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G'day everyone and welcome to the latest edition of your newsletter. Will it ever rain properly? Our gauge here at Boolarra is struggling. Despite threats from the Bureau that falls are pending, they all seem to miss us completely. Adding in the measly 24mm in May and the paltry 47mm in June our half-year total is 231mm, less than 50% of what it should be at this time of year. Still, a nice 50mm in the first week of July was very welcome after 5 frosts in the last week of June. If the spring rains miss us again, I'll have to dig up the garden and start planting cacti.

Here are a few items of interest concerning the Park:

- A contractor, complete with dogs, has been rounding up the stray sheep in the Park over the last few weeks. So far 40 animals have been removed. Anyone seeing any sheep in the Park are asked to report details of the sighting to our Ranger, so steps can be taken for their removal.
- Back in May I reported that Greenfleet had been given quantities of our seed for propagation with the aim of replanting Blue Gum Hill. Well, not only have they grown the plants, they have planted them as well! 7000 Blue Gums have been put into the ground, but you won't see any difference from a distance, there are no tree guards. The seedlings have been treated with an anti-browsing agent containing iron filings and some foul-tasting but harmless concoctions to discourage the kangaroos, wallabies and wombats from nibbling on them. Now all we need is some rain to keep the plants alive over the next summer.
- The property bordering the Park on the top of Blue Gum Hill off Reidy's Road has been leased. The new tenants are much more hands on and have already proven amenable to fixing fences, planting trees around the perimeter and allowing access works through the property to the Park. We look forward to progressing some of these plans.
- As some of the waders used for weeding along Billys Creek have fallen into disrepair and members have found the full length waders difficult to work with, some new pairs of hip-waders have been purchased. Hopefully these will make our weeding sessions much more comfortable.
- In the mailbox this month is an invitation to participate in the March 2010 Churchill Festival. We will consult with our colleagues in the Australian Plant Society Latrobe Valley Group before making a commitment.
- Also in the mailbox is the May issue of FriendsNet Newsletter (No.67), which features reports on the effects of the bushfires at Kinglake, Bunyip, Yarra Flats and the Prom. This newsletter also contains registration forms for the Friends Network Conference to be held in Grantville (on the shores of Westernport Bay, on the road to Phillip Island) from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of September.

## **July Activity**

More tree-planting is on the cards! But we won't be tackling the Coprosma Track just yet. I believe Rob has his eye on some vacant areas on the top of Blue Gum Hill, which we will access from Reidy's Road. I'm not sure how much parking is available or how accessible the site is to conventional vehicles, so I suggest we meet at the Junction Road gate at 10am on Sunday, July 19 to discuss our options. As always you will need to bring your lunch and refreshments, any useful tools although most will be provided and wear clothing and footwear suitable for the work location and weather conditions on the day.

## **Planting in Paradise** **June Activity Report**

There seemed to be a spring in everyone's step as we met at the Junction Road gate on June 21. Tree planting was back on the agenda! Rob, Ken, Wendy, Darren, Beryl, Reg, Laura, Cathy and I were joined by Stephen, who had learned of our activities by keeping an eye on the archived newsletters on the website. Some conversation and news was conveyed while we waited for any possible latecomers. Reg hates hanging around wasting time gasbagging, so we were soon reminded we were there to do some work and chivvied into the vehicles for the short drive to the bottom of the Zig Zag Track. On the way a flash of yellow leaves caught our eyes, so a pause occurred while a stray plum tree was extracted from where it shouldn't have been.

At the base of the Zig Zag Track, our task was to replace trees that had failed to survive since being planted a few years back. Only two had survived from the original effort, so that meant most of the site had to be replanted. Swinging into action, we soon had our remnant tree-planting skills resurrected, with Ken positioning the tubes where he wanted them, the rest of us carting guards and stakes to the right locations, Darren, Stephen & Reg clearing a square foot of grass with the mattocks, I followed along excavating a hole with the Hamilton planter and the girls did the business of inserting the plant and positioning the guard for Rob and whoever else had finished their other job to hammer in the stake. Sounds complicated, but it all makes for a smooth operation! We soon had the site at capacity and moved along to the weir to put a few trees in amongst the open areas where the floods and storms had bowled over the big trees a couple of years ago. Efficiency was at a peak and before we knew it we had finished that site as well and were ready for lunch.

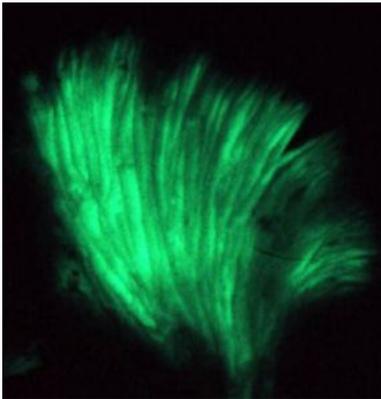
More yellow leaves were noticed on the hillside behind the weir, so, coupled with reports of Foxgloves running rampant, I decided to provide entertainment for the diners and attempt to scale the cliff to remove the offending weeds. The hardest bit was getting through the nettles along the creek, but once I'd found a way through the pricklies it was relatively simple to reach the plum tree on the bank. Removing it was another problem however, as the small branches visible from the other side of the creek were attached to a substantial trunk that was not going to be easily removed. My precarious position on the hillside didn't make things easier. In the end I was able to dig out by hand enough of the roots to extract the tree, much to the amusement of the audience when boulders began rolling down the hillside. On the way back to the picnic table, a few Foxgloves, Tutsans and Madeira Cherries were located and removed. After that effort, lunch was much appreciated; I needed a cup of tea and a good lie down.



After lunch we headed to Potato Flat to plant the remainder of our trees. Once again our organisation and efficiency resulted in a quick completion of our duties. I'm not sure how many trees we planted overall, I'd guess well over a hundred, but we did plant Swamp Gums into the wetter areas, Manna Gums elsewhere, with Silver Wattles and Blackwood Wattles filling up the gaps. It was good to see lots of visitors walking through the Park as well, all out enjoying the winter sun.

### **Fungi, Birds and a Wallaby in Morwell National Park** by Ken Harris

The start of June saw a double assault on Morwell National Park by Latrobe Valley Field Naturalist Club members. On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May the botany group visited Fosters Gully to look for fungi. Then on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June the birding group explored along Billys Creek looking for birds.



The weather was kind to both groups. Fungi hunting is slow work and we made almost record-breakingly slow progress, taking 2½ hours to reach Lyndon's Clearing. We were too hungry to go on round the full track and we returned to the car park, only taking 1 hour for the return journey.

The extended dry weather meant that it was not a good year for fungi, and the large spectacular species were few and far between, but we did nevertheless find a lot of interesting fungi, starting with the Ghost Fungus – *Omphalotus nidiformis* which is growing near the toilets. This is noted for its luminescence at night, which is unique in our area. At night it gives off a ghostly greenish light. I photographed this one by its own light back in 2000 (I gave it a 90 minute exposure at maximum

aperture).

As we turned to start along Fosters Gully, it was a Swamp Wallaby that caught everyone's attention. A male wallaby a little way down the track, was watched by everyone as it reached up and grabbed hold of a trailing stem of Forest Clematis. After a couple of unsuccessful attempts, it pulled the stem down, using its mouth and both front legs. Something gave a bit further up, and some stems of the clematis now hung within easy reach of the wallaby, that then proceeded to tuck in, obviously relishing eating the clematis leaves. This picture shows him with a mouthful of clematis.





An interesting fungus was found on the way to Lyndon's Clearing in a spot where it has been seen previously. Several fruiting bodies of the Vegetable Caterpillar – *Cordyceps gunnii* were found in grass by the track growing under *Pomaderris apetala*. This fungus parasitises a caterpillar that feeds on the roots of various trees. It eventually kills the caterpillar (about a foot underground and then pushes its way to the surface, showing its distinctive blackish club-shaped fruiting bodies. The photo was taken by April Nutter.

Reaching Lyndon's Clearing, we explored down to the creek and here, where it was damper, we found a variety of interesting and attractive fungi. Very special was the delicate little blue fungus, the Pixie's Parasols – *Mycena interrupta*. We found a large patch of this lovely fungus on a dead log and all our photographers took turns to photograph it. I thought this was a new species for the park, but when I checked my records I found it to be the second time it was found. The picture is another taken by April Nutter.



Although this was not new to the park, we did find several species not previously recorded in Morwell National Park, namely:

*Hypocrea sulphurea*

*Mycena mulawaestris*

*Macrotiophula juncea* – Fairy Hair

*Xylaria hypoxylon* – Candle Snuff Fungus

*Ryvardenia campyla* – Weeping Polypore

All of these are now illustrated on the Morwell National Park Web Site: [morwellnp.pangaeon.net](http://morwellnp.pangaeon.net)

Three days later I was in another part of the park, exploring Billys Creek with the club's birdwatchers. We had a very enjoyable walk as far as the Billys Creek Weir, but our greatest success came near the start of the walk. First David Mules spotted a Crested Shrike-tit and it became clear that there were 4 or 5 of them, perhaps a family party. It is always good to see these uncommon birds, but David did even better while we were watching the shrike-tits. He located a Red-browed Tree-creeper, a bird previously reported to be in the park, but unconfirmed until then. It was a difficult bird to see as it stayed very high in the upper branches of young Swamp Gums, but eventually we all got to see it. Its tendency to stay high up and its choice of trees was very different from the White-throated Tree-creeper which was also seen in the area.



Many other birds were seen including Golden Whistlers and Lewin Honeyeaters and of course Eastern Yellow Robins.

We returned along the southern boundary of the creek flats at the backs of private property and disturbed a large number of Eastern Grey Kangaroos, who were feeding on private property, but at our approach dashed back into the park for cover. The first mob we saw had at least 45 kangaroos in it and a little further on we disturbed a second mob of about 15 roos, making over 60 kangaroos on the Billys Creek Flats.

Although birds were our focus, several interesting fungi were seen as well. Near the start of the walk we found the Wood Blewits – *Lepista nuda*. These were growing in a large half ring, centred somewhere on the track leading to discussion of how these toadstool fairy-rings arise. Near the end of our walk we found

another very spectacular fungus, which was another new addition to the park list. It was the rich red Sea-star Stinkhorn – *Anthurus archeri*, which smells like rotting flesh and attracts flies to help disperse its spores.

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