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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – September 2007

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

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G'day everyone, welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. My contribution to this edition is minimal, just a short reminder for our activity in September. Most of the work has been done by our Ranger, President and Secretary in putting together the minutes and various reports presented at our AGM at the beginning of August. This fills up the allotted space nicely, so I'll hold over the August activity report until the next issue. It is a pleasant change to put together the efforts of others and not have to write it all myself.....

September Activity

We have not planned an activity on our normal third Sunday, due to our participation in the Friends Network Conference to be held at Rawson on September 7, 8 and 9. Ken, Cathy and I have registered our attendance at the conference and will host at least one walk in Morwell National Park on the afternoon of Saturday, September 8, somewhere around 2pm. Ken will lead a walk around Foster's Gully and, if enough interest is shown at the conference, Cathy and I will lead a walk along Billys Creek. Members are welcome to come along and assist on these walks and would not be required to register for the conference to do so.

Friends of Morwell National Park - Annual General Meeting- 5/08/07

Annual General Meeting declared open at 1:50pm

Attendance: Wendy Steenberg, Jane Sultana, Denis Sultana, Cathy Beamish, Mike Beamish, Dorothy Reinkowsky, Leslie Reinkowsky, Ken Harris.

Apologies: Reg Felmingham, Tom Lawless, Rob Howell.

Minutes of previous AGM: Read and accepted as a true account. (Cathy, Wendy)

Reports:

The President's Report was read and accepted. (Jane, Dorothy)

Friends of Morwell National Park- President's Report for 2006 to 2007

This year the Friends of Morwell National Park came of age. Our very first meeting was on 10th May 1986, and on 10th May 2007, we celebrated our 21st Anniversary. The celebration was twofold. In the afternoon we invited our guests to join us on a walk along Billys Creek to the weir, where we laid on a billy tea. The walk enabled us to show off how much we have achieved in the way of revegetation over the years. In the evening we invited our guests and existing members to share a meal with us at the Yinnar Pub. The whole day was a great success and we were delighted to welcome so many old members. Ian Roche, our ranger when we started, and his wife Gail who played a leading role in the foundation of the Friends, were particularly welcome. We were also pleased to welcome Yvonne Aplin who was a founding member and past president of the Friends and her husband Brian, together with Wendy Nickson, and Paul and Judy Lambert. At the dinner, Cathy Beamish provided a fantastic birthday cake, decorated with the floral emblems of all the states of Australia.

This year we were again without any tree-planting. A remnant activity is the removal of the tree-guards and only one main area (at the top of the Lodge track) still remains to be cleared. Otherwise our main activities have been weed removal and track construction. We made a further attack on the Tutsan all along the edges of Billys Creek. We have now covered the whole creek at least three times and Tutsan is becoming much rarer along Billys Creek. We did find a lot of seedlings from dormant seed and they will keep us busy for a while yet. An interesting development along Billys Creek has been a major flood which has deposited large quantities of silt all over the creek banks. This may have buried tutsan plants, but may also have provided a fertile seed bed for new plants to appear. We can also expect new willows to appear from branches brought down from further up the creek.

Track construction occupied us for a time on the start of the Coprosma track. The track has been levelled and cleared of weeds over a considerable distance, but the upper sections of the track are still poorly defined. We are seeking a grant for work on clearing the upper sections of the track to carry it through to the top of Blue Gum Hill. Our track work has had a major setback during June/July. A major storm brought Billys Creek up, flooding several areas including the Weir flat. This was combined with a powerful wind storm and large numbers of trees were brought down. The Weir flat was the worst hit, with about a dozen huge Manna Gums felled by the storm, but the damage was extended further than the Weir. The track was blocked at several places before the foot of Blue Gum Hill and further blockages have undone our great work on the Coprosma Track. We used our July activity to clear what we could of the damage and it is now again walkable as far as the ascent up Blue Gum Hill, but the repairs to the Coprosma Track still await us.

October saw our annual Koala count. Again the Koala count was poorly attended and this time we were only able to survey the two main walks. A total of 8 koalas were seen, all from the Stringybark Ridge Track, but the Fosters Gully group although drawing a blank for koalas, trumped the others with a superb sighting of a Powerful Owl (with its magpie prey in its talons).

In November I made the usual Orchid count in Fosters Gully, assisted by Cathy, while the rest of the group did various odd jobs, including an unsuccessful search for Swamp Gum seed and some sorting of our seed reserves. The Orchids were flowering well, but there has been a further loss of plants through the continuing drought and no fresh plants were detected on any of the plots.

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 19th November to celebrate another year of outstanding achievements by all the volunteer groups operating in the Latrobe Parks District. A delicious barbeque meal was enjoyed by all who attended.

In December, after the Tutsan pulling in the morning, a very enjoyable BBQ was held in the Kerry Road picnic area to celebrate the end of the year.

The work on the revegetation of Blue Gum Hill progressed and large numbers of seedlings were planted out on the steep hillside. Unfortunately, the extreme drought this summer made this a rather optimistic effort. The trees had to be planted, but it was so dry that a very low survival rate is expected.

There is still no positive progress on the Jumbuk Road log truck stalemate with the Council refusing permission for log trucks to carry the pines down Junction Rd, and there is therefore no progress in removing the pines that are holding up our plans for that area.

In September, the biennial conference of the Victorian Environmental Friends Network will take place in Rawson and the Friends of Morwell National Park will be co-hosting the conference with other Friends groups from the area. Our involvement will consist of an illustrated talk on our park and a field outing to the park for participants in the conference.

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.

Ken Harris
24th July 2007

The Ranger's Report was read and accepted. (Mike, Jane)

Ranger's Report – Morwell National Park 2006/07

The PV Community Group Grant we received for 2006/07 was reduced from the \$5000 of the previous year to \$2300 but still enabled us to spray more Tutsan along Billys Creek upstream of Coprosma Track and tackle other weeds like Turnip Weed and Californian Thistle. The usual good works were done by contractors on Blackberries, Thistles (mostly Shore & Spear) and Ragwort in the remainder of the Park.

Our efforts to control European Wasps over the past years still seem to be paying off and we were unable to find any nests to destroy this year. However, climatic factors may be an influence in population variations, with hot, dry summers, cold winters and floods having an impact. So, we will have to remain vigilant and be ready for whatever emerges in the future.

The funding we received from the RCIP scheme enabled us to plant 6,300 trees (mostly Blue Gums) across the big bare hill above the weir on Billys Creek. Unfortunately the lateness of the planting, the northerly aspect and the hot, dry spring and summer may have impacted heavily on the survival rate. It will be interesting to see what has survived up there now that we have had some good rainfall.

Speaking of rainfall, the total for June was 262mm, the majority of which fell over 2 days. This is the most rain for any one month since recording for the Park began in January 1978. This has resulted in major damage to the creek crossings in Billys Creek and many large fallen trees which will need to be cleaned up to re-open the tracks in the area. Unfortunately, the heavy scouring of the creek banks and large quantities of silt which have been deposited may encourage a new generation of Tutsan and Willows for us to seek and destroy. But we love it don't we!

Away from the creek, the revegetated areas along Billys Creek are looking great due to the continuing growth of the trees, evolving understorey in some places and the concerted effort by the Friends Group to remove old tree guards.

Many thanks to the committee and all members of the Friends of Morwell NP, and congratulations on another successful and rewarding year of activities in the park.

Rob Howell
Ranger

The Treasurer's Report (copy available) was read and accepted. (Denis, Cathy)

Election of office Bearers:

President- Ken Harris (Nom-Cathy, Sec-Wendy)
Vice President- Cathy Beamish (Nom- Denis, Sec- Wendy)
Secretary- Jane Sultana (Nom-Wendy, Sec-Cathy)
Treasurer- Wendy Steenbergen (Nom-Dorothy, Sec- Denis)
Newsletter- Mike Beamish (Nom-Cathy, Sec-Denis)
Publicity- Denis Sultana (Nom-Cathy, Sec-Mike)

General Business:

Motion: the membership fee structure will remain unchanged at \$10 per person or \$15 per family or group (Wendy, Jane).
Passed unanimously.

Motion: recommend payment of the Incorporation Fee forthwith (Wendy, Cathy). Passed unanimously.

Annual General Meeting declared closed at 2:25pm

Friends of Morwell National Park- Committee Meeting- 5/08/07

Committee Meeting declared open at 2:25pm

Attendance: Wendy Steenbergen, Jane Sultana, Denis Sultana, Cathy Beamish, Mike Beamish, Dorothy Reinkowsky, Leslie Reinkowsky, Ken Harris.

Apologies: Reg Felmingham, Tom Lawless, Rob Howell.

Minutes of the previous Committee Meeting: Held on 6th August '06, were read and accepted as a true account. (Cathy, Wendy)

Business arising from previous meetings minutes:

Friends of Morwell National Park website: Ken's son has been hosting our Park website. At this stage he can continue doing this for us. When he can no longer help we will investigate other internet options.

Ken has yet to consider the DSE Regional Fire Plan but will do so at the earliest convenience.

Correspondence:

Inwards: As per monthly newsletter

Outwards: Incorporation statement of Public Officer.

General Business:

Churchill Festival: We have sent in an expression of interest to take part in the 2008 Churchill festival to be held on March 15th

Government Grant: We are awaiting news of our 07/08 government grant in which we applied for funding to extend the Coprosma track. Contractors will be required to complete the heavy work.

Koala Count: To encourage more participants at our annual Koala Count in October it was decided that we will:

- hold a sausage sizzle before the event (Wendy to organize)
- try to get stories (with photo) promoting the event in the Express and Churchill News (Denis to organize)
- put an ad in the Monash University newsletter (Cathy to arrange)

Great Victorian Bike Ride: The ride will be spending the night of 27th November in the area. The organizers have asked if we could run tours of the park in the afternoon.

Ken is willing to run tours from the Kerry Rd Picnic area. Ken will liaise with Sue Williams from Parks Vic.

Calendar of activities 2007: Our activities program for 2007 was discussed and activities for most months suggested. Mike will publish a copy of this calendar in a forthcoming newsletter.

New Member: The following new member was unanimously voted into the group.

-Leslie Reinkowsky Moved: Wendy, Seconded: Mike.

Banking: Wendy suggested that we close the book account and transfer the funds from this into our main account. This motion was seconded by Ken and agreed upon by all present.

Meeting declared closed at 3:55pm