summer of 2013/14 with the aim of improving the dispersal and survival of juvenile Black Bream in the estuary.'

Scientists from the Arthur Rylah Institute monitored the Black Bream population in the estuary over the summer to see what effect the flows had and they have just released the results. While the results did not conclusively show that the flows were beneficial, juvenile fish were found throughout the estuary, which is encouraging.

We also learnt two new things about Black Bream in the Werribee estuary:

- *The breeding season progresses very rapidly, with adults spawning in late spring and young fish reaching fingerling size by February.*
- *Juvenile fish are present throughout the estuary and do not seem to move very far. This means that either adults are spawning in a broader range of habitats than we thought or the fish move as larvae in response to freshwater flow and the tide.'*

Bill Moulden, Environmental Water Planner – Integrated Planning, Melbourne Water T: (03) 9679 6613, 990 La Trobe Street, Docklands VIC 3008, PO Box 4342 Melbourne VIC 3001, melbournewater.com.au;

MELTON WILDLIFE

Blue Wrens return to Little Blind Creek

During MEG's June Bird Walk along Toolern Creek, Geraldine mentioned that there were

Superb Fairy Wrens (Blue Wrens) in residence at Little Blind Creek & in her garden; close to where MEG conducted extensive plantings several years ago. This Blue Wren was photographed bathing in Little Blind Creek. Blue Wrens had previously been absent from Little Blind Creek so it is good that they have re-colonised the creek.



Blue Wren bathing in Little Blind Creek July 2014

Prior to our beginning revegetation work at Brookfield in 2007, MEG made extensive understory plantings along Little Blind Creek. The absence of small understory birds such as Blue Wrens was one reason MEG began planting along Little Blind Creek, after discussion with Melton Shire & Melbourne Water. Stream side understory plantings by City of Melton, Melbourne Water & MEG have no doubt facilitated the return of Blue Wrens.

The superb Fairy Wren was recently declared Australia's favourite bird, according to a survey by BirdLife Australia.

<http://www.birdlife.org.au/birdvote>;

Birds in Hannah Watts Park

Geraldine also makes the observation:

'Just been for a walk in Hannah Watts and saw 4 Gang Gang Cockatoos and also a kookaburra the first in many years around the township'

On our May Bird Walk, MEG Bird group saw 4 Gang Gang Cockatoos here so it looks like they are still here. Another observer saw one near Melton South Primary School.

Kookaburras sometimes visit Melton & are seen along Toolern, Arnolds & Little Blind Creeks, but they do not stay. There is probably a paucity of the larger prey (reptiles, rodents, young birds etc) that are their diet. Perhaps it may find BBQ leftovers at Hannah Watts to its liking. They are more likely in

Eynesbury & Pinkerton Forest, as well as the pair than often can be seen perching on power lines near Anthonys Cutting.

Hannah Watts appears to be a hot spot for Melton birds!

Diamond Firetails in Melton

In May Nora Peters discovered several Diamond Firetails in Melton Gilgai Woodland, in Harkness Road. These beautiful but threatened little birds are still there, having been seen & heard by several observers. These birds were last reported here ten years ago, but they went missing through the drought; so it is good to see they have returned. Hopefully they will stay!

Nora has just discovered Diamond Firetails beside Toolern Creek, near Melton. They were also seen recently at Toolern Vale Primary School, at the top of Toolern Creek. Perhaps the creek is providing a corridor along which these endangered finches are colonising new territory?

This could confirm the value of Toolern Creek as a wildlife corridor, linking hillside Toolern Vale in the north with the Werribee River in the south.



Diamond Firetails beside Toolern Creek

Yellow-rumped Thornbills at Brookfield

As we were planting at Brookfield on 17th July there was a group of about a dozen Yellow-rumped Thornbills feeding in the grass, behind the Recreation Building. We have not seen these in Brookfield before so it is good to have them here. This brings the total Brookfield bird list to 54

ODD SPOT

Weird looking Cockatoo in Melton: Cockatoo x Corella hybrid?

Local bird photographer & expert Nora Peters recently discovered this highly distinctive but odd looking cockatoo in Melton. It shows similarities to both the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo & the Long-billed Corella, as the photo of both these birds together demonstrates. It has some of the facial 'cut-throat' markings of the Long-billed Corella, but these are orange-yellow rather than red. It has some yellow crest feathers, like the Sulphur-crested Corella, but only at the front; the remaining crest feathers resemble those of the Corella. It also has the blue patch surrounding the eye, as does the Corella. It has a dark coloured bill, like the Cockatoo; but it is long, like the Corella. There is some speculation & controversy among experts as to its true identity.



Hybrid Cockatoo (middle) with Long-billed Corellas

The diversity of Melton birds never ceases to surprise us! There are better quality photos on Nature Out West:

<http://natureoutwest.wordpress.com/2014/07/18/hybrid-cockatoo-in-melton/>;



Cockatoo x Corella hybrid



Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (left) & hybrid (right)

MELTON WOODLANDS

Red Gum Grassy Woodland in Strathtulloh



Strathtulloh resident Janet Dyke has highlighted this small Red Gum Grassy Woodland at the eastern corner of Greens Road and Strathtulloh Circuit. It is just a few hectares in size but it is

hopefully close enough to Strathtulloh Woodland for birds to find it. Strathtulloh is Grey Box Grassy Woodland while this is Red Gum Grassy Woodland. Although it is a small 'island' separated from other bushland by development, the intervening land still comprises large lifestyle blocks, hopefully giving it some degree of connectivity. It certainly looks worth a visit. A MEG bird walk there may give us an idea of what birds live there.

There has been massive regrowth of Red gums since the ending of the drought, & no doubt also due to removing grazing. This is illustrated by comparison with photos taken in 2008.

The presence of old growth trees has presumably saved it from destruction in the recent past. However, recent watering down of environmental requirements, under the guise of '*slashing green tape*' may mean that small woodlands such as this are no longer safe from development



Before: woodland in drought 2008



After: massive Red Gum regeneration in 2014