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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter December 2002

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

Our Next Activity

Our Christmas function will again be held in the Kerry Road Picnic Ground during the evening of Sunday, December 15. Hopefully, members of the Mt Worth, Tarra-Bulga and Baw Baw Friends Groups will be in attendance. Our plan is to meet at the propagation shed after lunch, about 1.30pm, and tackle a few odd jobs before the dinner and the guests arrive later in the afternoon.

Around The Traps

Heaps of correspondence this month, as follows:

- An invitation to contribute to the resurrected Churchill and District News. I will organise that they will receive our newsletter in future.
- An invitation to nominate citizens for Latrobe City Community Awards 2003. A quick chat at our last gathering determined that most would rather not be nominated.
- An invitation to participate in the West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy Stakeholder Workshops. Received too late to respond as RSVP was 6/11/02.
- An invitation to attend a fundraising exhibition at Gallery ARC at Yinnar for Friends of the Gippsland Bush. Received too late to attend as the exhibition finished on 17/11/02.
- An invitation to attend a Community Groups Insurance and Risk Management Information Session supported by Latrobe City. As we are covered by Parks Victoria during our escapades in the Park, we do not need to consider alternative coverage.
- Under Control magazine No. 21, September 2002. An interesting read if your into pest and weed control. Contains an interesting article on one of our local plants, Swamp Crassula (*Crassula helmsii*) and how it has become Britain's worst weed. Go, Aussie!
- West Gippsland CMA Annual Report 2002. Probably not something we really need to receive.
- A letter from the National Heritage Trust advising us of the status of our Envirofund Grant application (still being processed) and requesting permission to release our (or Ken's!) contact information to interested parties. Our failure to respond granted such permission!
- A questionnaire to fill in on our opinion of the Group Grants process, pertaining to our grant application and receipt during 2000-2001 financial year. Basically a report card for Rob and Parks Victoria, we took great pleasure in canning them both at every opportunity. Just joking, we actually gave them a passing grade with a few pertinent comments about the long-winded process.

News from Ken includes:

- Success on the missing newsletter saga. Eulalie Brewster has contacted Ken with the news that she has a full set of historical newsletters, including the initial 1986 issues. Thanks, Eulalie.
- Ken had the pleasure of addressing the Boolarra South Landcare Group on the mechanics of seed collection and propagation. In the process, Ken sold 7 copies of Flowers and Ferns of Morwell NP to members of the group.
- Further tidbits from Ken's walk on the Coprosma Track last month include his finding a large patch of Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), another horrible weed which will need to be dealt

with severely. While resting at the weir, Ken noticed fish, presumably trout, jumping at the weir wall. They weren't, however, jumping into the main flow coming over the wall, they were aiming for and succeeding in swimming into the water gushing through cracks and holes in the wall!

News from Rob includes:

- The Gas BBQ has been purchased and is now in storage awaiting installation. The concrete slab on which it will rest at Kerry Road is to be poured shortly. As of 26/11/02, one of the fireplaces had been removed in preparation for this event.
- Negotiations between Grand Ridge Plantations, Latrobe City and Parks Victoria are still progressing positively in regard to the removal of the pines along Jumbuk Road.
- Our experiment with clayballs on Blue Gum Hill has been a bit of a failure to date. So far, only one successful germination has been recorded. All the clayballs have disintegrated into little mounds of clay, but nothing can be seen of the seeds held within.

On Tuesday, November 26, I was invited to escort a group of gentlemen from the Campaspe Valley Bowling Association, Echuca, during their visit to Morwell NP. Actually, I was dobbed in by 'a nice lady from Churchill', but I shall forgive her, whomever she may be, because I was treated to a very entertaining and interesting morning wandering through Foster's Gully during a thunderstorm. I actually arrived before the coach, something that fellow Friends may doubt from past experience, a little before 10am. After giving an interminable, and no doubt incomprehensible short talk over the coach's public address system, I managed to convince the crew that I would be much more intelligible if they all debussed and commenced wandering the wilderness. We spent a very pleasant hour or so ambling along the gully, as I pointed out items of interest along the way, and answered a few tricky questions. All were suitably impressed by the Butterfly Orchids in full flower and heavenly scent that nobody had noticed until I pointed them out. Many were loggers back in the 1950's and were most interested in the logging remnants, the goldmine and quarry scars, and the identification of the timber trees all around us. Most commented on their dislike of the practices employed by the timber industry in recent times. Black Cockatoos and Crimson Rosellas called in the treetops, Grey Thrush added their melodies and Wrens twittered through the shrubbery. Even a Rufous Fantail made an appearance, brightening the gloom of the forest floor. Thunder rumbled and echoed through the hills, as big raindrops thudded into the ground. Thankfully, the rain was only intermittent and we had returned to the coach by the time the storm arrived in earnest. I thoroughly enjoyed yarning with the old blokes, hearing their stories and histories, and putting in my two bobs worth. I hope they enjoyed it as well and will fondly remember their stroll in Morwell National Park during a thunderstorm.

Weeding in Wonderland

Our activity on Sunday, November 17 started with an impromptu meeting. Wendy couldn't attend but had left some paperwork on Rob's desk for us to wade through. So Rob, Ken, John, Jane, Reg and I knuckled down and did the paperwork while Nicole and Zack lounged around. Danny wandered up a bit later and put his two bobs worth in. We had a bit of fun with the Group Grants questionnaire as mentioned earlier, never being people to miss a chance for a spot of ragging.

After putting paid to the administrative duties, Ken and Jane disappeared into the shrubbery to track down the orchid plots and make a start on the annual orchid survey. Meanwhile, Rob had decided the rest of us would wander along Foster's Gully between the track and the creek, from the footbridge to Lyndon's Clearing, searching for and pulling any mongrel varmint weeds we happened to come across, assuming we would recognise them if we saw them. In particular, we were after blackberries, thistles and nightshade. The work was not particularly difficult, but it was a bit warm and humid and for those of us not clever enough to wear long trousers, a constant danger presented itself in large clumps of stinging nettles. We plodded along at moderate speed, disturbing Ken and Jane as they counted away on their plot, stopping occasionally to admire the surroundings. A Rufous Fantail was spotted wagging away in the undergrowth, his brilliant rusty belly burning in the gloom. A Satin Flycatcher also put in a brief appearance as he chased the bugs through the trees. The Musk Daisy-bush and the Hazel Pomaderris were both in full flower, while the Butterfly Orchids were staring to open up, allowing their perfume to waft in the humid air. A chat with a couple of walkers provided a report of a tiger snake further along the track and also a beehive in the trunk of a fallen grey gum.

Apart from a short break for lunch at 1.30, we continued toiling away steadily. To Rob's delight, we were finding very few weeds. A couple of blackberries every now and then, some patches of thistles where the canopy was open to let the sunlight reach the ground. We didn't find any nightshade, however Rob found a couple of plants that we had missed, with one showing signs of being browsed. Great news, as Rob was worried that the little blighter had potential to become a major curse in the Gully. Still, we will need to be alert to further infestation in future. Come 3pm, we had reached Lyndon's Clearing, so we packed up and called it a day.

FRIENDS NETWORK CONFERENCE 2003

The following extract was received by Ken Harris from the Friends Network. If you wish to attend, please contact Bernie Fox at the email address given below.

The Friends Network Committee has excelled its previous offerings, even those of the Prom in 2001! We have linked a wonderful patch of country – Cape Bridgewater - with a wonderful Friends group - Friends of The Great South West Walk - for our next conference, so pencil March 28-30 2003 into your diary NOW! "Be careful who is listening if you wonder aloud "what the Great South West Walk is like!" If one of the Friends of the Great South West Walk is about, before you can say "backpack", you'll be setting off along the Portland foreshore, strolling in the Cobboboonee Forest, striding along Discovery Bay, scrambling through the Enchanted Forest before wandering back. Not only that, over billy tea by the campfire, you will have volunteered for a bridge or track mowing exercise on your next free Saturday. "You're mad! You want certifying!" was the first reaction to the idea of building a 250km walk. But the vision persisted, and in a triumph of co-operation between the Portland High School, Education Department, Lands Department, Forestry Commission, National Parks, Local Council, Commonwealth Transport Department and local landowners, work on the walk started in 1981. Since then a group called the "Friends of the Great South West Walk" has extended, maintained, upgraded and promoted the walk on behalf of Parks Victoria. Sixteen campsites have been provided with a pit toilet, freshwater supply and a wood barbeque or stone fire ring. The GSWW offers a good cross-section of the diverse Australian landscape. Cape Bridgewater is the highest cliff on Victoria's coast and Cape Nelson has the only Victorian stand of Soap Mallees. The walk offers great diversity - cliffs, beaches, rivers, birds, seals, even a petrified forest! Although it is possible to take advantage of bed and breakfasts and the co-operation of "friends" to do the walk in more comfort. The "friends" will transport you to different sections and collect you. If you want to do the whole walk, food drops can be arranged. The best times for walking are spring, early summer and autumn, but even in the height of summer or the depth of winter, there will be a section which will surprise and delight you. says the Glenelg Shire's web-site. We have arranged a venue at Cape Bridgewater that offers wonderful views, a mix of accommodation and is on the Walk itself. The FoTGSW have swung their passion and energies to back the conference so it's one you won't want to miss! Add to this mix the high standard conference items the FNC is renowned for and actually write 28-30 March 2003 in your diary using pen! The Committee is working on an associated program should you want to get there early or stay on a few days after 30 March. More information will follow in the next Newsletter. If you can't wait for more info, or to ensure you are kept up-to-date on planning, send your email address to Bernie Fox at hayburn@bigpond.com.

