



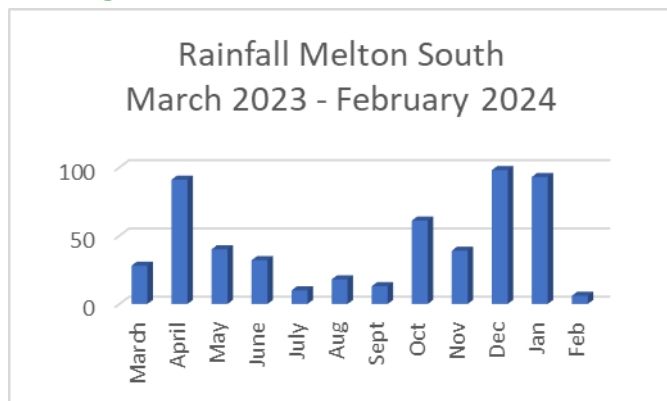
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

March 2024

WILDLIFE RESCUE

Ring: 13 000 94535

FEBRUARY



An uneventful month until the fierce storm mid-month, causing widespread wind damage & fires in the west. Melton shared the wind damage but mostly it seems north of the railway line. However summer finally arrived with a vengeance at the end of February, bringing storms & bushfire in its wake!

FEBRUARY ACTIVITIES

Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group Spraying Galenias at Pinkerton

On Thursday 1st February Irene & Daryl of Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group (PLEG) returned to Pinkerton Forest where we resumed spraying Carpet Weed (Galenia). It was gratifying to see the Galenia we sprayed a week ago is already dying off. As we progressed eastward from the carpark beside the lane, (the source of the infestation), the weed infestation seemed to get worse the further we went! We sprayed three backpacks each before retiring for lunch. We will return in a week's time to resume the seemingly Herculean task, on Thursday 8th February at 10.00.

Welcome Back' BBQ Friday 3rd February 6.00

Eynesbury Environment Group's end-of-year Christmas Party was unfortunately cancelled due to stormy weather. It was postponed to Friday 3rd February. EEG members had a BBQ at the tennis courts near the Discovery Centre. It was a magnificent Eynesbury summer evening as we watched the sun set among the Grey Box trees. We enjoyed food cooked on the BBQ accompanied by salads & fruit. Chris even supplied his very own home-brewed beer! A large group of what appeared to be a group of extended families were enjoying themselves on the adjacent tennis court, adding to the festive nature of the occasion.

Large numbers of birds were constantly arriving to drink at the nearby Eynesbury Ornamental Lake. White Cockatoos were especially conspicuous as they landed at the lakeside for their last drink of the day, before roosting for the night. The stillness of the evening was constantly punctuated by the angry chittering calls of grebes defending their nests.

Seed collecting & installing wildlife cameras in Eynesbury

On Sunday 4th February seven members of EEG collected native seeds from Eynesbury Forest, with permission from the landowner. We arrived at 8.00 to avoid the coming heat of the day. The Bullants were busily heading back toward their nests to avoid the heat of the day, ending the ants' night shift. They were being replaced by the Purple Meat Ants emerging to greet the sunlight, marking the beginning of the day shift.

We collected Fragrant, Nodding & Ruby Saltbush berries as well as some Golden & Gold-dust

Wattle seeds. We observed the Bulokes were seeding but their seeds were not quite ripe yet. A couple of weeks' time perhaps. These will be used to revegetate the Eynesbury local environment. We hope also to encourage Eynesbury residents to plant locally indigenous plants.



Collecting Ruby Saltbush seeds



Olivia & Chris placing wildlife camera.

After the main walk Chris explains how they found some Buloke seed:

"After the main walk the group collected a lot of Buloke seeds at the end of the day after we said goodbye to you and Adrian. A couple of plants were full of cones, especially high up. Thankfully a couple of cockies were busy feeding at the top and dropped loads of seed onto the footpath for us to sweep up".

We observed this Golden-tailed Ant (*Polyrhachis ammon?*) crossing the track carrying a cockroach. Birds were very quiet; no doubt having completed their activities during the cool of the morning prior

to resting during the heat of the day. As we left the temperature was approaching 37°.



Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group Meeting Thursday 15th February 2024

On Thursday 15th Irene, Lorraine, Rosemary & Daryl returned to Pinkerton to continue spraying Galenia (Carpet Weed). After spraying we adjourned to the Green Shed for lunch & for our first meeting of 2024.



Rosemary spraying Galenia in Pinkerton

We even discovered a new Saltbush species for Pinkerton! The Seaberry Saltbush (*Rhagodia baccata*) is similar & related to the much more locally common Fragrant Saltbush. The Seaberry leaves are a brighter green & the berries are a bright crimson colour.

As we were having lunch & having our meeting Pinkerton seemed to be the centre of a massive gathering of perhaps 100 or more Little Ravens. At times they were invisible in the grass then from time to time rising into the air calling loudly only to drop again to the ground. We had earlier observed large number of grasshoppers in the grass,

especially large long-faced ones, so perhaps these may have been what they were feeding on. Or perhaps they were feeding on crickets which seem to be common at the moment.

We decided to return the following Thursdays to continue spraying the rampant Galenia:

Thursday 22nd February,

Thursday 29th February

Thursday 14th March.

Our next meeting will be Thursday 16th May

EEG Birdwalk at Caroline Springs

On Saturday 17th February Denise, Debra Lorraine & Daryl of EEG Bird Group visited the Lake & wetland at Caroline Springs, beside the Western Freeway.

Caroline Springs wetland has a rich variety of waterbirds. A birdlife oasis in the midst of the western suburbs. One of Melton's best waterbird sites. A paved footpath is on both sides of the waterway.



Denise, Debra & Lorraine at Caroline Springs

We saw 34 bird species:

Domestic Goose	Swan
Eastern Swamphen	Dusky Moorhen
Coot	Black Duck
Chestnut Teal	Wood Duck
Domestic Duck	Little Pied Cormorant
Little Black Cormorant	Crested Pigeon
Domestic Pigeon	Spotted Dove
Red-rumped Parrot	Long-billed Corella
Rainbow Lorikeet	White Ibis
Masked Lapwing	Australasian Grebe
Mudlark	Mynah
Greenfinch	Reed Warbler
Little Grassbird	Starling
Little Raven	Willy Wagtail
New Holland Honeyeater	Little Wattlebird
White-plumed Honeyeater	Red Wattlebird

Magpie

Welcome Swallow

Recorded on Ebird

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S161937680>;



On first arrival we were greeted by a large Domestic Goose that was boldly walking beside the vehicles in the shopping centre carpark, looking for food.

A host of Black Ducks, Eastern Swamphens, Coots & Dusky Moorhens were flocking around the food plaza that faced the lake, no doubt waiting to be fed. The waterbirds constantly followed walkers hoping to be fed. We met a lady whom we also met on our last walk here a year ago. Last year she was feeding the birds corn from a can. There was a mother Chestnut Teal with two ducklings. The lady explained that there had been more but they had been attacked & eaten by other birds. She pointed to a large Eastern Swamphen saying that she saw one of these take & eat a duckling. She is obviously a regular fixture here. The Lady of the Lake perhaps!

A large white European Carp could be seen below the feeding birds, no doubt also looking for food, nipping at the feet of one Coot. Other carp of the more usual grey colour were probably also in the water but could not be seen due to their camouflage. Other carp could be seen swirling among the plants, possibly spawning. Sadly this is not a welcome addition of the wetland fauna as the feeding habits of carp are destructive to water vegetation. The copious beds of water plants now present no doubt contribute to the variety of birdlife here. Hopefully the carp will not turn the lake & wetland into a muddy pool devoid of plants. One lone Australasian Grebe was present, brilliant in its breeding plumage, photographed by Lorraine.

Stately groups of Black Swans were a conspicuous feature. However their territorial

battles were not such a stately affair as they chased each other across the water, grabbing each other's tails & rising in the water to flap their one-metre plus wings at each other; no doubt in a threatening display showing their conspicuous white underwing feathers like banners of war. Their battles were not gentle affairs as Lorraine's photo shows!



Australasian Grebe photographed by Lorraine.



Battle of the Swans photographed by Lorraine.

A sad sight was a fairly freshly dead Ring-tailed Possum beside the footpath. Hopefully it indicates a population of Ringtails here. The bushy understory would support Ringtails so hopefully there are more here.

PLEG / Werribee Wagtails:

Bird survey at Pinkerton & Eynesbury

On Sunday 18th February 12 bird observers participated in the quarterly bird survey in

Pinkerton Forest, Mulla Mulla Woodland (aka Bush's Paddock) & Eynesbury Forest.

Our lunch was closely observed by a curious herd of fat steers.

The Sewerage treatment pond at Surbiton Park had an abundance of waterbirds. About aa dozen or so Pelicans were perched on island rocks, while a similar number of Black Swans lined the edges



Ships of the Line: stately flotilla of Pelicans

Two of the survey group decided to check treeguards where we planted last year. A bonus survey result was that most of the Bulokes that had survived until 2024 are still thriving, possibly thanks to our watering. We even noticed a few surviving Hymenantheras!

Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group Spraying Galenias at Pinkerton

Once more Irene, Rosemary & Daryl returned to Pinkerton Forest where we continued the unrelenting chore of spraying Galenia! The Forest again hosted a large noisy gathering of Ravens. A huge Wedge-tailed Eagle also checked us out as we sprayed.



MARCH ACTIVITIES

Eynesbury Environment Group Clean up Australia Day Sunday 3rd March

'Come join the Eynesbury Environment Group this coming Sunday for Clean Up Australia Day! We will be meeting at the Eynesbury Homestead at 9am and then splitting into groups to make a dent in the rubbish that has accumulated around town. Meet at the Eynesbury Homestead/Ms Peacock 9am, Sunday 3 March 2024

Duration - Feel free to assist for as long as you can. Resimax has kindly donated some refreshments to be enjoyed after the clean up (at approx 12pm)

BYO - Gloves, hats, boots/closed-toe shoes. Rubbish bags, high vis vests and spare gloves will be available.

RSVP - if you can before Sunday, otherwise we'll see you there at 9am!

The litter around Eynesbury is not only unsightly, it has a big impact on wildlife as it makes its way into our wetlands, rivers and creeks via the gutters and stormwater drains on the sides of our streets. Every bit of rubbish we can prevent from entering our waterways will make a massive difference.

Big thanks to Resimax for their support of this event.

I hope you can be a part of it!

Cheers,

Chris Lunardi, EEG President

Eynesbury Environment Group AGM / Ordinary Meeting Wednesday 20th March

Ms Peacock Restaurant & Bar, Eynesbury Homestead. Arrive at 6.00 for tea for a 7.00 start

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group PLEG meeting Thursday 16th May 10.00

Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group's (PLEG) next meeting will be Thursday 16th May 10.00 in Pinkerton Forest at the Green Shed, following a working bee in the Forest. Cottrell Road. Melway Map 221.

Eynesbury Environment Group Meeting Wednesday 22nd May 22

meeting will be on Wednesday 18th February at Ms Peacock Restaurant & Bar, Eynesbury Homestead.

Arrive at 6.00 for tea for a 7.00 start

Meeting Wednesday 18th September 7 - 9pm

Ms Peacock Restaurant & Bar, Eynesbury Homestead. Arrive at 6.00 for tea for a 7.00 start

Meeting Wednesday 13th November 7 – 9.00 pm

Ms Peacock Restaurant & Bar, Eynesbury Homestead

Eynesbury Market

Eynesbury Environment Group is a regular participant in Eynesbury Market as a stall holder

Sunday 24 th March	Sunday 28 th April
Sunday 26 th May	Sunday 23 rd June
Sunday 28 th July	Sunday 25 th August
Sunday 22 nd September	Sunday 27 th October
Sunday 24 th November	Sunday 22 nd December

BIRDWATCHING IN MELTON

Birdwatching activities in Melton include:

- Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group
- Eynesbury Environment Group

PLEG / Werribee Wagtrails

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 & Eynesbury Forest in the afternoon.

Toilets, café & bar at Eynesbury & composting toilet at Pinkerton. Eynesbury Forest, is one of Victoria's largest remaining stands of Grey Box), We finish around 3 pm. Flat but uneven ground, with no paths.

Within the greater City of Melton, over 170 different bird species have been recorded. 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 50 or so kangaroos that live across all three of these adjoining sites.

Pinkerton is private property located at <http://goo.gl/maps/drFnS.0-p;l./>; From Werribee, drive up Tarneit Road, turn left into Boundary Road, then turn right into Mt Cottrell Road. After about 3 km, just after a rise, 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; or Daryl Akers jenniferkayakers@outlook.com; (0438 277 252). Meet at Mt Cottrell Road. Melway Map 221 Ref H8 Gates open 8.45 am, walk starts 9.00

Pinkerton & Eynesbury bird surveys are held quarterly on the third Sunday of February, May, August & November

Walks in 2024:

Sunday 18 th February	Sunday 19 th May
Sunday 18 th August	Sunday 17 th November

Eynesbury Environment Group: Nature Walks

The Eynesbury Environment Group's (EEG) nature walks are back for 2024. 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; or follow Eynesbury Environment Group on Facebook.

Eynesbury Environment Group's nature walks

Sunday 26th May 9am - 11:30am
Eynesbury Nature Walk - Swift Parrot survey

Sunday 28th July 9am - 11:30am
Eynesbury Nature Walk

Saturday 5th October 7pm - 9pm
Eynesbury Nature Night Walk
Meet at Toorong Rd

Sunday 3rd November 9am - 11:30am
Eynesbury Flora Walk
Led by Simon and Lorraine Jolly

EEG Bird Walks

Bird walk schedule for 2024

Saturday 16th March Eynesbury
Eynesbury is a 200 hectare Grey Box Woodland with over 150 bird species observed so far, as well as a small ornamental lake rich in wetland birdlife. A rare opportunity to see woodland bird species. Toilet facilities, general store, restaurant & bar! On Fire Ban Days, walk will be around the lake only. Eynesbury Discovery Centre Melway 226 Ref H1

Saturday 20th April Little Blind Creek
Little Blind Creek flows through Melton, meeting Toolern Creek at Hannah Watts Park. It is home for large numbers of birds. The many old hollow trees provide nest sites for many hollow-nesting birds & possums. Meet in Guide Hall carpark in Pinkerton St (off Yuille St opposite Melton Golf Course). Melway Map 337 Ref C8

Saturday 18th May Melton Botanic Garden
Melton Botanic Garden features plants that tolerate a dry climate and low water conditions. It is one of Melton's finest birding sites. Gather at the information Shelter near the corner of Williams & Tullidge Streets.. Melways Map 337 Ref: C10 and D10

Saturday 15th June Hannah Watts Park
Hannah Watts Park is a popular park, beside Toolern Creek, in High St, just east of the shopping centre, opposite the golf course. Melway Page 337 Ref D9

Saturday 20th July Toolern Creek
Toolern Creek (Big Red) 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.

Meet at Tamar Drive Melway Ref 337 C9

Saturday 17th August Strathtulloh

Strathtulloh Woodland is a remnant regenerating Grey Box Woodland overlooking Toolern Creek
Meet in Strathtulloh Circuit Melway 343 Ref A12

Saturday 14th September Melton Gilgai

Melton Gilgai Woodland (Harkness Road Woodland) is a remnant Grey Box/ Yellow Gum woodland. We hope to see a variety of woodland birds. Perhaps also some of the 100+ kangaroos that live here.

Meet in Harkness Road Melway map 330 Ref B11
Drive through Melton along High Street, west along the old Western Highway toward Bacchus Marsh.

Turn right (north) into Harkness Road, just before descending into the deep Anthonys Cutting.
There is a woodland a few km down the road.

Saturday 19th October Eynesbury Forest

Eynesbury is a 200 hectare Grey Box Woodland with over 150 bird species observed so far, as well as a small ornamental lake rich in wetland birdlife. A rare opportunity to see woodland bird species. Toilet facilities, general store, restaurant & bar! On Fire Ban Days, walk will be around the lake only.
Eynesbury Discovery Centre Melway 226 Ref H1

Saturday 16th November Long Forest Mallee

Long Forest Mallee (LFM) is a unique Mallee remnant between Melton & Bacchus Marsh. Long Forest Road Melway 335 Ref E3

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

National Eucalypt Day

Saturday 23rd March,

Held annually on 23 March, National Eucalypt Day aims to raise awareness of eucalypts and celebrate the important place that they hold in the hearts and lives of Australians.

'The National Eucalypt Day program aims to meet the promotion, education and conservation objectives of Eucalypt Australia by addressing the themes of tree breeding and genomics, primary education and public awareness.

'Eucalypt Australia is the operating name of the Bjarne K Dahl Trust. It is a charitable trust that awards grants to support the conservation, education and research of eucalypts.

inaugural National Eucalypt Day on 23 March 2014. The 23rd of March 1898 was the birthdate of

the Trust's benefactor, Bjarne K Dahl.

Eucalypt Australia supported the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria to create a series of videos on how to select, grow and maintain suitable eucalypts in the home garden.'

[https://www.eucalyptaustalia.org.au/cool_timeline/national-eucalypt-day-turns-10/;](https://www.eucalyptaustalia.org.au/cool_timeline/national-eucalypt-day-turns-10/)

This could be a day to celebrate our own iconic Grey Box, the defining species of Eynesbury, Pinkerton Forests, Mulla Mulla, Strathtulloh & Melton Gilgai Woodlands, & the plains of the Western Region.

Wattle Day

Sunday September 1st

September 1st, the first day of spring, is recognised as Wattle Day in Australia. According to the Wattle Day Association: *'Since 1992 National Wattle Day has been 1st September in all of Australia's States and Territories. Before then, Australians in different States celebrated wattle day on different days between August and September.*

[https://wattleday.asn.au/;](https://wattleday.asn.au/)

Noted ornithologist & early Field Naturalists Club of Victoria member A J Campbell, founded the 'Wattle Club' & advocated the creation of a 'Wattle Day' to commemorate these most well-known of Australian flowers; & as a celebration of Australia. Wattle Day is a fitting day for environmentalists, especially local ones, to celebrate. A J Campbell founded a Wattle Club in Victoria in 1899 to promote a Wattle Day demonstration every September to encourage recognition of the flower as a symbol of patriotism. In 1908 he delivered a lecture entitled *'Wattle Time; or Yellow-haired September'* in which he stated that *'by numbers, the Wattle is almost exclusively Australian, and should undoubtedly be our National Flower'.*

[https://australianhumanitiesreview.org/2007/02/01/yellow-haired-september-a-reflection-on-the-national-floral-emblem-in-aj-campbells-golden-wattle1/;](https://australianhumanitiesreview.org/2007/02/01/yellow-haired-september-a-reflection-on-the-national-floral-emblem-in-aj-campbells-golden-wattle1/)

Melton has a long historic connection with Wattle Day. A J Campbell was a member of the Pinkerton family, early settlers at Melton. Their property was beside the Werribee River, where Western Water's treatment plant stands today. It is still known today as Pinkerton Forest. His interest in birds & natural history was no doubt fuelled by many visits to Pinkerton Forest & the nearby Werribee River.

According to Wikipedia: *'the first recognised use of wattle as a symbol of the first day of spring was the formation in 1899 of a 'Wattle Club' in Victoria by Mr A. J. Campbell, a field naturalist. For several years the club organised bush outings on the first day in September. The first suggestion of a Wattle Day was made by Mr Campbell during a speech in September 1908.'*

Ian Campbell writes in his description of his grandfather:

'AJ [Campbell] moves on to discuss September and Acacia pycnantha or Golden wattles. He talks of his earliest reminiscences of Golden Wattle, 'the nodding yellow plumes, which seemed to beckon me, of slender saplings that grew in the dear old box forest' at the base of Mt Cotterall, close to his early boyhood home. '

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wattle_Day;

There are almost 1000 species of Wattle in Australia. The Golden Wattle possible our best known native flower, is the official floral emblem of Australia; & our national colours are green & gold, reminiscent of wattle trees. The Golden Wattle is the floral symbol of Australia. Details of Wattle Day can be seen on: <http://wattleday.com/>;

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

Here be dragons! Be afraid!!

The recent rediscovery of Grassland Earless Dragons, long thought to be extinct in Victoria was greeted with much joy by many Victorians. However this rediscovery of this highly endangered lizard has prompted much outcry & consternation in some quarters. It seems we haven't seen this much outcry about an endangered species endangering progress since the Golden Sun Moth. We seem happy to pay lip service to wildlife conservation until it becomes a bit difficult!

"I like lizards as much as the next person, but the government needs to explain what the plan B is," Outer Suburban Growth Shadow Minister Evan Mulholland said.

"Until we actually know how many there are, we don't know how long the potential delays could be," Linda Allison from the Urban Development Institute of Australia said.

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/victorian-grassland-earless-dragon-forces-developers-to->

[reconsider-housing-plans/141c999c-9e6f-4379-9ce6-22f3d0cb3da9](https://www.9news.com.au/national/victorian-grassland-earless-dragon-forces-developers-to-reconsider-housing-plans/141c999c-9e6f-4379-9ce6-22f3d0cb3da9);

In the words of John O'Brien, in *'Around the Boree Log'*:

'We'll all be rooned!, said Hanrahan'

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Said_Hanrahan;

Hic sunt dracones!

Melton Wildlife

Grebes nesting in Eynesbury Lake

These two Australasian Grebes were observed on their respective nests, about 60 metres apart, on Eynesbury Ornamental Lake. The nest is little more than a floating cowpat-sized island, almost impossible to see among the floating water vegetation. One must have had eggs as it hurriedly covered the nest in water plants as it hopped off into the water. The other had two chicks both on & beside its nest. Grebes regularly nest here, often quite close the bank & road. They protest the approach of other birds by the almost constant angry 'chittering' calls. Unlike most other local wetlands the water is crystal clear, indicating that no Carp are present in this landlocked lake



Australasian Grebe with nest & chicks



Australasian Grebe sitting on nest