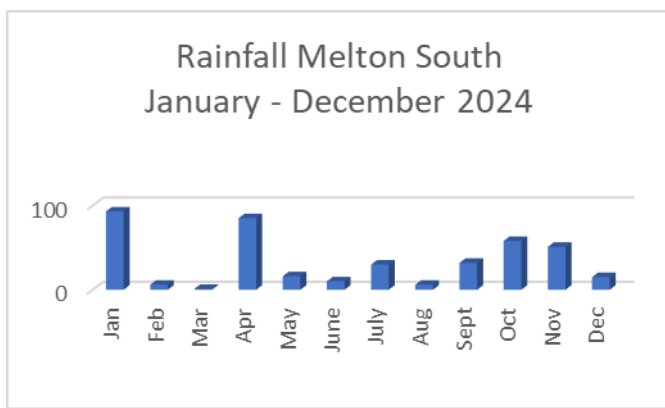




# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## January 2025

### RAINFALL



Rainfall over 2024 was sporadic & low, ranging from 93mm in January to 1mm in March.

### DECEMBER

Unfortunately 2024 has come to a fiery conclusion! A major bushfire in the Grampians, one at The Gurdies & another one on our own doorstep at Bullengarook. Low rainfall over winter & spring has left the countryside in a dangerously dry condition. A rainfall spike of 58mm in October & 51mm in November was sadly not enough to ameliorate this. Rainfall was both low & sporadic:

June	10mm	23 days no rain
July	30mm	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
December		22 days no rain

We experienced a classic Aussie Christmas: Described by Paul Kelly in the lyrics of in his classic song 'How to make Gravy':

*'They say it's gonna be a hundred degrees, even more maybe, but that won't stop the roast'*

Fortunately the scorching weather predicted for Boxing Day didn't happen.

Despite weekly watering since planting in June (apart from October where we concentrated on a major Galenia infestation) we still lost about 90% of our plants. It seems the ground was just too dry!

### DECEMBER ACTIVITIES

On Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December Irene & Daryl returned to Pinkerton to continue spraying the heavy Galenia infestation. At last, it seems like we are making headway! After 51mm rain in the last week or so in November (after sporadic & reduced rains in spring) the Forest had turned green as grasses had grown in response to the delayed rains. Dichondras have re-appeared also. Sadly, the Galenia we have painstakingly sprayed & destroyed throughout spring are returning vigorously after the rain; *'like a bat out of hell'* as Irene put it. So, we found ourselves respraying Galenia regrowth also. We were excited to find Kangaroo Grass sprouting in the northwest corner, beside the dead Galenia patches! The bushflies were in much reduced number & our newly acquired face nets now kept these at bay. As the morning was quite hot we only used one backpack of Grazon each.

Two species of cicada were calling loudly, as the temperature approached 30.° The smaller cicadas were first to start, soon after 9.00, with their shrill calls. Shortly after the larger cicadas, probably Red-eyed Cicada (*Psaltoda moerens*), joined the chorus, with their louder buzz-saw like resonating calls. We even found one small cicada hitching a ride on the window of Irene's car. A flock of about

thirty Zebra Finches were quite noisy around us as we sprayed the Galena, while several Golden-headed Cisticolas were buzzing from the nearby rushes, while two Rufous Whistlers called to each other from Pinkerton Link. A flock of about 100 Straw-necked Ibis flew overhead from the south toward the Treatment Lagoon

There were numerous Sand Wasps (*Ammophila* sp) scurrying around the Galenia, presumably looking for caterpillars. They were visiting borrows in bare patches of soil adjacent to the fence & close to the patches of Galenia.

We revisited the Bushpea (*Eutaxia diffusa*) where we had placed stockings over the seed pods to catch the seeds as they fell. The stockings now had numerous seeds in them so we collected them. Hopefully we can grow new plants from these to help us replaced the missing shrubby understorey. However we had not noticed a somewhat inconspicuous Bullant nest beside the shrub. No doubt upset at having us stand on their nest they responded by aggressively swarming out & climbing on us. The swarming attack was quite sustained as they continuously advanced upon us! One even appeared on a face net! After some rather undignified dancing & prancing in the bush, & a swift departure from the vicinity, we managed to avoid being stung! This Bushpea is well defended!

### Reimagining Arnolds Creek Melbourne Water: bird survey



Richard & Pam at Westlake

On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December Melbourne Water's Richard Akers led a bird survey along the section of Arnolds Creek that was revegetated in 2020, accompanied by Pam & Daryl. A similar

revegetation project was undertaken at Melton's Ryans Creek, adjacent to Melton Botanic Garden.



We saw a rich diversity of birds in the Westlake Reserve. However, birdlife along the newly revegetated stretch between Bulmans Road & High Street is still much less diverse than the reserve. As the creekside vegetation develops we are confident that wildlife diversity will also increase. Yearly bird surveys will monitor this.

We also saw two turtles sunning themselves on the island in Westlake. However, they appeared to be Murray Turtles as their necks were quite short, rather than the locally indigenous Eastern Snake-necked Turtle. A long way from their natural home in the Murray River catchment! Probably pets relocated. They are now endangered in their natural habitat for various reasons, including egg predation by foxes.

[https://cdn.environment.sa.gov.au/landscape/images/Murray-short-necked-turtle-fact-sheet\\_Riverland\\_FINAL.pdf](https://cdn.environment.sa.gov.au/landscape/images/Murray-short-necked-turtle-fact-sheet_Riverland_FINAL.pdf);

The survey found that there is still a great difference between both diversity & numbers of birds in Westlake Reserve & the revegetated section; indicating that re-populating by birds may be a slow process. However five new species were found in the project section, so they are gradually returning.

An unexpected surprise was the presence of Zebra Finches, in the middle of the Melton! Zebra Finches were once commonly seen on the open grasslands on the fringes of Melton but are rapidly retreating due to housing developments. They are still commonly seen around Strathtulloh, Pinkerton, Eynesbury & other open grassy rural areas. Presumably they have made their way from the grassy outskirts of Melton via the Arnolds Creek Biolink, illustrating the value of the Arnolds Creek wildlife corridor. In partnership with City of Melton, Melbourne Water, Church of Jesus Christ's



Latterday Saints & Melton Christian College, Melton Environment Group have planted several vegetated links in this wildlife corridor through Melton; beside Melton Christian College, Church of Jesus Christ's Latterday Saints & Brookfield.



Zebra Finches photographed by Nora Peters



Re-imagining Arnolds Creek project: 2020



Re-imagining Arnolds Creek project: 2024

This alone illustrates the success of the Re-imagining Arnolds Creek project! A lesson could be that once birds are lost from an area it may take a very long time for them to return! After only four years it is still early days! However, it can happen with appropriate environmental action.

**Many thanks to Melbourne Water, City of Melton & State of Victoria for this innovative environment project, in both Arnolds & Ryans Creeks.**

#### **Westlake:**

#### **31 bird species (163 individuals)**

Domestic Pigeon	Turtledove
Crested Pigeon	Masked Lapwing
Dusky Moorhen	Purple Swamphen
Black Duck	Wood Duck
Domestic Goose	Domestic Duck
Muscovy Duck	White Ibis
Little Black Cormorant	White-faced Heron
Red-rumped Parrot	Eastern Rosella
Rainbow Lorikeet	Musk Lorikeet
Long-billed Corella	Galah
Mynah	Starling
Willy Wagtail	Red Wattlebird
White-plumed Honeyeater	Blackbird
New Holland Honeyeater	Little Raven
Welcome Swallow	Fairy Martin
Mudlark	

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S205117060>;

#### **Re-imagining Arnolds Creek project:**

#### **15 species (46 individuals)**

Black Duck	Crested Pigeon
Long-billed Corella	Musk Lorikeet
White-plumed Honeyeater	Willy Wagtail
New Holland Honeyeater	Red Wattlebird
Little Raven	Magpie
Starling	Mynah
Greenfinch	Zebra Finch
Blue Wren	

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S205117238>;

*'Arnolds Creek was the first to be 'reimagined' in early 2020. Located in a highly urbanised catchment joining the Werribee River, the creek was characterised by a concrete channel that ran up either side of a grassy reserve. This area had around one-third of the area of open space per person compared to the wider Melton Council area, which has a lower socio-economic demographic generally and the fastest growing population rate of all local government areas.*

*'An important aim of the Reimagining Your Creek program is to create engaging spaces for community enjoyment, recreation and wellbeing. To create these public open spaces, it has been essential to work alongside external stakeholders and the local community.'*

*'For the Arnolds Creek restoration, we held a number of public engagement events and workshops in and around the site, as well as through our online portal, [Your Say](#). In this way, communities were able to share their thoughts and ideas on the proposed design, which could then be further developed in response to community needs.'*

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

*'Arnolds Creek is a heavily modified tributary of the Werribee River. Half the catchment is agricultural land, with increasing urbanisation extending out through new suburbs such as Arnolds Creek. Melton Environment Group has previously delivered multiple revegetation projects along the length of the creek in partnership with Melbourne Water, Melton City Council and various community groups.'*

*'Reimagining Your Creek is a Melbourne Water project aimed at redesigning significantly modified waterways to bring them to a more natural state, consulting with local communities and stakeholders to prioritise social and environmental outcomes and create desirable open spaces. A 1.4km section of Arnolds Creek in West Melton has been chosen for redesign.'*

*'Bird monitoring at these sites will be undertaken using [Melbourne Water's Riparian Bird Monitoring](#) methodology. This method uses a Before After Control Impact (BACI) model. Arthur Westlake Reserve has been previously surveyed as a control site for revegetation efforts south of High St, and provides a valuable set of comparison data. The initial survey shows a clear difference in bird diversity and abundance at the project site. As the redesign and revegetation establishes over the next couple of years we should hopefully see bird communities increase to a level closer to the control site.'*

*'Consultation has been undertaken for this project, with functional designs [available online](#). Works are expected to begin in September 2019.'*

*'Birds are one of the waterway values that are expected to benefit from and show observable changes as a result of these waterway improvements. Melton Environment Group has extensive experience in bird surveys in Melton, and is the largest contributor of bird data for Arnolds Creek and many other areas in the region. The group also has aquatic macroinvertebrate identification skills that can assist in tracking changes to other waterway values.'*

#### **Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group Xmas breakup Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December**

On Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December PLEG held its Christmas breakup at the Green Shed in Pinkerton Forest. Irene, Rosemary, Jenny, Lorraine, Simon & Daryl enjoyed a BBQ & picnic lunch. Also present was founding PLEG member Frances Overmars & Naturewest facilitator Suzie Gerraghty. After lunch most of the group had a walk in the Forest. Despite the dry winter & spring the bush is looking good!



#### **Eynesbury Environment Group: Xmas breakup Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December 6.00pm**

Eynesbury Environment Group: Xmas breakup was held on the evening of Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December at Eynesbury Discovery Centre BBQ area

#### **Pinkerton Link Project: increasing biodiversity in Pinkerton Link**

After a walk through Pinkerton Link founding PLEG member Frances Overmars gives an assessment of progress after a decade of environmental (& experimental!) revegetation work in Pinkerton Link:

*"Greetings all,*



I have attached the photos of the spear grasses planted in Pinkerton Link, taken 12 Dec 2024, as I wanted to see whether they had proliferated and I'm pleased to say they have!

Most of the trees, shrubs and ground covers were planted on the raised Euc. mulch beds and the one rice hull bed which we created, in order to give them the best start we could to counter the high nutrient waste base.

While all the native grasses are important, the reason *A. exilis* has been prominent, is that it grows densely at the base of Grey-box trees

Heath Spear grass (*Austrostipa exilis*) was identified by Val Stajsic in the 1990's. It grows well around the base of the old growth Grey box trees.

Val works as a botanist at the Herbarium

1 The photo (0981) were taken near the car park besides the old growth grey box, showing the spread of the grasses from the initial planting *Austrostipa exilis*

2. Photo taken (0983) at the end of the east-west plantings on mulch beds, near the track, in the northern section.

Not sure which species of grass was planted here, ? *A. mollis*, *A.stipa scabra*

3. Photos (0984, 0985) taken at the northernmost mulch bed, near the end of the access track and northern fence line, where I was pleased to see that this grass has now covered the entire bed!

Not sure which species was planted, ? *A.stipa scabra*, *A.stipa mollis*

It would be wonderful if all of the raised beds in Pinkerton Link be planted with the native grasses and ground cover herbs, provenance Pinkerton Forest. I wonder if it would be worthwhile, even just stripping the seeds from the parent plants in Pinkerton and hand broadcast them onto the raised beds? Following the lead of nature!

All the best,  
Frances "

**The success of the Pinkerton Link revegetation project is due to the vision & decision by William Rajendram (Greater Western Water Environmental Engineer) that this degraded**

**'sludge paddock' should be restored to its original state as a Grey Box Woodland & also to PLEG's founding member Frances Overmars by accepting the challenge of bringing William's bold long-term proposal to fruition.**



Photo 983



Photo 984



Photo 985

## **FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

**Possum Walk at Hannah Watts Park  
Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January 7.30 pm - 8.30 pm**

This 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!)



Brush-tailed Possum at Hannah Watts Park

### **Eynesbury Environment Group: first meeting for 2025**

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> 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  
Dates TBA

### **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**

**Note: change to quarterly bird survey days**

***Pinkerton/Eynesbury quarterly bird surveys will now be done on a week day in the future.***

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. 134 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](mailto:jackmack37@hotmail.com); or Daryl Akers [jenniferkayakers@outlook.com](mailto: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 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](mailto:eynesbury.environment.group@gmail.com); or follow Eynesbury Environment Group on Facebook.



## Eynesbury Nature Walks 2025 schedule

Cleanup Australia Day	Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> March
Eynesbury bird walk	Sunday 30 <sup>th</sup> May
Eynesbury bird walk	Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> July
Spring bioblitz	Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> September
Woodland night walk	Saturday 4 <sup>th</sup> October
Aussie bird count	Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> October

## EEG: Melton Bird Walks 2025 schedule

### Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 Strathhtulloh Cct
- Continue along Strathhtulloh Cct. (*Strathhtulloh 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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

### Wallaby in Pinkerton Forest

In October, we found a large Swamp Wallaby beside the Green Shed, looking somewhat lost! On our subsequent bird walk in November we saw the Wallaby again, beside the Pinkerton graves; presumably the same one we saw here a couple of weeks ago, in 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. Unfortunately it did not visit the water point so we didn't get a decent photo. It probably didn't know it was there. Another interesting addition to Pinkerton's faunal diversity. However, we only saw it once more so it probably left in search of company, as they are usually seen in pairs.



Wallaby in Pinkerton Forest

### Mystery bird in Pinkerton



This mystery bird was photographed at the Pinkerton water trough in late December. The mystery is mainly because of the bad quality of the phot of the bird which had just taken flight. It seems a little smaller than a raven photographed at the same position. The water trough is about 4 feet (1220 cm) in diameter.



Little Raven in same position

## HAPPY NEW YEAR

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