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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – August 2000

Website: <http://morwellnp.pangaean.net>

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AUGUST ACTIVITY

This will be our third month of tree planting. We are progressing nicely along the banks of Billy's Creek replanting various varieties of trees where the willows were removed. Remember to bring warm clothing in case we get the much needed rain and to pack a picnic lunch for that much needed break.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at the Junction Road carpark at 10am on the 20th August.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On Sunday 6th August the AGM was held at Ken Harris' house. The following people were elected, or re-elected, as the case may be:

President:	Ed Steenbergen
Vice President:	Ken Harris
Secretary:	Anne Bailey
Treasurer:	Wendy Steenbergen
Publicity Officer:	Danny Barclay
Newsletter:	Cathy Beamish (& Family)

A big thankyou to Ken Harris for allowing us to meet at his house and to all of those that took the time to come to the meeting.

The Morwell National Park website has been added to the top of the newsletter. I have been informed that it is worth taking the time to have a look. Please send in a note giving us your opinion of the site.

THE SECOND TREE PLANTING - By Danny Barclay

The second tree planting day was another success for the team. The weather was a mixture of sunshine, wind and light rain, which made everything more enjoyable. In the morning Dorothy and I headed out early to the site, anxious to get started, while Rob and John stayed behind to wait for the others to arrive.

Greeting us at the base of the tree planting slope was a big black steer. It had a great set of horns that reminded of one of those Spanish fighting bulls. Lucky for us it was on the other side of the fence and wandered off in due course, leaving us to breathe a little easier.

Going down to the bottom of the creek where we last planted there was a good flow of water. Patiently waiting for ten minutes, the complete team turned up with a vengeance. Rob rode his toy four-wheel motorbike with trailer; Michael drove the ranger-mobile while the others walked. Getting under way we worked solidly all morning to the lunch break. Everyone did their regular jobs: I dug the holes and planted some trees, Rob placed the tree guards, stakes and trees out, Dorothy planted trees and supervised when there was not a tree available. Wendy, Ken and John planted trees, Michael dug holes, planted trees and moved the four-wheel drive when necessary. Cathy planted trees, collected the empty pots and controlled the children. Nicole, her friend Cassie, and Zack did some work but were very much into climbing the woodpiles. They must have been lemurs in their past lives.

As we completed half of the day's tree planting we stopped for lunch. After lunch sadly Michael, Cathy, Nicole, Cassie and Zack had to leave as Michael had to work. They missed out on the best fun when the rest of us returned to planting trees. During the afternoon we had a few sagas. First, while planting further up the creek, John had found a freshwater crayfish that the kids would have liked to see. John showed it to Ken to record it into the famous binder and returned it to the creek. Second, a gust of wind blew our tree guards down to the bottom of the slope, which meant we had to carry them back up again.

As we were getting ready to leave for the day, Ken kindly bogged the four-wheel drive in a wet spot. Rob drove off happily thinking that we were following. He returned a few minutes later to find that all four wheels of the Toyota were bogged – he was not impressed. To free the vehicle the trailer had to be disconnected, mud shovelled away, and tyres lowered. We had to push from the front while Rob reversed it out of the mud.

Another problem arose when John lost the pin to the trailer. We all decided to leave before something else could go wrong. Back at the cars Dorothy's barley sugar settled our nerves and put a smile back on our faces.

MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

For those who haven't renewed their memberships, memberships for 2000/2001 are now due. Please forward single membership of \$10.00, or Family membership of \$15.00 to The Treasurer, Friends of Morwell National Park, PO Box 19, Churchill 3842. Cheques are to be made payable to 'Friends of Morwell National Park'.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles to be published in the newsletter, can forward them to Cathy Beamish, PO Box 112 Boolarra 3870.

RANGER'S REPORT – MORWELL NATIONAL PARK – 1999/2000

The 1999 tree-planting season was completed successfully with a very good survival rate due, in part, to the suitability of the green plastic tree guards to local conditions. Many extra trees were planted in some very difficult sites, in lousy weather conditions, by students from Catholic Regional College in Traralgon.

The two former SEC blocks at the end of Tebb Terrace were handed over to Parks Victoria in November 1999 for inclusion in the Park. CRC students will be planting trees there in mid August this year.

Large areas of Blackberries on the steep slopes around Billy's Creek were sprayed by contractors using funds from NRE's Good Neighbour Program, with very good results. The time saved by this operation allowed the NRE spray crew to treat Tutsan and Nightshade as well as the usual Ragwort, Thistles, Teasel and Blackberries along the creek flats.

I spent three days working on the Alpine Vegetation Survey in the Caledonia fire area and four days on Snake Island (near Wilson's Prom) doing Koala population control work. Both very interesting and worthwhile jobs.

The Bat trapping exercise with Lindy Lumsden and Co. added another two new species to the Park fauna list and was attended by a large group of visitors.

The two crown allotments at the end of Reidys Road were earmarked for addition to the Park as part of the Regional forest Agreement process in April but the agreement has not been finalised and it is uncertain whether CA 1A (the bald hill) will be included or sold off.

New "tourist style" signs have been purchased to replace old or missing ones on local approach roads around the Park. These should be installed within the next month.

The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and their contractor did a great job of clearing the willows from a 1km length of Billy's Creek but, unfortunately, were unable to burn the heaps due to the wet conditions. They hope to burn them closer to next summer when they have dried out more. In the meantime we will continue to revegetate the cleared areas and creek banks a suitable distance away from the heaps.

I have organised the CRC students to clean up the cleared sites and remove as much as possible of the remaining willow sticks, roots and limbs from the ground.

Volunteers from the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers (ATCV) removed Pittosporums from the Fosters Gully area but were only able to work on that for one day due bad weather. They spent another day assembling tree guards to be used by the CRC students when planting trees on the ex-SEC land.

A new automatic timer and watering system have been installed in the hardening-off area so that it can be watered independently from the nursery, where the watering requirements are far less.

Fox baiting has been done in the Morans road area in conjunction with the two adjoining farmers. Very good results are indicated by the number of baits taken.

Rainfall figures from the Park show continuing drier than average conditions over the last 4 1/2 years, with 1997 being the lowest ever recorded at 585mm and 1999 not far behind at 662mm.

Rob Howell
Ranger.

Friend's of Morwell National Park Annual General Meeting 4th August 2000

President's Report;

Another eventful year has past having made a great contribution to Morwell National Park and issues in and around the area, having made a successful entry in to the year 2000.

I'd like to open by expressing as big thank you to the committee of the last year, for their contributions and enthusiasm in regard to the management of MNP.

Revegetation continues to be a major emphasis of FMNP with just a few pockets of flats to be filled and variety increased. Having collected what seed we could in the past dry summer, propagation was either great or very poor. So with a reduced number of species, nearly 2000 were potted.

As for planting, it has been a hardy consistent workforce. GEST also contributed to the revegetation process by growing some 2000 plants and planting 500 of them. The new tree guards are an improvement to the methods, and success rates, of planting.

The eradication of weeds within the park continues, with two activities. The careful removal of tutsan berries and plants, and the pulling of rooted willow branches was done by some very focused teams. The removal of the larger willows down stream was efficiently completed by the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, presenting a suitable area for planting.

More track work was done by some very able-bodied members, clearing the Side Creek track and levelling it for bike and trailer access.

Publicity in the newspaper has been consistent, with notices for coming activities and reports on natural features and of past activities. The printing of our pilot brochure was completed with the limited resources we have and a Centenary friends Grant. This will be refined to make a great motivational brochure to expose the Morwell National Park as a significant Gippsland feature.

Our success at gaining grants from Parks Victoria has continued. We are finishing reports, are halfway through the report on vegetation and there is another application to complete. All ideas are welcomed for the current round.

Several letters on behalf of the friends group have been written. These include: the progress of the implementation of the Management Plan to the Minister; Freeway signage to Latrobe City and VicRoads; and Environment Policy response to Latrobe City. All are being dealt with now.

I'd like to conclude by thanking our dedicated ranger, Rob Howell, without his skills and knowledge we'd be floundering and we'd be a lot poorer. Thanks Rob.

Ed Steenbergen
4/8/2000