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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – September 2006

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

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G'day everyone, welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. Cold around here isn't it, even though the boffins continue to tell us the average temperatures are increasing at an alarming rate. Could be, though, that it just seems cold to us because we've only just arrived back from Vanuatu. Funnily enough, all the locals over there are complaining it is the coldest August they've had in at least 30 years. Of the 21 days we spent there, only 4 were reasonably sunny, the rest overcast, but only a couple were wet. Even so, the temperature was still 25°C or better, more than enough for us Mexicans to bum around in t-shirts and shorts. The main disadvantage of the grey weather was the resultant lack of colour in the water and the corals, so we saw very little of the picture perfect postcard view of a tropical paradise. Maybe we'll have to go back to make up for it: next week sounds good!

Tree Guard Removal **August Activity Report**

By Jane Sultana

Denis, Aaron, Liam and I arrived at 10 am at the Junction Road carpark. Rob, Wendy and Beryl were already there. A few minutes later Ken appeared. After chatting for ten minutes or so we set off for the Tebb Terrace entrance. The first lot of tree guards to be removed were just inside the gate. We all set to work. Most of the guards were in good enough condition to be salvaged for reuse. Aaron (now a big 3 year old) was extremely enthusiastic, ferrying tree guards from tree to trailer at lightening speed.

While walking to the next clump of tree guards we spotted a large mob of kangaroos bounding through the bush. Aaron was excited to see the kangaroos but even before they had disappeared he was urging us to keep moving to catch up with Rob who was towing the trailer to our next stop. "Where Rob? Need to find Rob" he called. "Need to collect more tree guards". Hopefully his willingness to help will last for a few years yet!

At our next stop, while the rest of us set to work removing guards, Ken was busy trying to photograph a couple of dung beetles. Unfortunately they both flew and he only got one photo. Hopefully it will be clear enough for him to identify the species.

By lunch time the trailer was half filled with reusable tree guards. In the back of the ute were a few (but not too many) badly broken ones. We enjoyed our lunch on a grassy clearing with the sun shining warmly upon us. After lunch Denis and I decided to head for home. Little Liam (now 4 months old) had refused to sleep in his pram and was getting rather tired and grumpy. We farewelled the others, who were about to cross the creek and continue their good work.

September Activity

Our next activity is scheduled for Sunday, September 17, to commence at 10am. Our war on weeds is due to continue after a 6 month hiatus, so the plan is to meet at the Junction Road gate to the Billy Creek section of the Park and await further guidance. You will need to bring your own lunch and refreshments, and suitable clothing and footwear for the weather conditions on the day and the environments you may be working in. Secateurs and loppers may come in handy if you prefer to use your own.

In the Mailbox

The following items were handed to me at the AGM. Let me know if you would like a read, I'll organise getting them to you:

- Letter from Parks Victoria Regional Manager, East Region, confirming our successful Community Grants application for \$2300, to assist with our weed control program.
- An invitation and registration form from Latrobe City for a Dinner Forum entitled 'Creating Dynamic Community Groups' to be held on 13/9/06.
- FriendsNet Newsletter No.55, May 2006.
- Friends of Coolart Newsletter 2/06.
- Parks Victoria Canopy Newsletter No.29, July 2006.
- DSE/DPI Under Control Newsletter No.34, June 2006.

Friends of Morwell National Park **Annual General Meeting- 6/08/06**

The day we left for Vanuatu, we managed to attend the AGM at the Howell residence in Churchill. Here are the minutes:

AGM declared open at 1.43pm.

Attendance: Rob Howell, Ken Harris, Wendy Steenbergen, Dorothy Reinkowsky, Cathy and Mike Beamish.

Apologies: Denis and Jane Sultana, Reg Felmingham, Tom Lawless.

Minutes of previous AGM: Read and accepted as a true account.

Reports:

The President's Report (copy included) was read and accepted. (Mike, Wendy)

The Ranger's Report (copy included) was read and accepted. (Ken, Cathy)

The Treasurer's Report was read and accepted. (Wendy, Mike)

Election of Office Bearers:

President: Ken Harris (Wendy, Dorothy).

Vice-President: Cathy Beamish (Mike, Wendy).

Secretary: Jane Sultana (Cathy, Mike). (Accepted nomination by email prior to meeting)

Treasurer: Wendy Steenbergen (Cathy, Dorothy).

Newsletter: Mike Beamish (Wendy, Cathy).

Publicity: Denis Sultana (Mike, Wendy). (Accepted nomination by email prior to meeting)

General Business:

1. Motion that the membership fee structure to remain unchanged for the next financial year. Passed unanimously. (Wendy, Cathy)
2. Motion to pay the Incorporation Fee at the due time. Passed unanimously. (Wendy, Cathy)

AGM declared closed at 2.20pm.

President's Report

From Ken Harris, August 1, 2006.

This year is something of a milestone for the Friends of Morwell National Park. Our very first meeting was on 10th May 1986, so we have now completed more than 20 years of watching over Morwell National Park. The anniversary went by unnoticed, so perhaps we should plan some celebration of our 21st Anniversary in May next year. I think we can all be proud of what we have achieved over the last 20 years.

This year we had a year without any tree-planting. Weed removal has become our main activity, as we attack the Tutsan all along the edges of Billys Creek. Tutsan removal was our activity in August and December 2005 and again in February, March and April this year. We have now covered the whole creek at least twice and have made great progress, but we are now seeing seedlings from dormant seed beginning to appear and cannot rest on our laurels for a while yet. We have a further grant to help with this project for the next season.

Last September, we took a break from working in the park and made an excursion to the Button Grass Walk in the Bunyip State Park and after lunch visited Mt. Cannibal. Despite mixed weather, we had a delightful day, looking at numerous wildflowers, including several orchids.

October saw our annual Koala count. Not as well attended as some years, but the usual three walks were surveyed and a total of 8 koalas were seen and a couple more heard. We received some very good publicity afterwards in the form of a letter to the Latrobe Valley Express from a family who joined us for the day.

In November I made the usual Orchid count in Fosters Gully, assisted by Sheina, while the rest of the group worked at the propagation shed, potting some *Rapanea* seedlings and sorting out masses of Blue Gum and Acacia seeds. Blackwood seeds are hard work as they like to stay attached to their pods!

In December, after the Tutsan pulling in the morning, a very enjoyable end of year BBQ was held at Rob Howell's home.

January as usual was given over to seed collecting. Varnish Wattle *Acacia verniciflua* was the main target and plenty of seed was collected. The second target of Prickly Moses *A. verticillata* was harder to find and only a little seed was collected.

After all the Tutsan pulling was over for the year, May and June were used for some track work. In May we created a new Track linking the Muttonwood Track to the top of Silvertop Hill, along the Park boundary. In June we reformed the section of the Coprosma Track, along Billys Creek from the foot of Blue Gum Hill. Both tasks were very successful. It would be great to see that section of the Coprosma Track gravelled as it will otherwise overgrow again very rapidly.

In July we took a rest again and paid a visit to Mt. Worth State Park where we joined an outing exploring the Fungi. The outing was very ably led by Paul George, who was kept busy identifying all the fungi located by a large group of naturalists.

August last year saw the heaviest snowfall for many years and quite a bit of damage occurred in the Park.

In other breaking news, we hear through the grapevine that we are in line for some substantial grants from the Regional Catchment Improvement Program and Greenfleet that will enable us to put in place our plans for the revegetation of Blue Gum Hill. The word is that we will receive enough to fence off 6 to 7 hectares of hillside, put in place weed and rabbit controls, then grow and plant several thousand trees, all by contractor. This work has got under way. Blue Gum Hill has been surveyed for the cutting of access routes by bulldozer, to enable the tree planting contractors to get their gear in. The bulldozers have been busy cutting tracks up and across the hillside, in preparation for the contract planting that will commence in June or July. Our seed has been sent over to Hamilton, in the western district of Victoria, where it is being grown and prepared. The plants will be planted by hand and all will have tree guards installed around them. Imagine the difference all this is going to make to that bare hillside!

Along the same lines in the negative, there is still no progress on the Jumbuk Road log truck stalemate and therefore no progress in removing the pines that are holding up our plans for that area.

The proposed Coprosma Track is unlikely to proceed in the near future due to ongoing maintenance funding concerns, and the proposed land swap (the bare block off Reidy's Rd for a vegetated block up Side Creek and below Moran's Rd) is still awaiting approval.

Friends of Baw Baw NP, Morwell NP, Tarra Bulga NP, Mt Worth SP, Lyrebird Forest Walk, Glen Nayook, Crossover Regional Park and The Mt St Gwinear Ski Patrol gathered in Traralgon on Sunday 20th November to celebrate another year of outstanding achievements by all the volunteer groups operating in the Latrobe Parks District. The weather was excellent, the venue ideal and a delicious barbeque meal was enjoyed by all who attended. Ranger In Charge, Peter Kershaw, made a speech highlighting the achievements of each group and congratulated some long-serving groups and individuals eg: Friends of Baw Baw 25 years and Ken and Wendy close to 20 years on the committee of FOMNP. He also spoke of the great work being done on environmental projects by groups with the help of Volunteer Grants and announced the funding of some major revegetation projects for Mt Worth and Morwell NP.

A lovely new bird was added to the Park list in February. I was walking along the Western Boundary, when a Blue-winged Parrot, *Neophema chrysostoma*, flew up from the paddock and landed in a Eucalypt tree in the extreme North-west corner of the Park. Only in the Park by 5 metres, but in the Park nevertheless.

Cathy and Mike attended the Owl Night hosted at the Kerry Road BBQ by Parks Victoria and DSE on March 7. They were treated to a tasty BBQ, followed by an informative talk on owls. A spotlight walk along Foster's Gully didn't reveal any owls. The only sign of an owl was a call from a Southern Boobook.

Churchill Festival was held on April 1 and the Friends stall (shared with the local Australian Plant Society) was well staffed throughout the day. The weather was ordinary, the site for our display was not the best, but a few books were sold, a few people expressed interest in joining the group. The give-away indigenous plants provided by Col Jackson proved to be a drawcard for getting people to talk to us.

The weed control programs are in full swing throughout the Park. Apart from our own efforts with Tutsan, weeds such as Blackberry, Ragwort and various thistles are all subject to spraying programs, a large patch of foxgloves has been severely dealt with along Billy Creek, several *Prunus* plants have been found and pulled and the Pampas Grass on the Zig Zag Track is continuing to be monitored.

At the start of the March war on Tutsan, we were delighted to see a flight of swifts (Whitethroated Needletails) overhead. These lovely birds are not often seen in the Park, being autumn visitors from North of Australia.

Thank you to all Friends for their great work throughout the year and especially to our ranger Rob Howell for his support and help in caring for the Park.

Ranger's Report

From Rob Howell

The PV Community Group Grant we received for 2005/06 of \$5000 enabled us to spray more Tutsan and tackle other weeds like Turnip Weed and Californian Thistle, along with the odd assortment of other weeds which keep appearing along Billys Creek. The usual good works were done by contractors on Blackberries, Thistles (mostly Shore & Spear) and Ragwort in the Billys Creek area as well as a few isolated areas around the perimeter of the western section of the park.

Our efforts to control European Wasps over the years seem to be paying off and we were only able to find one nest to destroy this year. However, climatic factors may be an influence in population variations, so we will have to remain vigilant and be ready for whatever emerges this summer.

I have been liaising with Rob Hescoock from Grandridge Plantations and it seems that the Latrobe City Council is still a long way from solving the issues around log trucks using Jumbuk Road. So it appears that the harvesting of the pines in the Park and the subsequent revegetation of the site are still a fair way off.

We have been fortunate to receive funding from the RCIP (via West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority) and Greenfleet to do revegetation works in Morwell NP & Mt Worth SP. The Morwell NP component of this will see 7000 trees (Blue Gum, Varnish Wattle & Prickly Moses) planted on the hill east of the weir in Billys Creek. Hopefully, the scars left by the tracks which have recently been cut to give the tree planting contractors access to the site, will soon be covered by a forest of healthy young trees.

Thanks again to the committee and all members of the Friends of Morwell NP and congratulations on another successful and rewarding year of activities in and related to the park.

Friends of Morwell National Park **Committee Meeting- 6/08/06**

Meeting declared open at 2.22pm.

Attendance: Rob Howell, Ken Harris, Wendy Steenbergen, Dorothy Reinkowsky, Cathy and Mike Beamish.

Apologies: Denis and Jane Sultana, Reg Felmingham, Tom Lawless.

Minutes of previous Committee Meeting: Read and accepted as a true account.

Business arising from previous Committee Meeting Minutes:

1. No action has been required as yet with regard to the Morwell National Park website.
2. Future participation in the Churchill Festival will depend on the Committee's assessment of benefits, should an invitation be forthcoming.

Correspondence:

1. As per monthly newsletter.
2. We received a DSE Regional Fire Plan and Survey Form, which Ken will consider.

General Business:

1. Consideration was given to promoting the annual Koala Count, with the aim of recruitment of new members, to local community groups such as Scouts, Field Naturalists, APS and Garden Clubs. The possibility of a pre-count BBQ was raised.
2. Our 2006 Christmas function will be a BBQ at Kerry Road.
3. Our program for 2007 was discussed and a broad outline decided upon. Mike will update the form and publish a copy in the newsletter before year's end.

Meeting declared closed at 3.10pm.