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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter May 2001

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Welcome to the May edition of the Friends of Morwell National Park Newsletter. This month we have an article by Ken Harris on the bats that are to be found in the park, as well as the usual information about next month's activities and what we did last month.

Last month we again pulled willow regrowth from Billys Creek. I still find it amazing how such small twigs can turn into a major regrowth. The highlight of this activity was the amount of natural regrowth of native plants that we saw. Now that the large willow trees have gone, the seeds of other plants are now taking hold. We found regrowth of Manna Gums, Hemp Bush, Silver Wattle and Blackwoods. This is very exciting, as we are now able to see the rewards for all the hard work that has been put into the willow clearing.

On the down side though, all this regrowth may not have survived the recent floods during the last week in April, with 110mm in Boolarra and a mind-boggling 425mm over three days at Balook. I have heard reports of substantial damage along Billys Creek, with the creek breaking it's banks in several places, spreading up to 40m wide on some of the flats and probably removing some of last season's plantings. Hopefully, we'll find the damage not too great.

MAY ACTIVITY

For this month's activity we are again going to try and pull willows from the last stretch of the creek. This will depend on whether the leaves on the willows have fallen yet. If they have it may mean that we will be unable to see them, so we will then turn to Rob to find out what we will do next.

Please note that we will be meeting at the Junction Rd carpark, this month, at 10am on the Sunday 20th May. Please remember to wear appropriate clothing and to bring your lunch.

Bats in Morwell National Park 1994 - 2000

On 26th February last year, Lindy Lumsden came to the Park for the third time, trapping bats as the guest of the Latrobe Field Naturalists Club. This is the third time Lindy has trapped in the Park and our knowledge of the bat fauna of the Park is largely the result of these visits.

I apologise for being so late with my report on her latest visit. I wanted to combine the results of her three trips and have only just managed to relocate the earlier data.

Lindy works for Parks Victoria as zoologist, specialising in studying bats, and her knowledge and enthusiasm for her subject is enormous. She also appears bedecked in bats, bat tee shirt, bat ring, bat necklace and bat earrings!

Her first visit as the guest of Latrobe Field Naturalists Club, was back in March 1994, which was very late in the season and resulted in the trapping of just nine bats of three species.

In December of the same year, she returned as the guest of Friends of Morwell National Park, specifically to try and extend our knowledge of the bats found in the Park. This was very successful, with 87 bats of 8 different species being trapped, with trapping taking place both in Fosters Gully and in Billys Creek. Many members will remember that occasion, when dedicated friends stayed up with Lindy, checking traps until 2.00 am and then returned at 7.00 am to help her empty the traps and take them down.

This latest visit followed a talk Lindy gave to the Field Naturalists and fell between the other two trips in season and in success rate. 36 bats were trapped of 7 species, but this did include one species, the lesser Long-eared Bat - *Nyctophilus geoffroyi*, which was not caught on any of the previous visits.

Each bat caught, was carefully identified, measured and recorded by Lindy and most of those present got the chance to hold a bat for a moment before releasing it. They varied quite considerably in size, from the tiny Little Forest Bat - *Vespadelus vulturnus* only 44 mm long to the much larger Eastern False Pipistrelle - *Falsistrellus tasmaniensis* of nearly 70 mm.

In addition to the species trapped, Lindy reported on all three occasions that she could hear the White-Striped Freetail Bat - *Tadarida australis*, a high-flying species, hard to trap, flying above the Kerry Road picnic area. This time, Lindy had with her a bat-detector that recorded the sound of any bats in the area, reducing the frequency to make them audible. The recording could be examined as a frequency spectrum and Lindy was able to make precise bat identifications from this record. Using the detector, she identified several of the species she trapped as also flying over the picnic area. She was also able to confirm that the White-Striped Mastiff Bat was definitely present in the Park.

It was interesting to see the difference in trapping rates between the three visits. On her first two visits, the Chocolate Wattled Bat - *Chalinolobus morio* was easily the commonest bat, with 5 out of 9 the first time, and 45 out of 87 the second, when it

WILLOW CLEARING 3

BY DANNY BARCLAY

The third willow clearing was like a case of déjà vu but there were some variations. Instead of the overcast and drizzly weather of last month it was a fine sunny day. Arriving on time at the Braniff's road car park I was greeted by Jane and Dennis, our latest recruits. They had enjoyed removing the willow at our last activity and were happy to revisit us. Dennis was proud to show off his new gumboots as his old ones were on their last legs. Saying "Good Morning and Happy Easter" to Rob as he organised the 4WD, we waited for the others to arrive. We were again lucky to see the local Wedge-tailed Eagles flying around the pine tree covered hill. They must sense us whenever we visit their neighbourhood, I think they are as curious about us as we are about them. Perhaps they just don't like us intruding into their territory.

Soon after Ken arrived followed by Wendy. The latecomers today were the Beamish family, unusual as they are normally punctual. Apparently they had attended a cocktail party the evening before and were still recovering from the lack of sleep. (What do you expect after a 2am finish! Ed) As they apologised for their lateness, we headed down to the creek to where we finished up last month. All armed with secateurs, saws and a tin of roundup, the teams worked along the creek, cutting and poisoning the regrowth of willow. While the adults were busily battling the willow, Nicole and Zack remained in the car, a bit paranoid after Nicole's encounter with the wasps last month.

By lunch we had reached the cliff part of the creek where we first planted trees last year. We enjoyed a relaxing lunch together in our famous green chairs, amid offerings of strawberries from my vege garden: delicious. While we were enjoying the nice sunny weather we had a visit from the man employed by Parks Victoria to exterminate the European Wasps and nests which have been particularly prevalent recently due to the warm weather. (At last count, 23 nests had been located between Junction Road carpark and the track junction from Braniff's Road. Ed)

After we had lunch we continued on with the removal of more willow growing extensively at the cliff part of the creek and the adjacent creek flat. When we reached the bushy area of the creek we called it a day after a good team effort, so that we could take a scenic tour in the park. A short 4WD trip past the weir, brought us to a newly made walking track that takes you further up the creek to some relatively pristine natural bush. It was soothing to walk along the track until we reached a part of the creek where it was peaceful, tranquil and picturesque, listening to the trickling of the creek and the rosella's clicking their beaks as they eat the buds in the tall Eucalypts. On the way back to the vehicles we came across a native snail which had a very small black shell, hiding under the bark on a dead stump. We then drove back to the carpark and went home.

During the autumn months I have encountered a variety of wildlife visiting my home. Between 6-6.30 in the evenings a number of bats have been flying around, which is the first time I have seen them flying in the open. They are very fast flyers which go by in a flash as you hear their squeaks. The other animals I have seen include a Ghost Moth, measuring nearly the size of my hand, a Banjo Frog with a missing back leg, and three Spotted Marsh Frogs which I rescued from a deep hole of water. At night I've watched a large garden spider construct a massive web between two bushes. It is interesting how the spider knows where to put each thread of silk, very complex artwork indeed.