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# Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

## *Newsletter – November 2023*

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Welcome to this month's newsletter.

### October Activity Report

For the first activity of the day, we had Matt, Ken, Tamara, Caitlin, Anita, Mike W, Jay, David, Mike B, Cathy, Gordon and Darren. We had apologies from Rose and Beryl. Also with us we had 5 members of the community to join in the search for orchids.

In a meeting before the activity Jay told the group that the work on the bird book is progressing well and they have received seed funding from Field Naturalist Victoria of \$1,000. A list of birds to be included has been made and there will be 106 bird species within the book. A person can now be employed to generate layout ideas and work upon enhancements to the better layouts.

Matt reported that he recently attended a day at Morwell NP hosted by Friend of the Earth (FOE Melbourne). They have a group called Strzelecki Koala Action Team, or S.K.A.T.

They had come down from Melbourne to meet up with local Suzie Zent and discuss the Strzelecki Koala. As the FoMNP have been counting Koalas in the NP since 1986, we felt that it might benefit the S.K.A.T. people to have one of our group along. There was quite a good turn out with many making the trip down from the city and a few locals also coming along. We had a lengthy discussion in the car park regarding the local Koalas, their importance in terms of genetics, the numbers left and the possibility of linking up areas of suitable habitat. We also discussed a few other things for those who didn't know a lot about Koalas in general, such as size, behaviour, diet etc.

After the discussion, they went for a short walk along Fosters Gully where they were able to show the group three koalas. This was a bit of a thrill for those who rarely (or never) get to see them and it even seemed to impress the S.K.A.T. people, especially as all three were in very close proximity to each other. I was asked if this was usual for the area and I told them that it was quite normal to see them in such numbers. While our best FoMNP count was 16, I have counted 16 in one single lap of Fosters Gully. That was an exceptional day but it goes to show the importance of the local population, and Morwell NP in particular, as far as Koala survival goes. Anthony Amis (S.K.A.T and FOE) told me that in some NSW locations, researchers would be lucky to see three in a year!

At the end of the meeting the group introduced themselves to each other. The large group then moved towards Stringybark Track, while Ken saved his energy for the afternoon walk, Caitlin took photos of the

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koala above the picnic area and Jay investigated other parts of the park.



Walking towards Stringybark track we found the bridge barricaded so using the sidetrack was the only option. It is interesting to see that the bridge has been broken for a while and now it is barricaded closed.

The walk around Stringybark was pleasant although the number of orchids located was down on previous years. Even with the skilled younger eyes who found many orchids, the number of orchids on show for our walk was not high.



Some of the orchids found are shown below:



When we returned from Stringybark, we found that many people had come early for the koala count. Lunch was had in the picnic area in preparation of upcoming Koala Count.

For the koala count we had Matt, Ken, Tamara, Anita, Jay, Joelle, Mike B, Cathy and Darren. We had apologies from Rose, Caitlin, Gordon and Beryl. We were joined by 11 members of the public so that would greatly improve our ability to spot koalas.

The group divided with most deciding upon Fosters Gully since it was the shortest walk, the likelihood of seeing a koala was high and it was different to the morning's walk. The group divided into the following groups:

- Fosters Gully – Ken, Cathy, Anita and all members of the public
- Stringybark Track – Tamara, Joelle and Mike B
- Jumbuk Road Track – Matt and Darren

Matt and Darren were fortunate enough to have Gordon drive them to the start of their track. It saved having to collect a vehicle later. At the top of hill the view was great but sadly they saw that a number of pinus radiata have grown where many larger trees were removed five years ago. These mature trees must have spread a lot of seed which have now grown. These pine trees will need to be removed before they grow too large and spread too much seed. They scrambled down the hill side and saw two koalas and a wallaby on route.



Surprisingly they were the first group to return to the picnic area. Later the Stringybark group returned excited in seeing a tawny frogmouth and five koalas.



The Fosters Gully group took the longest but sighted the most koalas. The attentive eyes of the children were great at spotting koalas. It was great that Caitlin had taken photos of the koala above the picnic area because it could be found when the survey started.



Thanks is extended to Caitlin, Joelle and Anita who each sent brilliant photos they collected during the day, which are included here. Overall, it was a very successful day with a high number of koalas spotted.

Track	Number of koalas
<b>Fosters Gully</b>	14 koalas seen and one heard
<b>Stringybark Track</b>	5 koalas seen and one heard
<b>Jumbuk Road Track</b>	2 koalas
<b>Total</b>	21 koalas and two additional koalas heard

## **November Activity**

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November 10am

The group will meet in the Kerry Road car park to complete the Butterfly Orchid Survey and some track maintenance. You will need to bring your lunch along with clothing and footwear suitable for the weather conditions on the day.