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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – November 2007

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

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G'day everyone and welcome to the latest edition of your newsletter. What a busy time of year! Cathy and I are just about run ragged keeping up with work commitments and all the activities organised by the various groups to which we are associated. Just about every weekend is booked up already and we haven't even factored in the Christmas season yet. Can't complain though. Aside from the fact that nobody will listen, we have seen some beautiful countryside (Errinundra Plateau and McKillop's Bridge area on the upper Snowy River, with APS Latrobe Valley), been guided through some magnificent parks and gardens in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, with APS Victoria) and discovered some lovely flowering plants (in both the above and in the Moondarra Fire area, again with APS LV). Clashes in the timetable have meant that we missed out on the Koala Count in Morwell NP and in an orchid search around Orbost with ANOS. We have also experienced the highs and lows of the weather, scorching hot one weekend, pouring rain the next, but that is what happens in a normal springtime and it is much better than what happened over the last couple of years.

November Activity

On the calendar for Sunday, November 19, is the annual Butterfly Orchid survey, undertaken by Ken and a single volunteer. Other participants might be asked to undertake a variety of odd jobs, whatever is deemed a good proposition by our Ranger, Rob, on the day. This may include such things as weed removal, seed collecting or sowing, general housekeeping, walks, bird watching or any other activity which takes our fancy at the time. We will meet at the Kerry Road Picnic Area (or drive through to the propagation shed if the gate is open) at 10am, equipped with lunch, refreshments, suitable clothing and footwear for the conditions on the day.

Also, please keep in mind that participants in the Great Victorian Bike Ride will be staying in the Yinnar area on Tuesday, November 27. We have been asked to lead an activity in Morwell NP for interested riders, so if any of you are available to help with this activity it would be most appreciated. No doubt more information will be forthcoming on Sunday the 19th.

Counting Koalas October Activity Reports

Cathy and I were sweltering in better than 35°C heat at McKillop's Bridge on the Snowy River at about the same time as the Koala Count was getting underway. We didn't see any Koalas there, but there was a large and unhappy Lace Monitor sighted not too far away and we disturbed a White-bellied Sea Eagle from his camp at the junction of the Deddick and Snowy Rivers. Thanks to Jane and Ken for submitting their reports on the Koala Count.

From Jane Sultana:

After a front page article in the Churchill News and two good sized notices in The Express we were expecting huge numbers at our annual Koala Count. It therefore came as a surprise when only 11 adults and 2 children arrived to join the hunt. The participants were divided into three groups and each group set off on different walks in search of the elusive grey marsupial.

My group took the Fosters Gully loop. Despite our super hiking boots and high-tech binoculars we didn't spot a single koala. However we did see a wombat, two wallabies and a good sized lizard. At least this was enough wildlife to impress the children. The weather was warm but not too hot making for a very pleasant afternoons stroll.

On our return to base we met up with Ken's group. They had had better luck than us having spotted three koalas. I don't know about the third group because I had to make a quick getaway as my son Aaron (aged 4) was getting tired and hungry.

From Ken Harris:

Our October activity saw the annual Koala count in the Fosters Gully section of the park. Meeting at 1.30, there were 12 friends and Rob present so we were able to have parties covering the three main walks. When I arrived at the car park it looked as though we had a massive turn out, but it wasn't to be. There was a Church group having a barbecue lunch and not part of the Koala count at all.

We gathered at the gate for lack of space elsewhere and a plump beetle was spotted on the ground by the gate post. I of course photographed it and was subsequently able to identify it as one of the Darkling Beetles in the family Tenebrionidae. Our beetle is known as *Lepispilus rotundicollis*.



The Koala count was quite successful, but the Fosters Gully Group, which usually gets the highest count, reported a complete blank. They did not see a koala. I believe they saw an Eastern Water Skink.

I led the Jumbuk Road group and we were a bit more successful. We located two adult Koalas. The first was hard to see clearly to sex it, and as I manoeuvred around it, I finally saw not one face but two. It was a mother and baby. The second one we saw was a male. It proved a good day for orchids. Nothing exciting on our walk, but we found Pink Fingers in a couple of sites where it hadn't been recorded before.

The most successful group and the last back was the Stringybark Ridge group which include the ranger Rob Howell. They were able to report sightings for 8 koalas on Stringybark Ridge, bringing the days total to 11 koalas.