

PO Box
19
Churchill
3842



President:
5122 3137

Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter - November 2003

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. Thank you to those who have contributed this month, you have made my task much easier. As I have spent the last couple of weeks gallivanting around the countryside, with trips to Wilson's Promontory, Little Desert National Park, Wonthaggi Heathlands and the South Gippsland Australian Plant Show with no time to write articles, without these contributions your newsletter would be much smaller and pretty boring.

November Activity

Our next activity is pencilled in for Sunday, November 16, to commence at 10am at the Kerry Road Picnic Ground. A variety of jobs will be available, such as general cleaning and tidying around the propagation shed, weed pulling in areas that Rob will determine, perhaps a bit of Koala counting since last month was a washout, a wander around gazing at the scenery (not really a job!), or anything else that we can find needs doing. Ken may require a helping hand with his annual Butterfly Orchid survey, but this usually only requires one extra person. So, come prepared to do anything, rain, hail or shine.

Koala Count 19th October Morwell National Park

From Wendy Steenbergen

The rain did not deter the group of 19 GCOARN members from arriving to enjoy their barbecue and maybe Koala Count. Rob was early to make sure we were OK and to lend a hand with advice about the makeshift shelter of tarps strung up around the information shelter. A few of us managed to keep dry, but the hardy souls cooking the barbecue had fun hiding under a couple of golf umbrellas. We managed to consume all the food and empty a few thermos's for a hot drink and as the rain keep coming we made an executive decision, with Rob's help, to leave the Koalas in peace this year. Just as we were about to go Ken arrived, so we left Ken and Rob making arrangements to drive somewhere to identify some plants. All my plans to change the menu from damper to pikelets will have to be put on hold until next year.

Not Counting Koalas

by Ken Harris

The Sunday of our annual Koala count was a very wet day. It rained all morning, but I nevertheless turned up on time at 1.30 already for a walk in the rain. I did not find the usual crowds in the car park all eager for the fray! I found Rob and Wendy and about 8 members of the CGOARN just finishing a very wet barbecue lunch. It continued to rain and nobody was at all enthusiastic about Koala counting. We decided that in any case we had not enough members to lead the various walks and for the first time in the history of the Friends, the Koala count was cancelled.

Having got to the Park already for a walk in the rain, I told Rob that I would go up to Stringybark Ridge to inspect the possible Pelargonium plants I found a month earlier and he offered to drive up there, saving me a wetting. We went up and inspected the burnt area. The Pelargonium plants were

easily relocated, but there was still no sign of them flowering. We noticed that the little grass trees have responded to the fire by flowering profusely. The flowers are not yet out, but many plants are growing multiple flower spikes. One plant has about 35 flower spikes growing in a single plant. They will be an absolute picture when the flowers open.

We continued across to the Western Boundary and observed that the fire that Parks Victoria tried to set had been more successful on that side, clearing some patches in the forest and we inspected these, looking particularly for orchids. It was interesting to see that although the fire had never got going properly, it had burned several large old logs away to nothing but a little ash. The only orchids we found were a number of Pink Fingers and Tall Greenhoods. We did however find one plant of the Twining Fringe Lily – *Thysanotus patersonii*. I found this lovely little lily in the same area in October 1988, but have not seen it in the Park since then. It had clearly had flowers open very recently, but none were open now and a seedpod was clearly developing. I also found several other lily plants. Milkmaids were in flower, but the Pale Grass-lily was still growing its flower spikes. One lily plant had me very puzzled. I thought it might be a new species for the park, but I went back a fortnight later and have decided that it is probably a Chocolate Lily. I will be going back again to check it when it flowers, just in case!

By the way, very soon after we drove up to Stringybark Ridge the rain stopped, making the afternoon just perfect for counting Koalas!

Native Snail and Slug

by Ken Harris

On 16th October I went for a walk in Billys Creek and when passing the little cliff at the right of the track, a little before the weir, I noticed a snail near the top of the cliff, on the very tip of a long, slender, dead blade of grass. I quickly recognised it as *Helicarion niger*, a native snail that has a small fragile shell, too small to contain the whole animal. I had seen one once before in the park on Stringybark Ridge in November 1985 and wanted to get a better photograph of it. I quickly organised my camera and turned back to the snail and to my amazement, it was no longer on the blade of grass, but some 20cm below it, hanging from the grass by a slender thread of mucous. This was an amazing sight and a unique opportunity for an unusual photograph. It was difficult to photograph, because as it extended the thread of mucous and lowered itself down the cliff, it kept spinning first one way and then the other, but I managed a fairly satisfactory picture. The snail continued to lower itself for a total of about 1.2 metres and just as it reached the bottom of the descent, I caught it on a leaf and then a got a further photograph before releasing it at the bottom of the cliff.



When I got to the weir, I discovered an unusual slug under the bark of a Manna Gum. This I also recognised as a native species, *Cystopelta purpurea*. It has a distinctive flattish tail portion, with a leaf-vein pattern on its upper surface. This slug has been recorded once before in the Park, by Rob de Souza-Daw in July 1994, but it was the first time I had seen one and again I was glad of the chance to get better photographs.

The pictures of both species are viewable on the park web site at <http://morwellnp.pangaeon.net>