

PO Box
19
Churchill
3842



President:
5122 3137

Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter November 2001

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

A0016319X

November Activity

Our next scheduled activity will be on Sunday, November 18. This month we will be undertaking a new activity in the manufacture of clayballs, which we will use next year in our attempts to disperse seed on those steep hillsides south and east of Billys Creek. Ranger Rob Howell has managed to source some supplies of the raw materials needed to proceed, so it will be interesting to see how we go. We will meet at 10.00am at the propagation shed, up from the Kerry Road carpark.

Annual Koala Count – 21/10/01

Once again we had a very good turn-out on a beautiful spring afternoon. We had 42 people in attendance, the majority belonging to the Central Gippsland Older Adults Recreational Network, back again this year after their successes in last year's count.

We were soon organised into our preferred walking groups, with Rob, Reg, Dennis and Jane leading the long walk from Jumbuk Rd, Ken and Danny taking the largest group around Stringybark Ridge, and Joan, Ray, Cathy and I coping with the leisurely stroll around Foster's Gully. Ken made a point of warning his group that they would have to spot all the koalas, as Ken would be keeping his eyes on the ground, looking for orchids! Meanwhile, Wendy and Nicole stayed behind to prepare the billy tea and damper for the return of the hungry hordes.

My group were off to a flying start, with 2 koalas spotted in a large Mountain Grey Gum before we'd reached the turn into Foster's Gully. Despite our notes and the experience of Joan, I'm still not convinced you can accurately sex a bundle of fur way up a gum tree, even with binoculars. Two more koalas were logged before we had reached Lyndon's Clearing, as well as a nice shiny 4ft long Tiger Snake that was apparently sunning itself trackside while half our group obviously wandered past, before deciding it was getting too crowded and departing for a quieter location.

Once in Lyndon's Clearing, we fruitlessly scanned the surrounding treescape for telltale dark, furry objects. But then one of the CGOARN ladies spied some movement through the foliage way back up in the gully. Even with directions, it took

some time to home in on the location, but sure enough, we had our fifth koala. If it hadn't moved at that time, we would not have seen it!

Half of our group decided not to tackle the hilly second half of our track and returned to the carpark along the flats. In any event, we only found one more koala in the Messmates at the top of the zigzags where the steps used to be. We did, however, find a few orchids in flower. Bird Orchids (*Chiloglottis valida*) were abundant in the gully, with Waxlips (*Glossodia major*), Pink Fingers (*Caladenia carnea*) and Sun Orchids (*Thelymitra* sp.) in bloom on the drier hillsides. The Butterfly Orchids (*Sarcochilus australis*) in the gully all had buds forming, ready for flowering in December, and there were remnants of Helmet Orchids (*Corybas* sp.), Greenhoods (*Pterostylis* sp.) and Autumn Bird Orchids (*Chiloglottis reflexa*) in various places. The remainder of our walk was uneventful and we were soon back at the carpark, where an echidna was happily rustling away in the undergrowth behind the information leaflet box.

We were the first group to return, so we made the most of the billy tea and damper while waiting for the other groups to wander in, in one's and two's. Ken was the last to arrive, having been distracted by the discovery of a leek orchid near the main junction on Stringybark Ridge. When Ken returned from a quick trip home to fetch his orchid ID key, 5 of us piled into Rob's new 4WD and drove back to the site. Ken decided the discovery was the Short-lip Leek Orchid (*Prasophyllum brevilabre*), recorded for only the second time in the park. Nearby, we also noted Pink Fingers (*Caladenia carnea*), Musky Caladenia (*Caladenia gracilis*) and Bronze Caladenia (*Caladenia iridescens*), as well as Chocolate Lilies (*Arthropodium strictum*), Milkmaids (*Burchardia umbellata*) and some beautiful tall Grass Tree spikes (*Xanthorrhoea minor*). Interestingly, we also found a large egg nestled in amongst a pile of fallen branches beside the track. Our best guess was that it was a Wood Duck egg dislodged from a tree hollow, perhaps by a Lace Monitor.

Back at the carpark, we again indulged in the tea and damper as people began to think about heading home. The final tally for the day was 10 koalas (6 in Foster's Gully and 2 each on Stringybark Ridge and the Jumbuk firebreak), 1 echidna, 1 tiger snake and 12 orchid varieties. Thank you to all those who attended, your help is greatly appreciated.

Article's Please!

I am running very short of items to print in this newsletter, so if anybody has items of interest or would like to try their hand at some creative writing, please don't be shy! Please contact me on telephone 5169 6543, post them to PO Box 112, Boolarra, 3870 or join the electronic age and e-mail me at beamish@vic.australis.com.au.