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# Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

*Newsletter – June 2021*

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Hello everyone and welcome to this month's newsletter.

## May Activity Report

For this activity we had Ken, Mike, Cathy, Beryl, Tamara, Rose, Graeme and Darren. We had an apology from Gordon. Matt surprised the group by joining the group for the catch up in the picnic area.

Most discussion was around the recent activity with Lavalla College where the students in groups completed diversity surveys in and around the park. Mike has written an article about the activity and it is included at the end of the newsletter. Sadly one of the nesting boxes was found by a group of students at the base of a tree. This will be another box which needs to be reattached to the tree at a future activity.

The day's original plan was to work on Silvertop Hill, but with wet weather forecasted the group decided it would be better to clear encroaching undergrowth on Fosters Gully Track. The required tools were collected and we walked into Fosters Gully. Just before the toilet a branch has come down on the directional signage. Parks staff have cleaned up the branch but sadly the sign is now broken and flat instead of upright.



The group worked along Fosters Gully track removing branches and undergrowth that had come in from the sides of the track. Broken branches overhanging the track were also removed.

As an indication of the amount vegetation that needed to be removed is that the whole group worked at a similar pace to Ken on his crutches. When you start there is a lot adjacent to the track to remove. Rose learned from Graeme about layering with the hedge trimmer.

A fallen tree (which was reducing the track's width) was removed by Parks staff which was good since the chainsaw was blunt and needed a new chain. The one little tree it was used on would have been cut quicker by a butter knife!

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Around 12.30 the group reached Lindon's Clearing and decided that returning to the picnic area for lunch was wiser than trying to finish the rest of the track before eating. The group walked back while Rose collected Graeme who had continued further down the track.

During lunch the first few drops of rain fell. We had done well in the morning to have no rain, but a little bit was the indication of what was to come, so we wisely finished for the day.

### **June Activity**

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June 10.00am

The group will meet in the Junction Road car park to investigate the direct seeding test plots and complete track maintenance on the Blue Gum Hill track. You will need to bring your lunch along with clothing and footwear suitable for the weather conditions on the day.

## Surveying with Students

On Wednesday May 12, five members of the Friends assisted a class of Year 11 Environmental Science students from Lavalla Catholic College in Traralgon. The purpose of the activity was to help the students with the identification of plants and animals during the student's biodiversity surveys of 3 sites within and adjacent to Morwell National Park and provide general guidance and background information during the day.

We all arrived at the Junction Road car park ahead of time and made our introductions. The first site on the agenda was the Billys Creek Picnic Ground, managed by Latrobe City, opposite and across the bridge from the car park. Here the students were introduced to their assignments and given pointers of the methods to be used during their surveys, namely setting up a 100 square metre (10m x 10m) zone, listing the main organisms within, then laying out a 1m quadrat within the zone three times for a more thorough survey of the biodiversity contained. As the revegetation work around the picnic ground was carried out by the Yinnar/Yinnar South Landcare Group, Jay and Joelle provided the students with the background information for this site.



The next site on the agenda was within the Billys Creek section of Morwell NP. We wandered a few hundred metres down the track towards the weir. On the way, a White-throated Treecreeper did it's thing, running up a vertical trunk where the kids could get a good look at it. At the second power line easement, Gordon gave the students a brief rundown of the history of Morwell NP, then the students split into their three groups and each selected a 10 metre square to run their surveys. The Friends picked a group to tag along with and made themselves available for any questions the students could come up with. None of us were able to identify every plant and critter that we came across, but at least we could give the kids a few pointers on how and where to follow up on some of their observations, such as the Friends publications, other identification books and online services such as Flora of Victoria, ALA and iNaturalist.

The bus returned to transport the group to the Kerry Road car park, where we enjoyed a well-earned lunch break. Then it was back to the business at hand; we walked a few hundred metres along the Foster's Gully Nature Walk until we found a spot that would accommodate three 10m squares and the students did their thing. Some interesting organisms were found by the kids, several types of fungi such as little toadstools of various colours, red, green, brown and yellow, a couple of different brackets and some vegetable caterpillars. A couple of spiders, a couple of caterpillars and all the different plants. We tried to highlight the differences between the three sites: the first being mainly grassy weeds with a couple of remnant trees nearby and some revegetation along the creek to offset the willow removal; the second having more large trees, mostly planted but very little understorey and lots of weedy growth; and the third mostly natural, with dense overstorey, denser midstorey and a mix of open and dense cover on the ground, depending on light penetration, and much fewer weeds. Hopefully, some of it sank in!



The students finished their surveys a little early, so we decided on a quick walk to Lyndon's Clearing. Cathy located a few Butterfly Orchids to show to the kids, but we couldn't find a koala to save ourselves, to highlight the importance of reserves such as Morwell NP to endangered species such as the Strzelecki Koala. We gave them the lecture anyway, before they rushed back to the car park in time for the bus ride home. Jay and I were the last ones out, perhaps 5 minutes after the main group, and we were treated to the sight of a male Superb Lyrebird in full regalia, crossing the track not far from the toilet and commencing his songs and mimicry as we approached the car park. Sometimes it pays to take your time!