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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – February 2021

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Hello everyone and welcome to this month's newsletter. We are now half way through summer, which has been wetter and cooler than average. The grass in the park which normally would have dried out, has not died out yet and is still green in most parts of the park. Parks staff have recently done a great job of slashing the tracks and park boundaries.

January Activity report

For the activity we had Cathy, Ken, Matt, Tamara, Rose, Wayne, Graeme, Beryl, Joelle, Gordon and Darren. We had an apology from Mike. For the activity we also had David and Anas along for the day. They had both travelled separately from the suburbs of Melbourne to look around the park and (hopefully) look at some sugar gliders.

The groups was greeted by the sight of earth moving equipment in the car park. Graeme and Wayne had come with plans to replace the broken culvert just inside the Billy's Creek entrance. The culvert has been broken and falling in for a period of time. They along with Matt and Rose worked on digging out the broken pipes and replacing it with a new culvert and crushed rock. Big thanks goes to Graeme for organizing all of this and providing the materials used. This is an excellent long term solution to a problem which had been bad and getting worse over time.



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Parks as part of the bushfire recovery program will make a comprehensive list of plants, animals and weeds found in the national park. Matt reported that the work upon the plant, weed and animal surveys and the resulting report continues. Parks has allocated somebody to work on this two days a week.

Parks have run another round of the Junior Ranger program with a night walk around Fosters' Gully. A new snail species (the Cannibal Snail) was located on this walk. This siting still needs to be confirmed.

Tamara had looked over the recent Butterfly survey and compared the results with previous years. The 2020 results of 59 plants with 19 in flower was slightly more than the 2019 results. 2020 was generally a good year of ground orchids with good growth and an abundance of orchids. Sadly this was not reflected in the butterfly orchids. The number of plants and the plant sizes has varied from year to year and has been independent of periods of drought. The Butterfly Orchid survey has now been done over the last 30 years. The 2020 figures are about 50% of the figures from a decade ago and around 30% of the orchids from around the 2000s. Sadly over the years the numbers of Butterfly Orchids is clearly decreasing.

Since we had a healthy group size, Joelle decided to pull some weeds while the rest of the group started upon investigating the nesting boxes. Throughout the day around the nesting boxes saw some interesting animals. The most interesting find was a large stick insect (Genus Tropicoderus) and another was a Cowboy Beetle which flew around the car park. Throughout the day many different mobs of kangaroos and some wallabies were also seen.



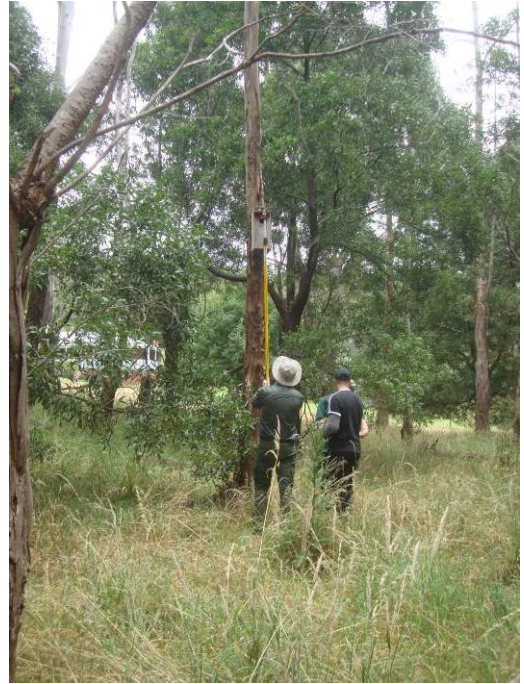
Photo by Anas Halima



Photo by Ken Harris



The survey started slowly with no sugar gliders found in the boxes closest to the car park. After an hour of using the pole mounted camera to look inside each box, the camera stopped working, with what was being seen through the camera not showing on the screen. Cathy and Anas returned to the car park to collect the second camera. Fortunately we received the second camera in 2018, so now we could use it to continue the survey. With no sound available in this camera, it will make it harder to check the recordings.



The group continued around the boxes, noting a few that needed repairs or replacement (to be done at the next activity). With over twenty boxes to inspect, the main group were joined by Matt, Rose & Joelle for a lunchtime break. After lunch the group finished examining the remaining boxes. Over the day the number of sugar gliders was less than the last few surveys. Less of boxes were being used but in two of the boxes - 3 Agile Antechinus were found. Finding them in the boxes is less common, so they were a nice find.

February Activity

Sunday 21st February 10.00am

The group will meet in the Junction Road car park to complete some repairs to the nesting boxes and collect some seed for planting later in the year. You will need to bring your lunch along with clothing and footwear suitable for the weather conditions on the day.