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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – March 2008

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G'day all, welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. I'm starting to create a tradition of being late with the production of this newsletter, my apologies if I'm cutting it too close to the mark.

Cathy and I have been off gallivanting around the countryside once again, taking advantage of the nice weather at this time of year and the availability of some long weekends due to Cathy's reduction in working hours and my recent hiatus from work. We spent four days touring around the Warrnambool area, looking at native plants with the APS Victoria crew in early March and then spent another four days last weekend camping on the banks of Shaw's Creek at Thomastown, between Bennison's and Holmes Plains on Kelly's Lane, just off the Tamboritha Road at over 1000m elevation north of Licola. The weather was perfect for both weekends, sunny with cooling breezes, not too many wildflowers on display at this time of year over in the south-west but the snow plains were putting on a wonderful display of alpine daisies. While the scars from last years fires were still apparent, regeneration is continuing and there are plenty of new plants arising from the ash beds. Hopefully they will get a chance to mature and establish the next generation before the next fire comes along.

The other benefit of the altitude is the temperature difference from the low country. On Sunday and Monday up on the snow plains it was a magnificent mid-20's, clear blue sky, gentle cooling breezes, perfect for wandering around Bryce's Gorge or dipping your toes into the icy mountain streams. Imagine our surprise when we headed home on Monday afternoon, having to turn the air conditioner on in the car half way down the mountain and finding the valley to be a dusty, hazy, stinking 38°C. It was almost enough for us to ignore all of our responsibilities, turn around and go back. We restrained ourselves, though and once we unpacked our gear, we consoled ourselves with a cool shower and a cold beer.

The Churchill Festival

We have put our hand up once again to mount a display at the Churchill Festival at Gaskin Park, Churchill on Saturday, March 15, between 10am and 3pm. All we need now is for Friends to come along and be prepared to man the display and encourage members of the public to consider joining the group. Similarly to last time, APS Latrobe Valley will be sharing the site with us and hopefully both our groups can benefit from the participation.

March Activity

Our next activity is scheduled for Sunday, March 16, 2008 at 10am. It is Wendy's favourite pastime (no one else thinks very much of it, though it needs to be done), yes, you guessed it, tree guard removal. While the weather is fine and the tracks dry, we will tackle the old wire guards that refuse to rust away quickly enough at one of the original planting sites at the top of the Lodge Track. We will meet at the Junction Road gate ready for transport to the working area, probably via Moran's Road. As always, you will need clothing and footwear suitable for the weather conditions and the working environment on the day, your own lunch and refreshments and any personal tools, such as pliers or wire cutters, which might come in useful for the job at hand.

Weed Wars – Episode XVII **February Activity Report**

Cathy and I were on the spot bright and early on 17/2/08, but Cathy wasn't staying as she had hired a wallpaper removal machine the day before and then been side-tracked so that the job didn't get done as planned. Thus, she had a hard day of stripping walls ahead of her, while I got to splash around in Billy Creek once again. I was enjoying a nice, hot cuppa when the rest of the crew began to arrive; Rob, Ken, Wendy, Reg, Beryl, Darren and Peter. The obligatories were soon dealt with and we were on our way to the Weir.

We actually went past the Weir to start with, as after our report on the condition of the Coprosma Track from last month, the crew wanted to have a closer look. In the end, we walked over both creek crossings, past where we finished our maintenance exercise last year and up on to the top of the grassy ridge where Ken had installed some new track markers. The track was a bit of a mess and would require a fair bit of effort to get it back to a reasonable condition.

By the time we had finished our inspection walk it was close to lunch time, so rather than jump in the creek for a short time, we decided to have an early lunch before starting our Weir Walk. Nobody seemed to be in any great hurry as we made our way back to the Weir to make use of the picnic table. The park was busier than we normally see, with several walkers and fishermen wandering past as we dined, some stopping to chat.

Eventually we were ready to tackle the Tutsan. Ken, Rob, Peter and I went in at the weir to work downstream, while Reg, Darren, Beryl and Wendy walked down to the last ford and worked downstream from there. It didn't take long for us to reach the last ford, so we leap-frogged the other team and drove down to the Potato Flat ford to work upstream from there. We worked steadily for a couple of hours, finding enough Tutsan and the occasional Willow, both Crack and Pussy, to keep us busy, but not delay us unduly. Some of the deeper pools held trout and one in particular was so unconcerned by our presence that it stayed still enough for Ken to photograph it! We met up with the other crew at just the right time to call it a day. Apart from an encounter with stripy serpent, their afternoon was of similar content to ours, so we parted company knowing we still had a couple of days work to finish the job for the year.