

PO Box  
19  
Churchill  
3842



President:  
5122 3137

# Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

## *Newsletter - October 2003*

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

### In the Mailbox

Quite a few items were handed to me at the last gathering:

- Newsletter 1 – August 2003, West Gippsland Regional River Health Strategy.
- FriendsNet 44 – August 2003, from the Victorian Friends Network.
- Community Group News 8 – August 2003, from Latrobe City, along with information and application/nomination forms for their Community Grants and Community Awards programs, both of which closed in early September.
- Friends of Tarra-Bulga National Park newsletter for winter 2003.
- Friends of Baw Baw National Park newsletter No. 20 – September 2003.
- Several brochures from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne and Cranbourne. We are planning an excursion to Cranbourne in conjunction with the Australian Plant Society Latrobe Valley District Group for September next year.

### The Great Orchid Hunt

We wandered out of the front door, turned around and went straight back in to put on a pair of shorts. At 9.30am, it was 18°C with a warm northerly breeze blowing, a perfect spring morning. Arriving at the Kerry Road picnic ground at 9.45am, we had the place to ourselves, but not for long as Reg soon appeared on the horizon. Ken, Wendy, Danny and Kai Ming were not far behind him, with Ken bringing along his newly acquired copy of a German freshwater crayfish book that contained Ken's photograph of the land yabby dug up at Tebb's Terrace by my young bloke, Zack, when we were planting trees up there last year. We stood and chatted for a little while, waiting for any stragglers and checking out the addition to the information shelter. No latecomers appeared (apart from a couple of private walkers), so we readied ourselves and headed off into the wilds.

The first orchid was spotted by the last person in the line, me, about ten feet in from the gate, mainly because the rest of them had followed Ken directly to a patch of Nodding Greenhood (*Pterostylis nutans*), just up past the toilet blocks that he had already recorded previously. My sighting was a couple of the very common Maroonhoods (*Pterostylis pedunculata*), growing on the grassy verge of the gravel road. A short distance further along, the paired leaves of the Common Bird Orchid (*Chiloglottis valida*), some with buds almost ready to open, were much in evidence. The round green leaves of Veined Helmet Orchid (*Corybas diemenicus*) were also common in the damp shady areas in the gully, but their flowering period is mid winter, so we were unlikely to find flowers in September. We paused to examine a couple of Butterfly Orchids (*Sarcochilus australis*) growing on the trees next to the track, marvelling at their intricate root systems meandering along the branches of their hosts. Most had flower spikes forming, ready for their burst of glory in late November, but the Wonga Vines (*Pandorea pandorana*) in the treetops over our heads were already fully displaying their cream and purple tubular flowers.

As we crossed Foster's Gully and climbed up on to bottom of Stringybark Ridge, a patch of Bird Orchids in full bloom caught our eye, their resemblance to baby birds beaks begging for food obviously the characteristic leading to their common name. At the base of a Messmate (*Eucalyptus obliqua*), in

amongst the leaf litter, we spied another group of Helmet Orchid leaves and, lo and behold, closer inspection revealed a couple of late flowers, making a lie of my previous statement. Wandering sedately up the track, orchids seemed to be few and far between, but we did find the odd Tall Greenhood (*Pterostylis longifolia*), Musky Caladenia (*C. gracilis*) and leaves of Autumn Bird Orchid (*C. reflexa*) and probably both of Tall and Slender Sun Orchids (*Thelymitra media* & *T. pauciflora*). We split up to thoroughly check out the burnt area, but, to our disappointment, nothing exciting was found, other than several plants of what appeared to be Austral Storksbill (*Pelargonium australe*), uncommon along Billy's Creek and not previously recorded on Stringybark Ridge.

We continued slowly making our way up Stringybark Ridge, not finding very much, the leaf of a Sun Orchid here, a Musky Caladenia or a Tall Greenhood there. A couple of very sad looking Mayfly Orchids (*Acianthus cordatus*) came next, then we were upon a known colony of Flying Duck Orchids (*Caleana major*) with heaps of leaves blending into the background, a few showing buds that will open in a month or so. Along the top section between the seats, an occasional Alpine Greenhood (*Pterostylis alpina*) could be found amongst the trackside grasses. We stopped at the second seat for a rest and a bite to eat, gazing out at the Yertchuks (or Prickly Stringybarks, *Eucalyptus consideniensis*), one of which contained a sleepy Koala, and within spitting distance of a couple of leaves and buds that were probably Waxlips (*Glossodia major*).

After our refreshments, we continued on the homeward and downhill leg of our walk, finding plenty of flowering plants, but very few orchids. Golden Bush Pea (*Pultenaea gunnii*) and Pink Bells (*Tetraloche ciliata*) showed off their vivid colours, as did the red, pink and white varieties of Common Heath (*Epacris impressa*). Love Creeper (*Comesperma volubile*) twined gracefully through the shrubbery, while Forest Clematis (*C. glycinoides*) smothered anything within reach. Ivy-leaf Violets (*Viola hederacea*) and Tall Sundews (*Drosera peltata*) grew everywhere. The icing on the cake came just before reaching the end of the loop, when Cathy spied a Southern Spider Orchid (*Caladenia australis*), not seen in the park since 1986. Much excitement and scrambling for cameras ensued. Overall, this capped off a successful hunt, with 15 species of orchid counted, 5 of them recorded in new locations.

## **Hunting for Orchid Hunters**

From Jane Sultana

Denis, Aaron and I were running a little late on Sunday morning, having slept in after an exhausting night of feeding, burping and nappy changes. Leaving home at 9:50am we expected to arrive at Kerry Road Picnic Area by 10:15am. However when we had almost reached our destination Denis remembered that we had forgotten to pack Aaron's carry pouch. Neither of us fancied cradling Aaron in our arms as we trekked around the National Park so we made a speedy U-turn and headed back home to retrieve the forgotten pouch.

Having collected the pouch we set off again arriving at Kerry Road at 10:50am. Noticing many familiar cars in the car park we could tell that the turnout for the orchid hunt was good. Quickly we loaded Aaron into the pouch and left in search of the orchid hunters. Unfortunately we had gone but a few hundred metres when Aaron started crying loudly. Denis (who was wearing the pouch) noticed that Aaron's leg was quite damp. We returned to the car for a nappy and clothing change and a breastfeed. Clean, dry and with a full tummy we started out once more.

Not sure in which direction the orchid hunters had gone we decided to follow the Fosters Gully track. With ears and eyes alert we scanned the bushland either side of the track but with no luck. After completing the Fosters Gully loop we searched a small section of Stringybark Ridge. Here we spotted an echidna but the elusive orchid hunters were nowhere to be found. We returned to the car park a little disappointed but still having enjoyed the walk

## **October Activity**

Our next activity is the annual Koala count to be held on Sunday, October 19, at 1.30pm, meeting at the Kerry Road carpark. We need as many members as possible to attend to lead various groups on various tracks. Some will be arriving early to have lunch in the picnic ground, feel free to join in. Billy tea and damper will again be provided on the return of the counters.