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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter May 2003

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. Thanks to Danny for the following contribution on some of his recent thoughts and observations.....

'There's A Home For Everyone.'

By Daniel Barclay.

A lot of things have been happening since the beginning of autumn. Still quite warm, my home has given tenancy to an Echidna. Nearly everyday it's been putting its nose in the gardens, on the lawn, waddling up the driveway and wherever it likes to seek out ant nests. Observing the Echidna closely, I was surprised how successful the animal was. It is an animal with a lot of personality; it is cheeky and it will check everything out. It is very tough and versatile, it can dig into any surface and climb up any steep and rocky embankment with ease. It does not care about the things around it, as it knows it can drill in the ground and stay there for hours shielded by its quills.

With a lot of strength for a little animal, it tipped a big pot plant of dirt over, as it could smell an ant nest in it. Ignoring the angry swarm of ants, it relished the eggs and larvae. My mother thought it was cute wandering around the house until it started to excavate the garden. She was not impressed. Now that it has become colder the Echidna has mysteriously disappeared to get ready for the long winter sleep. Apparently, Echidnas behave a bit like hummingbirds. When they sleep they drop their heart rate and metabolism right down to conserve energy through winter. When the warm season comes, they should wake up quite active. If you've ever seen an Echidna they don't stand still.

Since the little rain not long ago there has been an explosion of Jumping Jack Bull-ants. Everywhere I walk they're marching very busily, collecting food for the nests. Looking carefully, I noticed some bull-ants were fighting. I found this rather odd but I put a theory that the bull-ants were from different colonies. Each colony has its own distinct chemical odour that helps identify each other, but when two colonies meet and sense the smells don't match war breaks out.

There was disturbing news when a fire hit the park a few days after the last activity (in March. Ed). It was 5.00 – 5.30 in the morning on Tuesday or Wednesday when I was woken by my mother saying there was a fire in the park. Having their window open, Dad smelled smoke. Getting up, we had a look and saw the fire. It was a fair distance away but there was a concern, as it was on our side of the park. Also the wind was blowing towards us. Seeing a fire in the park, my first thought was of Rob, as I knew he would be notified and help tackle the fire. I am glad that it is out.

Now that daylight saving has come to an end, it was good to see the bats flying around again just on dusk. Using my imagination, the theme of the Batman movie always comes into my head. Don't worry, I'm not going batty! I think those in Melbourne are going batty at the moment when the Flying Foxes have returned to seek revenge after they were scared off or relocated. I think people should know by now that Flying Foxes are great problem solvers and the high tech scaring devices were a waste of money. Tormenting Melbourne even more, the Flying Foxes have abandoned the botanic gardens and have taken refuge in one of the city's parks.

May Activity

Our next activity is scheduled for Sunday, May 18 at 10am. We will meet at the Junction Road gate for another attack on the biodegradable tree guards that refuse to biodegrade and insist on strangling our trees. As always, suitable clothing and footwear for wandering around in long, wet grass is essential, lunch and refreshments are vital, and sharp implements for cutting off guards is highly recommended by those with experience.

News and Views

Some items of correspondence that have come in recently include:

- An invitation to attend a Community Forum on Biotechnology hosted by Latrobe City on April 29.
- Issue 14 of EcoVoice, the newsletter of EcoRecycle Victoria. Anybody who wants a read, sing out.
- An invitation to attend an environmental sustainability information session, run by Latrobe City on April 30.
- An invitation to attend Regional Achievers and Community of the Year Awards on April 30.
- An invitation to attend various Community Groups Information Sessions throughout the year, commencing with "Working with the Media" on May 14.
- An invitation and information pack for making applications for the 2003-2004 Grants Program.

To address the last item above, a Committee Meeting was called for Wednesday, May 7 at 7pm at Ken's residence. I shall include the minutes of this meeting in the next newsletter, but, in a nutshell, we intend to apply for monies to fund a number of picnic tables for replacement of some of the more dilapidated units in the park.

Also at the Committee Meeting, all of our new members were formally accepted into the Friends Group, so please accept this as the official welcome for Kai Ming Ting, Elizabeth Collins and the Waller family. Denis Sultana graciously accepted being roped into the position of Vice-President as a stand-in for Ed Steenbergen until the AGM in August. Hopefully, Denis will consider remaining in the position, unless anyone else out there would like to nominate???

Some news items on the grapevine (oops, an exotic plant, perhaps I should say wonga vine or something):

- Ken tells me that some prescribed burning is planned for the Park this autumn, in two areas; at the beginning of Stringybark Ridge as you come up from Foster's Gully and south of the Kerry Road picnic area. So if you see smoke coming from these areas, there may be no cause for alarm, however, our firebug does still seem to be about, as highlighted by the fire on Stringybark in March.
- Rob is hopeful that we will gain some assistance from The Green Corp, probably in the first week of June, to erect the fencing we require for our seeding and planting trials on Blue Gum Hill.
- The blocks of Crown Land at the top end of the Billy Creek section are still some time away from inclusion in the Park. The Regional Forest Agreement for the area, on which the transfer depends, are still not through Parliament.
- The logging, and subsequent revegetation, of the Monterey Pines on Jumbuk Road, will probably not occur until next year, dependant on the availability of logging teams and development of an action plan to allow for closure of sections of the road as a safety precaution for access and movement of log trucks. Our application for funding via the National Heritage Trust Envirofund to assist with these works has been unsuccessful, however the logging contractors believe the logging would be economically viable in its own right.
- Our activity in April, an exploratory walk along the proposed Coprosma Track, was very successful, albeit damp. A number of interesting events and observations were recorded and I shall endeavour to include a full report of proceedings next month.