



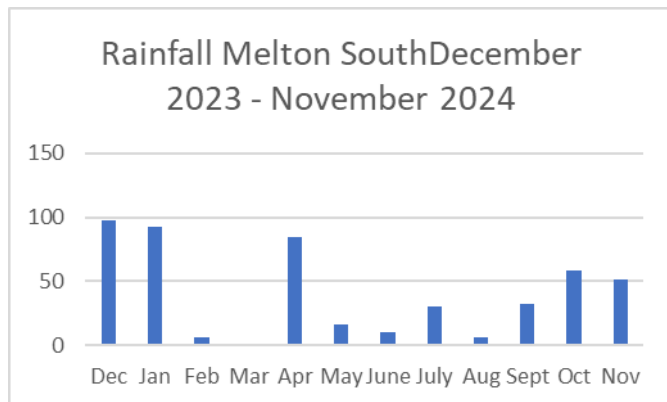
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

December 2024

WILDLIFE RESCUE

Ring: 13 000 94535

RAINFALL



In Melton South 51mm rain fell in November. Most of November's rain fell in the last week or so of the month, with 28 days since the previous rain!

Rainfall over the year was both low & sporadic, with long periods without was significant rain:

June	10mm	23 days no rain
July	30	23 days no rain
August	6mm	28 days no rain
September	32mm	24 days no rain
October	58mm	27 days no rain
November	51mm	23 days no rain

Despite weekly watering since planting in June (apart from October where we concentrated on a major Galenia infestation) we still lost many of our plants.

Again it appears that we may need to reconsider our planting & watering strategy for next year!

NOVEMBER ACTIVITIES

Pinkerton working bee



On Thursday 7th November Irene & Daryl continued spraying the large infestation of Galenia beside the track near the shearing shed. On arriving at Pinkerton we found the gate at Mt Cottrell road wide open. Fil the farm manager was advised & it was closed by farm worker Adam. Also there was a large black stray dog near the shearing shed. Definitely not a sheep dog or cattle dog & it looked quite lost. Again Fil was advised & Adam arrived, & rang the Melton Pound. Later that night we received 2.5mm rain, which was welcome as it was our first rain in three weeks! Never a dull moment!

Pinkerton working bee

On Thursday 14th November Irene & Daryl yet again continued spraying the large infestation of Galenia beside the track. We noticed that those plants we had planted in winter were not doing as well as we had hoped. So, we decided to return the following day to water.

Pinkerton working bee

On Thursday 15th November Irene & Daryl resumed watering, after having ceased watering for October due to continuing but intermittent rain. After many plant losses last year, we reconsidered our planting & maintenance strategy, by deciding to plant fewer shrubs but to water them more intensively, from day one, to allow for predicted rainfall deficit. However, this spring we have experienced similar plant losses. Bulokes have proved to be the success story, with many of these thriving now near the Green Shed, with reduced *Hymenandra* & *Acacia rostriformis* success. Perhaps this site, on the lee side of the Forest, experiences less stress from prevailing north-westerly winds? The vicinity of the carpark appears to show lesser success, with fewer plant survivals. The mound beside the carpark seems especially vulnerable to plant loss. This site bears the brunt of drying north-westerlies.

So, we may need to reconsider our strategy, once again! Perhaps we may need to continue watering, despite what we may consider adequate rainfall?

Bird walk in Long Forest Mallee



On Saturday 16th November eight people met in Long Forest Mallee (LFM) for our last bird walk of the year, coming from as far afield as Darley, Sunbury, Ormond, Eynesbury, Melton & Ballan. A very warm walk, at 31°, this gave us a sample of the coming summer weather. LFM is a unique Mallee remnant between Melton & Bacchus Marsh. We were fortunate to be joined by Marilyn Hewish, one of the authors of 'Birds of the Long Forest' & an expert on Long Forest Mallee & its unique wildlife.

Marilyn explained that the Long Forest is a remnant of a much more ancient landscape. LFM was once connected with the vast Mallee woodlands that cover much of interior southern Australia. Mallees are a form of eucalypt that has adapted to a dry climate. It consists of a large lignotuber (mallee root) that stores water. From this lignotuber grow a number of radiating trunks (whipsticks). These trunks grow outward, channelling rainfall toward the lignotuber in the centre. The landscape of poor soil to which the mallee was adapted became covered with nutrient-rich volcanic soil by volcanic activity several thousand years ago, thereby changing the nature of the vegetation. Only this remnant was left, trapping many bird species now more usually found in the mallee country to the north, such as Crested Bellbird.

To date 156 bird species have been found in LFR!



Boris & Boris photographing a Bull Mallee

Marilyn showed us the bright multi-coloured bark of the Bull Mallees. These colours rival the often-photographed vivid colours of the better-known Snow Gums. A hidden gem of the Long Forest!

We discovered more birds that we usually did thanks to Marilyn identifying their calls.

Marilyn explained that the best place to see birds in LFR is beside the creek & the best time is spring, at dawn.

Just as we were about to leave, we saw an Echidna walking beside the fence. It then crossed into the picnic reserve. We were surprised at how quickly it moved through the bush. As we approached for photos it started to dig itself into the ground at the base of a tree. Every minute or so it would turn its head to see if we were still there then resuming its digging with renewed vigour.

After we had taken our photos, we left it to continue its activities

Apparently a 3.2 magnitude quake was recorded about 10.45am in nearby Lerderderg Gorge. However none of us heard or felt anything- the earth failed to move for us!

Birds seen were:

Crimson Rosella	Weebill
Red Wattlebird	Grey Currawong
Magpie	Magpie
Blue Wren	Yellow-faced Honeyeater



Echidna in Long Forest picnic ground

Pinkerton & Eynesbury bird survey



On Wednesday 20th November four people conducted a quarterly bird survey in Pinkerton Forest, Bush's Paddock & Eynesbury Forest. The day was warm & sultry, with hordes of flies as there was no wind. As well as our usual small mob of Grey Kangaroos we were also surprised to see a large Swamp Wallaby, beside the Pinkerton graves; presumably the same one we saw here a couple of weeks ago, on 31st October. The last time we saw a Wallaby here was over a year ago. It hopped into a leafy fallen tree limb, where we left

it undisturbed. Hopefully it may visit the water point where we may get a photo. If it remains in the Forest it will add to Pinkerton's faunal diversity. However, we expect that it will probably eventually leave in search of company, as they are usually seen in pairs. The group noticed an old Grey Box tree with a long twisted scar winding from the top to the ground, presumably resulting from a lightning strike many years ago.



Tree with old lightning scar



Long-billed Corella

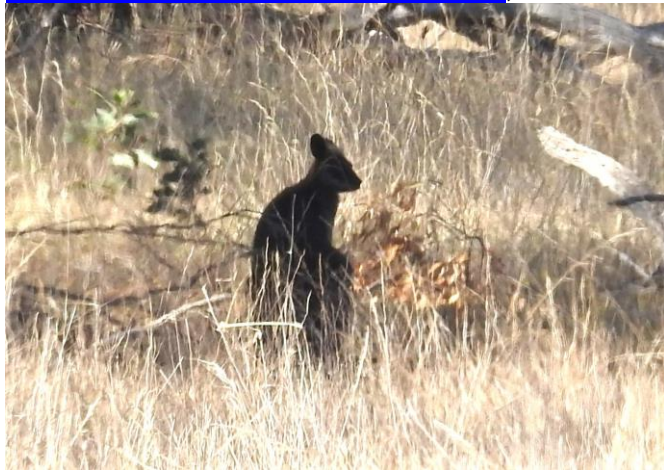


We found a Galah, caught in the act of removing bark from a tree. Three similar scars showed where similar activities had taken place.

Pinkerton working bee

On Thursday 21st November Irene & Daryl returned to the task of spraying the Galena in the northwest corner adjacent to the carpark. However, it is now quite apparent that we are making headway with the infestation, whereas to date it has always appeared that we were barely scratching the surface! We then watered the surviving shrubs on the hill. We had our usual welcoming committee of Kangaroos. The old Kangaroo was hopping through the Forest while a small family group of one male, a doe & a joey were in Upper Pinkerton. There was also a large Swamp Wallaby at the Pinkerton graves, probably the same one we saw yesterday. It hasn't yet appeared on camera so presumably it hasn't yet discovered the water point. Hopefully it will find the water as the weather heats up in the next few days. How it came to be here is a mystery, as is how long it will stay. As they are usually seen in pairs it may leave in search of a mate. An addition to our wildlife is always welcome. Fortunately the flies were not so bad as they were the previous day. The first cicadas started calling about 11.00, marking the beginning of summer.

27 bird species were observed, recorded on eBird: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S203145559>;



Wallaby in Pinkerton Forest

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

**Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group
Xmas breakup Thursday 12th December**

Eynesbury Environment Group: Xmas breakup Friday 13th December 6.00pm

'Hi everyone,

It's coming to that time of the year when we host our annual Christmas party.

I'd love to invite you and your loved ones to a casual Christmas BBQ to celebrate our achievements and spend some quality time together.

This will be a bring-a-plate gathering, so feel free to showcase your favourite dish! Family members and four-legged friends are more than welcome to join us. It's a great opportunity for us all to relax, share stories, and enjoy each other's company in a casual setting.

Date: 13th of December, 2025 **Time:** 6 pm

Location: Eynesbury Discovery Centre BBQ area (479 Eynesbury Rd, Eynesbury VIC 3338)

Since this is an outdoor event, please dress for the weather and remember to bring a hat and sunscreen. Please RSVP by the 10th of December and let me know if you have any questions.

Looking forward to celebrating with you all!

Best wishes,

Olivia'

Possum Walk at Hannah Watts Park

Saturday 18th January 7.30 pm - 8.30 pm



Brush-tailed Possum at Hannah Watts Park

We had to cancel our Possum Walks due to several year's Covid lockdowns. The walk is along a concrete footpath (no bushwalking in the dark!). 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. (sadly nothing in life is guaranteed!)
Date & details TBA

Eynesbury Environment Group: first meeting for 2025

Wednesday 5th February 2025 7.00 – 8.30

Ms Peacock & Bar

Eynesbury Market

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

BIRDWATCHING IN MELTON

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 & 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 in Pinkerton. Part of the Eynesbury walk is on a bush track.

Within the greater City of Melton, over 170 different bird species have been recorded. About 127 bird species have been recorded at Pinkerton & 170 at Eynesbury to date. Wedge-tailed Eagles regularly nest in these woodlands. These quarterly surveys provide valuable scientific data as to both bird diversity & numbers in these woodlands. This data helps us make decisions & plan for the protection of our vulnerable birdlife. Citizen science in action! We may see some of the 60 or so kangaroos that live across all three of these adjoining sites as well as the several hundred kangaroos in Eynesbury. Birds of Pinkerton & Eynesbury Forests are recorded on eBird.

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

Note: change to quarterly bird survey days
Pinkerton/Eynesbury quarterly bird surveys will now be done on a week day in the future.
The surveys will be done on the third Wednesday instead of the Sunday.

Pinkerton & Eynesbury bird surveys are held quarterly in February, May, August & November

Eynesbury Environment Group: Nature Walks

The Eynesbury Environment Group's (EEG) nature walks are back for 2025. 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.

EEG: Melton Bird Walks 2025 schedule

Saturday 18th January 7.30 pm - 8.30 pm

Possum Night Walk at Hannah Watts Park

The walk is along a concrete footpath (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 may be more convenient. In past years it was held on Friday evening to better coincide with Bird Week in Melton, & avoid a school night. However, Saturday may suit people better now. The weather in January should also be less unpredictable,

Meet at the carpark/rotunda at Hannah Watts Park
Please wear sturdy shoes and bring a torch. We
will be walking on a paved footpath. Meet in
Hannah Watts Park at 7.30 pm.

Saturday 15th February Caroline Springs

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. Meet in the carpark in the new shopping
centre beside the large lake at the entrance at
Caroline Springs BLVD. Melway 358 Ref G4

Saturday 15th March Eynesbury

Eynesbury is a 288-hectare Grey Box Woodland
with over 170 bird species observed so far, as well
as a small ornamental lake rich in wetland birdlife.
A rare opportunity to see woodland bird species. A
reminder of what the Melton region one looked
like! 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 19th 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 17th 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. Meet at the
carpark in Lakewood Blvd, near the public toilets
& BBQ shelters. Melways Map 337 Ref: C11

Saturday 21st 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 19th 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 16th August Strathulloh

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

- Drive south out of Melton along Exford Road,
descending to the bottom of the road to the T
intersection at Exford
- Turn left at the T intersection (*watching carefully
for traffic!*)
- Head east along Greigs Road
- Turn left (north) into Redgum Drive (*opposite
Butlers Rd*)
- Turn left at the T intersection into Strathulloh
Cct
- Continue along Strathulloh Cct. (*Strathulloh
Cct veers to the right*)
- Continue past Greens Road
- There is a footpath here on the left of the road
(*just past Greens rd*) leading into Strathulloh
Woodland

Saturday 20th 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.
- Second woodland gate on the right

Saturday 18th October Eynesbury Forest

Eynesbury is a 200 hectare Grey Box Woodland
with over 170 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, café, restaurant &
bar! As this is old growth woodland, on Fire Ban,
stormy days, or if lightning is threatened; walk will
be around the lake only due to potential danger of
falling branches or trees. Eynesbury Discovery
Centre Melway 226 Ref H1

Saturday 15th November Long Forest Mallee

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

- Drive through Melton along High Street, west along the old Western Highway toward Bacchus Marsh.
- Turn right (*north*) into Long Forest Road, after descending into the deep Anthonys Cutting, then ascending once more to the top
- Long Forest Mallee is a few km down the road.
- Continue past Sundew Ave (*on right*)
- Slow down & turn left just after Sundew Ave into a reserve carpark (*hard to see*)

MELTON WILDLIFE

Deer in Melton

This deer was spotted beside the road between Toolern Vale & Gisborne, presumably killed by a vehicle & hopefully not dumped. The size of a cow it was definitely too big to have been one of our local Fallow Deer. At a distance it appeared to be the biggest kangaroo in the country! Sambar Deer are slowly spreading westward & are commonly seen in the leafy eastern suburbs like Park Orchards. Could this be the vanguard of their advance into the Western Region?



Apparently, more recently another deer was also reported killed on Bacchus Marsh-Gisborne. This one was reported as a Red Deer. This may have been a farm escapee.

Take care on the roads!

Geckoes emerging in warmer weather

The return of warm weather in October has prompted the re-emergence of Marbled Geckoes. This one (about 7cm in length) has again returned to its hunting ground on a kitchen window, presumably lying in wait for moths. Marbled Geckoes are a wildlife success story in & around Melbourne. They are also found in Bacchus Marsh & Ballarat. They must be finding the urban

environment to their liking as their numbers are expanding. They do not appear to have made the transition to the surrounding bushland however, so they may be taking advantage of the warmer urban environment. They seem especially attracted to hot water systems. One plumber recently observed that he often sees them when replacing hot water systems. He says he likes to see them as they eat spiders, & he hates spiders! They are often found in various strange hiding places such as in piles of firewood, mailboxes. They are also often found inside stacked plant seedling tubes. The black plastic may be absorbing heat, providing a warm home in winter. Previous visitors would always scurry away when the kitchen light was turned on. But the present resident, a juvenile, is rather less timid, remaining on the window while the light is on.

<https://www.viridans.com/INTRO/gecko.htm>; & <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/species/8377>



OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

More environmental vandalism in Melton

Sadly, more environmental vandalism continues to happen in Melton. This time there had been illegal cutting of old growth Grey Box trees in Parwan-Exford Road, between Five Ways & Woolpack Road. About half a dozen Grey Box trees, perhaps several hundred years old, had been cut from the roadside woodland verge.

To add insult to injury rubbish is also being dumped along here. Some of this looks suspiciously like asbestos! Hopefully not. It would be disappointing if people are dumping such hazardous wastes in the Melton countryside. Unfortunately rubbish is still being

dumped in our country roads. Out of sight out of mind perhaps?



Grey Box trees cut in Parwan-Exford Road

Unfortunately illegal tree destruction & roadside rubbish dumping such as this creates a very bad first impression as visitors & potential new residents approach Melton. It is also disappointing that this is occurring in a town that prides itself on its reputation for environmental responsibility. Melton has won

numerous awards, over very many years, for its protection of the environment. this



Rubbish dumped beside Parwan-Exford Road



More rubbish- is this asbestos?

HAPPY CHRISTMAS



Wishing everyone a Happy Christmas & holidays. Take care on the roads!!