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# Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

## *Newsletter February 2002*

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. Also, welcome back to past member Mary Austin, who we hadn't heard from for a while and had subsequently gotten lost in the paperwork!

### January Activities

A big thank you to all those who gave generously of their time over the busy post-Christmas period. A tremendous amount of work was achieved in spite of some tough weather conditions and poor seed yield from a lot of species. Here is a short, biased and one-eyed account of proceedings:

On Sunday, January 6, ten of us gathered at the potting shed for a spot of potting. A good strike of seed had been achieved, particularly one tray of Eucalypts that were lush and healthy and looked better than my lawn. While the majority got stuck into potting up, Ken, Jane and myself were assigned the task of dashing up the Lodge Track to raid the Varnish Wattles for their seed. It was tough, sweaty work, but at least I got to drive most of the way: Ken and Jane walked most of the way up in their search. Seed was mostly scarce, but we found enough on the odd plant to make it worthwhile. We also gathered a bit of Prickly Moses seed. Typically, most of this was found on a single shrub that we planted a year or three ago, not far from the Junction Road gate. In our absence, the crew had potted up 29 trays (1160 plants), then most had departed, apparently in search of cold liquid refreshment.

On Saturday, January 12, I had to work, so I wasn't there to witness another excellent turnout of eleven finely tuned potting-upperers. Cathy reliably informs me that 12 more trays (480 plants) were filled in quick time before Rob decreed we had enough for this year and let everybody go home. Rob, Ken and Danny stayed on to plant out some *Solenogyne gunnii*, an obscure native daisy with no common name, at the top of the Lodge Track, and to place new marker pegs on the Orchid plots in Foster's Gully.

Finally, on Sunday, January 20, only Ken, Rob and us lot turned up on a bit of a scorcher to pick some more seed and wander down Billys Creek pulling willows. We started off at the base of Blue Gum Hill picking some Prickly Currant-bush (and the damn stuff is prickly, the fruit squishy, the flies sticky and the local koala directly overhead had a good aim! Good thing Ken knew how to go about it or we'd still be there trying to get a reasonable amount), then drove to the Lodge site for some much more comfortable Pomaderris seed. By then, we were all hot enough to jump in the creek without any hesitation and spent the rest of the afternoon wrestling with weeds. It was good to see how few willows had managed to re-grow, but we'll still need to be vigilant for a while yet (and there is plenty more creek to check over next month).

### February Activity

Our next activity is scheduled for Sunday, February 17, and will probably consist of more weed and willow removal. We will meet at the Braniff's Road gate at 10.00am. Be prepared for anything. Possibilities include sunstroke, snakebite, water fights, hill and/or tree climbing, encounters with various beasts and the sheer joy of pulling out another willow. Sounds like fun, eh?

# **BIRD RESIDENCE.**

Danny Barclay.

During the warm spring months my home has become the residence to a family of kookaburras. It all started with two birds the alpha male and female. Fully establishing their territory they like to perch on the weeping elm in the middle of the garden centred on the front lawn. As a landmark they use this as a lookout and feeding perch. The kookaburras will sit there nearly all day watching their surroundings to find worms moving on the lawn. Observing the bird's behaviour I realise they have extremely sharp eyesight. The front lawn is quite large and seeing a worm in the grass at a great distance from where they are perching is an amazing feat.

Later on during their stay a third kookaburra came to the scene. I had found out the third bird might be the first offspring and becomes a subordinate to help the adults to watch their territory and feed the second brood. Cutting along the boundary of our property there's a creek with a line of trees. The kookaburras always fly towards a certain group of trees, in which they may have a nest.

I'm getting used to seeing kookaburras sitting on the elm tree almost everyday. Late on some afternoons there are five birds present. I guess the extra two are the second brood. With a family of five it was very difficult to discover who was who, because they all looked the same. The older birds had darker wings and back and a bit of blue while the younger ones were mottled.

The kookaburra's common behaviour is the standard posture and the flick of the tail upwards when it perches to a branch. Sometimes the tail is flicked downwards when it is very windy this is to help the bird's balance. Sitting on a branch the kookaburras scan the lawn and quickly pounce to the ground and collect a worm. If the worm is too big the kookaburra beats it on the ground or branch to swallow it more easily.

When kookaburras fly they normally fly direct for a fair distance and perch. I have seen the kookaburras fly around in open sky following each other with slow deep wing beats. I assume this would be a courtship display. The kookaburras' laughing calls are distinct, strong and loud. Sometimes they make half a laugh; this happens when they perch next to each other with a surprise and they forget to recognise each other. They make complete laughing calls when they squabble with other birds intruding in their territory. The other week the five kookaburras went to town when another kookaburra family overlapped their territory. They were not happy, they squabbled non-stop.

Now that the days are getting warmer and warmer the kookaburras have decided to go their separate ways although they visit now and then. Also up the road of Peel Drive and Brewster's Road, two Sacred Kingfishers have returned from their winter grounds, wherever that is. When I am driving I always see them perching on the power lines. They are very tiny and fast fliers, like little darts.

The following is a typed copy of a letter received late last year. It lists some pertinent points, most of which have been addressed. Thanks to Dennis and Jane for organising a suitable reply.

23 Wirra Mirra Drive  
Wurruk Gardens  
Sale, 3850

Thursday Nov 21 '01

Dear "Friends",

This week our U3A group of Sale "short walks" section had a very enjoyable day walking the Morwell National Park. The older park in the morning and after lunch we moved to Braniffs Rd to walk the Billys Creek tracks. Having already returned all our maps to the boxes after the morning walk we were expecting to pick up maps again at our entry point – 1<sup>st</sup> complaint- no boxes with maps. Fortunately we had one map (found in a pocket) which was then used to guide us along the pipe track, then the weir track to the weir, some of us using the Zig Zag track to Billys Creek track, others returning on the pipeline track- all lovely walking BUT although the signs were plentiful and in good order, the names were not printed on the map making it difficult to map read with certainty- the map was no better than a mudmap- also an explanation as to why Potato flat was so called- we used our imagination but historical notes would be appreciated in a number of instances. We enjoyed our day very much and hope these remarks will be useful to your group to help improve a "gem" among the built up areas nearby.

Yours Truly,

Marion Coleman.

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December 17, 2001

Dear Marion

We appreciate your comments of your letter dated November 21, 2001 and are glad that your U3A group had an enjoyable visit to our Park.

The Billys Creek area of the Park is still in its infancy and is under development. The signs listing the tracks (as noted in your letter) have only been recently installed. It is planned to install the map boxes in the near future to house the recently printed Park Notes specific for the Billys Creek area. Other improvements that are occurring in the Billys Creek section is the ongoing installation of seating and picnic tables and ultimately installation of a new carpark and picnic facilities at the Braniffs Road entrance.

I am sorry that these facilities were not all in place for your visit, but we have been concentrating on Willow removal along the Creek and revegetation of the area

And as a consequence over 25,000 trees have been planted on the creek flats since the Billys Creek section was added to the Park.

Yours Sincerely,

Jane Sultana  
Secretary

## Correspondence

We have received the following:

- Canopy (Parks Victoria newsletter) Issue 16, December 2001.
- Under Control- Pest Plant and Animal Management News, (DNRE- Agriculture Victoria) Issue 18, December 2001
- EcoRecycle Victoria Annual Report
- Grassland Conservation information leaflets- DNRE

If you would like to browse, let me know.

### Park Words

By Danny Barclay

Y A B B I E S O O R A G N A K  
R W W O L L I W B H N S P K W  
T O Y H T O R O D I L M O C E  
R R O S R C R K T L X A G A I  
A K T D I I E N A M L U G T R  
C R V R A N A B O A A L M H A  
K A B I L L Y S C R E E K Y Y  
S P R B P A B O D S C A T N A  
E R S E L A U S F N D H W N D  
K S E C O N L G W D E C I A N  
A R E T T E L S W E N I G D U  
T E D E S E K A N S N M R N S  
S G S U R O N C Z G I D S F Q  
G P E B E T F A A W S R Y T E  
N X Z Y I E Y K J Z F K D N U

AGM	ORCHIDS
BILLYS CREEK	PARK
BIRDS	RAY
CATHY	REG
CLAYBALL	ROB
DANNY	SEEDS
DENNIS	SNAKES
DOROTHY	STAKES
EAGLES	SUNDAY
ED	TRACKS
FOSTERS	TREE PLANTING
FRIENDS	TREES
GUARDS	TRIAL PLOTS
HILMAR	WEIR
JANE	WENDY
KANGAROOS	WILLOW
KEN	WORK
KOALA COUNT	YABBIES
MICHAEL	ZACK
NEWSLETTER	NICOLE