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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter October 2002

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

Tidbits

Welcome to new members Mark and Sharon Waller, who we hope will come along and join in some of our activities in the near future.

A correction from the last newsletter, where I reported that the floral index on the website was now complete. Well, I wasn't wrong, but it has been complete for some time! What I should have reported was that the plant identification key was now complete, so if you find a plant in the park that you don't recognise, you can now hop onto the website, enter the characteristics as required and, lo and behold, you will be informed of the plant's ID. May many new discoveries be made!

What a great time we had wandering through the Park last month. A disappointing start with the rubbish in the carpark, but the flock of Red-browed Firetails frolicking in the shrubbery nearby diverted our attention. The floral display up on Silvertop Hill was just magnificent, with the brilliant purple Austral Indigo's (*Indigofera australis*) standing out against the bright yellow of the wattles. See Denis Sultana's report below for the full story.

Correspondence includes:

- a flyer from Parks Victoria advertising the features of their website www.parkweb.vic.gov.au.
- an invitation from Latrobe City to provide material for inclusion in the "Gippsland has it all" visitor guide.
- The Latrobe Community Service Centre newsletter.

October Activity

As is the norm for October, we will once again be holding the annual Koala Count. We are expecting CGOARN to participate, but still need a great turnout from the Friends to lead the various groups, and undertake all those other very important duties, such as hunt for orchids and cook the billy tea and damper. See you at Kerry Road Picnic Ground at 1.30pm on Sunday, October 20 with your binoculars and walking boots.

Exploratory Walk

By Denis Sultana

September's activity was a bit different to the norm; we all arrived at the Kerry Road Picnic area without a pair of gumboots or a trailer load of tree guards in sight. Instead we were armed with hiking boots and backpacks ready for a day of exploration. Rob was already hard at work cleaning up of the picnic area thanks to party-goers that had neglected to clean up after their revelry. Upon his completion it was decided to drive up the Stringybark Ridge track and do a loop walk encompassing Muttonwood creek and Silver-Top Hill.

We all piled into the 4WD's and set off on our adventure. We had only been going a couple of minutes when Rob's Ute pulled up and everybody hopped out. It seemed an odd place to park but we did likewise. This wasn't to be our starting point, instead Rob had spotted some greenhood orchids and investigation commenced. We soon hopped back into the vehicles and set off again and arrived at our starting point.

Off we went on our great adventure. We had been walking for a few minutes when Rob said this would be good habitat for Koalas, he had barely finished his sentence when he exclaimed, "*there's one!*" The Koala must have been well camouflaged as only half the group claimed to have seen it.

The morning's trek was walked at a leisurely pace with many stops to admire the various orchids on display, including Bird, Maroon-Hoods, White Caladenia and various Green-Hoods. Ken was his usual informative self, pointing out flora of interest including the Yertchuk (*Eucalyptus consideriana*) with its prickly, stringy bark and the Silver-Top (*Eucalyptus sieberi*) with distinctive silver coloured branches in its top.

It was during the Muttonwood creek section that our first mystery of the day surfaced. A selection of trees just off the track had a track worn around their base and their bark had been considerably scratched up to about 1 metre. With no tracks or droppings to give the culprits identity away it was concluded it might have been a wombat with mange (Although Wendy's suggestion of a Black Panther did hold more to inspire the imagination).

We were towards the top of Silver-Top hill when we hit a fork in the track, After the incident of the previous month Rob did a quick head count and came up one short, "Danny was missing!" Luckily no search party was needed as he had only wandered a little further up the track and returned when called.

It was decided that lunch be taken on a nice grassy section of track, Ken then realised that he had left his pack containing his lunch and drink back in Rob's Ute and Rob hadn't brought any lunch as he thought we weren't starting this month's activity until 1:30pm. But all was not lost; they survived on fresh and dried fruit and breakfast bars which were surplus to others needs. Although they both declined Michael's offer of peanut butter and honey on a cheese and bacon roll. (Some people just have no taste! ED)

The afternoon's walk went along drama free and we returned back to the vehicles where Ken gleefully ate his lunch and Michael spotted a Koala perched in the tree above the vehicles. This time the Koala was visible to all with a mental note being made of the area for the Koala count next month.

All satisfied with our day's walk we hopped back into the vehicles and headed back towards the Kerry Road picnic area. We had travelled most of the way back when Rob once again pulled up and everybody piled out. This time it was not to admire orchids but to try to unravel the second mystery of the day.

More trees had been found with bark missing, this time no tracks were worn at the base of the trees and the bark was missing between knee and head height. Once again with no animal tracks or droppings to identify the beast it was narrowed down to a deer rubbing the felt off its antlers or wild cats. Then the plot thickened, piles of bark were found lying against an old fallen log suggesting human intervention. The bark was moved to see if anything sinister lay below but nothing was apparent, so new theories were postulated including: someone sleeping out in the park, bark being removed to be used for bark paintings and the refuse hidden behind the log, or children building a cubby hut??? With no other evidence it appears it will remain a mystery with Rob keeping the area under surveillance.

We returned to Kerry Road with no other excitement and concluded that the day's activity was a great success with a good time had by all.

Postscript: It is assumed that Rob finally had his lunch as he was spotted entering the Churchill Fish and Chip shop.