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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – November 2006

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

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G'day everyone, welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. This one is coming to you from a hotel room (Four Points Sheridan, no less) in fine and sunny, but cool and breezy Geelong. Good thing I'm not paying for it, other than having to do a bit of work every now and then. Rather than stare at the four walls, it is a perfect opportunity to catch up on all of those little administrative jobs (such as editing newsletters) that seem to always be left until the last minute.

As seems to be the trend lately, along with the lack of rain, there is very little to report as far as Morwell NP is concerned. The planting of Blue Gum Hill has commenced (and is probably complete as I write) and no doubt all the tree guards will stand out like the proverbials for all to see. There is still no word on when the Jumbuk pines will meet their demise. Only a couple of items have appeared out of the mailbox: Issue 30, September 2006 of the Parks Victoria newsletter Canopy and an invitation to attend a free 'Volunteer Walking Leaders / Motivators Training Course' held by Latrobe City on October 25. It was already past the registration date when we received it! Also coming up in early November is the annual Parks Victoria Volunteers BBQ get-together, for which you should have already received your invitations direct from Rob Howell, as RSVP is required before you are likely to receive this newsletter. Perhaps we'll see you there!

The Koala Count **October Activity Report**

We couldn't decide what the weather would do, so went prepared for anything on the afternoon of Sunday, October 15. We were neither first nor last to arrive, but there were no problems with parking at any time, which indicates that the number of people participating were short of what we would like. As a result, Rob decided that we only had enough counters to cover the two main tracks, Foster's Gully and Stringybark Ridge. Cathy and I drew the short straw for the long walk, accompanied by Reg, Beryl, Joan, Mandy and Shirley. Rob, Wendy, Peter, the Sultanas, Rolf, Sally and their two kids all chose the quick and easy route.

Off to a flying start with two beasts in the book by the time we reached the junction at the base of the ridge, we then experienced the usual dry spell as we wandered up through the stringybarks. Not that Koalas won't be found in the Messmates, just that they prefer the gums, which makes them all the more difficult to notice when they are sitting in that one stringybark amongst hundreds of others. We didn't see another bear until near the top of the ridge where the Mountain Grey Gums become more common

and closer to the track. Then we were hard put to take a couple of paces without sighting the next addition to our list. As usual, we indulged in much debate about gender, this one surely has smaller ears, that one a bigger nose, none had a convenient youngster in tow and none would give us a clear view of its rear end. Still, we added six more animals to the records, for a total of eight. The long walk back down the hill on the return leg of the track yielded no further sightings although we did hear a call from over in Foster's Gully, which the other group didn't record. A short, sharp shower of rain as we descended off the ridge hardly wet the ground, but hastened our pace back to the cars.



After our success on the ridge, we were surprised to hear that the Foster's Gully group had failed to sight a single Koala. Our bragging was short-lived, however, as they had seen something that just about trumped our efforts; a Powerful Owl at roost with its prey at hand (claw?). As most of the counters headed for home, Rob offered to drive those who were interested into the sighting site, to see if the owl was still there. It was! In a perfect position for photos, too. Murphy's Law dictates that when you have your camera set up for close-up photography, you will always find a shot that requires a zoom lens. Such was the case. I did take a couple of shots, but most weren't worth a second look. The only one that I was able to digitally manipulate to look half reasonable is shown at left. Still, we can now claim a sighting of this endangered bird and hope we get another opportunity in the future when we are more organised.

November Activity

On the calendar for Sunday, November 19, is the annual Butterfly Orchid survey. Ken will require the assistance of one person for the survey, the rest of us will keep busy with some of the odd jobs that crop up during the year, which aren't substantial enough to warrant their own activity day. We will meet at the Kerry Road car park at 10am to await further direction. You will need to bring along your own lunch and refreshments, suitable clothing and footwear for the conditions on the day.

Australian Native Orchid Society

On Sunday, December 3, at 10am, a group of enthusiastic ANOS members will visit Morwell NP, primarily to look at the Butterfly Orchids, but also to have a look at any other species that may be around at the time. I have been asked to provide some guiding, but other members of the Friends group are welcome to join in. Any information on the whereabouts of flowering orchids, either in the Park or elsewhere in the local area, would be most appreciated.