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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter January 2003

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

Items of Interest

Rob reports that he recently removed some unusual weeds, probably all escapees from nearby gardens. A specimen of White Kunzea (*K. ambigua*) was removed from below the woodshed near the Park Office, it's nearest natural occurrence being Wilson's Promontory and Croajingalong NP in East Gippsland. Spanish Heath (*Erica lusitanica*), from Europe and a real pest along roadsides in this area, Sticky Wattle (*Acacia howittii*), from the Tarra Valley and Blackwarry district, and Ovens Wattle (*A. pravissima*), from the upper Macalister River and NE Victoria, were all removed from the firebreak along the Fay Street boundary.

A couple of people had a go at me the other day for not mentioning a few of their sightings while pulling weeds in Foster's Gully. My apologies, but if I don't see the critters personally it's even more difficult to remember them when I get around to writing up the events of the day. Apparently, Reg and Nicole spent five minutes or so being entertained by a pair of lyrebirds about fifty metres from where I was diligently weeding, and they didn't even tell me until the birds had gone. Also, Danny spied a bird of prey, possibly a Brown Goshawk, before he departed for the day.

The new gas BBQ is in and working nicely, as proven by Rob and Peter (Rob's boss), as they excelled in their second careers as master chef's at Friends Christmas Functions. Many appreciative comments were received, as well as tongue-in-cheek suggestions for further improvements to the picnic ground, such as a five-star shelter for the BBQ and those participating in worship during the more unseasonable times of year.

Correspondence includes:

- Issue 13 Spring 2002 of Ecovoice, the newsletter of Ecoecycle Victoria.
- Issue 4/02 of the Friends of Coolart newsletter.
- Issue 42 November 2002 of Friends Network News, which is entirely devoted to the Friends Network Conference at Cape Bridgewater from March 28-30, 2003. It contains a full itinerary, accommodation and meal options and costs, and registration forms. If you are going to attend, let me know and I will forward a copy to you.
- A letter from Kate Hayes, Parks Victoria Grants Coordinator, letting us know that the 2003-04 Grant Programs have been delayed by the recent State election.

Our Secretary Jane has written a very nice letter to our ex VP Ed Steenbergen and family, thanking them for their efforts and participation in our group and wishing them all the best in their future in New Zealand.

Party, Party

Sunday, December 15 was a bit of a stinker and I must admit I didn't really feel like getting too enthusiastic about hard labour at the National Park. I thought the weather was much more suitable for sitting in the shade with some good company and a very friendly ice-cold beer. I still think a nice portable Friends beer fridge should be on the cards for a future grant application. It would go nicely with the new gas BBQ and the proposed shelter. As it was, we were late again, hard though it is to believe, as we were delayed by our primary function of providing chauffeured services for our children's social lives. Rob, Ken, Ray, Reg and John were hard at it, sweating it out in the nursery separating seed from capsules and sowing a few seed trays for next season's planting. Cathy and I just watched and chatted for a bit, while Ray and Nicole headed off for a stroll into the Gully to have a look at the magnificent floral display of the Butterfly Orchids. They specifically mentioned the heavenly scent of the blooms, which were particularly noticeable in the warm weather.

Next on the agenda was a spot of seed collecting, with Silver Wattle being the target. Rob, Ken and I were the only ones that could be enticed away, so we left the others to it and jumped into Rob's ute for the trip over to Billy Creek. It was a nice drive from Junction Road right up past the weir and back out Braniff's Road. We didn't find any ripe seed, but we noted some green pods for future reference. Weed spraying has commenced again and will continue over the summer period, so it was pleasing to see the few ragwort, teasel and thistle plants starting to wilt from the latest bout of chemical warfare. Last season's blackberry spraying was evident on the steep hillsides above the creek, with the dead, brown plants standing out from the green of those still thriving. Later on, the helicopter may even be utilised to spray some of the more inaccessible and steeper areas.

Back at the propagation shed, the gang was slacking off sitting in the shade. Only minor tasks remained: getting the watering system functioning, sorting out the old seed stores and setting up for the evening BBQ. Rob soon had the pipework in tip-top shape and the kids were taking full advantage as they gleefully hopped under the sprinklers for a mood-enhancing cool off. Hilmar arrived just in time to help load up the ute with festive furniture and fare, while Ken and I emptied out the seed store and ruthlessly decided the fate of the many packets. Most was destined for dispersal along Billy Creek in the hope that some was still viable and would be able to make a go of it among their cultivated cousins. We kept a couple of packets of the youngest and more unusual or difficult to obtain seed, but the rest was designated excess to requirement and doomed for dumping.

Party time at last! That cold beer with my name on it went down without touching the sides. Two others went the same way down Cathy and Ray, who thoroughly agreed with my assessment of the situation and did their best to relieve me of my stubby holder, as they don't normally partake of the amber liquid and didn't bring their own. They did not succeed. Lazy latecomers soon began rolling in, no names mentioned (Dorothy, Denis, Jane, Wendy and Danny), possibly drawn by the enticing aromas issuing from the pristine stainless steel plate of our glistening new BBQ as Rob and Peter applied their moonlighting skills. A few people from our fellow Friends Groups at Tarra-Bulga, Baw Baw and St Gwinear Ski Patrol also straggled in and joined in the occasion.

January Activity

We are pencilled in for a seed collecting session on Sunday, January 19, commencing at 10am at the Braniff's Road carpark. As is normal at this time, the seed is not likely to be ready when we are, so be prepared to play it by ear. I suggest that robust footwear and clothing suitable for repelling the pricklies and bites may be a good idea. Hopefully, Rob will remember the bug spray and the sunscreen, but you will need your own lunch and drinks.