



# FRIENDS OF MORWELL NATIONAL PARK INC.

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August 26, 1990

Hello,

Well, the tree planting is almost over, folks. At our last meeting we planted about 340 trees around the old lodge site, and on the peak behind the lodge. Some of the trees planted included grey, blue and manna gums, blackwood and silver and varnished wattles. Considering the small number of people that turned up, the day was a rip-roaring success. Thanks to all that took part; especially Yvonne and Brian Aplin, who prepared the tree guards during the week. This was valuable for freeing up a pair of hands on the day.

And the news we've all been waiting for - the last tree planting day will be on September 16, at 9:30 a.m. We'll be meeting at the end of Tebb Tce., and will be planting around the creek flats, so it should be a doddle. However, the fun doesn't stop there. At 1:30 p.m. we'll be meeting at Fosters Gully car park for the annual koala survey. I can't stress enough the importance of having as many eyes as possible for the day, so bring along lots of friends and family. It's probably our least strenuous activity, so please make an effort.

Finally, a reminder that fees are now due, just in case you haven't renewed yet. They are still \$10 for singles and \$15 for families. Please bring along your outstanding fees to the next meeting, or post them to the Treasurer, c/- the address above.

Bye

Steve Shinnars

## **Friends of Morwell National Park**

### **President's Report for 1989/1990**

This year has seen a fairly marked change of emphasis in the Friends' activities. We have spent the majority of our meetings this year working hard in the Park weeding, clearing rubbish, seed-collecting, culminating this winter in a frenzy of tree-planting. We can now look forward to gradually seeing the results of our work come to fruition as our newly planted trees begin to take over some of the barer areas of Billies Creek. Not that we can rest on our laurels. What we have achieved so far, good as it is, is only a small beginning and we have plenty more of the same to keep us occupied for a long time to come.

The year started in the heat of the controversy over the access to Billies Creek, and I am pleased to report that, although not yet finally resolved, the situation has been considerably eased by the departure from the area of the most outspoken opponent of road access to the area. My understanding at present is that Department of Conservation and Environment (DCE) have been attempting to negotiate purchase of the most suitable block for road access and our major remaining concern must be whether the necessary money will be found. It would be a sad end to the story, if the block were available for purchase and the chance was lost through lack of funds.

All through this year, we have been eagerly awaiting the draught management plan for the Park, which we understand has been mainly held up by the problems which arose over the road access. It is with great pleasure that we welcome Deborah Burke here today with a first draught of the management plan for us to look at.

Membership of the Friends remains fairly stable, but it is noticeable that numbers at activities vary considerably. Tree-planting is a great deal more popular than weeding! All these activities help to enhance the natural beauties of our Park and we need all the help we can get.

Among our activities this year, we have continued to interchange visits with other Friends groups. On 20th August, a small group of us visited the Friends of Coolart on the Mornington Peninsula. If you think weeds are a problem in our Park, you should take a look at the infestations of smilax and dolichos that are choking the native flora in that area. We were very impressed with the public access bird-hides provided at the edges of the wetlands, providing excellent views of the sacred ibis nesting colony and many other water-birds.

Our annual koala and orchid surveys, were duly completed. Mostly, koala counts were low, but we had one record count from the stringybark ridge walk. This resulted from involving a party of schoolchildren who chanced to be in the Park that day. The children participated eagerly, competing with each other to spot the next koala. This resulted in a far more thorough search than we usually manage (all sightings were confirmed by Friends). We hope to learn from this experience and organise similar teams of koala counters for future counts.

The orchid survey was disappointing, a very dry season resulted in a decrease in both the number of surviving plants on the plots, but also in the numbers of flowers on individual plants. To counter this however, I subsequently located more seed pods, about 12 in all, including for the first time two seed pods on plants in our plots. WE must hope that this will lead to better things in future surveys.

This spring, seed collected by us in January 1989, was germinated and grown on at Won Wron prison farm and some 1500 seedlings were subsequently delivered to the Park. Getting all these planted in one winter, is proving a major undertaking, but by including a few extra work days and by working all day instead of just the afternoon, we have broken the back of the planting, with close to a 1000 trees and shrubs now planted. Thank you to all who helped.

Recent tree plantings were well advertised in the local paper and several new faces turned up to these plantings and we hope to welcome many of them as new members.

Weeding as I said is less popular, but we have made real progress with one large patch of purple-top verbena and have recently planted 380 trees and shrubs over the area previously covered with verbena.

Several of our members once again assisted at the Yinnar South fair and following the fair, we successfully applied to the fair committee for a grant for the purchase of traps for the ranger to attempt to reduce the fox population. We were granted \$400 dollars and Rob has been able to purchase the traps he requires.

We have also now spent most of the money we obtained as a grant for construction of an information shelter in Billies Creek and Rob now has the materials for the shelter stored, for use once access to the area becomes a reality.

Apart from our own activities, there has been some encouraging interest shown in the Park from other quarters. A teacher from Yinnar Primary School attempted to get a grant for a plan to involve children from the school in a series of activities in the park, including seed-collection, growing and finally planting of trees. He was unsuccessful with the grant application, but apparently still intends to continue on a reduced scale.

In addition, a group of three environmental students from Monash University, who are undertaking a study into weed control in South Gippsland, have set up some vegetation monitoring plots in recently sprayed blackberry patches in the Billies Creek area and have asked for our help in the continuous monitoring of these plots over some years. In addition, one of the three students has started a project to investigate a procedure for re-generation of trees in Billies Creek, by direct sowing of seed. She will conduct trials this spring in two areas. She will sow blue gum (*eucalyptus globulus*) and varnished wattle (*acacia verniciflua*) on the steep bare hillside in the heart of the area and for comparison, will sow blue gum and silver wattle (*acacia dealbata*) in the cleared area between the park proper and Junction Road. We have provided seed collected in the park for this venture and will watch the results of both projects with interest.

We have now had a year of working with our new ranger Rob Howell and I should like to conclude by thanking Rob for all his assistance during the year. He has shown great enthusiasm for the potential of the Park from the start and has worked closely and co-operatively with the Friends in every regard. We are fortunate to have Rob as ranger and look forward to working with him a great deal in the years ahead.

Ken Harris, President

3rd August 1990