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# Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

## *Newsletter – October 2005*

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. Spring has sprung! Some decent rainfall, the odd day of warmer weather, more hours of sunlight: all have contributed to the greening of the countryside and the seasonal blooms. Our recent trip to the Grampians highlighted what a difference a bit of water can make. Back in June, the place was dry, brown and dusty, with creeks barely flowing and dams all but empty. Now, even though they are still well short of enough to get through the summer, the countryside looks much happier, green, almost lush in places, waterfalls putting on their normal display, plants and animals doing their spring things. All very good for a relaxing break to soothe the nerves, reduce the stress levels and forget all about what I need to write in monthly newsletters. Thanks to Ken for his contribution of an article on the area deliberately burnt back in April, that's a whole page of newsletter I don't have to come up with!

### In the Mailbox

Three items have appeared on the desk this month:

- FriendsNet Newsletter No. 52, August 2005. A collection of interesting reports from various Friends Groups around Victoria.
- Under Control Newsletter No. 30, June 2005. A pest plant and animal management newsletter put out by DSE and DPI.
- An updated Community Engagement Policy and Strategy Booklet from Latrobe City.

If you would like a gander at these, let us know.

### October Activity

It is once again time for our annual Koala count. Please let all your interested contacts know, as the more that come along, the more successful the occasion will be. The official part of the day will commence at 1.30pm on Sunday, October 16 in the Kerry Road (Foster's Gully) Picnic Ground. I would expect that there will be the normal pre-count BBQ's happening for various participants. Don't forget to bring along a pair of binoculars, a chair to sit on (I'm sure seats will be at a premium), your own refreshments and wear suitable clothing and footwear for strolling about the Park on the formed tracks.

### Bunyips and Cannibals September Activity Report

Only four intrepid souls ventured out to the carpark opposite the Morwell Post Office on Sunday, September 11. Reg was waiting for us as usual and Ken was not long in appearing. We waited for a little while to see if anyone else would appear, but the freezing cold wind soon drove us into the car and on our way. Whether it was the weather or the change in activity date that accounted for the lack of attendance remains to be seen.

We had the Button Grass Walk in Bunyip SP to ourselves, donning our coats for the walk as the weather remained grim. Pea flowers seemed to be the order of the day, with several egg and bacon varieties (*Pultenaea* sp.) and lots of purple peas (*Hovea*, *Glycine*, *Hardenbergia*) on display. Wattles were also prevalent, with Heath and Spike Wattles and Prickly Moses all in full bloom. A couple of Hakea species were flowering (*H. decurrens*, *H. ulicina*), while a couple more were finished or just

budding up (*H. nodosa*, *H. teretifolia*). Pink Swamp Heath (*Sprengelia incarnata*) was in full bloom in the wetter sections amongst the Button Grass and Coral Fern was abundant around the swamp margins.

We decided to drive to the picnic ground at Mt Cannibal for our lunch, a good choice considering the weather and the availability of a shelter and toilet at this spot. The weather took a turn for the worst, with showers threatening and the wind picking up even more. We still took our walk up the hill, braving the elements, particularly the howling gale on the western lookout point. It was a pleasure to wander over to the eastern side to get away from the wind. There were plenty of flowers to see as well, a couple of Greenhood Orchids, some Donkey Orchids and lots of other small lilies like Early Nancies and Blue Squills. Horny Conebush was in flower, along with the introduced *Erica baccans* creating a pink haze on the hillsides. Still, an enjoyable outing on an ordinary day.

### After the Fire By Ken Harris

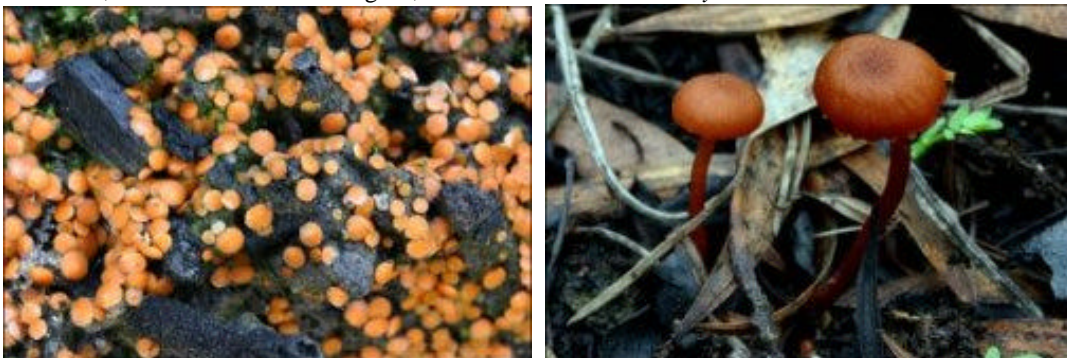
Earlier this year the department did a successful fuel reduction burn on the northern end of Stringybark Ridge. Some of that area is quite an important one for orchids, so on 14<sup>th</sup> August, I had a first look over the burnt area to see if anything interesting was emerging.

Crossing Fosters Gully on the way, the Mountain Ducks were present, as usual for this time of year. There were 7 or 8 of them flying overhead calling loudly. One in particular was calling from a large Mountain Grey Gum close to the Fosters Gully bridge. It is lovely to see them like this every spring and it seems that they must nest in the big mature gum trees, even though it means that their babies have a long, complicated walk before they meet water for the first time. On the way up the track from the creek to Stringybark Ridge I found a patch of Nodding Greenhoods *Pterostylis nutans*, already in flower.

I had a pretty thorough look at the burnt area and found very little. There may be many orchids to appear later in the spring, but all I found was one small patch of Waxlips *Glossodia Major* plants (buds still at ground level) and a small patch of Helmet Orchids *Corybas diemenicus* with no sign of buds at all. Both of these were growing close to the Western boundary in a lightly burnt patch.

There were newly emerging seedlings of both Wattles and Eucalypts growing in quantity all over the area. One surprise was to find right in the middle of the fire, a large plant of Coarse Dodder-laurel *Cassytha melantha* almost untouched by the fire, although much of the Varnish Wattle *Acacia verniciflua* on which it was growing had been burnt. Perhaps that is one of the advantages of not having any leaves!

More conspicuous than the missing orchids, were two species of fungus, both of which were growing in quantity all over the burnt area. The first is a type of cup fungus, appearing as a patch of pale orange discs (2 to 3mm across). This one was particularly common and proves to be *Anthracobia muelleri*, known as Charcoal Cups, from its habit of appearing in the burnt aftermath of a fire. The other was less common, but still occurring in patches all over the burnt area and is a more conventional toadstool, brownish, with a brown stem and gills, which I believe to be *Inocybe australiensis*.



I will be back in the same area later in the spring to look again for the orchids!