



# Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

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## NEWSLETTER MAY 1996

### APRIL ACTIVITY

On 21 April 1996 the monthly Friends activity was well attended. In favourable weather conditions. President Ken Harris led the group for a nature walk along the southern boundary tracks of the Fosters Gully section. The party met at the Fosters Gully carpark then walked along the Stringybark Track before walking along an old logging track to reach the southern boundary of the Park. After meandering through the Park. walkers rejoined the Stringybark Track and returned to the carpark. The 6 kilometre walk was completed in 2.5 hours.

The less adventurous completed the Stringybark Track. President Ken Harris pointed out interested aspects of the Park's flora and Ranger Rob Howell commented upon the Park's history. Victoria's State Floral Emblem. the Pink Heath *Epacris impressa* was in flower. Fungi -in a variety of colours, shapes and sizes added interest to the nature walk. A Southern Brown Tree Frog *Litoria ewingi*, a Maccoyi's Skink *Nannoscincus maccoyi* and several spider species were found. During the walk party members sighted several species of birds including crimson rosella, magpie, yellow robin, grey thrush. scrub wren, superb blue wren and Lewin's honey-eater.

### PARK DEVELOPMENT

Ranger Rob Howell reports a handrail has now been constructed for the stile at the Braniffs Road entrance. Recently labour from the Morwell River Prison upgraded the walking track which followed the water pipeline in the Billys Creek section. This walking track will enable vistors to the Park to gain access to the weir area from the Braniffs Road entrance without crossing Billys Creek. The track is several hundred metres long and access is gained by following the signs (pointing to the left) just before the first creek crossing.

### MAY ACTIVITY

**10am, 19 May 1996**

**Junction Road, Opposite Junction Picnic Reserve**

**Tree Planting in Billys Creek section**

**Bring your own lunch and drinks**

**PTO**

# SNAKES IN MORWELL NATIONAL PARK

Rob de Souza-Daw

Twenty-seven species of snakes have been found in Victoria. Five species have been reported for Morwell National Park., all in the family Elapidae which are the front-fanged snakes. Elapidae snakes have a pair of relatively short hollow fangs which at their base have a duct connected to the venom glands. The venom of many Elapidae snakes is capable on inflicting a fatal bite to an adult human.

The five species recorded for the Park are: .

## **ELAPIDAE**

*Austrelaps superbus* Common or Lowland Copperhead

The Common Copperhead prefers wetland environments and usually forages during the day. The species is reported to remain active at lower temperatures than other elapid snakes. Copperheads are variable in colour, often heavily-built and grow to 1.7 metres.

*Drysdalia coronoides* White-Lipped Snake

The White-Lipped Snake prefers forest environments and is often found in wet areas. The species is active during the day and is not considered to be dangerous. White-Lipped Snakes have variable dorsal colouring but their belly scales are pinkish. This elapid snake is small and grows to 40 centimetres in length.

*Notechis scutatis* Tiger Snake

Tiger Snakes live in a variety of habitats. This is another diurnal species and usually possess banded marking along its body. The dorsal and belly colouring is variable. Tiger Snakes can be solidly built and grow to 1.2 metres in length.

*Pseudechis porphyriacus* Red-bellied Black Snake

The Red-bellied Black Snake prefers wetland habitats. Like other local elapid snakes, this species is active during the day. The species has a glossy black dorsum with pink lower lateral and ventral scales. This is a large snake and grows to 2 metres.

*Pseudonaja textilis* Common or Eastern Brown Snake

The Eastern Brown Snake prefers open and dry habitats. This elapid is a swift-moving snake and is active during the day. Eastern Brown Snakes have a uniform brown colouring with a light belly which may contain scattered dark blotching. The species is relatively slender and grows to 1.5 metres.

Although the Park possesses only five known species of snakes, identification can often be difficult as colouring and markings are variable. For example, Tiger Snakes sometimes do not possess the typical tiger-like markings and Copperheads may not possess a dark marking around their nape. Consequently positive identification may require examination of the snakes head, mid. body, anal and ventral scales.

The best time to see snakes in the Park is on warm days from October to March.

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