



PINKERTON LANDCARE and ENVIRONMENT GROUP Inc

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Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group *Diary for 2018*

Weeding at Pinkerton Link Sunday 14th January 2018



Irene mowing weeds with Simon, Joan and Jaqueline in background

KABV City Pride Award 2003 Winner: City Pride: *Landcare Group*

KABV Sustainability Cities Finalist 2005 Protection of the Environment Award: *Protection of Pinkerton Forest*

KABV / Sustainable Cities Award 2010 Winner *Protection of the Environment: The Sea-eagle has Landed*

KABV / Sustainable Cities Award 2014 Winner *Protection of the Environment: Outdoor classroom on the Werribee River*



PLEG commenced activities in 2018 in Pinkerton Link on Sunday 14th January. Frances, Jaqueline, Irene, Joan, Simon & Daryl began the year's activities by cutting and spraying some of the exotic seeding grasses growing on last year's spread mulch. Ground that had been so recently scorched black by the invasive fire in November 2017 was now covered in rampant weed grasses. Non-native grass was seeding on one of the mulch islands, and the stalks needed to be cut before the seeds matured. This was tackled by Irene with her lawn mower, Daryl with a whipper snipper and Simon with spray backpack. Other weeds were matted out by Frances, Joan and Jaqueline. Those weeds remaining will be mowed by Western Water.

Those trees scorched by the fire are now showing green regrowth, illustrating the resilience of Greybox Trees and their resistance to bushfire. Similarly the grasses are now growing green and lush after summer rains.



Simon spraying Couch Grass

Pinkerton Link: creating a wildlife corridor connecting two remnant Grey Box Woodlands
Community Volunteer Action Grant 2015: *Threatened Species Grant to protect Diamond Firetails*

This was followed by a walk in Pinkerton Forest in the hope of collecting rare native grass seed and hopefully look for wildflowers also (especially Plains Joyweed as it is in flower in Pinkerton now). Suitable grass seed however was not available in the forest. There were not many birds as the day was not sunny. These included two raptors, an Australian Hobby that called almost incessantly until it was disturbed and a Brown Goshawk. However there were few other birds with the exception of large numbers of Tree Martins that were actively hawking for insects.

While in Pinkerton Forest we checked out the new memorial plaques that replaced the old plaques that had faded over the years.

Weeding in Pinkerton Forest 16th January

On Tuesday 16th January Frances and Daryl visited Pinkerton Forest to spray Galenia. (Carpet Weed). There was more Galenia in the Forest than we hoped to see, making a return visit necessary.

We were pleased to see a Koala looking down from a tree overlooking the Pinkerton grave site.

We were looking for native grass seeds (especially *Austrostipa exilis* which grows around the bases of Grey Box trees) but suitable ripe seed was in very short supply.

A large female Brown Goshawk kept circling over the canopy, hopefully seeking a rabbit lunch!



Frances spraying Galenia

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Weeding in Pinkerton Forest 7th February



Frances and Rosemary weeding

Frances, Irene, Rosemary and Daryl visited Pinkerton Forest on Wednesday 7th February where we weeded the mound beside the carpark near the Pinkerton graves. As this is beside the main entrance into Pinkerton Forest it gives visitors their first impression of the Forest, hence the need to keep the site presentable. The Gold-dust Wattles we are establishing here are growing nicely.

We then gathered the tiny berries of the saltbush ground covers that grow in the vicinity; Ruby Saltbush (*Enchylaena tomentosa*) and Berry Saltbush (*Atriplex semibaccata*). These were then scattered over the mound, in the soil disturbed by weed removal. Saltbush berries provide food for birds and ants. Indeed Purple Meat Ants are often seen carrying the berries, presumably to their nests. Perhaps they may be agents of seed dispersal?

Birdlife was understandably quiet due to the hot morning but four raptor species still made their presence known; Black-shouldered Kite, Brown Falcon, Brown Goshawk and two White-bellied Sea-eagles. The sea-eagles are more usually residents of Western Treatment Plant at Werribee, but regularly fly along the Werribee River corridor and are intermittent visitors to the treatment ponds at Surbiton Park and Melton Reservoir. Anecdotal advice suggests they may have nested in Melton Reservoir last year. A single Pink-eared Duck flew over us, possibly en route to the treatment pond.

The sea-eagles graphically illustrate the crucial importance of the Werribee River corridor to birds and other wildlife through the rapidly developing western region. Koalas, kangaroos, wallabies also use this corridor, as well as migratory birds that follow the Great Dividing Range from northern Australia to Victoria, then along the Werribee River to the coast.

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Frances, Rosemary & Irene gathering saltbush berries



Frances spraying weeds in fenced enclosure at Pinkerton Flat

Spreading mulch & sowing seed at Pinkerton Link 25th February 2018

On 25th February 2018 Frances, Irene, Karen, Frances, Inna, Kevin, Simon and Daryl returned to Pinkerton Link where we continued the process of spreading the truckloads of mulch that had been deposited in 2017, purchased by the Birdlife Australia grant. The process of spreading the mulch had been begun by Western Water staff. PLEG members returned to 'fine tune' the mulch spreading by making sure it was spread wider and more evenly, to an optimum depth of about 10cm.

This was followed by scattering native grass seed (Kangaroo Grass, Wallaby Grass and Speargrass). This was physically achieved by broadcasting handfuls of seed across the mulched area, then raking over the mulch to ensure that the seed was settled into the mulch and not blown away by wind. The seed was scattered over a wide area thanks to the wind, which was surprisingly cold after the warm muggy conditions of the day before. .

After morning tea we surveyed the Link. We were pleased to discover that the Drooping Sheokes planted several years ago, that were burnt by the fire in November 2017, have now begun to re-sprout; like the Grey Box saplings a month previously. Again proving the resilience of the Australian bush in the face of fire.

Kevin even identified a new bird species for the Link- Weebills chattering in the foliage of the 2-3 metre trees, bringing our bird total to 46. Even over the dry summer the tree saplings are showing new foliage growth.



Spreading mulch in Pinkerton Link



Broadcasting native grass seed by hand



Morning tea at Pink Link

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Drooping Sheoke re-sprouting after fire (closeup)

Weeding at Pinkerton Flat



Pinkerton Link: creating a wildlife corridor connecting two remnant Grey Box Woodlands
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On Tuesday 6th March Frances & Daryl sprayed weeds in the rabbit-proof enclosure at Pinkerton Flat. We sprayed Serrated Tussock & Pattersons Curse. We found large numbers of Garden Skinks (*Lampropholis guichenoti*) scurrying through the grass. These small skinks are quite abundant along the river, no doubt forming a valuable component in the food web. They probably provide a valuable food supply for the Sacred Kingfishers that return here each summer to nest. Grasshoppers of various sizes & species (some exceeding the lizards in size) also abounded in the grass. The naturally grown Melicytis are growing prolifically within the enclosure.

On Monday 26th March Frances & Daryl matted weeds in the north-east corner in Pink Link. We then sprayed Galenia in Pinkerton Forest.



Protecting trees burnt in November 2017 fire



On Sunday 22nd April Rosemary, Irene, Frances, Joan & Daryl replaced tree guards around Grey Box and Drooping Sheoke trees that were showing regrowth after having been burnt in the fire in November 2017. Several stakes that had burnt were also replaced. We were pleasantly surprised to find how many had survived. The Grey Box trees showed regrowth in January 2018 but the Sheokes were a bit slower to sprout new growth, some just showing tiny green sprouts now.

Afterward we did the same with the Grey box trees in the Greening Australia site, replacing guards around trees scorched in a controlled burn in 2017.



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Ballarat Line Upgrade: removal of trees from rail corridor
Relocating felled Sheoke trunks from rail reserve to Pinkerton Link



At a meeting with Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group (PLEG), Regional Rail Revival, Melbourne Metro Rail Authority and LendLease concerning removal of native grassland vegetation from the rail corridor between Deer Park and Melton, PLEG were informed that a stand of Drooping Sheoke trees, a few hundred metres east of Ferris Road was to be removed to make way for railway duplication works. Also to be removed is virtually all the native vegetation within the rail corridor. The rail corridor has been a last refuge of native grassland vegetation in the western region.

Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group requested that the Drooping Sheokes destined to be removed from the railway corridor be recycled for environmental purposes and placed in a local woodland, rather than being merely mulched, burnt or otherwise disposed of.

The biodiversity value of the Grey Box Woodland under creation in Pinkerton Link would be greatly improved by the addition of these tree trunks and logs. The process of creating a forest here would be greatly enhanced as it will provide a ready-made wildlife habitat of woody debris, as the Grey Box trees we already have planted grow around them. Naturally grown woody debris of this kind would otherwise take centuries to develop!

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On Monday 23rd April Western Water, Western Land Services (Environmental Contractors) & PLEG held a meeting on site to determine where the logs were to be ultimately deposited. A map was handed to Western Land Services (WLS) detailing where the logs were to be placed. WLS decided that they should be able to provide a front end loader for the day in a couple of weeks' time.

On Wednesday Steve of Western Land Services arrived with a front-end loader to relocate the logs to their final resting places. The task was a demanding one as we had asked him to place the logs among the trees already planted, without damaging any of these! This involved manoeuvring the loader, with the logs in its mechanical maws in and around young tree saplings. This he did with ease, driving the ungainly looking machine on its caterpillar tracks through the trees without damaging any. Many thanks to Steve for completing this delicate procedure.

On the day for the logs to be relocated to their eventual positions among the Grey Box saplings a large contingent of managers and media people from Western Water, Lend Lease and Ballarat Line Upgrade arrived (in four carloads!). All parties involved in this project were keen to have the operation recorded so that their part in this large logistical event of environmental restoration could be given maximum publicity.

Clare the ecologist with Lend lease explained to Graham Holt, Western Water's Managing Director of Corporate Affairs the immense ecological value of placing the logs in the paddock. The presence of several ecologists & similarly inclined people involved in the Ballarat Line Upgrade project no doubt influenced their willingness to relocate the logs. Also the opportunity to get some positive publicity from what amounts to environmental destruction was probably considerable, as evidenced by the size of the management and media team. Steve (of Western Land Services) watched in amazement as the four carloads of people came down the track towards us! Perhaps his largest audience as the dozen or so people watched as he relocated the logs. A production bigger than Ben Hur!

This has been a complex environmental project involving many parties, between a seemingly unlikely group of parties including Regional Rail Revival Melbourne Metro Rail Authority, Melbourne Metro, Lend Lease, Western Water and Pinkerton Landcare & Environmental Group.

It has resulted in the paradox of an environmentally constructive project arising in the wake of unavoidable environmental destruction.

Many thanks to all parties involved.

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NEWS



Graham Holt, Daryl Akers and Clare Kenny. (Supplied)

New use for old wood

Felled trees that made way for the Ballarat line upgrade will be re-used at Pinkerton Forest for native animals to make their home.

Logs from trees, mostly sheoaks, which were removed for construction work on the rail line, will be placed strategically around the forest among indigenous plants to encourage wildlife to nest.

Regional Rail Revival director Mark Havryluk said that it was a joint initiative between the revival consortium, Western Water and Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group (PLEG).

"It was necessary to remove some trees to make way for new tracks and infrastructure as part of the Ballarat Line Upgrade and we've worked with the local community to ensure

the trees can be used to benefit the local environment," Mr Havryluk.

"Construction on the Ballarat Line Upgrade is on track and once it is complete, the project will boost service frequency and improve reliability for passengers."

He said that the trees removed were in the direct line of new tracks or station infrastructure being built. Where possible, construction methods and design were changed to reduce the need for tree and vegetation removal.

PLEG secretary Daryl Akers said the land between Pinkerton Forest and Bush's Paddock in Mt Cottrell had been rehabilitated by volunteers to create a wildlife corridor.

Esther Lauaki

Planting at Pinkerton Link with Melton Secondary College

On Tuesday 29th May students and teachers from Melton Secondary College joined Frances, Sue, Michael & Daryl of PLEG and Nathan Gard (Western Water's Environmental Officer) and William Rajendram (Western Water's Senior Environmental Engineer) to plant in Pinkerton Link. We planted 120 Grey Box trees and native grasses. The grass seeds had been collected by Melton Secondary College students the previous year from the adjacent Pinkerton Forest. We had 2.5 mm rain the previous night, followed by 0.5 mm rain the afternoon following the planting so their chances of thriving should be good.

We were fortunate to have so many young and energetic people planting so many trees and grasses. Hopefully some of them may return in later years to see how tall the trees they have planted have grown.



Filling buckets with water prior to planting



Students planting trees in Pink Link



Nathan, William & Frances in Pink Link

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Melton Council & Western Water walk in Pinkerton 8th May 2018

On the 8th May Frances & Daryl of PLEG accompanied William Rajendram of Western Water & Sjaan Bidwel & Tony Herwerth of Melton Council for a monitoring exercise in Pinkerton Forest



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Planting with Conservation Volunteers Australia 10th July 2018

On Tuesday 10th April eight volunteers from Conservation Volunteers Australia joined Frances and Daryl planted native grasses in Pinkerton Link. The volunteers came from homelands as far as Japan and Brazil. We planted various *Stipa* species (speargrasses). As well as trees we need to recreate a woodland understory of grasses, bushes and wildflowers.

After morning planting we gathered several fallen branches which we placed beside Clematis plants, to provide a climbing base for them to grow into.

After lunch we planted *Stipa exilis* around the tree saplings, three to each tree. *Stipa exilis* is a woodland grass that grows beneath Grey Box trees in Greybox Woodlands.



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Open Day at Surbiton Park: *Launch of Werribee River biodiversity brochure*



On Saturday 2nd June Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group (PLEG) and Western Water welcomed the community to an Open Day to visit the Werribee River Volcanic Gorge beside Western Water's treatment plant at Surbiton Park. PLEG launched their brochure '*Restoration of the Werribee River Volcanic Gorge*' funded by a City of Melton World Environment Day Grant.

Visitors explored the stunningly beautiful volcanic gorge and learned about the four distinct ecological vegetation niches which are being restored, and the fauna which depend on them. This restoration project is supported by Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority, Western Water, Melbourne Water, PLEG & BirdLife Australia (Werribee branch).

The Werribee River Volcanic Gorge has been classified by the National Trust landscape "... Those parts of the physical environment, both natural and man-made, which in the Trust's view are essential to the heritage of Australia and which must be preserved"

The current grant from the Port Philip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority (2017/18) is for restoring the native grassland areas above the river gorge. The four different sections of native vegetation in the volcanic gorge were described according to topography. The participants were shown by Frances an example of a successful restoration of native grassland from a previous grant,

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and the methodology was explained. Self- sown Small-leaved clematis plants are now successfully growing within the grassland.

The Landcare Walk included practical examples of restoration of the four ecological classes on the magnificent Werribee River volcanic gorge.



Walk participants learnt about the native wildlife and rare plant species which depend upon these niche ecosystems from the Landcare members who have been restoring this site since 2011 with the support of Western Water, Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority, Melbourne Water and last but not least the broader community who have been seed collecting, propagating, monitoring (incl. Bird Life Australia, Werribee branch), weeding, planting and holding community activities such as walks, picnics (including the Pinkerton family picnic held last year), monitoring platypus, encouraging local school children and just simply having fun.

The educational leaflet was produced by PLEG members to provide a focus on the four ecological vegetation classes in the volcanic gorge, the native grasslands above, the steep rocky escarpments, the flood plain and stream bank. Each has their own suite of indigenous plants which have evolved over millions of years. And, similarly the animals have evolved with them, each complementing the other, which are also described.

As we restore each of these niches, removing rabbits and weeds, allowing the native species to thrive, we have become conscious of the fact that if we need to plant for the first time in a particular

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ecological niche, that we need to keep the balance of species proportionate to those already found on the site. This is the reason we have provided the detail of percentage of plant species present in each ecological vegetation class, so that our restoration actions ensure that one species doesn't dominate another, thus providing an optimal habitat.

A total of 54 visitors including Melton councilors, environmentalists, conservationists, sporting shooters and several children, took advantage of the sunny day.

PLEG members described:

- restoration of native grasslands
- fauna & flora
- Wurundjeri archaeological artefacts
- eDNA sampling of platypus
- rare plant species found in the gorge
- monitoring of fauna and flora

Visitors were welcomed by PLEG President, Richard Rowe



At the top of the escarpment local native grassland landowners Frances Overmars and Simon Jolly described the restoration of the Low Rainfall Plains Grassland (EVC 132-63) on the Yaloak

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Escarpment. Frances is also PLEG Restoration Co-ordinator. From the Yaloak Escarpment we had a panoramic view over the magnificent volcanic gorge through which the Werribee River flows.

Local native grassland landowner Simon Jolly talked about the edible native tubers and how they were used successfully by indigenous people. Simon showed several of these tubers which he had grown. These included Yam Daisy and Blue Grass-lily tubers, which were handed around for participants to see at close quarters.

The Kurungjang-balug clan of the Wurundjeri tribe previously lived in this region east of the Werribee River. To the west of the Werribee River lived the Wathaurong people. This site is named Yaloak Escarpment as the original name for this site by the local Kurungjang baluk people was apparently Woody Yaloak. This name was then adopted by the Pinkerton family when they settled here. Although the name Woody Yalloak is thought to refer to the large permanent waterholes in the river here, the present restoration site has been named Yaloak Escarpment to commemorate the Pinkertons' name for the property.

We then moved down to the flood plain and walked the 300 metres to the remains of the old Pinkerton homestead and displays, for morning refreshments, provided by Western Water. This site is known as Pinkerton Flat.



There were displays of 'before' and 'after' photos of the landcare works, as well as a display on the Pinkerton family, the first European settlers of the site.

There was a display by Bird Life Australia (*Werribee branch*). Bird Life Australia have been conducting regular quarterly bird surveys for over a decade, building up a detailed database of the bird diversity of Surbiton Park.

On display here was a large bale of native grass seed, collected by local environmental contractors Western Land Services. Western Land Services were represented by Peter Sell.

The Mayor of Melton, Cr. Bob Turner launched the educational leaflet that describes the Ecological Vegetation Classes and fauna of the gorge. The leaflet was illustrated by Tony Bainbridge. Melton Councilor Kathy Majdlik also represented Melton Council.

Julie Williams, Western Water's General Manager Business Services, discussed the role of Western Water in the environmental restoration of their property at Surbiton Park.

William Rajendram, Western Water's Senior Environmental Engineer was also present to represent Western Water. William Rajendram has authority over environmental activities at Surbiton Park and has given inestimable support to environmental restoration here

This was followed by a walk along the flood plain, which is Riparian Woodland (*EVC 641*) while looking up at the dramatic rocky escarpments rising starkly above us. The vegetation of the steep escarpment is Escarpment Shrubland (*EVC 895*). A rare plant, Cobberweed (*Sigesbeckia australiensis*) has been found among the rocky of the steep escarpment here. Simon Jolly also pointed out several now locally uncommon Sweet Tobacco plants. This is a night flowering native tobacco plant that has a sweet perfume when the white tubular flowers open at night. It was once fairly commonly found around Melton but has now largely disappeared under housing.

At this point Melbourne Water's representative Louise Nicholas (Waterways & Land Officer for the Lower Werribee River), explained the extensive boxthorn and rabbit control undertaken by Melbourne Water along three kilometres of the gorge this year.

Glenn Clapton, Crew Leader of Wurundjeri Land Management Council's environmental team, the Narrap Rangers, described in detail the native heritage of the area, illustrating how the history of people in this region dates back many thousands of years. He described how the Werribee River formed the boundary between the Wurundjeri people and the neighbouring Wathaurong people. The local clan, the Kurunjang baluk, are still commemorated locally by the Melton suburb of Kurunjang.

We then moved down to the riverbank where Frances described how PLEG have been collecting water samples for eDNA platypus testing. The water samples are then taken by Melbourne Water to be analysed to detect traces of Platypus DNA. This is a more effective means of checking for the presence of Platypus. The old method of simply sitting by the water hoping to see a Platypus, although a pleasant way to spend an hour or so by the river as evening fell, was largely hit and miss, and not very effective. Monitoring by eDNA testing has shown that Platypus are still present in the river here. The vegetation here is Stream Bank Shrubland (*EVC 851*).

Daryl Akers of PLEG described the local wildlife, explaining how natural corridors such as the Werribee River are vitally important in providing both habitat for native wildlife but also crucial corridors for wildlife to move through the region in a social environment where much of our local landscape is being taken over by swift and massive development. These corridors are also important for migrating wildlife, especially birds as they migrate seasonally through the region.

The day was judged a great success, with attendances illustrating wide community interest in our local natural environment.





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Planting at Pinkerton Flat with Melton Secondary College

1st August planting native grasses



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Pinkerton Escarpment 8th August



On 8th August Frances, Irene visited Pinkerton Escarpment to plan weeding and revegetation for the remainder of 2018.

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Sowing native grass seed Pinkerton Escarpment 26th August 2018



Karen & Irene broadcasting native grass seeds atop Pinkerton Escarpment.

On Sunday 26th August Irene, Karen, Kevin, Simon & Daryl returned to the grassland atop Pinkerton Escarpment to sow native grass seed purchased from Greybox & Grassland Indigenous Nursery (GAGIN). PLEG had purchased two hay bales of Wallaby Grass & Speargrass seed. We had decanted the two bales into a number of seed bags to allow for ease of handling & sowing some days previously. We broadcast the seed by hand. The morning was warm, sunny and almost windless, making broadcasting an easy if time consuming activity.

The seed that was scattered among the Serrated Tussock sprayed by Narrap Rangers some months earlier should settle to the ground undisturbed by the wind. We will return to cover the seed scattered on barer ground by teatree branches, to prevent it being dispersed by wind.



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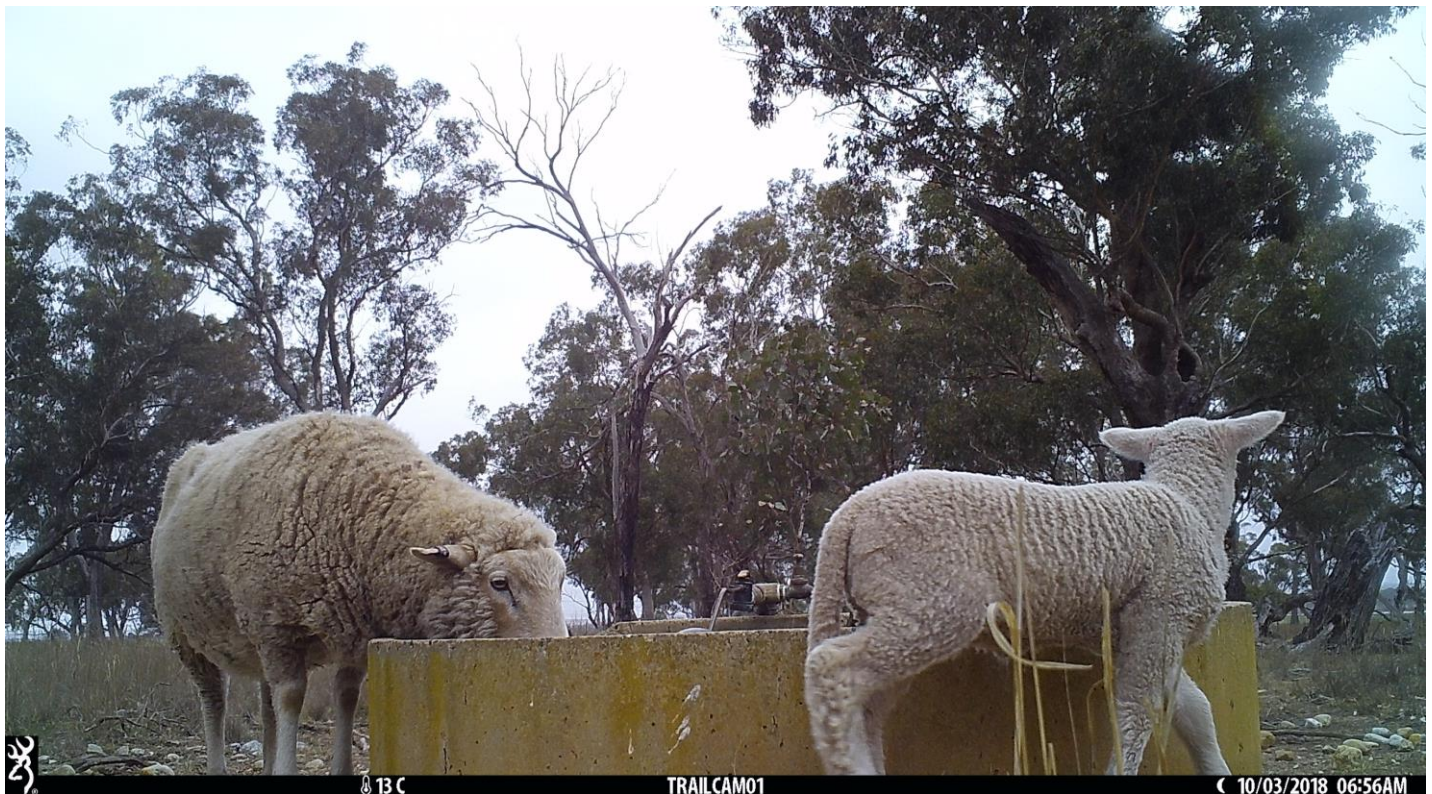
As we photographed the site from the air using a drone we were surprised to see an Australian Hobby (aka Little Falcon) circling nearby in the air. It was then joined by another Hobby that proceeded to swoop the drone several times, but without actually making contact. However, a passing Wedge-tailed Eagle, presumably one of the pair that maintains this section of the gorge as its territory, appeared to show little interest.

Hand watering Pink Link

The Grey Box trees planted by Melton Secondary College students were hand watered several times in October because of low early spring rainfall.

Grazing in Pinkerton Forest

In early spring Fil of Woodhouse Holdings (pastoral lessee) asked if he could place some lambing ewes in the Forest for sheltered grazing prior to their lambing. They were placed in Pinkerton Forest and after a couple of weeks grazing they were removed, after eating out the emerging exotic weed grasses. To date the exotic grasses have not returned and to date the Forest remains quite free of weed grasses. One ewe managed to evade muster, remaining in the Forest for a couple of months. The presence of the lamb was not noticed for two months so the mother presumably managed to keep it hidden for quite some time!



Grazing in Upper Pinkerton

Early in October 2018 weed growth was checked in Pinkerton Forest, a few months after grazing here by sheep in early spring. There has been little regrowth of grass of any type in Lower Pinkerton since it was grazed

After rains in spring 2018, albeit meagre, exotic annual weed grasses had grown in Upper Pinkerton.

There had been some growth of Wild Oats & some Barley Grass in Upper Pinkerton, as well as considerable Rye Grass. There was also some considerable flowering of Wallaby Grass. As these are hardy perennials it is expected that these will not be too adversely affected by grazing

Fil (the representative of farm lessee Woodhouse Holdings) was asked to put sheep in for a week, while the weed grasses are flowering but before they set seed.

The sheep were placed in the paddock for a week, then removed. They have made a significant difference as the flowering Wild Oats & Rye Grass have now gone, as well as the most of the Barley Grass that was about to seed. Although the paddock looked much 'prettier' with so much green grass this consisted mostly of weeds. Much of the flowering native Wallaby Grass had also been eaten but green remnants remain. As these are perennial they should bounce back before long, especially with 28mm rain that fell a few days after. Upper Pinkerton is now mainly free of exotic annual weed grasses



Sheep grazing in Upper Pinkerton

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Before & After Grazing by sheep



Before grazing 17th October 2018



After grazing 4th November 2018

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Hand watering 5th November

The Grey Box trees planted by the students were once again hand watered in early November.

The dryness of the Link was illustrated by a Pobblebonk frog found dead on the ground. It was facing the Western Water treatment lagoon so perhaps it was heading toward the water here, but didn't make it. Perhaps the 28mm rain brought it to the surface, only for it to succumb to the following dry conditions. A dead Eastern Snake-necked Turtle was similarly found dead in the Link paddock a few years ago, presumably also looking for water, without success. Life in the wild can be harsh, especially in drought!

Storm damage in early November

During storms in early November a very large bough had fallen from a tree across the fence beside Pinkerton Lane. Some of the hollow branches will be recycled as wildlife nesting hollows. Other timber fell in the forest during the storm but without damage to infrastructure. These will be left to lie where they fell as coarse woody debris, to provide wildlife habitat.

Many thanks to Western Water for repairing the storm damage!



Before: large tree bough fallen across fence beside lane in Pinkerton Forest



After: tree trimmed & removed

Watering in Pinkerton Link 11th November 2018

Low spring rainfall made it necessary to water the Grey Box trees planted in Pinkerton Link by Melton Secondary College students. Despite the lack of spring rain the trees were looking surprisingly good, as well as the grass also planted by the students; with minimal losses. The trees were hand watered in October and November.

Despite about 28mm rain in early November the soil in Pinkerton Link was still dry below the surface due to the prolonged dry spell, so we it was decided to have a working bee to water. Western Water supplied a water trailer. The open nature of the Link paddock with its high exposure to winds (the Link is especially susceptible to the hot north-westerlies) means that there will be high evaporation rates even if we have rain over the coming months. As the trees grow over the years they will eventually provide their own shade & protection but in the meantime they will need our TLC.

Most of the trees planted this year by the school students are still growing despite the dry weather but we expect little rain over the coming warmer months. There is also a healthy crop of Speargrass (*Austrostipa scabra*).

On Sunday 11th November Rosemary, Joan, Irene, Karen, Kevin, Simon and Daryl watered the trees in Pink Link, as well as the grasses planted this year. A couple of weeks later we received 25 mm rain over two days so if this rain is not followed too soon by dry northerly winds we may not need to water again for a few weeks.



Rosemary, Joan & Simon collecting water



Irene, Kevin & Joan watering in Pinkerton Link with Mt Blackwood in the background

Internal fence & gate in Pinkerton Link



Fence and gate in Pinkerton Link

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An internal fence and gate within Pinkerton Link was erected on 14th November 2018 by Western Water. This will allow us to control weeds in the Link more effectively without threatening more recent plantings. Targeted grazing will allow more cost effective weed control, reducing the need for spraying or slashing. This will enable grazing in Pinkerton Link to be isolated to various sectors. Grazing may be appropriate where the trees are several years old whereas it is not appropriate to graze where the trees are only a year or two old. There will also be a standpipe placed in the Link to facilitate watering in the future, without the need to have a water trailer placed in the paddock

Weeding in Pinkerton Link 21st November 2018





On Wednesday 21st November 2018 Irene, Rosemary & Daryl returned to Pinkerton Link to weed among the native grasses planted by Melton Secondary College Students. Irene & Daryl tackled the weeds with whipper snippers while Rosemary used a mattock to remove weeds. Most of the grasses were surviving but exotic weeds were threatening to overwhelm them. The surrounding Grey Box trees planted a few years previously are all growing vigorously.

Weeding in Pinkerton Link 10th December 2018

On Monday 10th December Frances and Daryl visited Pink Link where we continued to weeding work commenced in November. We sprayed exotic weed grasses, noting that native Wallaby, Spear and Windmill Grasses were flowering, The Windmill Grasses flowering quite prolifically.



Frances spraying weeds in Pinkerton Link



Grey Box regrowth after fire in November 2018

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Sheep grazing in Pinkerton Link

On 20th December a number of sheep were placed in Pinkerton Link to control weeds. The internal fences erected in Pink Link allows targeted grazing to allow more cost effective weed control, reducing the need for spraying or slashing. This enabled grazing in Pink Link to be isolated to various sectors

It allowed us to control weeds in the southern section of the Link where the trees are several years old and will be unaffected by temporary grazing without threatening those trees in the central section planted this year by the school children.



Section grazed by sheep, leaving native speargrass (left) weeds ungrazed (right)



Southern section of Link with weeds removed by sheep



Central section recently planted with trees in 2018, with prolific speargrass

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