

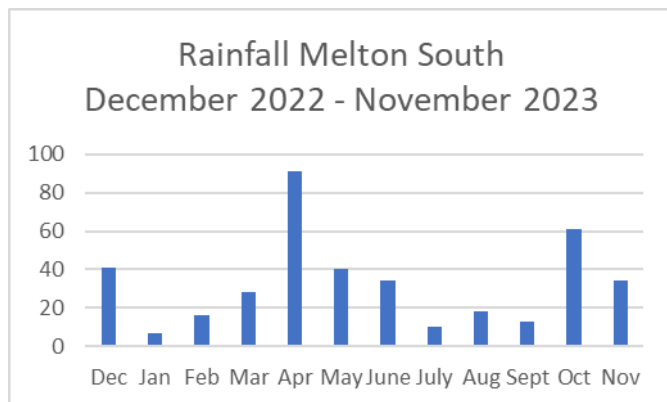


# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## DECEMBER 2023

Volume 11

### NOVEMBER



"Sumer is icumen in" or so we are reliably informed. However it doesn't feel too summery. Spring has been mainly gloomy, albeit somewhat bereft of adequate rains. 34 mm in November. The dry winter & spring took a toll on our plantings in Pinkerton Forest, with a spike of 61mm in October. November received 10mm at the beginning of the month with 24mm at the very end of the month; sharing the rainfall with much of southeast Australia.

### WILDLIFE RESCUE

Ring: 13 000 94535

### NOVEMBER ACTIVITIES:

#### Sheep & goats in Pinkerton



These two (hopefully only two!) goats were seen in Pinkerton Forest on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November. They were not shy at all, unlike the feral goats along the river. They also appeared on the trail camera at the water point. The farm lessee said that they were not his. He suggested that they are probably from the river but the goats along the river are quite wild and difficult to approach. Goats are much more destructive to new trees than sheep. Greater Western Water was advised so that they could be removed.

There were also two large lambs on camera. Apparently, they got into the Forest through the dilapidated section of fence between the carpark and the shearing shed a week ago as the farmer was moving stock. They have since been removed. The two goats are also nowhere to be seen so hopefully they have moved on.

### Eynesbury Environment Group: Flora Walk



On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> November Simon & Lorraine Jolly led a walk in the Forest observing & discussing the distinctive flora of Eynesbury Forest Grey Box Woodland. They led us along the intermittent watercourse that flows through the Forest, where several distinctive plants grew among the rocky

creekside, among them Turkey Bush (*Eremophila deserti*), Rock Correas, Melicytis (once known as Hymenanthera) & Bursaria. Rock Correas are very distinctive due to their glossy green leaves that stand out against the grey bushland, & pale green flowers. As their name suggests they are found on rocky hillside & gullies, especially in our local rocky gorges. Due to the dry spring the forest floor was quite bare. Wildflowers were in very short supply, also due to the dry spring. Lorraine found several very small Creamy Candles hidden among the sparse leaf litter. These should have flowered in early spring but they were only a few centimetres tall.

Lee Francis told us that the land was once the territory of the Marpeang-balluk clan of the Wathaurong people.

We saw 20 bird species. Again, no raptors!

Long-billed Corella	White Cockatoo
Galah	Eastern Rosella
Red-rumped Parrot	Rainbow Lorikeet
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Horsfields Bronze-cuckoo	Little Raven
Magpie	Willy Wagtail
White-plumed Honeyeater	Red wattlebird
Blue Wren	Golden Whistler
Welcome Swallow	Tree Martin
Starling	Mynah



Other wildlife seen were several Rabbits & a Fox. No Kangaroos were seen. These used to be a common sight but they now seem to avoid the Forest where increasing numbers people now walk. Apparently, they now keep to areas less frequented by people. Perhaps reduced numbers of Kangaroos in the Forest may result in increased recruitment of Buloke seedlings- formerly intensively grazed by the Kangaroos.

## Eynesbury Environment Group: bird walk 'Reimagining Arnolds Creek'

On Monday 13<sup>th</sup> November Richard Alers of Melbourne Water led Pam & Daryl on a bird survey along the stretch of Arnolds Creek known as 'Reimagining Arnolds Creek'. 'Reimagining Arnolds Creek' is an ambitious project that removed the ugly concrete drain between Bulmans Road (Westlake) and High Street, & restored it with indigenous creekside vegetation. It now looks like a real creek!

Melbourne Water, with the assistance of the former MEG bird group, have been monitoring the return of birdlife to the newly re-created creek, which will form a link in the Arnolds Creek Wildlife Corridor. Prior to Covid Richard led a series of bird surveys along the restored Creekside to monitor the return of birdlife to the creek. These had to be abandoned due to Covid lockdowns & restrictions. Melbourne Water would like to re-introduce these surveys

We met at Westlake carpark in Bulmans Rd. We first surveyed the Westlake where we observed 20 bird species. We even saw a turtle, probably an Eastern Snake-necked Turtle, as these are found naturally in this region. Several Snake-necked Turtles make there home here. On very sunny days three have been seen sunning themselves on the island.

<https://www.melbournewater.com.au/about/what-we-do/research-and-innovation/reimagining-arnolds-creek>



Richard & Pam beside restored Arnolds Creek.

On one eucalypt sapling, several metres tall, we discovered numbers of Ribbed Case Moth *Hyalarcta nigrescens* cocoons. These graphically indicate the return of native wildlife. Insects are a major link in the natural food web.





Bird monitoring sightings recorded on eBird:  
<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L9725156>;

### **Eynesbury Environment Group:**

#### ***Simon Jolly: talk on the Plains Grasslands***

At Eynesbury Environment Group's meeting on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November, Simon Jolly gave a talk on our local Volcanic Plains Grasslands.. Simon & Lorraine are restoring a native grassland on their property at Parwan so he has a special insight into our Volcanic Plains Grasslands. Our local grasslands grow in a low rainfall region. Our local wildflowers are both spectacular & drought-hardy, making them ideally suited to being grown in local gardens.

The iconic local grass is the spectacular Kangaroo Grass, (*Themeda*) replaced on drier sites by Speargrass (*Austrostipa*). The Western Plains Volcanic Grasslands were noted for their treelessness, resulting from low rainfall, heavy basaltic cracking soils & possibly frequent burning.



Wiry? Buttons



Featherheads (*Ptilotis*)



Common Everlastings & Lemon Beauty-heads



Clustered Everlastings



Pussytails



### Pinkerton working bee

On Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November Irene, Rosemary & Daryl visited Pinkerton Forest where we looked at the dilapidated fence between the grave's carpark & Surbiton Park. Fil, the farm lessee, suspects that this is how his sheep are getting into the Forest. We decided that we will ask Western Land Services to repair the fence as this will be covered by our grant. The goats, observed on 1<sup>st</sup> November, were nowhere to be seen or heard so hopefully they have departed.



Rosemary & Irene examining dilapidated fence

We then took mattocks into the Forest to tackle remnant weeds. The Forest is looking good & Themeda Ecology have done a good job removing weeds. We found removed isolated Galenia, Serrated Tussock, Boxthorn & one single Prairie Ground Cherry. We still found enough Galenia close to Pinkerton Lane to require a further visit in two weeks' time to tackle these with backpacks. These are constantly recruited from the adjacent lane. Unfortunately, the bushes we planted in winter have suffered severely without rain. We will need to return on Thursday November 30<sup>th</sup> to water the survivors & to spray Galenia!

The Forest was alive with birds & their calls. About a hundred Tree martins flew among the treetops. Several Rufous Whistlers called to each other; their calls described as 'e-chong'. Three White-browed Woodswallows were hopping about the lower tree trunks. These are summer migrants, usually arriving in November then departing in February. A flock of about 50 were seen the previous month on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October by the Eynesbury Environment Group (formerly MEG) bird group.

Prominent also were several (6-8) White-winged Trillers that called noisily to each other with their loud trilling calls. These are summer migrants. The

White-winged Triller was apparently once called 'spink' or more descriptively but less lyrically, as, -- *White-shouldered Caterpillar-eater*'. It was described thus by the bush poet "John O'Brien" of 'Said Hanrahan' fame in his anthology 'Around the Boree Log'.

His poem "*The Libel*" describes the lament of a settler:

*"The birds have no song so they told us at school;  
But sweet in our souls was the ringing  
Of notes soft and clear from the edge of the pool,  
Where dainty gay thrushes were singing  
The magpie, the spink, and the pretty blue wren,  
The butcher-bird up in his eyrie,  
The trills! Oh, I wish I could hear you again,  
My dear little Chocolate Wiree".*

The identity of O'Brien's 'dear little Chocolate Wiree' alas remains a mystery!

30 bird species were seen, recorded on eBird:  
<https://ebird.org/checklist/S154539445>;

### Bird walk in Long Forest Mallee: Eynesbury Environment Group



On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November Debra, Lyndal, Pam & Daryl participated in a walk in Long Forest Mallee. Long Forest Mallee (LFM) is a unique Mallee remnant between Melton & Bacchus Marsh. This small, unique mallee remnant escaped the volcanic eruptions & lava flows that occurred over a million years ago, cutting off the mallee pocket from the rest of the mallee in northern & western Victoria. It is described in detail in the book "*Birds of the Long Forest*" compiled by Friends of Long Forest Mallee & Werribee Gorge, after twenty years of bird surveys!

Sadly we saw very few birds although the canopy echoed to the sound of innumerable unseen birds.

Perhaps 9.00 is too late to see birds here in November? We did see clouds of Common Brown Butterflies, as well as a few day moths. Despite the lack of visible birds the walk from Long Forest Road to where the track drops away to reveal a vista over Happy Valley, with views all the way to the You Yangs & the three Anakie Sisters is magnificent, & well worth the effort!



Common Brown Butterfly in Long Forest Mallee

On the track we met a photographer who was trying to photograph a Scarlet Honeyeater, which he had heard calling. Sadly, we did not see it. These brilliantly coloured honeyeaters are summer migrants to nearby Bacchus Marsh.

#### **PLEG & Werribee Wagtails: bird survey Pinkerton Forest & Mulla Mulla Woodland**

On Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November seven members of Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group (PLEG) & Werribee Wagtails once again participated in a quarterly bird survey at Pinkerton Forest & Mulla Mulla Woodland (Bush's Paddock) in the morning & Eynesbury Forest in the afternoon.



Yellow-billed Spoonbill in Pinkerton

About 127 bird species have been recorded at Pinkerton & about 170 at Eynesbury to date.

Wedge-tailed Eagles regularly nest in these woodlands. These quarterly surveys provide valuable data as to both bird diversity & numbers in these woodlands. Citizen science in action!



A Yellow-billed Spoonbill was a conspicuous feature of the irrigation dam. The White-winged Trillers found last Thursday were still there with their spectacular black & white plumage & loud trilling calls. They were in the same place we found them on Thursday morning. Also a pair of Pied Currawongs were seen. Another new species for Pinkerton! As in Long Forest Mallee the previous day the Forest was full of Common Brown Butterflies!

Another highlight was the discovery of a large Wedge-tailed Eagle chick on a nest in Mulla Mulla Woodland (Bush's Paddock). The nest was built here some years ago & Lorraine recently observed that the nest was active again. The goats were again nowhere to be seen or heard so hopefully they have departed! Several snake tracks of various sizes were seen in the dust crossing Pinkerton Lane.

#### **Eynesbury Environment Group: Bird Group Possum Walk at Hannah Watts Park**

On Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November we had hoped to re-instate our Possum Walk. We had to cancel these due to several year's Covid lockdowns. Numbers of possums live in the Possum Tree and they emerge at nightfall to feed on picnic leftovers in the playground.

However, we had to cancel the walk as wet stormy weather was forecast for the evening. The storm did not eventuate but we had 7.5mm rain! It was disappointing to miss our first Possum Walk for several years but the rain was welcome. Who



would have thought we would have to cancel an event because of bad weather, in such a dry spell!

Rescheduled to Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

### **PLEG working bee Thursday November 30<sup>th</sup>**

On Thursday November 30<sup>th</sup> a working bee was scheduled for spraying Galenia & watering plants. However, 24.5mm rainfall at the end of the month meant watering was not necessary & spraying weeds was not possible. Also, the access track would be too slippery after 24mm rain.

## **COMING ACTIVITIES**

### **Eynesbury Environment Group: planning meeting Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 6.00**

EEG will have a planning meeting on Wed 6<sup>th</sup> December at 6.00 at the Eynesbury Homestead

### **Eynesbury Environment Group Christmas breakup Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December 6.00**

Eynesbury Environment Group's end-of-year Christmas Party will be a BBQ at the tennis courts near the Discovery Centre, starting at 6.00. BYO drinks

### **Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group Christmas breakup Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December**

PLEG will have its 2023 Xmas breakup on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December at the Green Shed in Pinkerton Forest. Fire restrictions permitting. Otherwise BYO non BBQ food & drinks Details TBA

### **Possum Walk at Hannah Watts Park Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January 7.30pm – 8.30pm**

In November we had to cancel our newly re-instated Possum Walk at Hannah Watts Park to visit the Possum Tree, due to rainy weather. The walk is along a concrete path (no bushwalking!). We should be able to guarantee to see possums. Numbers of possums live in the Possum Tree and they emerge at nightfall to feed on picnic leftovers in the playground. This is a child (& elderly person!) friendly event, with possums (virtually) guaranteed.

Saturday evening should be more convenient. In past years it was held on Friday evening to better coincide with Bird week in Melton. However, Saturday may suit people better now.

Meet at the carpark/rotunda at Hannah Watts Park. If we meet at 7:00 we could snack first. BYO

snacks. Please wear sturdy shoes and bring a torch. We will be walking on a paved footpath. Meet in Hannah Watts Park at 7.30.

### **Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group**

Next meeting 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024

## **Other coming activities**

### **Latham's Snipe survey dates 2023-2024**

#### **January 13.**

Melton Botanic Garden is an important stopping of point for Latham's Snipe on their epic migration between northern Japan, Manchuria & Siberia; & southern Australia.

Dr Birgita Hansen writes:

*'Hi all*

*The 2023-2024 snipe surveys dates for the upcoming season are, **November 11 and January 13**. I hope that you might all be available again to assist. Please put these in your calendar.*

*In other news, I have had a few people ask what happened to the snipe wetland guidelines we workshopped last year. They are coming! I am hoping to have them drafted and to Melbourne Water for comment in the next fortnight. So I expect them to be ready in mid-winter.*

Cheers

Dr Birgita Hansen

Senior Research Fellow, Federation University  
Australia Mount Helen, Suite 14B, Greenhill  
Enterprise Centre, PO Box 691 Ballarat Vic 3353

## **BIRDWATCHING IN MELTON**

### **SCHEDULE OF WALKS**

Birdwatching activities in Melton are now confined to two groups.

These include:

- Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group
- Eynesbury Environment Group

### **PLEG / Werribee Wagtails:**

#### **Bird surveys at Pinkerton & Eynesbury**

Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group (PLEG) & Werribee Wagtails once again invite the community to join them birding at Pinkerton Forest & Mulla Mulla Woodland (Bush's Paddock) in the morning.

About 127 bird species have been recorded at Pinkerton & about 170 at Eynesbury to date. Wedge-tailed Eagles regularly nest in these woodlands. These quarterly surveys provide valuable data as to both bird diversity & numbers

in these woodlands. Citizen science in action!  
We may see some of the many kangaroos that live in all three of these sites.

Pinkerton is private property located at <http://goo.gl/maps/drFnS.0-p;l/>

As you drive up Mt Cottrell Road from Werribee there is a group of houses on the left. The gravel track to Pinkerton (behind a locked gate) is just before the first house (1668 Mt Cottrell Road). Mulla Mulla Grassland (formerly Bush's Paddock) is accessed by the same track. For more info: John McKenzie [jackmack37@hotmail.com](mailto:jackmack37@hotmail.com); or Daryl Akers [daryljpolyanthemos@outlook.com](mailto:daryljpolyanthemos@outlook.com); Meet at Mt Cottrell Road. Melway Map 221 Ref H8 Gates open 8.45 am, walk starts 9.00

Bird surveys are held quarterly on the third Sunday of February, May, August & November  
*Walks in 2023:*

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November

### **Eynesbury Environment Group**

The Eynesbury Environment Group's nature walks are back for 2023. Join us for a guided walk through the Eynesbury Grey Box Forest and discover why it is one of the most important woodlands around Melbourne.

Meet outside of the Eynesbury General Store. Bring long pants, walking shoes, water, binoculars (available to borrow), camera. All walks are free! All ages, bird watching abilities and interest levels welcome. More walks and events are added throughout the year. For further details, updates or to join the Group contact us at: [eynesbury.environment.group@gmail.com](mailto:eynesbury.environment.group@gmail.com); or follow Eynesbury Environment Group on Facebook.

### **Melton Bird Walks**

#### ***extra bird walk in January!***

Melton bird walks are held on the third Saturday of the month.

There have been no bird walks in December or January. December is usually too busy with Christmas & end of year functions, while in January many people are away on holidays. However, it has been suggested that we could have our first bird walk of the year in January. A bushland setting may be impractical & possibly unsafe in midsummer. All our walks take place on tracks or paved footpaths.

Our cancelled Possum Walk has been rescheduled to Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January.

All walks begin at 9.00.

**Note:** on Fire Ban Days or where there is a prediction of thunderstorm activity or high winds, bird walks in old growth woodlands (Eynesbury Forest or Melton Gilgai) will be cancelled for safety reasons (to avoid potential danger from falling trees or branches). In adverse weather conditions the Eynesbury walk will be around the ornamental lake.

### **OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS**

#### **An open letter to Victorian Premier Allan by Wombat Forestcare:**

Wombat Forestcare have written an open letter to Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan, expressing concern about the fate of the woodlands in Western Victoria. Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group have agreed to be signatories to the letter.

*"it's now over two and a half years since the Victorian Government accepted the VEAC recommendations to create the Wombat-Lerderderg, Mount Buangor and Pyrenees national parks, along with several other reserves and protected areas.*

*Since that time, we've seen huge pressures on these forests; the impacts of the windstorms and the follow up salvage operations in the Wombat, firewood harvesting in the Wellsford and clearfell timber harvesting at Mt Cole.*

*The legislation of these parks is overdue. Together with the Victorian National Parks Association, we're planning a public push for government to act on their commitment and legislate the 60,00 hectares of national parks.*

*In mid-November, in the last sitting weeks of parliament, the VNPA and Wombat Forestcare are publishing a full-page open letter to the new Premier, Jacinta Allan, in local papers. We've lined up the Ballarat Courier, Bendigo Advertiser, Pyrenees Advocate and several more. The VNPA will also be publishing this letter across our social and digital channels.*

*The impact of this action will be far greater if we join forces to represent our collective values and shared vision for stronger protection for nature, community and wildlife.*

*The final draft of the letter is attached. I'm happy to send you the final design mock up when it's available.*

*We are seeking the support of the Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group as a signatory to this letter. We hope that you will add your organisation to the list of signatories. The logos will appear online, and the list of organisation and groups listed as text in the advertisement.*

*Kind regards,  
Gayle Osborne'*

Wombat Forestcare

[info@wombatforestcare.org.au](mailto:info@wombatforestcare.org.au);

### **Open letter to Victorian Premier Allan**

*"Congratulations on your recent appointment to Premier. It's now time to demonstrate leadership by permanently protecting the surviving wildlife, forests and woodlands of western Victoria. We congratulated the Victorian Government's 2021 public commitment to create new protected areas. We applauded the decision to end native forest logging in the east of Victoria by 1 January 2024. In doing so your government acknowledged the incredible natural diversity and cultural importance of these areas.*

*Yet VicForests has plans to log over 53,500 hectares in the fragmented and cleared landscape of the west. If your agencies log this habitat, plants and animals like the Powerful Owl, Brush-tailed Phascogale and Mt Cole Grevillea risk becoming locally extinct.*

*It's time to look after the complex web of natural life in these forests and restore what we have left. We call on you to immediately:*

- *Halt the taxpayer-funded destruction of our natural heritage in the west and end native forest logging statewide.*
- *Legislate the promised Wombat-Lerderderg National Park, the Mount Buangor National Park and the Pyrenees National Park.*
- *Cease all firewood harvesting in the Wellsford State Forest and include the forest in the Greater Bendigo National Park.*
- *Enact formal protections promised for the nature-rich Cobaw Conservation Park and other regional parks and conservation reserves.*

*This is a rare opportunity to create a profound legacy for future generations and:*

- *Provide vital habitat for over 370 rare and threatened animal and plants.*

- *Support First Nations joint management of new parks.*
- *Help reduce the impacts of climate disruption by trapping millions of tonnes of stored carbon.*
- *Support rural and regional livelihoods through visitation and nature-based tourism.*
- *Create critical water security for farms and communities by protecting the headwaters of rivers that flow from these forests.*
- *Help forestry workers to transfer their skills to nature-positive jobs*

*Creating new national parks and phasing out destructive native forest logging isn't only about protecting wildlife and beautiful places – it's about clean air and water, a liveable climate and people's livelihoods.*

*The organisations listed below, representing hundreds of thousands of Victorians, call on you to formally protect these natural areas and act immediately to halt logging our native forests and woodlands."*

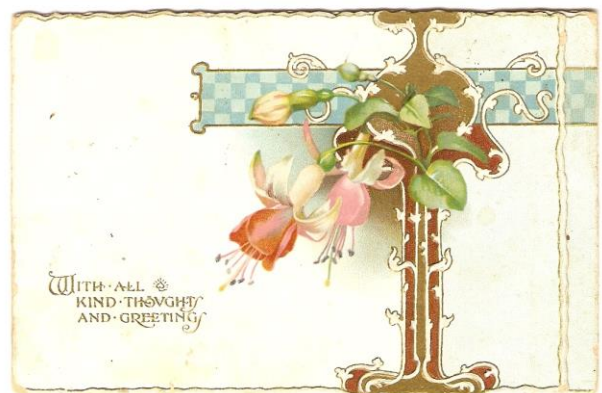
*Kind regards,  
Gayle Osborne'*

Wombat Forestcare

[info@wombatforestcare.org.au](mailto:info@wombatforestcare.org.au);

### **MERRY CHRISTMAS**

Merry Christmas to everyone & take care on the roads over the holidays!



Christmas card 1900