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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter March 2002

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

Park News

There are a number of items to report this month; things are on the move:

- Rob Howell reports that our grant submission has been finalised, submitted and approved by the Ranger-in-charge, so fingers crossed for final approval sometime after June. We have applied for financing of a gas barbecue and a larger information board/shelter at the Kerry Road picnic ground.
- Rob also reports that weed spraying is continuing at a great pace, with blackberries and ragwort being the main targets of late. Spear thistles and teasel were tackled earlier. A large area adjacent to the Junction Road car park was heavily sprayed recently, you may have noticed the black plastic bags covering and protecting our planted shrubs while this was done.
- The last of the new seats has finally been installed, as have the new information leaflet boxes. Apparently there is only one of the new signposts still to be erected, but hopefully this will be completed before long.
- The implementation of the Regional Forest Agreement and the termination of the lease on the block behind Blue Gum Hill are still in the process of consultation. Hopefully something will be resolved before too long.
- Ken Harris reports that his photos of the koala that provided Ken, Jane and myself with some entertainment during our lunch break whilst collecting seed up the Lodge Track, are now available for viewing on the website. On the Morwell National Park Online page, click on 'Search', enter Koala, Mammal and Common Name in the appropriate boxes, click on 'Go' to get to the first photo, then click on the photo itself to see the rest.
- Ken also reports that the cicada found by Danny whilst planting at the top end of the Lodge Track is a new record for the park. It is *Cicadetta abdominalis*, no common name. Ken states that he has captured a total of four cicadas in the park and each have been a separate species!
- On February 14, the LV group of the Australian Plant Society invited me to escort the group for an evening stroll along Billy Creek from Junction Road to Potato Flat. The day was a trifle warm, but it was pleasantly cool along the creek. The group showed great interest in our revegetation efforts and the historical and natural qualities of the park.
- The Annual Friends Conference is on Saturday, March 23 at the Organ Pipes National Park Visitors Centre, commencing at 9.30am. If anybody is interested in attending, a registration form is included at the end of the newsletter, RSVP 15/3/02. Sorry for the late notice!

March Activity

Our next activity is scheduled for Sunday, March 17. We will meet at **Junction Road** at 10.00am with the aim of leaving the cars there, jumping into the 4WD's for the ride up Blue Gum Hill, then throwing some clayballs around on the top. Please bring along anything you regard as being necessary for maintaining the agility of a mountain goat.

Willow Withdrawals – 17/2/02

Forgive me if my recollections are a trifle hazy, as I fronted up for our weed removal session straight off night shift. We were the last to arrive, as I was travelling in slow motion at this stage. The crew was gathered at the gate, gazing in awe at a dead snake on Rob's tailgate. A tad smelly it was, but the flies thought it a bit of all right. Apparently it was a newborn copperhead that didn't make it across the car park (did I hear cheers from those not particularly thrilled by creatures herpetological?). At least it kept the kids amused for a while! Other locals were not leading a peaceful life either, with a couple of magpies doing a David and Goliath act on our resident Wedge-tailed Eagles.

It was decided that we should split into two groups, one to continue on where we left off last month while the second group would walk the creek from the base of Blue Gum Hill to the Braniff's Road ford. Ken, Danny, Cathy and myself (plus the 3 kids) headed upstream while Rob, Reg, Dennis and Jane went the other way, with a plan to meet at the weir for lunch at 12.30. We were right into it, with Ken diving straight into the creek while the rest of us looked for a less prickly approach (is nettly a word?). Willows were few and far between, a good thing, but other weeds like Tutsan, *Hypericum androsaemum*, Ragwort, *Senecio jacobaea* and Teasel, *Dipsacus fullonum*, were in abundance. Some lovely examples of native flora were also observed, though, such as Mulberries, *Hedycarya angustifolia*, Mutton-wood, *Rapanea howittiana*, Tasman Flax-lilies, *Dianella tasmanica*, and many species of fern sighted along the creek banks. Ken had me sampling some Water Pepper, *Persicaria hydropiper*, however he neglected to warn me of its potency, much to my discomfort and his amusement.

We made steady progress downstream, arriving at the ford well before lunchtime. Due to a slight mishap, where my can of Roundup mysteriously fell off a perfectly flat rock into the creek, we needed a top-up to tackle a couple of willows just upstream from the first footbridge, so we headed down to meet up with the others for an early lunch. We parked ourselves in the shade and enjoyed the lovely weather, the plentiful bird life and Danny's homegrown strawberries. All too soon it was back to the fray. Cathy and Danny stayed with the others, so Ken and I (and the kids) headed back upstream to finish our section. Firstly we went back to the weir to stake a small Mulberry that had fallen over on a silt bank. Good thing we did, as we found a couple of small willows hiding in the shrubbery next to the Mulberry. It makes you wonder how many willows we miss along the length of the creek! We also collected a small, green, grasshopper-like insect (Ken tells me it's called a katydid) that Ken was keen on photographing. Of course, his camera equipment was in Rob's vehicle! On the way back we sorted out the willows we had found earlier.

By the time we caught up with the rest of the crew, they were within cooee of Junction Road. As Ken and I were searching for them, we paused to have a look at and remove the tree-guards from some *Rapanea*'s planted a year or three ago. As they are a slow-growing tree, they were still only a metre or so tall, while other species in the same planting were well over our heads in height. Lo and behold, inside one of the tree-guards, attached to the stake, we found some very interesting constructions that may have been the nests of some type of mud-wasp. Ken has taken them home to see if anything startling hatches out, we'll keep you informed.

We finally found the gang clambering around the steep banks on the first corner before Junction Road. Good thing they weren't in the creek just there, because a copperhead was. It was just floating placidly down the pool and appeared dead, but as soon as Ken headed down the bank for a closer look, it stopped playing possum and disappeared into the reeds. A little further downstream we noticed an echidna scratching its way into the bank, the first record for that species along this part of the creek. One or two more willows later and we were under the bridge. We averted our eyes from the distressing sight of numerous full-grown willows downstream and no chainsaw within reach. We would have to satisfy ourselves with the trailer full of the blighters behind Rob's truck.

Stan Glowacki, a former Friends Group member, wrote the following article and submitted it to the newsletter via Rob Howell.

Bees on the Fringe

When most people think of bees the first thought is of the European honeybee or an Australian commercial honeybee, and of being stung as a kid. Which carries into adult life as a dislike of Australian commercial honeybees. Australian native bees come in all shapes and sizes but most go unnoticed in our parks and gardens as the majority don't form social hives like some of their cousins in NSW and places north.

Over the last couple of years I have been catching native bees in Koala Drive, Jeeralang Junction, and sending them up to NSW for identification at the Native Bee Research Centre. With this location being on the fringe of the of the Morwell National Park it may be reasonably concluded that these bees may also be living in the park. Native bees and Australian commercial honeybees have been observed sharing the same flowers at the same time.

How to identify a native bee? Generally speaking native bees have 4 wings although when edges are interlocked and folded they may appear as two, hairy legs and or body hair for carrying pollen. Males generally have longer antennae than the females. As always there are exceptions to the rule. Refer to the table below for some of the local species:

	Name	Description	Habits
1	<i>Colletidae</i> sub family <i>Hylaeinae</i>	Shiny black body with large yellow dots	Primitive almost hairless bee carries pollen in a special crop. They nest in a hole bored in a pithy stem, timber or the ground. The nest is lined with a cellophane secretion
2	<i>Colletidae</i> , genus <i>Hyleus</i> (?)	Black, approx. 5mm long, yellow marking on the shoulders	
3	<i>Exoneura</i> species Reed Bees	Small Bee with black head and thorax red/brown colouring on abdomen Approx. 5-6mm long	Nests in pithy stems and dry leaf stems of tree ferns. Unlike other natives that die in winter reed bees will remain dormant in the nest
4	<i>Halictidae</i>	Similar to a European honey bee but 1/3 the size	
5	<i>Halictidae</i> Genus <i>Lasioglossum</i> (?)	Approx. 7 mm, dark Orange on shoulders	

6	<i>Halictidae</i> sub family Nominee genus <i>Nomia</i>	10-12mm, black grey on the front of the abdomen with orange furry stripes across the abdomen towards the sting	
7	<i>Halictidae</i> Genus <i>Homalictus urbanus</i> Emerald Homalictus	7-8mm long, long emerald green head and thorax, black abdomen	Nests in the ground with up to 160 females sharing the same burrow
8	Family <i>Colletidae</i> , <i>Hyleoides concinna</i> Common Wasp mimic bee	Approx. 10-12mm long orange abdomen with 1 thick black stripe, violet black wings	Easily confused as a wasp. Nests in old longicorn beetle tunnels. In stumps, logs and fallen branches. Nest lined and sealed with a cellophane secretion
9	<i>Megachilidae</i> Leaf cutter bee Still to have identity confirmed	Bright yellow face and legs, black thorax black abdomen with 3 pale blue/white stripes, body covered in fine hair, approx 22 mm long	Burrows in the ground in close to other bees
10	<i>Amegilla cinguata</i> Common blue banded bee	Tawny hair on thorax, females have 4 blue bands on black abdomen, males 5.	8mm tunnel in soft sand stone or soft mortar with side tunnels
11	Family <i>Colletidae</i> , genus <i>Hyleus</i> (?)	Approx. 8 mm long, large yellow and a small yellow spot on the thorax, yellow semi circle around the eyes	

Thanks to Dr. Ann Dollin from the Native Bee Research Centre, North Richmond
NSW, for identifying the samples.

FRIENDS NETWORK SEMINAR

Organ Pipes NP

Visitor Centre

Saturday 23 March 2002

The Keilor Basalt Plains: problems and opportunities for volunteer participation in restoration projects

Program:

9:30 Registration

9:45 Official opening: Bernie Fox (*Network committee*)

9:50 Best Friend Award: presented by Governor John Landy

10:30 Morning tea

11:00 Speaker: Colin Hocking, VUT: *Western grasslands*

11:30 Forum & questions: Jason Summers (*City of Brimbank*), Gerard O'Neill (*Parks Victoria*), Bernie Fox (*Friends Network*)

12:30 Lunch

1:30 Friends of Organ Pipes: *OPNP, environmental degradation in the region, Organ Pipes as an example of restoration efforts, projects undertaken*

2:00 Walks (leaders will give a 10-minute talk on the background of the walk themes. Choose one of

- **Nursery/plant trail/grass harvester demonstration.** Leaders: Ian Taylor, native plant expert; Mike Cusack, Ranger
- **Geology of Organ Pipes.** Leader: Neil Archbold, geologist
- **White Cypress Pine (*Callitris glaucophylla*), relic site and its restoration in the area.** Leader: Robyn Adams, botanist

4:00 Afternoon tea

4:30 Thanks and official close

Evening:

a. Bat box project duration, development, achievements, significance. **Bat box inspection:** harp trapping in the valley. Natasha Schedvin

b. Sugar Glider reintroduction: wild capture/release, academic work on the colony, problems of ongoing support for the colony in a regrowth forest. **Spotlight walk.**

Cost: \$10 per person. Cheques to **VNPA Friends Seminar.**

Morning & afternoon tea provided, tea/coffee available throughout the day

BYO lunch, dinner, bring a mug.

REGISTRATION FORM

Friends Network Seminar, Saturday, 23 March, 2002, at Organ Pipes National Park

Name.....
(Please print)

Name of your Friends group or organisation
(Please print)

.....

Contact telephone no. Fax
.....

Email
.....

I will / will not be staying for the evening session. }
I enclose a cheque for \$10.00 / I will be paying on the day }
Please cross out whichever does not apply

Signature
.....

Please use one form per person

Send to: Friends Seminar
c/o VNPA
10 Parliament Place
East Melbourne 3002
by Friday 15 March