



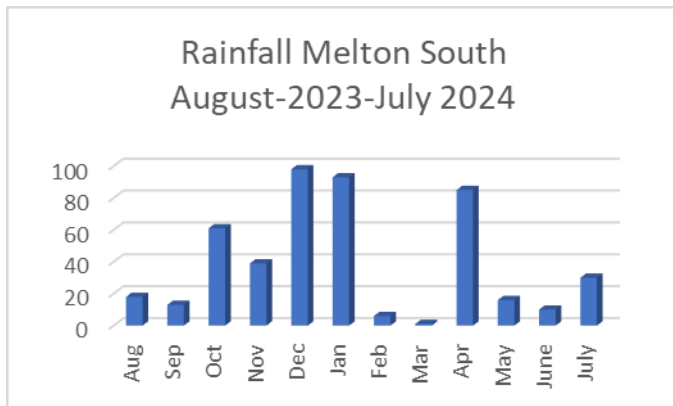
# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## August 2024

### WILDLIFE RESCUE

Ring: 13 000 94535

### RAINFALL



30mm rainfall recorded in Melton South for July. We will still need to water in Pinkerton!

### Cootamundra Wattle time again!



Cootamundra Wattle in Butlers Rd

It's Cootamundra Wattle time again! Cootamundra Wattles are resplendent in their golden plumes scattered in & around Melton. Although not indigenous (native to the Cootamundra region as their name implies) they widely naturalised almost everywhere we look.

Despite the miserable freezing winter we are experiencing, the golden splash of these wattles against the background of the dark wintry skies bring promise of the coming of spring in a couple of months' time. With the coming of spring the countryside, especially the bush, will be ablaze with gold! This coming month we should be seeing Gold-dust & Golden Wattle, as well as bushpeas (Eutaxia).

### JULY ACTIVITIES

#### Pinkerton Forest working bee



Rosemary planting in Pinkerton Forest

On Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July Irene, Rosemary & Daryl returned to the Forest to continue planting understory shrubs as part of our strategy to enhance the habitat value & increase nesting sites for our declining small woodland birds.

We planted ten shrubs (five *Acacia rostriformis* & five *Dodonea viscosa*) purchased from & propagated by Friends of Melton Botanic Garden. The morning was cold & misty (4° on arrival & 9° on departure!). Afterward we watered the *Hymenantheras* we had planted previously, propagated by Irene.

We discussed the mound of dumped soil beside the Pinkerton Graves carpark. Rosemary suggested planting Gold-dust Wattles here. There are already three of these already planted here so this sounds like a good idea. We have about a dozen or so Gold-dust Wattles available.

Gold-dust Wattles sucker prolifically & readily form dense coppices so we can hope for a dense coppice with every bush we plant! These hopefully should be especially valuable in creating bushy understory bird nesting habitat.

### ***Midden in Pinkerton?***



Irene & Rosemary on old ash mound



Closeup of deep layer of ash in rabbit burrow

We discovered a low mound that consisted of black soil that appeared to be ash. The ashy-looking soil had been exposed by an old rabbit burrow. Instead of usual native plants there were bright green weed grasses growing. We have noticed vegetation of this sort growing on sites where we have previously burnt large piles of Boxthorns in past years. However, this mound appears somewhat larger than these, with a much deeper layer of ash. This powdery ash is nothing like the heavy black basalt

soils found in the region. The soil in Pinkerton Forest by comparison is scoria-derived red (not ash-black)

It almost had the appearance of an old earth oven or midden, similar to those found in the Riverina locally known as 'ovens'. Were earth ovens of this type used in this region?

Our resident Kangaroos were as usual there to greet us. One group was accompanied by a very small joey. When the group jumped the fence into the lane the joey was plainly too small to follow. It hopped desperately along the fence, accompanied by its mother, on the opposite side of the fence. The rest of the group crossed the lane and then hopped the fence into Pinkerton Link. The mother however refused to leave the joey, hopping back & forth across the lane. Eventually she hopped back into Forest to the joey, ignoring our presence. Shortly afterward she returned, hopped the fence & thence into Pink Link, with the head of the joey plainly visible looking out of its mother's pouch! A kangaroo was photographed at the water point with a large joey in her pouch. Possibly the same joey?



Mother kangaroo with joey at water trough

Not many birds to be seen or heard possibly due to the very cold morning. Mainly eerily quiet. The Bronze-winged Pigeon that we have seen on two previous visits was still here, near the Pinkerton Graves

Magpies	Little Ravens	Noisy Miners
Red Wattlebirds	Brown Treecreepers	
White-plumed Honeyeaters	Blue Wrens	
White-faced Heron	Long-billed Corellas	Galahs
Red-rumped Parrots	Eastern Rosellas	
Common Bronzewing		

There is now a new gate to prevent livestock straying into Upper Pinkerton. Twin gates no less!

Somewhat akin to the staircases in Tevye's dream house in 'Fiddler on the Roof'.

'There will be one long staircase just going up & one even longer going down'.

Many thanks to Greater Western Water for the new fence & gate!



New gate in Upper Pinkerton

### Pinkerton Forest working bee

The working bee on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July was cancelled due windy conditions for safety reasons. We have copied Birdlife Australia's rule of cancelling events on declared Fire Ban days, on days of stormy weather or when lightning activity is threatened, for safety reasons. Although not blowing a gale on the day but it just takes a strong wind to cause the old growth trees to shed large branches or topple completely. We have been present when this has happened in Pinkerton in past years when we have been there in windy weather, and it's a bit scary! The sound of a 400-year old Grey Box tree crashing to the ground would be not easily forgotten!

### Pinkerton Forest working bee

On Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> July PLEG returned to Pinkerton Forest. Present were Irene, Lorraine, Rosemary, Simon & Daryl, & Susie of Naturewest. Irene, Rosemary & Daryl planted five bushes, Bacchus Marsh Varnish Wattle (*Acacia rostriformis*) & Dodonea near the carpark on Pinkerton Lane. We then planted three Bush Peas (*Eutaxia diffusa*) grown by Simon. Susie then arrived representing NatureWest. 26 bird species were seen, recorded on eBird, <https://ebird.org/checklist/S187636716>;

After planting we assessed the Forest, noting where there are large patches of exotic grasses that will need to be controlled. Perhaps we may need the assistance of an environmental contractor due to the extent of the infestation. On the whole however the Forest is looking pretty good & is relatively weed free.

We noticed where an old Grey Box tree was surprisingly bent & deformed & wondered how this may have occurred. Irene noted that the leaning tree pointed in the direction of Mt Cottrell. This may or may not be of significance & may be merely coincidence. Rosemary noted that it looked somewhat like another similarly deformed tree identified by a Monash University team here in 2022. This tree had several scars. A Kamilaroi man, Alfie, who was part of the university survey team suggested that men had pushed it over for some reason. Something to do with men's business. Then again it may have happened naturally!



Lorraine observing possible? scar tree

We observed several other scarred trees, although some may have been natural. There are still mysterious sites to be found in Pinkerton!

### Photos taken by Rosemary

This tree around which Simon was weeding was shattered by lightning several years ago during a violent storm. The tree had been completely split in half with shattered branches & sharp wooden shards scattered around. This would have been a spectacular sight although it graphically illustrates why we avoid being in old growth forests such as Pinkerton during storm activity!



weeding around 'lightning tree'



Lichen-encrusted stump



Ruby saltbush



Scar tree

### EEG bird walk Toolern Creek

The birdwalk scheduled for Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July Toolern Creek (Big Red) was cancelled on the day due to the icy wind. The two of us who turned up had a brief meeting, without getting out of our cars. Like a country car window meeting! To the annoyance of people driving through! We both decided it was too cold and too windy. Even the birds were nowhere to be seen

### Pinkerton Forest working bee

We called off our working bee in Pinkerton on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> July due to a forecast of bad weather. However the forecast of bad weather appears to have been greatly exaggerated! The threatened wind and rain did not eventuate and the day was quite warm if not pleasant. No sun but no wind or rain either. Sadly no rain either (1mm only). Such is life!

If we have to call off our next working bee for the same reason, due to the volatility of weather lately, perhaps we may need a contingency plan. We noticed when we last planted that the soil is quite dry and rain in July so far has been meagre-36mm, 19mm on one day (the 17th). Watering will definitely be needed. We don't want this year's plants to suffer the same fate as last year's.

### Eynesbury Environment Group: Nature Walk



On Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> July Chris Lunardi led a group of nine people on a nature walk in Eynesbury Forest.

Despite the cold weather conditions (6° on arrival & 10° on departure) we still saw a good number of birds. Three Crested Shrike-tits stood out conspicuously against the dark foliage & sky.

The group also found a largish red-coloured bullant while crossing the creek near the road. It was odd to see a bullant out & about on such a cold day & it seemed quite sluggish. It also seemed quite unaggressive for a bullant but this may just have

been the cold. It looked somewhat like *Myrmecia nigriscapa*, not seen as often as the more commonly seen (& more aggressive!) *M. nigriceps* or large black *M. pyriformis*.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myrmecia\\_nigriscapa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myrmecia_nigriscapa);

& [https://www.antwiki.org/wiki/Myrmecia\\_nigriscapa](https://www.antwiki.org/wiki/Myrmecia_nigriscapa);



Red bullant found in Eynesbury Forest July 2024



Red bullant at Long Forest November 2019

### FUTURE ACTIVITIES

#### Eynesbury Environment Group Meeting

**Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 7 - 9pm**

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

#### Eynesbury Environment Group Meeting

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 7 – 9.00 pm**

Ms Peacock Restaurant & Bar, Eynesbury Homestead

#### Pinkerton & Eynesbury Forest Bird Survey

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> August 9.00**

Werribee Wagtails/Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group will hold their quarterly bird survey in Pinkerton & Eynesbury Forests. Pinkerton Forest is on private property located at [http://goo.gl/maps/drFnS.0-p;l.](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).

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

Wednesday August 21<sup>st</sup>  
Wednesday 20th November

**Biosecurity Alert**

As the land surrounding Pinkerton Forest is leased for grazing purposes it is imperative that all gates be closed after access.

**Eynesbury Market**

Eynesbury Environment Group is a regular participant in Eynesbury Market as a stall holder  
Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> August      Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> September  
Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October      Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> November  
Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December

**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.***

***The surveys will be done on the third Wednesday instead of the Sunday.***

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.](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 now held quarterly on the *third Wednesday* of February, May, August & November**

Wed. August 21<sup>st</sup>      Wed. 20th November

**Wildlife warning in Pinkerton Lane**



Visitors to Pinkerton please note:

There is a Blue-tongue Lizard living in the stone wall beside the lone tree about 100 metres from the Mt Cottrell gate. On sunny days it likes to sun itself on the track. When the sun gets hotter it likes to move into the thin shadow cast by the tree, where it becomes almost invisible. We have had to shift it a few times to avoid running over it! There was a pair here but sadly one was run over last spring. Blue-tongues have no road sense! Perhaps it may need to be re-located to somewhere safer, now that there is only one! There was also one that lived beside the gate at Mt Cottrell Rd, also living just as dangerously. This one was relocated to a safer territory in the Forest, close to a location where there is another Blue-tongue living.

*Walks in 2024:*

**Wed. August 21<sup>st</sup>      Wed. 20th 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](mailto:eynesbury.environment.group@gmail.com); or follow Eynesbury Environment Group on Facebook.

#### ***Eynesbury Environment Group's nature walks***

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October      7pm - 9pm**  
**Eynesbury Nature Night Walk**  
**Meet at Toorong Rd**

**Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> November      9am - 11:30am**  
**Eynesbury Flora Walk**  
 Led by Simon and Lorraine Jolly

#### **EEG: Melton Bird Walks 2024 schedule**

##### **Saturday 20<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 17<sup>th</sup> August Strathtulloh**

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

#### **Saturday 14<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.

#### **Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> 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 16<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

### **OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS**

#### **Wattle Day**

##### **Sunday September 1<sup>st</sup>**

September 1<sup>st</sup>, 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/>;

#### **2024 NATIONAL ENTOMOLOGY INSECT EXPO - Woodend Buffalo Stadium 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> October**

*'The National Entomology Insect Expo is Australia's largest exhibition showcasing the entire Science of Entomology (Insects) to the general public. This spectacular exhibition will promise visitors a unique and fascinating look into the world of insects and their relatives.'*

*Featuring Entomologists, Insect Researchers, Breeders, Spider and Scorpion Keepers, Insect*

*Educators and Specialist Insect Retailers, this amazing event also brings together a large number of static Entomological Collections, 'Live' Insect displays, Spiders, Scorpions and Related Invertebrates, Childrens Workshops, Entomological Merchandise and the ongoing research work of the C.V.R.I.C. Over 100 exhibitors from all over Australia will feature spectacular displays, many of which have never been seen by the public. Featured Insect Pantomime Entertainment will be there to meet and greet all visitors and Quality Food Catering will also be available On-Site during the entire 3 day event.'*  
**TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE. [admin@cvric.com.au](mailto:admin@cvric.com.au);**

*The third NATIONAL INSECT EXPO for 2024 will be held on the 4th - 5th and 6th of October at the Buffalo Sports Stadium, Forest Street, Woodend. Tickets are now available and due to venue Capacity Limits, priority will be given to Pre-Booked On-Line Ticket Holders. In order to avoid long queues, we suggest you book your tickets early here:*  
<https://courses.cvric.com.au/index.php?route=product/category&path=65>  
 The Insect Expo Team

Live displays	Insect breeders
Insect craftworks	Scorpions & spiders
Entomology publications	Workshops/activities
Insect keepers & experts	Rare collections
3 days of rare & unique displays	

## **OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS**

### **Melton Wildlife**

#### **Kangaroos at Rockbank**

There is a group of about 20-30 Kangaroos at Rockbank, between the Freeway & the rapidly developing housing development. Hopefully they will not become trapped within housing estates with no opportunity for escape. But if they do become trapped then we can expect to see them on the highway in coming months!

#### **Sea-eagle at Pinkerton**

This juvenile White-bellied Sea-eagle was seen perched in a tree on the north-west edge of Pinkerton Forest, near the carpark. This tree on the very edge of the Forest is a favourite perch for sea-eagles. No doubt it provides a good vantage point for surveying the surrounding countryside. Its mottled plumage identifies it as a juvenile. Good to see they are still here.

A pair of sea-eagles nested in Pinkerton Forest in 2007 & 2008.



#### **Bird nest in Eynesbury Forest**

This tiny bird nest was found on the ground in Eynesbury Forest during high winds. Although very old & threadbare the basic structure of the nest is still quite apparent. Looks like a honeyeater nest. Possibly White-plumed as these are the commonest small honeyeater in Eynesbury Forest. New Holland Honeyeaters make a similar nest but these are found in the township, not the Forest. Willy Wagtail could be a possibility also but these are usually more substantial

