



FRIENDS OF MORWELL NATIONAL PARK INC.

P.O. BOX 19
CHURCHILL 3842

Ranger: 924547
Secretary: 696496

Hello,

Many thanks to members who turned up for the Annual General Meeting, held on 4th August. The following were elected to the Committee:

President	Ken Harris
Vice President	Yvonne Aplin
Secretary	Johanna Azziz
Treasurer	Judy Lambert
Newsletter	Wendy Nickson
Member	John Pulis

Thanks to Ken, Yvonne and Judy for agreeing to continue in their past roles. Very special thanks must go from us all to Steve Skinners for the sterling job he has done for the past three years as Secretary, and who is now taking a well deserved rest off the Committee. In fact, he was so good that it has taken two people to replace him, Johanna who is going to take care of the general Secretary duties, and yours truly who is going to lighten Johanna's load a little by compiling the Newsletter. Steve (with a little help from Shelley) is still taking on the photocopying and distribution of the newsletter - you can't keep a good man down. We also thank Wendy Steenbergen who has been a past member of Committee but who is withdrawing this year because of other commitments, and welcome John (and me) as new Committee members.

The last of the tree-planting efforts took place on Sunday 18 August and a good crowd, including some very welcome new faces, turned up on another of our rare warm days. We certainly know how to order the weather at FMNP. The planting was a higher section of the Park, east of Billy's Creek which necessitated access along a very muddy Lindners Track and Moran's Road. I hear a certain member was a little overambitious on how far she could drive up the road and got bogged, necessitating a rescue effort from Brian Aplin in his 4WD!

A very intriguing sight for the intrepid planters was a wedge-tailed eagle soaring on the thermals in the Billy's Creek Valley BELOW them. How does that song go - "I can fly higher than an eagle"! Some 234 seedlings were planted (Blue Gum, Grey Gum, Messmate and Prickly Moses), bringing the 1991 tree planting by Members to a close. Most of the seedlings planted later this year have strong tree guards, so we are anticipating a fairly good success rate. We hope that the new people who have come to these tree plantings will keep up their association with the FMNP Group.

The "Tree Planters Inc." group decided to reward themselves with a casserole dinner which was held at Johanna's. The table was groaning so loudly under its load of food we felt it incumbent upon us to eat all before us, and this we did! Many thanks to Johanna and Hassan for their wonderful hospitality - a most enjoyable evening.

The next function is the first of two Koala Surveys on Sunday 15th September - meet 1.30 at the Fosters Gully car park and BBQ area. Many eyes make light work, so please come along with a friend or family member or two the is a good "whole family" activity and easier on the back (though not on the neck) than tree planting! Children seem to be particularly good at spotting koalas and if you can organize a SMALL group with adult supervision, please invite them.

Another date to mark on your calendar is Sunday 20th October. We have tentatively arranged to visit the Friends of Merri Creek group (Coburg/Fawkner area), to join in with their planned activity for the day and have a look around the area. Hospitality at these visits is usually excellent and the interchange of ideas invaluable. Transport will be by car pool - 8.00 am at the Morwell Railway Station carpark. Further details and confirmation of venue will be in the next newsletter.

Attached is a copy of the President's Report for your information. 'Bye for September.

Wendy



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Friends of Morwell National Park

President's Report for 1990-91

The year just completed has been another very successful one for the Friends and thank goodness without the controversy and confrontation over the Billys Creek access that we had to contend with recently.

Progress over the management plan has been disappointingly slow, but the year finished on a very high note, with the ranger imparting two very welcome pieces of news.

Firstly he told us that a new officer had been appointed to the task of completing the management plan. Secondly and even more welcome, was the news that the Department have purchased Scully's block in Braniffs Road, solving in a stroke the long-standing problem of access to Billys Creek.

A high percentage of our activities for the year have been involved in tree planting to revegetate the more denuded parts of the Billys Creek extension to the Park.

Last year's plantings were completed successfully, with a total of about 1600 seedlings having been planted.

Inspections during the year have shown rather mixed results. Plantings on the flats adjacent to the creek have thrived and put on rapid growth. Plantings on higher sites have had very mixed success.

On the sites of the old lodge and workshop, a reasonable survival rate has been achieved, but there is evidence of browsing by wallabies. The best results were obtained with Prickly Mo (*acacia verticillata*), which has grown really well and perhaps discouraged browsers with its spiny phyllodes.

The purple-top verbena site, is very disappointing. Growth rates have been very slow, but in addition, the plastic sleeves we used as guards have been a total failure. Firstly they have provided little defence against browsing animals, but in addition, the guards have constricted the development of the plants, leading to the few survivors being distorted in their growth.

The worst news from our 1990 planting came from the highest site (above the lodge site). Here the feral goats cleaned us out completely, within a few weeks of planting. Not a single plant is known to have survived.

These results led to some major rethinking of our strategy for this year's plantings. It was decided that substantial cages were needed as tree guards, if all our efforts were not to be wasted.

We planned on planting a further 1600 seedlings in 1991 and the Department provided funds for the purchase of wire mesh to make metre high tree guards.

Making 1600 tree guards is no small task, and some extra work days were set up and gallant friends set to the task. It looked a major labour to complete that all in time, but the ranger

managed to gain the help of the Department of Corrective Services, who employed offenders on community work orders to make the cages for us. After a rather slow beginning, they got well enough organised to complete the task in time and our thanks go out to them.

Another problem was a supply of stakes to support the cages, 3200 needed in total. This seemed another major problem, but the ranger came up with the solution again, locating a local timber company who provided free, the pine spacers they had used to separate the drying timber. A final problem was cutting these into stakes and this was achieved by some hard-working friends, much aided by the purchase of a bench saw, using funds donated by the Yinnar South Fair, to whom once again we offer our sincere thanks.

Our tree plantings for 1991 started on April 21st, when a small gallant band braved appalling weather to plant over 300 trees on the flats beside Billys Creek. This planting inaugurated the attempt to revegetate the flats which border the creek between Junction Road and the bush areas of the park. We are starting from the bush end, and if current planting rates continue the same, it will be many years before we reach Junction Road.

In May, June and July, the weather was much kinder to us and we had an excellent turn out of both Friends and others attracted by publicity in the Local Press.

All planned plantings were completed successfully, with just one remaining planting to follow the AGM. The final planting will be back on the hillside to the area devastated by the goats.

The herd of goats has been substantially reduced during the year, but we are chiefly pinning our hopes on the strength and size of our tree guards.

The other activity during the year that relates to the tree planting is seed-collecting. This was carried out around January and this year some emphasis was placed on species not previously collected. In addition to the various eucalypts and acacias, we collected seed from

Cyperus lucidus	Leafy flat-sedge
Dianella tasmanica	Tasman flax-lily
Hedycarya angustifolia	Austral mulberry
Goodia lotifolia	Golden-tip
Indigofera australis	Austral indigo
Veronica derwentiana	Derwent speedwell
Coprosma quadrifida	Prickly currant-bush
Bursaria spinosa	Sweet bursaria
Parsonsia brownii	Twining silk-pod

Some of these will need trials to develop germination techniques before seedlings can be grown for planting in the park.

This year's plantings included gynatrix pulchella (Hemp bush) for the first time, following a successful trial which showed the need for the same heat treatment needed by the wattle seeds. We have already seen excellent growth on some hemp bush seedlings, although some planted close to the creek have been washed away in the somewhat extreme floods of this very wet winter.

Other activities during the year have included our annual koala and orchid surveys. Following last years success, parties of school children were invited to help with the koala surveys and resulted in many more eager eyes searching for koalas.

The orchid survey was disappointing. A dry previous year has seen a loss of plants from all plots and the season was a very poor one for seed setting. I only located two seed pods, although one of these was on one of our plots.

In October, we once again made a visit to another Friends Group, this time to the Friends of Churchill and Lysterfield Lakes. We spent the morning in Churchill National Park where our ranger Rob Howell who used to work there conducted us on an enjoyable walk round the park.

We then drove to Lysterfield Lakes, where we joined their Friends for lunch and then assisted them in an afternoon's tree planting. With the plantings completed, we then went walking again and eventually completed a circumnavigation of the lake. An evening barbecue then led into the highlight of the day a spotlight walk. We were delighted to find that in among low eucalypts around the car parks, we saw not only ring-tail possums, but also a pair of tawny frogmouths and best of all several excellent views of sugar gliders which seem to be quite numerous in the area and much easier to see than among our tall grey gums. Our thanks to our hosts for an excellent day.

During the year, I conducted two visiting groups around our park. The Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club chose a very wet day for their visit and I led them round the stringybark ridge walk. I made the theme of the walk the variety of eucalypt species in the park and we made a detour from the far end of the walk to see the silvertop (*eucalyptus sieberi*). The weather discouraged anyone from visiting Billys Creek in the afternoon.

The second party were the South Gippsland Conservation Society and they were awarded rather better weather. We spent the morning walking stringybark ridge where many orchids were in flower. To mine and our visitors delight, I spotted a new orchid species during the walk. The elbow orchid (*arthrochilus huntianus*) is a tiny saprophytic orchid and has never before been recorded in the park. The first one I found was given a great deal of attention and we carefully recorded its exact position. Imagine our surprise when we subsequently found more and more and more of them. Around the outer half of the walk, we must have located over 50 plants!

In the afternoon I took the group to Billys Creek and showed them some of our 1990 tree plantings and discussed our plans for 1991. I received offers of help in future tree-plantings, but so far nothing has eventuated.

On the whole it has been a full year and a core of members have put in a lot of hard work for the benefit of the park and all who visit it. I thank everyone for their help and support.

Finally I should like to thank Rob Howell our ranger, for his excellent work in the park and his help and enthusiasm for all the Friends' activities. We are very fortunate in having Rob as our ranger and look forward to working with him for many years to come.

Ken Harris, President