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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter April 2002

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

Park News

Ken Harris reports:

- The website server has crashed, so that anybody looking for the Koala photo's as described last month will have difficulty until he can reload the relevant databases.
- This year has been the worst on record for the pollination of the Butterfly Orchids in Foster's Gully. Although off to a flying start with two seedpods on the first plant, only one other seedpod was found on 220 plants. Normally, Ken would find 10 to 15 plants with seedpods.
- There has been no movement yet with regards to the mud nests found attached to a stake last month. Some troubles were encountered in removing the nests from the stake so they would fit into a container. Ken believes they belong to a Mud Dauber Wasp characterised by their construction of ribbed nesting chambers.

Other news:

- Various complaints were voiced about the lack of direct notice for the Annual Friends Conference, making it difficult for people to arrange attendance at short notice. We will enquire why we no longer receive notification, having to rely on somebody seeing the announcement on the Parks Victoria website.
- The Latrobe Economic Development Group has been so successful in promoting the Morwell National Park by distribution of our brochures and sale of the booklet that they have asked for more. Also, the Latrobe Tourist Information Centre is keen to establish a display that would include information and pictures of Morwell National Park and our group. Any volunteers to provide input?

Correspondence

Our post box has been graced with the following:

- An invitation from Latrobe City Council CEO to participate in a survey providing information to the Marketing Advisory Panel of the LV Ministerial Taskforce (not accepted- expiry 22/2/02).
- An invitation to attend a 'Fundraising and Money Workshop' from Latrobe City Council (not accepted- held on 20/3/02).
- An invitation from Parks Victoria to participate in the 'Victoria's Parks Festival' at Albert Park in May (not accepted- RSVP 20/2/02).
- Another Parks Victoria Annual Report 2000-2001.
- West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority Annual Report 2000-2001.
- Friends of Coolart Newsletter 1/02.

If you would like to peruse any of the above, let me know.

April Activity

Our next activity is scheduled for Sunday, April 21 at 10.00am. We will meet at Junction Road, where, weather permitting, we will jump into the 4WD's for the cruise up Blue Gum Hill for some clayball casting. All the normal attire and accessories will be required.

Moist Meanderings

A change in our plans was forced upon us by some ordinary weather on Sunday, March 17. A grey, drizzly morning resulted in heavy dew on the ground, which made it unlikely that we could make the climb up Blue Gum Hill without some dangerous slipping and sliding. Rob made the executive decision and decided on a walk through the plantations along Billy Creek, with the purpose of extracting anything nasty, as the alternative. Despite the gloomy outlook and some apologies due to ill health, the turnout was still respectable with nine of us fronting up.

A wet suit would have been a handy accessory, as we were soon wet to the waist (at least those of us who left the track were! Nothing like a sly dig to start off an article). To be expected I suppose when wading through waist high Kikuyu after a heavy dew. The first culprit was soon discovered by Ken; a dirty great willow standing a couple of metres high with multiple stems. Even though we didn't bring the saw since we didn't think we would find anything large enough for it, we still managed to hack our way through a couple of inches of willow trunk using the loppers and sheer guts and determination. Amazing what you can achieve with a sufficient amount of loathing. 'Twas relatively quiet after that, with nothing but a few little *Prunus* near to the track on which to vent our frustrations. A quick nibble on the beautifully ripe and succulent little berries of the Prickly Current Bush that has so conveniently self-seeded near to the second seat, sustained us to continue up the hillside.

At this point we left the track, startling Kangaroo mum and joey. Some yelling and screaming disturbed the peace, as the leader's let the loiterers with the loppers know that lopping was looming. The offending flora was identified, after much discussion, as the suckers of a large pear tree that had been removed from the vicinity some years before. Around the same area were large, pink lilies (Belladonna's?) that Heather took a shine to and several specimens of; a large, old mulberry tree that I sampled and promptly spat out (by George, she was tart); and a concrete trench hidden in the long grass that Rob says is the remains of a dairy. Usually covered by some corrugated iron that had become dislodged, we will need to tidy this up to prevent somebody falling into it. All of these amongst a beautiful, open woodland of Apple Box trees and various other plantings.

The halfway point of our expedition was upon us, as we discovered some self-sown natives growing amongst the plantation timbers. Lunch beckoned as we sidled down the hillside to the main track. But Danny was waiting for us, standing beside a dreaded willow on the creek bank. We soon dispatched the blighter (the willow, not Danny) but as we continued downstream several more willows were spotted. Those willow walkers of weeks ago ought to be sacked and their pay docked, they must all be blind. Of course, I had nothing to do with it! Eventually, we managed to get away without sighting another willow and made it back to the cars before we expired from hunger. Even then we had to sit on Jumping Jack nests because Rob didn't bring the chairs. It's tough being a volunteer.

After lunch, we tossed the coin to decide whether we would be slack and lazy and go home to vegetate and drink beer, or to head for the propagation shed and sort out seeds and seedlings. Amazingly, the seeds won, what a dedicated (read silly) lot we are. We actually were pretty dedicated, too, as we toiled away for another 3 hours sorting out seedlings to be transferred to the hardening-off enclosure and separating this year's crop of seeds from the chaff. Not terribly difficult, but very time consuming. Pleasant it was, as the drizzle had long since cleared and had turned into a delightfully warm, autumn afternoon. Still, that beer would have been good.