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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – October 2004

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

Items of Interest

In the Mailbox: A couple of items have lobbed onto the editorial desk this month;

- Friends of Tarra-Bulga National Park Winter 2004 newsletter. This arrived too late to advertise, or participate in, their annual lyrebird count on August 14, but other dates to keep in mind are the AGM on September 11 and the 10th Anniversary BBQ and Carols by Candlelight on December 16.
- FriendsNet Newsletter Numbers 47 & 48- May and August 2004. The August newsletter contains a shortened version of my wasp article, as well as articles on the willow removal program in Baw Baw National Park and other snippets from local groups.

News: Here are the latest goings on;

- Our AGM was held on August 1 at Wendy's house. Thanks to all who attended, the minutes are reproduced below.
- An extra planting day was organised for Sunday, August 29, due to not completing the job on August 15. After a week of warmth and sunshine and despite dire predictions, the weather remained fine long enough for Ken, Wendy, Jane, Cathy and myself to stagger around the hillsides and plant out the remaining 137 trees. A nice downpour the next morning would have watered them in nicely.
- Did you all see the political article in the LV Express on Thursday, August 19? It was a comment by Liberal MLC for Gippsland Province, Philip Davis, on the lack of funding for parks and reserves, using Morwell NP as his prime argument. I'm not sure what has roused his interest, but I can only agree with the sentiment!
- Ranger Rob Howell has been doing some homework on methods of tree planting in areas of difficult terrain, such as Blue Gum Hill. Discussions with Grand Ridge Plantations have yielded information on the 'Tiko System', where specialised equipment similar, but more compact than our own, is used. The advantage is in a harness system that allows all the necessary gear to be carried by a single person while tree planting. No doubt we will hear more on this in future.

October Activity

On the program this month is the annual Koala count, to be held on Sunday, October 17, meeting at the Kerry Road carpark at 1.30pm. Cathy and I will not be able to attend due to other commitments, but we hope the weather will be better than last year and participants will enjoy a dry afternoon with plenty of Koala sightings. As always, you will need to bring your own refreshments and clothing and footwear suitable for the climate, season and activity.

Friends of Morwell National Park
Annual General Meeting- 1/08/04

Meeting declared open at 1:50pm

Attendance: Wendy Steenbergen, Rob Howell, Jane Sultana, Cathy Beamish, Mike Beamish, Dorothy Reinkowsky, Ken Harris, Tom Lawless.

Apologies: Denis Sultana.

Minutes of previous AGM were read and accepted as a true account. (Ken Harris, Jane Sultana)
The President's Report (copy included) was read and accepted. (Mike Beamish, Cathy Beamish)
The Ranger's Report (copy included) was read and accepted. (Jane Sultana, Wendy Steenbergen)
The Treasurer's Report was read and accepted. (Dorothy Reinkowsky, Tom Lawless)

Election of office Bearers:

President- Ken Harris (Nom-Tom Lawless, Sec-Jane Sultana)
Vice President- Cathy Beamish (Nom-Mike Beamish, Sec-Wendy Steenbergen)
Secretary- Jane Sultana (Nom-Cathy Beamish, Sec-Dorothy Reinkowsky)
Treasurer- Wendy Steenbergen (Nom-Cathy Beamish, Sec-Dorothy Reinkowsky)
Newsletter- Mike Beamish (Nom Cathy Beamish, Sec-Dorothy Reinkowsky)

General Business:

1. Motion that the membership fee structure will remain unchanged at \$10 per person or \$15 per family or group. Passed unanimously. (Wendy Steenbergen, Ken Harris)
2. Motion that recommended payment of the Incorporation Fee forthwith. Passed unanimously. (Wendy Steenbergen, Jane Sultana)
3. Wendy Steenbergen will contact past member Danny Barclay to see if he would like to continue working with the Friends group and carry on the excellent work he has been doing as publicity officer.

Meeting closed at 2:20pm

President's Report for 2003 to 2004

The Friends of Morwell National Park has now completed its 18th successful year helping in the management of Morwell National Park. This year has seen some new members join the Friends and we extend a welcome to them. Our new members include Jenny Farrar, not forgetting our youngest newcomer Aaron Sultana, born to Jane and Denis last year and now nearly a year old. Aaron is not active in the park yet, but already present on several working days. On a sadder note, we lost one member when Rayma Felmingham passed away during the year and our sympathy went out to Reg and Cathy at that time.

Our annual koala count was a bit less successful than usual this year, not for lack of koalas, but lack of counters prepared to brave the weather. The koala count was postponed for the first time in the Friend's history. A less comprehensive count than usual was carried out the following month and some koalas were recorded. At the same time as the deferred koala count, the butterfly orchid survey was completed. There is a continued loss of orchid plants as the endless drought continues, but it proved a good year for seed set and we can hope for some recovery as a result.

Working days started with the last tree planting for the winter, which saw a clear area on a steep slope at the top of the Lodge Track partially covered with new trees. The trees planted had been intended for trial planting on Blue Gum Hill, but the assistance we hoped to receive from The Green Corps to erect the fencing on Blue Gum Hill did not eventuate and is unlikely to in the near future. Difficulties with access, equipment and organisation were the downfall of the idea. We are still looking at alternative ways of getting an area fenced so that we can make a start on the daunting task of reforesting that steep hillside.

One of our other attempts at revegetating Blue Gum Hill was a trial of using clayballs to get seed started. We sowed clayballs in a fenced plot, but had no lasting success. We detected 2 germinated eucalypts, but neither survived the dry summer. This left us with a lot of surplus clayballs containing seed and rather than discard them, we used our March working day to distribute these clayballs in an

(unfenced) area of Blue Gum Hill. At least that way they have some chance of success and even a few trees developing will be a useful reward for our efforts.

In the spring we had a non-working day and went for an orchid walk on Stringybark Ridge. Overall we found 15 different species of orchids on the day, capped at the end by the first Southern Spider Orchid *Caladenia australis* seen in the Park since 1986. A few other interesting plants turned up during the year. Following the fire on Stringybark Ridge, a plant previously unrecorded in the park was found in the burned area, this was the Scentless Stork's Bill *Pelargonium inodorum*. We also found the first Twining Fringe-lilies *Thysanotus patersonii* since 1986, some of these last were found on the deferred Koala count.

The year again saw successful propagation of trees and shrubs for this winter's planting. We are not growing quite as many at present as we are running out of accessible and workable sites that need revegetation. Seed collection was very limited this year but we have good reserves of the important species.

More work was put in destroying regenerating willows and it was pleasing to find very few of them. We are make real progress with eliminating willows from a long stretch of Billys Creek. A diversion from the willow pulling was the location of a number of wasps nests. These were all marked and an expert was later brought in to destroy them all.

In December our working day finished with an excellent barbecue provided for us and neighbouring Friends groups by Parks Victoria.

During one willow-pulling day, a lizard was found that was a new species for the park, our first Delicate Skink *Lampropholis delicata*.

In May, the Friends had a stand at the Churchill Festival which attracted a fair bit of interest and the sale of several more books.

In June we started the winter's tree planting, this time on Peel's block on the Western boundary of the park.

Unfortunately we were unsuccessful with our grant application for picnic tables in Billies Creek, but the department later found money for 2 tables, which are now installed and in use at the Junction Rd entrance and by the Billys Creek weir.

Other developments and events during the year were:

- The new expanded information board was installed in the Kerry Road picnic area.
- Some roadworks alongside Billys Creek have improved the Billys Creek Track.
- Another arson incident in Fosters Gully in April resulted in a small area close to the main track being burned. It was stopped with remarkable speed by the rural fire fighters and only a very small area was burned.
- Legislation for the formal expansion of Morwell National Park to include sections on the far side of Blue Gum Hill has been presented in parliament and should soon be ratified.

Hilmar Batza is to be congratulated on his research into the history of Billys Creek. His report "Billys Creek – A Brief History" is available for reading on the History section of the Morwell National Park web site. Hilmar's history was highlighted recently by an article in the Latrobe Valley Link Magazine.

We have again applied for a government grant and have already heard that we have been successful this time. We have been awarded a grant to use for removing the weed Tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum* from along Billys Creek, together with Teasels, Mulleins and Foxgloves.

Jane and I attended the Greening Latrobe forum in June and I accepted on behalf of the Friends a certificate from the Latrobe Council in recognition of all the revegetation work that we have completed over the years.

Finally I would like to thank all the Friends for their efforts during the year, especially all members of the committee, our Secretary Jane, Treasurer Wendy and newsletter editor par excellence, Mike.

All will share with me in once again thanking our ranger Rob Howell for his outstanding assistance and support throughout the year.

Ken Harris
28th July 2004

Ranger's Report – Morwell National Park 2003/2004

Despite the failure of the 2003/04 PV Community Grant, we were still able to install two new picnic tables in the Billys Creek area (one at the weir and one at Junction Rd). The 2004/05 Grant application has been more successful and we will have \$3500 to spend on controlling streamside weeds along Billys Creek, targeting Tutsan.

Progress has been made towards the removal of the pines in the southern end of the Park with the widening of the bend on Jumbuk Rd to enable log trucks to descend to the valley. This should allow the plantation to be logged this summer, once the ground dries out, and give us the opportunity to start on the long awaited and challenging task of revegetating the site in the near future.

Noxious weed control (by contractors) was another major task undertaken during the year with several successful assaults being made on Thistles and Ragwort and a large-scale onslaught being conducted against Blackberries in the planted areas along Billys Creek. The Friends have again contributed to the on-going war against weeds with another two valuable sessions of removing Willows and other environmental weeds in and along the creek.

During one of our sorties along the creek in April a large number of European Wasp nests were discovered and it was decided to use a local Pest Control contractor to dispose of them during daylight hours instead of the usual method of going back after dark to treat the nests. A day or so later, while the Contractor was treating the nests, more were discovered and a total of thirteen nests were disposed of in half a day. The effectiveness of this operation and the recognition of the increasing problem have lead to the inclusion of an extra \$1000 in our annual Budget dedicated to controlling European Wasps.

There were another two deliberately lit fires in the Park this year, one on Stringybark Ridge and the other in Fosters Gully. Fortunately they were both spotted early and kept very small which minimised the damage and the need for rehabilitation works.

Works carried out in the Park this year include the addition of new decking and a second handrail to the footbridge over Fosters Gully, realignment of the carpark barriers at Kerry Rd and removal of the old fireplace and concrete wood box near the Gas bbq. The Track to the weir was also upgraded with the installation of a new culvert, improved drainage and new gravel to improve vehicle access in the wetter months.

The proposed additions to the Park have now been included, except for the block at the end of Reidy's Rd which will continue to be leased (subject to fencing) to the adjoining land owner or become private property if the proposed land exchange goes ahead.

We have had some very favourable publicity this year in print and on radio and special thanks should go to Hilmar for his work on the Park's history and Danny for the articles on Friends activities. I would also like to thank the committee and those hard working people who took part in all the activities throughout the year. A good job well done.

It is also pleasing to see a return to a variety of more enjoyable activities such as the Churchill Festival and the upcoming visit to the Royal Botanical Gardens Annexe at Cranbourne. Thanks, once again, for another constructive, rewarding and enjoyable year.

Rob Howell.

Friends of Morwell National Park
Committee Meeting- 1/08/04

Meeting declared open at 2:25pm

Attendance: Wendy Steenbergen, Rob Howell, Jane Sultana, Cathy Beamish, Mike Beamish, Dorothy Reinkowsky, Ken Harris, Tom Lawless.

Apologies: Denis Sultana

Minutes of the previous Committee Meeting on 3rd May 2004 were read and accepted as a true account. (Cathy Beamish, Dorothy Reinkowsky)

Business arising from previous meetings minutes: Nil.

Correspondence:

Inwards:

- Latrobe Valley 2100 Coal Resources Project.
- EcoRecycle Victoria update April/May 2004.
- Invitation to attend Regional Achievers Awards on May 31.
- Updated draft of the Latrobe City Community Plan.
- Thankyou letter from Churchill Festival committee for our participation in the Festival on May 15.
- An invitation to attend the launch of the Tarra-Bulga National Park Centenary Booklet on July 27.
- Parks Victoria 2004/2005 Community Grants Program letting us know that we were successful in obtaining funding for the project "Tutsan Control-Billys Creek".
- Under Control, June 2004, number 27.
- Canopy, July 2004, Number 23.
- Certificate of Appreciation from Latrobe City Council in recognition of valuable contributions to native revegetation in the Latrobe City.
- Draft Neighbourhood Environment Improvement Plan (NEIP) proposal for the Traralgon Creek Catchment.

Outwards:

- Volunteer Groups Grant Application asking for funding for Tutsan Control along Billys Creek.
- Letter to Alpine Grazing Taskforce stating the committee's opposition to renewing grazing leases in the Alpine National Park.
- Article by Mike Beamish regarding European wasps in Morwell National Park. This was sent to Geoff Durham for publication in the FriendsNet newsletter.

General Business:

1. The next tree planting, scheduled for August '04, will take place up along Jumbuck Road behind the pines. The main species for planting is Blue Gums.
2. There is a possibility that 'Work for the Dole' may construct vermin proof fencing up on Blue Gum Hill. Our hopes are that 1km of fencing, enclosing 5 hectares could be constructed. The fencing would keep out hares, rabbits, wallabies and wombats allowing us to revegetate the area without a need for tree guards and stakes. This area is steep and access is difficult so it would be much easier for us if tree guards were not needed.
3. Rob is going to contact Grand Ridge Plantations to find out how they go about planting on steep slopes. The information he obtains may help us to tackle some of the steeper parts of the park.
4. Planning for 2005- An activity calendar for 2005 was discussed and drawn up. This will be published in the newsletter.

Meeting closed at 3:35pm.

Subscriptions!!!

It is that time of year again and subscriptions are now due for the year ending June 2005. If you haven't already taken care of business, please take advantage of the cut-off slip below, otherwise you may be deleted from our member list.

To: Treasurer, Friends of Morwell National Park, PO Box 19, Churchill, 3842

Please find enclosed the amount of \$ _____ (\$10 per person, \$15 per family/group) being for membership 2004/2005.

Name:.....Telephone:.....

Address:.....

Cranbourne Capers September Activity Report

Cathy and I appeared in the Morwell central carpark, opposite the Post Office, at the designated time of 9.30am, to be greeted by Wendy, Dorothy, Ken and Fay. Wendy informed us that they had followed Reg into the carpark, but he had continued straight through to install himself in the Station carpark a little bit further up the road. I duly trundled off to retrieve him, but in his defence we had failed to inform him in writing of the change to our meeting point, and we all know what his memory is like! Within a few minutes, the rest of the people we expected, all of them APS LV members, had arrived, so we pooled ourselves into a couple of cars and were on our way to Cranbourne by 10am.

The trip down was uneventful until we reached Pakenham, then between Pakenham and Officer we were into gridlock. Cars were heading off in all directions in their attempts to avoid the jam and we followed suit, doing some quick scanning through the Melways and taking the next left turn. Apart from some of the roads being unsealed, the detour turned out to be more interesting anyway, travelling through some of the little hamlets off the beaten track. We still arrived at the Botanic Gardens on time at 1130am, as did the majority of the rest of the group, including Denis, Jane and Aaron. The Friends of RBGC were there to meet us and we were soon divided into three small groups for a short introductory walk before lunch.

The walk turned out to be both longer in time and distance, and quicker in pace than we would have liked, not our normal leisurely stop and smell the flowers stroll. Still, we gained a good overview of the place and sighted a few interesting plants and birds. We were a bit late getting back for lunch, but we didn't have to wait for the sausages to cook, just line up and dig in. Bellbirds singing in the stringybarks and bandicoots wandering amongst the picnic tables made for a very pleasant snack, but the mosquitos were a bit too friendly!

After lunch we were herded into the cars for the short drive around to the new Australian Garden construction site, where we were escorted around for the next hour or so. Still very much in it's infancy, it was great to see the scale of the project and have some of the planning and design components explained to us. There weren't a great number of plants in the ground at this early stage, but there was enough to whet the appetite for a return visit in two or three years time, when the plants have established and grown into their surroundings. A quick tour through the Friends of RBGC nursery finished off the formal part of the afternoon and we were free to come and go as we pleased. As it was 3.30pm, most of us decided to head for home.