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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – May 2000

A0016319X

May Activity 2000 Sunday 21st May, 10.00am

This month we will be working along Billy's Creek. Please bring along any tools that you may think will be of help (shovels, secateurs etc), your gumboots in case it is wet, jacket and your lunch.

We will be meeting at Junction Road at 10.00am. Please call Ed on 5664 8211 if you would like further information.

STICK INSECT

Rob de Souza-Daw

Australia has approximately 150 known species of Stick and Leaf-insects. They are all leaf-eating insects with mouthparts designed for chewing. All species have a similar life cycle. When the eggs hatch the young are miniature versions of adults and they undergo several moults before reaching adulthood. In many species there is significant sexual dimorphism between adult males and females. Stick-insects are probably more common locally than what sightings of specimens may suggest. This is because of their cryptic nature and their tendency to live amongst the upper foliage of trees.

In late 1998 Terry Walker (formerly of Envirogen, Traralgon) gave me prints of a Stick-insect he found in Morwell National Park in 1991. A label stated the Stick-insect was found in a wet gully area and I understand, in the Fosters Gully section.

Stephen Fellenberg (an entomologist with Insektus, Sydney) identified the species from the photograph as *Ctenomorpha chronus* in Phasmatidae. The species distribution is the coastal region of eastern Australia including Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.

In October 1997 we kept an adult female *Ctenomorpha chronus* in captivity for three weeks before she lost a leg and died. The specimen measured 175mm's long and possessed small fore-wings and larger hind-wings which were normally kept closely folded along its thorax and abdomen. When climbing occasionally the female opened her wings as a stabiliser and one could observe the insect's multi-coloured and regular venation of its wings.

We also had eggs of this species of Stick Insect. The eggs were hard-shelled and whitish with dark ornamental markings. They were laid around February 1997 and one hatched in October 1998. The young nymph was green and fragile and could not be found a few days later. Presumably the nymph had died.



I wish I had a dollar for every time that I have begun a sentence with the words: "I wish I had a dollar for every time..."

J.D. BOATWOOD

Upcoming Regional Training Session

Ferns and Mosses

Date: Sunday 28th May
Time: 10.00am - 12.30pm onwards
Cost: Nil
Venue: Moonlight Creek Picnic Area
Mt Worth State Park, Hallston
VicRoads reference 96 H6
BYO: Morning tea and lunch

Content:

Ferns and mosses are an integral part of the forests eco-system. With a walk through the forest, this session will provide participants with an insight into the ecology of the species, as well as an overview of the characteristics of a wet forest, including Mt Worth State Park. Areas covered include: characteristics of wet forests, ferns and mosses (features, ecological requirements and identification).

For more information contact:
Kate Walsh
Greening Australia
5662 5201
or feel free to turn up on the day

Six legged trivia questions

1. What is the most ferocious land beetle of the insect world?
2. What bug is named after its vicious killing reputation?
3. Before mankind, what animal can farm livestock and grow and mature crops?
4. what is a Blue-bottle ant? An ant or a wasp?
5. What is the difference between a dragonfly and a damselfly?
6. What insect uses sandpit traps to capture its prey?

Thanks Danny for these tricky little questions.

Thank you to the contributors to this newsletter.
Please send any information, articles etc. to
PO Box 19, Churchill, 3842.

Helen Steenbergen

Track Maintenance Activity - April

Danny Barclay

It was a pleasant start to the Track maintenance activity on a peaceful Sunday morning. Right before schedule I had arrived early at Braniff's Road looking forward to the day and see everyone again. Doing the right thing to be there on time for once, I was the only soul there. Never worried, I was sure the regular friends were not far behind. Having a small moment to myself, I stepped out from the car to get myself ready by collecting my backpack and putting my gumboots on while I waited for the others to arrive.

Hearing the calls of many native birds, I took out my binoculars and looked around for the park locals that may be in the area. Always known to appear at the right moment, the parks famous wedge-tailed Eagles were happy to fly in the open around the hill of pine trees. Graciously roaming the skies, the two eagles were accompanied by a third eagle which may have been a younger bird by the paler feathers. I always wondered what are the ages of the adult birds? Darker the plumage and larger the size, gives an indication of the birds prime. Also I would like to know how to identify the female from the male when they are flying. I know that the female is larger than the male.

When it struck ten o'clock the friends began to arrive a few minutes after each other. First Wendy, followed by ken, then Rob and lastly the newcomer, John. As the group was complete, everyone began to chat about what has been happening to the park, themselves and what was on the agenda of the activity, all before making a move pass the gate and toward the yonder.

Answers

1. A tiger beetle - it eats anything from other insects to tadpoles when stranded, it can even run down flying prey.
2. An Assassin bug - it ambushes and stabs its prey with its sucking beak and injects a poisonous saliva so it can slurp up the insides of its victim.
3. Some species of ants - some ants farm caterpillars of certain butterflies to their nest so they can feed on the sweet larvae fluid. The caterpillars are released when they mature. Ants store seeds to feed on.
4. A wasp
5. A dragonfly lays its wings out like a moth and damselfly folds its wings together like a butterfly.
6. An Antlion - the larvae nymph of an insect similar to a lacewing. Antlions create special pit traps in dry sand where ants and other insects can't get out of once fallen in.