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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – December 2004

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

In the Mailbox and other News

In the mailbox this month:

- Canopy (Parks Victoria magazine) Issue 24, October 2004.
- Friends of Tarra-Bulga NP newsletter, Spring 2004.
- Friends of Coolart newsletter 3/04.
- A flyer advertising the Catch-a-Carp fishing competition to be held at Lake Narracan on Sunday, December 5 from 10am to 4pm. For more information, contact Tammy Dawson at the West Gippsland CMA on 5175 7800.

I shall keep the newsletters for a short time, so if you would like a look, let me know quick smart before I file them.

Well done to our members who are maintaining a high profile in various publications around the region. Jane Sultana had a letter to the editor on logging published in the LV Express in early November and Hilmar Batza had his 'History of Billy Creek' published in the Churchill News recently, as well as his photo in the Latrobe City Link (Issue 30), highlighting his interest in astronomy.

Congratulations to Diana Alweyn and family on the safe arrival of their new young bloke, Sebastian Anthony. The little one arrived on October 26 at the healthy weight of 8lb 14oz.

News from around the Park includes:

1. The proposed fencing project on Blue Gum Hill appears to have fallen through at the moment, apparently due to logistical problems. This, of course, holds up any plans we can make about getting the hill revegetated.
2. The pines on Jumbuk Road are due to be logged at any moment, pending Grand Ridge Plantations availability to do the job. The tight corner on Jumbuk Road has been widened, removing the access restriction to log trucks on the road.
3. I believe Ken escorted a group from Australian Plants Society South Gippsland around the Park on the Saturday before the Koala Count. As yet, I haven't managed to extract a report from Ken on the success of this outing.
4. Wendy escorted a group from the Barwon Older Adults Recreational Network through Foster's Gully on the same morning as our November activity. From all reports the orchids are spectacular at the moment.

You should receive a copy of our Activity Calendar for 2005 with this newsletter. Note that due to our successful grant for weed (Tutsan) removal and our reduced requirement (at this stage) for tree planting, we have changed our planned tree planting days to weed removal days. We will still need to collect seed, particularly Varnish Wattle and Blue Gum, in January if it is available, otherwise we intend to focus this year on getting stuck into the Tutsan.

December Activity

We are programmed for an odd jobs session on Sunday, December 19. Rob tells me that there aren't too many odd jobs that need doing, so he suggests that we continue with our Tutsan weed pulling sessions, starting at the Braniff's Road car park at 10am. You would need to bring suitable clothing to ward off the nettles and blackberries and footwear for wading down the creek.

We would then finish off the year with an afternoon BBQ at the weir. Rob proposes to provide the BBQ, meat and bread, while members would bring salads and desserts to share, drinks to quaff and chairs to sit on. If members wish to attend the BBQ only, then you will need to let us know so that we can come out to Braniff's Road to pick you up. The more the merrier.

Toiling over Tutsan **November Activity Report**

We all (Rob, Ken, Wendy, Jane, Reg, Cathy and I) met at the propagation shed at the appointed time and quickly organised our day. Ken would head off for the orchid survey (see below) with Cathy to assist. Wendy would head off to escort her OARN group to the start of their walk around Foster's Gully. The rest of us would drive beyond the weir on Billy Creek to start our assault on the dreaded Tutsan.

The first idea was for Rob and Jane, Reg and I to drive to the base of Blue Gum Hill, walk up the proposed Coprosma Track to the first creek crossing, then go our separate ways, Rob and Jane heading downstream, while Reg and I went upstream a short distance to assess the prevalence of Tutsan. It was not so much a walk as a bush bash as the track was mostly overgrown by fireweed and nettles, much to Rob's discomfort as he had foolishly stripped down to shorts and t-shirt. The first thing we saw at the creek was a willow, which was quickly dispatched. Reg and I continued on, ripping out a foxglove on the way, dropping back into the creek at the second crossing and working our way up, finding the odd Tutsan plant, but not many. Then we came to a deep hole that was lined with a large clump of Tutsan, all budded up and coming into flower. We worked diligently until lunch time (to be honest we worked until the depth of water threatened to change the pitch of my voice, 'twas a tad cool), then headed back to the vehicles, disturbing a Rufous Fantail from his insect chasing and a small crayfish from his rocky abode on the way.

We met up with Rob and Jane on the way, they hadn't gotten far either, being distracted by a few small willows and, of all things, a marijuana plantation. They had gathered 26 small plants that Rob would have to deliver to the local constabulary. Wendy met us just as we emerged back at the cars for lunch. After lunch, nothing of note occurred, we worked near the vehicles until 3.30pm, only having nettles and the ubiquitous blackberries to contend with. Judging from the amount of ground (or water) we covered, we'll need either a huge increase in manpower or several years to tackle the Tutsan.

Butterfly Orchid Survey **November Activity Report by Cathy Beamish**

Sunday saw me helping Ken Harris again with his annual Butterfly Orchid survey. I am very pleased to report that we had quite a successful day. A large percentage of last year's counted plants were still present and putting on an amazing display of flowers. We even found a few more plants that Ken hadn't previously recorded! This may have been their first flowering season, making them so much easier to find. The few plants that we were unable to find from last year had been recorded as attached to a dead tree or branch, on the ends of twigs or hanging by their roots, all of which mean that the plant is unlikely to survive to the following season. There were a couple of large dead branches lying on the ground with the orchid still attached, but there is not much hope of them surviving in this position.

I am pleased to say that I survived scrambling up and down the muddy, slippery banks of the creek. Mind you, my legs spent the next two days reminding me of their effort. Just shows how unfit I am! I also escaped the joys of large patches of stinging nettle, thanks mainly to the gloves provided by Rob. Ken also survived the day largely unscathed, surprising considering a couple of the slips he had. Overall, a successful and enjoyable day.