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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – April 2005

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

In the Mailbox

Landing on the editorial desk this month are:

- Friends of Tarra-Bulga NP newsletter for Autumn 2005. Within this newsletter there is an invitation to attend a weekend of activities led by Bruce Fuhrer, a well known naturalist, photographer and author. There will be a Saturday night slide show, at 7.30pm on 16/4/05, in the Visitors Centre theatre, followed by a guided walk on Sunday 17/4/05 at 9.30am. RSVP to Peter Bryant on 5166 1759.
- Canopy (Parks Victoria) newsletter no.24 for March 2005.
- An invitation from Latrobe City to nominate for the Tidy Towns 2005 competition. I'm not sure what this has to do with our group, but the closing date for nominations has passed anyway.

Calendar Conundrums

It seems we have a clash of activities happening in September. Our program includes an excursion to somewhere on Sunday 18/9/05. Organ Pipes NP was suggested as a destination, but luckily nothing yet has been organised. We have just found out that this years Friends Conference will be on the same weekend in the Grampians (which is also the first weekend of the school holidays), which some of us would be keen to attend and which would no doubt limit the availability of other Friends groups to host our excursion.

Any suggestions? Possibilities include altering our excursion date back or forward a week or two, changing our planned destination to somewhere more local (or to the Grampians?), cancelling September entirely or anything else you can come up with. Have a think about it and let us know what you would prefer, we still have some time up our sleeves before we have to finalise our plans.

April Activity

Wendy tells us that she won't be able to attend April's planned tree guard removal session, so the rest of us (ie. Rob) have decided that we won't do it either. Instead we will continue with our Tutsan destruction while the weather is still reasonable and the water in Billy Creek not so cold. Tree guard removal will be deferred until Wendy is available. Thus, we will meet at the Braniff's Road gate at 10am on Sunday, April 17, don the waders and hopefully finish off the rest of Billy Creek, as far as Tutsan is concerned. Don't forget to bring your own lunch and refreshments and wear suitable clothing for walking down the creek, although some pairs of waders will be available.

Rambling about the Park

On Friday, April Fool's Day, Cathy and I decided to go for a wander around the southern reaches of the Park in search of autumn-flowering orchids, in particular Midge Orchids (*Genoplesium* sp.). These have not been recorded in the Park, but they do grow nearby in a number of locations in similar habitat and we could see no reason why they wouldn't be in the Park. They are, however, diminutive in stature and cryptic in colour, blending in very well with their surroundings, making them very difficult to find. We were inspired by trips a fortnight previously to the Button Grass Walk in Bunyip State Park (with APS Victoria), where we found the Bearded Midge Orchid (*Genoplesium morrisii*) and to Gelantipy over Easter (with Aust. Native Orchid Society), where we found a variety of Greenhoods (*Pterostylis aestiva*, *atrans*, *coccina*, *decurva*, *fischii*, *laxa* & *revoluta*), some Parson's Bands (*Eriochilus cucullatus*), the occasional late Hyacinth Orchid (*Dipodium roseum*) and some finished Midge Orchids setting seed.

We started at the Brewster's Road gate and wandered down the track to the sandy area above the dam, where the Duck Orchids flower in spring, taking our time and hoping something would catch our eye. Eventually something did, but it wasn't a Midge Orchid. It was a Tiny Greenhood (*Pterostylis parviflora*) standing perhaps 4 inches high with a couple of flowers in full bloom. Another was found a couple of feet away. I took some photos while Cathy kept searching, but nothing more was found so we continued along the track, dropping down into Muttonwood Creek and climbing out the other side until we reached the south-west corner of the Stringybark Ridge Track. Only the leaves of the Autumn Bird Orchid were apparent in some extensive colonies, but no flowers of course. Instead of retracing our steps we decided to continue up Stringybark, then make our way out to the southern boundary and follow the fence back to Muttonwood Creek, then up and over Silvertop Hill and back to the car. No more orchids were found, the day was hot, we were tired from the occasional scrub bashing, so we decided any Midge Orchids could wait for discovery until next year.

Weed Wars, Episode IV March Activity Report

On Sunday, March 20, six intrepid weeders arrived at the Braniff's Road gate right on cue. A brisk discussion ensued on a variety of subjects, such as the vagaries of Microsoft when attempting to work with photos while compiling newsletters, the trials and tribulations of calendar clashes and new advances in weed spraying technique within Morwell NP. Rob conveyed the welcome news that talks with contractors had resulted in the ability to use Tordon 75-D in knapsack carriers with manual spray nozzles very close to stream side, such that the contractors had walked the length of Billy Creek within the Park, even the couple of kilometres above the weir, and sprayed all the Tutsan to within inches of the creek. Even overhanging plants had been pulled back over land, sprayed and released. This meant our slow, time consuming and pedantic search, cut and paint method suddenly became much faster, as we now only had to seek out those plants that were obviously not wilting and still growing, evidently having been missed by the contractors.

The conversation was so lively that a couple of wombats down in the gully below could take no more and decided on a quickish and fairly noisy, stick-snapping escape, bringing their presence to our attention. That was our prompt to stop gas-bagging and be on our way into the wilds. Up to the weir we drove, through all the newly maintained fords, then donned our waders, split into two groups and commenced our course of destruction. Cathy, Ken and I headed upstream to our finishing point last year, while Rob, Wendy and Jane started at the weir and worked downstream. Very little of significance occurred: we paused to prop up a Mulberry that had been bowled over by the February flood; we removed a crop of Jerusalem Cherry (*Solanum pseudocapsicum*) just above the weir; we admired the Muttonwoods in full fruit and collected a few berries for our seed supplies. We finished our section, caught up with the other group, had lunch, then continued to work downstream for the afternoon. We found and removed the odd Tutsan plant that appeared to be healthy and unsprayed, but by and large, very few compared to last month had to be eradicated. More wombats, a wallaby, plenty of birds, wasps and bees flitting around and small trout darting out of our way kept our attentions wandering, but we persisted long enough to complete all the unchecked sections of Billy Creek above the Braniff's Road ford, leaving only the section down to Junction Road to complete next time.