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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – January 2000

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Happy Holidays

I hope everyone had a very Happy Christmas and was able to stay up and see in the New Year. It was lovely to catch up with family and friends and also for all of that wonderful rain that began on Boxing Day. It has brought a touch of green back to the lawn and the plants are beginning to bloom again.

I also hope that it has left you ready to face the new year full of vitality and enthusiasm and to get in and get your fingers dirty at this year's Friends activities.

January 2000 Activity

We begin this year with our annual bout of seed collecting. This is a vital point in the Friends calendar as it allows us to collect the vast quantities of seed needed to propagate and successfully plant. It can be a fiddly job getting the seed of the trees, so many hands make for very light work. It is also an opportunity to explore the Park and learn more about the native tree population.

We will be meeting on Sunday 16th January at 10.00am at Braniffs Road. Please bring along your hat and sunscreen as it will soon warm up in the Park.

Please contact Ed on 5664 8211 if you would like more information.

An Unusual Weed -Ken Harris

Several years ago when we were planting trees on the hillside above the Lodge Site, Shelley Templeton found a strange plant that looked like an orchid. I identified it then as the Lesser Broomrape, *Orobanche minor*. This is an introduced plant from Europe, but is interesting because of its unusual behavior. It looks rather like an orchid because it has no green leaves or stem, with a spike of purple flowers. It is in fact a root parasite, getting its sustenance by attaching itself to the roots of other plants, especially the pea family such as clover and vetch. I have not seen any in the Park since then, but this year it is back in strength. There are probably 30 or more plants present along the entrance road from Braniffs Road, in two patches. The first patch is some 30-50 metres into the Park on the far side of the dip to the left of the entrance. The second patch is at the first bend alongside the road on the left.

Summary of tree planting for 1999 - Ranger Rob Howell

We had 2000 seedlings grown from our seed by the GEST nursery in Moe and their students came to plant some of these in the Park as part of their learning experience. We also received invaluable help from students and staff from catholic regional College Traralgon who did a fantastic job.

Trees planted by:

Gippsland Employment Skills Training	500
Catholic Regional College	1690
Friends of Morwell National Park	1450
Total	3640

The new green coreflute tree guards provide excellent protection for the seedlings but consume large amounts of time in the assembly process. So next year we will try to move them onto the planting sites already assembled.

The Jude weed mats (which also take up a fair amount of time) are providing to be of questionable value as the wombats have taken a liking to them and pull them from below the tree guard. We will review the need for these over the next six months then decide whether to continue using them.

Finally thanks to those involved in the planting effort and a special thanks to Dorothy and Danny who helped the CRC students and produced an excellent article and photo on the activity for the local paper.

Christmas Friends BBQ - Wendy Steenberg

Our Christmas BBQ at fosters Gully was a very enjoyable afternoon activity. We did have matches for the fire, but no fat for the hotplate. So Ken had to sacrifice the butter from his bread and we used Johns sauce which was in short supply, to share on our sausages. But they tasted good anyway.

After lunch we inspected the trees in the propagating shed and found that the tray of silver wattles and a few others needed to be pricked out. So Danny and Wendy filled the trays with pots and filled them with soil and Dot, Ken, Rob and John planted out and watered. We worked hard for a few hours, completing 23 trays of Silver Wattles, Blackwoods, Hazel p. and Musk Daisybush.

Rob went to Ed and Helen's house at Olsens Bridge, Boolarra and collected a few cans that were scattered around, filling a couple of bales. So with the money we received from the cans, we have purchased some folding chairs to be used on our future activities. We will probably have a few extra days activities to continue the pricking out of the seedlings, but that will depend on how quickly the seedlings grow.

Thank you for your contributions to the newsletter. Please send articles to Friends of Morwell National Park, PO Box 19, Churchill, 3842

Helen Steenberg

Plant Variety in Morwell National Park

In the process of developing the Morwell National Park web site, I have been recording the distribution of the plants in some detail. I have designated a total of six different walks through the park and have divided each into sections, recording the plants I have been able to find along each section. There are a total of 103 sections in all. The six walks are

Fosters Gully Walk

Stringybark Ridge Walk

West Boundary Walk

Billy Creek Walk

Creek Flat Walk

Zigzag Walk

This runs alongside the Stringybark Ridge walk along the western boundary of the park, continuing through to Brewsters Road from the Braniff's Road entrance past the weir as far as the track goes.

Along Billy Creek from Junction Road and back along the southern boundary.

From Jumbuck Road down to Billy Creek and up the other side as far as the Morans Road entrance.

I thought it interesting to compare the numbers of native plants and weeds found in the various sections of the walks and they are shown in the following table.

Walk	Sections	Native Plants		Weeds		Total	
		Average	Max	Average	Max	Average	Max
Fosters Gully	17	40.1	65	7.1	18	47.2	83
Stringybark Ridge	16	39.0	51	2.3	8	41.3	55
West Boundary	25	41.1	63	9.0	19	50.1	77
Billy Creek	11	29.9	42	37.7	65	67.6	94
Creek Flat	11	24.4	39	35.9	58	60.3	95
Zigzag	23	34.1	58	19.0	32	53.2	90
Total	103	36.1	65	15.8	65	51.9	95

Altogether, I have recorded distributions for 373 species of plants, all of which are visible from one of the tracks.

It is no surprise to know that there are far more weeds in the Billy Creek section of the park than in the original park, but there are some interesting features nevertheless.

The section with the greatest variety of native plants is in Fosters Gully, where the section from the T-junction to the bench half way along Fosters Gully has 65 different native plants. But it isn't Fosters Gully itself that has the fewest weeds. This belongs to the Stringybark Ridge Walk, with an average of only 2.3 species per section, and there are three sections, where I have so far not recorded any weeds at all.

The worst areas for weeds, are either side of Billy Creek. As you walk in from the Braniff's Road entrance, the section from the first major bend, to the first creek crossing has a total of 94 species, 65 of them weeds, while a section of the Creek Flat Walk, which is immediately across the creek from that section, has 95 species of which 58 are weeds.

It is interesting to note how much the weeds are reduced, when you get away from Billy Creek itself. The Zigzag walk, which traverses the high ground on either side of the creek, has more native species and only half the weeds compared with the walks along Billy Creek itself.

The figures are not complete, but I believe that they are pretty thorough and I don't expect future changes to significantly effect the pattern shown above.

Ken Harris