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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter December 2000

Website: <http://morwellnp.pangaeon.net>

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Welcome to the last newsletter of the year. We would like to take the opportunity to thank all the people who have contributed their time and effort at one or many of the monthly activities that have taken place this year. It is encouraging to see the many new faces that keep volunteering for the various activities. It is also great to see the growth on the trees that were planted in previous years and we are looking forward to watching the results of our labours in future years.

CHRISTMAS BREAK-UP

On Sunday, December 17, we are having a spit roast catered for us by the DNR. For those of you that have phoned Wendy Steenbergen and accepted the invitation, we are meeting at the Foster's Gully Car Park at 10am to do some sort of activity for the month. We will decide if the seedlings need to be pricked out into tubes, or if we will do some willow clearing on the day. We propose to stay until 1pm (you may wish to bring along your lunch) and will then return at about 6pm in anticipation of a delicious tea. We are hoping to complete a night walk afterwards to see what we can find.

The only things that you need to bring are chairs, drinks and maybe a spotlight, should you own one and are planning to stay for the walk. Don't forget the bug spray and appropriate clothing and footwear.

Looking forward to seeing everyone there.

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

As you may be aware, The Friends of the Morwell National Park have received \$10,000 in government grants. One is for the development of the Billy's Creek walking track and the other is for stage one of revegetation of the creek. The Express has run articles explaining the success of our group and others in the area in obtaining these grants.

“SEED SOWING AND TREE PLANTING”

By Danny Barclay.

I arrived at the Foster’s Gully car park and, gathering my backpack, walked up to the propagation shed. Rob was already working away, loading trees into the back of the ute, while listening to the radio. He told me of the change in plans: tree planting at Tebb Terrace instead of willow checking. Unfortunately the Catholic Regional College had postponed their tree planting session. This meant that the plants in the tubes were getting too big and had to be planted as soon as possible. So it was up to the regulars of Rob, Wendy, Ken and myself to plant as many as possible.

First of all we did some seed sowing. Wendy and I managed to complete 5 trays – Blackwood, Messmate, Swamp Gum, Manna Gum and Silver Wattle, while Ken sowed seeds of the more uncommon native plants. Rob also demonstrated how the water timers worked.

We then went to Tebb Terrace end of the park to begin the tree planting. Taking care not to over-exert ourselves, we planted trees on the grassy hill. Rob spread out the guards, stakes and tubes, while the rest of us planted. We stopped and had lunch about 12 o’clock, making ourselves comfortable in the long grass. I hoped that the grass wouldn’t aggravate my hayfever.

We managed to finish revegetating the hill after lunch and the find of the day was a snake’s skin in the grass. We were glad the owner was not to be seen! I stayed behind to help Rob clean up and water the plants and then called it a day.

Hasn’t it been a terrific season for the wildflowers? On our return from Queensland our garden was jumping out of the ground, in stark contrast to northern NSW and SE Qld after 6 months of drought (although they’ve had floods since!). As illustrated in the next article by Ken Harris, all sorts of flowers have been seen, some for the first time in years.

On a recent camping trip to Wonnangatta Station we found much the same situation. For those that haven’t been there, the station was originally a very remote farm situated in a valley nestled between the Snowy Range and The Great Divide. It takes 2 hours driving to get to the turnoff on the Howitt Road north of Licola, and then another 2 hours to travel 34kms along a 4WD track that goes up and down and around some steep hills before you finally reach the valley floor. It was purchased by the Government and added to the Alpine NP in the mid 1980’s.

We went with the specific purpose of finding a particular kind of native orchid. And we did. The orchid is a Pale Golden Moth, *Diuris ochroma*, found only in Victoria, in this particular valley. We had timed it perfectly and found what would probably amount to hundreds of plants spread out along about 7kms of the valley.

We also found Sun orchids (*Thelymitra media*), Onion orchids (*Microtis unifolia*) in their thousands, Donkey Orchids (*Diuris sulphurea*), Cinnamon Bells (probably *Gastrodia procera*) and Mountain Caladenia (*Caladenia lyallii*), as well as other wildflowers, such as Chocolate Lilies (*Dichopogon sp.*), Bulbine Lilies (*Bulbine bulbosa*) and shrubs like Royal Grevillea (*Grevillea victoriae*). The valley was looking extremely good with lush green grass everywhere and the rivers flowing well. Even the Dry River had water flowing in it. The only negative was some damage to the track where thoughtless drivers had left the track to avoid wet patches, making the situation worse.

A very good weekend was had by all.

Mike and I would like to take the opportunity to thank those people who have provided us with articles and inspiration during our short time as editors. We would also like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a very safe and prosperous New Year. We are looking forward to seeing everyone helping out again next year.

Orchids (and Fringe Lilies) Galore

by Ken Harris

This has been a great season for orchids in the Park, with a lot of valuable new information. I previously reported finding orchids on the Billys Creek side of Jumbuk Road.

The newly added section of the Park at the end of Tebb Terrace is outstanding for orchids and is immediately the best spot in the whole Billys Creek section. Among the trees, just below the Tebb Terrace entrance this year was the largest patch of Maroonhoods *Pterostylis pedunculata*, that I have ever seen anywhere, with hundreds, if not thousands of plants. They were not alone however and other orchids in the same area are:

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Tall Greenhood | <i>Pterostylis longifolia</i> |
| Nodding Greenhood | <i>Pterostylis nutans</i> |
| Pink Fingers | <i>Caladenia carnea</i> |
| Veined Helmet Orchid | <i>Corybas diemenicus</i> |
| Tall Sun-Orchid | <i>Thelymitra media</i> |
| Slender Sun-Orchid | <i>Thelymitra pauciflora</i> |

It was good to find all these species together in this area, but all are common species in the Park. Amongst them however was one that was not quite in flower, but which I felt sure was one of the bearded orchids. The original Park list, before I came to Victoria, had one Beard Orchid species on it, the Copper Beard Orchid *Calochilus campestris*. In 15 years, exploring the Park, I found two additional Bearded Orchids, but until now had never been able to find the Copper Beard Orchid. On 7th November I identified the plant near Tebb Terrace as a Copper Beard Orchid and photographed it in flower. There are in fact three of these plants, the first records from the Park for more than 15 years.

Another delight was that when I went to photograph the Copper Beard Orchid, I found the Slender Sun-Orchid in full flower. This is a very common orchid, but it is very rare to see a flower wide open. The flowers are self-fertile, and unless they get a day in full sunshine, they often never open. The deep shade along Stringbark Ridge seems to inhibit their opening, but by the Tebb Terrace entrance they are out in the open, and several plants were open wide and I was able to photograph them in flower in the Park for the first time.

The next excursion was on 25th November, when I led the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club for a walk around the Stringybark Ridge Track. It was interesting to note that it was the exact same day in 1990, that I first found the Elbow Orchid *Arthrochilus huntianus*, growing in the Park. On that day Eulalie Brewster was present, and she was back on the same day in 2000.

We had a delightful walk and saw a number of orchids, including the Butterfly Orchids *Sarcochilus australis* in full flower. On the Stringybark Ridge Track, we found several plants of the Elbow Orchid, still flowering in the same area, 10 years after we first found them. Further round, in the vicinity of the Flying Duck Orchids *Caleana major*, which were also in flower, one of the party spotted several plants of Cinnamon Bells. This is a saprophytic orchid, with no green colouring and is particularly interesting, because the one species was recently divided into two different species, *Gastrodia procera* and *Gastrodia sesamoides*. I am still trying to determine which of these is in the Park and up to now, I had believed them to be *Gastrodia procera*, the less common but more robust species. These showed every sign of being *Gastrodia sesamoides*, much slenderer, with fewer flowers. More about this later.

Fringe Lilies *Thysanotus tuberosus*, are particularly beautiful flowers, but until now, I thought that they were very uncommon in the Park, being restricted to a small area near the outer limit of the Stringybark Ridge Track. This walk proved me completely wrong. We saw Fringe Lilies, either in flower or in bud, scattered everywhere round the Stringy Bark Track. We also saw a few Chocolate Lilies *Arthropodium strictum*, Pale Grass Lilies *Caesia parviflora* and a few late Milkmaids *Burchardia umbellata*.

Finally, the jewel in the crown! The Black-tongued Caladenia, is one of the rarest orchids in the Park. I arrived here in the spring of 1985 and in that year, I found two flowering plants of the Black-Tongued Caladenia. I have looked many times over the 15 years that have passed and up until now, have not seen another plant. This year, one plant, with one flower, is flowering only 80 metres from where I saw one plant 15 years previously.

One more excursion to report. On 29th November, I led a group of overseas students around the Fosters Gully Walk. Just a little past Lyndon's clearing on the right, I found two more plants of Cinnamon Bells, again looking very much like *Gastrodia sesamoides*, although the flowers were not quite open. Just as I am deciding that I was mistaken previously and all the Cinnamon Bells in the Park must be *G. sesamoides*, I spotted yet another Cinnamon Bells plant. Unlike the others however, this was a strong robust plant, with about 29 flowers and shows all the signs of being *G. procera*. It seems that we may have both species in the Park. I have photocopied the pages from the flora and this weekend, will take them into the Park and carefully check all the plants and try and resolve the issue. Watch this space!!!

One more bonus at the end of the walk, was the discovery of a couple of Fringe Lily plants on the return half of the Fosters Gully walk. All previous records had come from the Stringybark Ridge track.

30th November 2000

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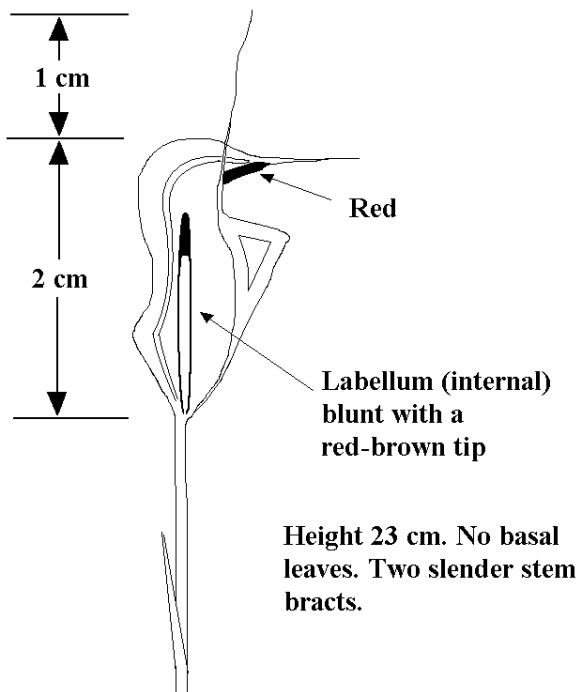
On Friday evening, 1st December, I revisited all the Cinnamon Bells plants, and the jury is still out. The largest plant on the Fosters Gully track had disappeared and the smaller plants are still not in flower. The ones at the end of the Stringybark Ridge track are however definitely *Gastrodia procera*, despite impressions at the time. I shall keep the small plants in Fosters Gully under observation.

On Saturday, Clarissa Collis and I extended my mapping of the plant distributions to the Blue Gum track, toiling to the top of the bald hill and back, not a walk on which orchids were expected.

On the way in I checked the spot on the right just before the second bridge over Billys Creek, where Cinnamon Bells have been regular for the last four years. This year there are more plants than ever. In fact there are at least 35 flower stems of Cinnamon Bells in the one spot, just beginning to come into full flower. This is as good a display of this unusual orchid as you are ever likely to see. One stem has as many as 40 to 50 flower buds on it and I confirmed that this group are also *Gastrodia procera*, further confirming my original identification.

On to the plant survey and up to the top of the hill, where to our surprise we found four orchid species, one plant of each. One Hyacinth Orchid *Dipodium roseum* (still in bud), one more Cinnamon Bells and

again *Gastrodia procera*, despite having only 4 flowers and one Common Onion Orchid *Microtis unifolia*. The fourth species was the biggest surprise and caps all the special items already listed. Clarissa spotted a small greenhood, growing in the track, close to the large tree trunk that forms a bridge over the track. I knew at once that this was a new species for Morwell National Park. I photographed it, sketched it and made careful notes to be sure that I would be able to identify it. It is the Blunt-Tongued Greenhood *Pterostylis atrans*. This is apparently a fairly common species, although the Flora of Victoria, only shows it at the Prom, along the coast and in the ranges to the North, not anywhere in the Strzeleckis. The Billys Creek section, is gaining importance where orchids in the Park are concerned.



On the final steep descent back to Billys Creek, we also found five plants of a *Caladenia* species. The flowers were over, but I suspected that they were one of the Spider Orchids. I shall have to repeat that walk earlier in the spring next year.

On the track, among *Acacia verticilla*, 1.5 m in front of a large *Eucalyptus globules*, 15 m South of the large tree trunk, which bridges the track.

Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Activities Calender 2001

(Third Sunday of the Month, plus extras)

| <u>Date:</u> | <u>Activity:</u> | <u>Venue and Times:</u> |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| January 7 +/-or 14 | Potting of Seedlings | Foster's Gully: 10am |
| January 21 | Seed Collecting | Braniff's Rd: 10am |
| February 18 | Tree Guard Removal | Braniff's Rd: 10am |
| March 18 | Weir Walk, Willow Pulling | Braniff's Rd 10am |
| April 15 | Track Maintenance | Braniff's Rd: 10am |
| May 20 | Billy's Creek Works | Junction Rd: 10am |
| June 17 | Tree Planting | Junction Rd: 10am |
| July 15 | Tree Planting | Junction Rd: 10am |
| August 5 | AGM | TBA; 1.30pm |
| August 19 | Tree Planting | Junction Rd: 10am |
| September 17 | Tree Planting | Junction Rd: 10am |
| October 21 | Koala Survey | Foster's Gully: 1.30pm |
| November 18 | Seed Sowing & Track Maintenance | Propagation Shed 10am |
| December 16 | BBQ Lunch | Foster's Gully 12 noon |

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

- For all activities BYO: food and drinks, suitable clothing and footwear, and equipment required for the activity
- Please check dates. Locations and activities details in the newsletter

