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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter February 2001

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

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Hello and welcome to the February edition of our newsletter. Hopefully this edition will get to you before the monthly activity and not after. Due to a mix up at the Regional Office, last months newsletter hasn't long been received. We now hope that everything is sorted out and apologise for any inconvenience that it may have caused.

FEBRUARY ACTIVITY

This month's activity will be the removal of the new growth of willows. Please note that this is different from what is printed on the activities calender. We will meet on Sunday 18th at 10am at Braniffs Road. Don't forget to bring your lunch and gumboots.

SEED COLLECTING

Last months activity was seed collecting on Blue Gum Ridge. As there were only four of us (our beloved leader was recuperating at home after injuring his shoulder, please get well soon Rob) Mike drove our four-wheel drive into the site. I didn't see much of the last part of the track, as it was more or less straight up the hill, and I'm not the best of passengers in that kind of country. We arrived safely and thanks to Mike, we weren't exhausted by the time we got there.

The collecting of the seeds proved to be challenging as the majority of the trees only had branches that were way above our heads. I gave up following the men around the side of the hill in search of lower branches and meandered my way back to the vehicle.

The weather was very kind to us, a very pleasant, sunny Sunday in between two scorchers. Even so, I was pleased that Ken had arranged a key to the gate so we could drive in, as it would have been a long and tiring walk from Braniffs Road all the way to the back of the park and up onto Blue Gum Ridge. The track was nice and dry, which allowed us to drive most of the way up the ridge to the main saddle before being stopped by a fallen branch. It certainly would have been interesting if the track was wet!

Even though we had ropes and the handsaw with extension handle with us, things did not look promising initially. The majority of the trees were typical of Blue Gums, tall and straight, with no branches anywhere near within reach. We decided to traverse around the side of the hill in the hope of finding fresh fallen branches or some within reach of the vertically challenged. The hillside was pretty steep and slippery with leaf litter, dry and rocky in parts. Varnish Wattle was regenerating well in places (though they had already

shed their seeds) and we found several Blue Gum seedlings struggling upwards. At last we found a branch that appeared to have some capsules within reach of the saw, so we went to work and lopped the appropriate section to get a handful of capsules in the bag.

As we continued our way around the hill, Cathy decided she wasn't of mountain goat stock and headed back to the car. Ken, Danny and I continued, occasionally finding a low branch with half a dozen capsules within reach, but nothing substantial. The trees were all looking very healthy with plenty of new growth and lots of flower buds, so perhaps we're a year early. Danny spied a critter in the grass with a sleek grey tail, but wasn't keen on investigating further for some reason, so we don't know if it was snake or lizard. Mind you, I wasn't volunteering either.

We finally found a decent branch of capsules on the big tree in the fenced off regeneration trial block, which we managed to collect without lopping the branch. At least we now had a reasonable amount to show for our efforts. The difference in plant growth inside and outside the fenced area highlights the effect of grazing animals in the park.

We then climbed to the top of the hill, meeting a small echidna on the way. Small brown skinks (I'm sure Ken could name them for you) were forever scurrying out from under our feet through the leaf litter. Danny left us here and headed back to the car for a drink, while Ken and I continued over the hill, just in case there was one last tree we could raid. And there was! Down in the saddle, just near the park boundary fence was a huge old Blue Gum with several branches hanging down to ground level, absolutely loaded with capsules. Easy pickings, we more than doubled our morning's take in very quick time and headed back to the car ourselves, very satisfied with our efforts. After a bite for lunch, we headed back out to Braniff's Road.

Waiting at the carpark for us was one of our past members, Steve Shinnars, who believed that we were due to start at 1.30pm as in the olden days (of course, he had not received his newsletter either). Cathy and I had to leave as I was due at work later this afternoon, but Ken, Danny and Steve headed back to the propagation shed and spent their afternoon potting up seedlings. Thank you to all for a successful day's work.

NEWSLETTER TRIVIA - By Danny Barclay

How well do you know your kangaroos, wallabies and their relatives?

1. How many species of kangaroo, wallaby and their relatives are there?
2. True or false. Do any kangaroos and wallabies exist in Papua and New Guinea?
3. What is the largest species of the kangaroo and wallaby family?
4. What is the smallest species of the kangaroo and wallaby family?
5. What is a Boodie?
6. The Boodie was extinct on the mainland. What are the four islands in Western Australia that it is confined to?

7. What is the other name for the Rufous Hare Wallaby?
8. How many species of Potoroo are there in Australia?
9. What is the only kangaroo that can walk backwards and finds its home in the rainforest canopy of North Queensland and Papua and New Guinea?
10. What are the specialised wallabies that live agilely on rock piles, rocky slopes and outcrops
11. What is the name of the endangered and strikingly marked wallaby that has a unique feature to its tail and only exists in a reserve near Dingo, North Queensland?
12. Can you name the three species of Pademelon?
13. What is the small wallaby that inhabits Rottnest Island?
14. The Musky Rat Kangaroo, Rufous Bettong, Bush-tailed Bettong, Long-footed Potoroo and Long-nosed Potoroo have a behaviour to use their tails as a tool for what purpose?

Answers will be in next months newsletter

