

PO Box
19
Churchill
3842



President:
5122 3137

Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter - May 2002

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

A0016319X

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. Many thanks for all the great contributions this month, they have made my life much easier. Welcome to a new member, Mr Peter Steller of Churchill, who we can hopefully entice to come along to our monthly gatherings, so we can put a face to the name and provide a more personal welcome.

A couple of items to report;

- Our website is back online with some enhancements proposed as soon as Ken finds time to install them. Apparently, the site is now accessible via a link from a caterpillar/butterfly website because of Ken's provision of information on the Australian Admiral Butterfly and its foodplant, Stinging Nettles, to that website. More detail can be acquired from Ken.
- A committee meeting was held on Thursday, May 1 to discuss various items, such as;
 - The effectiveness, efficiency and worthiness of clayballing
 - Options for planting/seeding Blue Gum Hill- costs, materials, access, workforce
 - Extension of planting areas along Billy Creek
- Would anybody have use for wire tree guards? Rob no longer needs the guards at the Park office, they are still in good condition, so anybody who wants them, contact Rob.
- Various items of correspondence were received, but most were hijacked by Jane at the committee meeting for further action, so I don't have details.
- Any of you that are interested in our native forests may like to attend the Rally for the Forests, which will be held on Saturday, May 18 at Batman Park on the corner of Spencer and Flinders St in Melbourne, at 11am. You are asked to be early, bring friends, family, whistles, banners and a healthy dose of passion.

May Activity

Our next activity is scheduled for Sunday, May 19 at 10am. We will meet at the Junction Road car park for a tree guard removal session along the Billy Creek flats. Be aware that the grass in this section of the park can be quite long, so if it is damp or dewy, we will be too.

Clayball casting up Blue Gum Hill

By Jane Sultana

A small but committed group met at the Junction Road car park on Sunday, April 21. Our mission for the day was to spread clayballs in one of the new trial plots on top of Blue Gum Hill. Wendy, Danny, Ken, Rob and I (Jane) piled into Rob's truck and away we went.

Upon arrival at the trial plot we realised that we would need to do a fair bit of clearing before dropping any clayballs. The plot was thickly covered in grasses and weeds. Several hours later having cleared much of the grass away we were ready to start distributing the clayballs.

To add interest to the experiment we distributed the clayballs in a variety of ways. Over two fifths of the plot, 5 clayballs were placed per square metre. Over the rest of the plot, 2 clayballs were placed per square metre. In some areas we cleared the surrounding ground of all vegetation. In other spots we thinned the grass but did not remove it all. We put some of the clayballs in a small depression made with a hoe. Others we simply placed on the ground. Rob kept accurate notes on what we were doing in each area of the plot. It will be interesting to see whether the germination rates differ.

It was 2 o'clock before we finally stopped for lunch. During lunch Wendy realised that her reading glasses were missing. She had hooked them on her collar while working and they must have been knocked off. We scrambled back down to the trial plot to search for the glasses. Despite sifting methodically through piles of grass we were unable to find the lost glasses.

Having finished our work atop Blue Gum Hill, Wendy, Danny, Ken and I decided to walk back through the park, via the Blue Gum Hill track. Rob travelled back by road. On our walk we discovered a very dead wombat. While Wendy, Danny and I recoiled due to the horrific smell, Ken's eyes lit up and he knelt down to take a closer look. Excitedly he collected samples of the colourful little beetles that were scurrying purposefully all over the stinking carcass.

Back on the flat we met up with Rob again. He gave us a lift, beetles and all, back to the Junction Rd carpark.

Encouraging Results from Direct Seeding in Trial Plots

While we were up at the Trial Plots on Blue Gum Hill last Sunday setting up a 100 square metre Trial of our clay seed balls, I did a count of the trees which resulted from our direct seeding trials done in spring 1998.

The original assessment done in 1999 showed a successful germination rate and produced 123 seedlings in a 20m strip. Of the various seed preparation methods used, seed mixed with plain washed sand produced the best results, and the wattles seemed to be marginally more successful than the Eucalypts.

Sunday's count showed 86 trees remaining, with losses fairly well spread over all species. This is a survival rate of 70%, which seems fairly good considering the dry conditions experienced over the last few years. The resulting strip of trees is quite spectacular, with many of the trees up around 5 metres in height already.

I am looking forward to seeing the results of our seed ball trials next summer.

Rob Howell
Ranger

East Gippsland Forests Forever Camp

By Jane Sultana

Over Easter Denis and I attended the 20th annual 'Forests Forever' camp held by local environment group 'Concerned Residents of East Gippsland' (CROEG). Over one hundred people attended. Our campsite was nestled amongst huge peppermints and manna gums beside the pristine Brodribb River. Expert botanists and ecologists led walks and tours around some of the best old growth and rainforests that East Gippsland has to offer.

It was truly wonderful to experience the beauty of these ancient forests. We saw huge, knobby old shining gums over 650 years of age. These trees were so old they were mostly hollow inside and their tops had been weathered and broken. Although twisted and battered they were amazingly beautiful and loaded with cracks and crevices for animals to nest and live.

These ancient old trees were growing in what is called a mixed rainforest. A mixed rainforest has eucalypts as well as your typical rainforest plants whereas a mature rainforest no longer has eucalypts. The only way that these old gums will reproduce is if a fire goes through. The rainforest floor is dark and moist and their seeds have no chance of survival. If a fire does not occur within the next few hundred years the old trees will die without having reproduced. There will no longer be any eucalypts and the rainforest will have matured.

Within the Errinundra National Park we visited an amazing sphagnum bog. According to botanist Kevin Thiele this bog was around 21 thousand years old. Because sphagnum grows layer upon layer, it has been possible to take core samples of sphagnum from the bog to analyze. Pollen grains from plants growing around the bog have been trapped in the layers of sphagnum. By examining the core samples for types of pollen found, scientists have been able to determine the kinds of plants that have been growing around the bog for the last 21 thousand years.

The greatest changes to vegetation type around the bog has occurred within the last 30 years, due to the effects of logging in state forest further upstream. Logging has altered water flow in the river that feeds the bog and as a result this 21 thousand-year-old bog, extremely rare in Gippsland, is drying up.

Amidst the variety and marvels of these unique old growth forests were the horrific and devastating effects of logging. We visited a clear felled coup, which had been burned to encourage regrowth, but regeneration was limited, as many species did not survive the winter frosts due to the loss of a protective canopy.

Information gained under the Freedom of Information act shows that these magnificent forests are being sold for woodchips and exported for as little as 11 cents a tonne government royalty. This means that a truckload of our forests goes to the chipper for the price of a loaf of bread. Eighty percent of forest logged in East Gippsland is sold as woodchips.

We find these facts shocking. Why would any government sell off their country's unique and precious assets at any cost, let alone for this ridiculous amount?

A local forum held in Orbost, comprising environmental groups, local businesses and representatives from the timber industry are looking for alternatives that are sustainable and will preserve the forests. They are excited by the idea of a 'Great Walk'. A 300km long track could be constructed linking the national parks to create an unbroken chain of forest from the Coast through to the Alps.

The term 'Great Walk' is borrowed from New Zealand which has nine walks described this way. International tourism to New Zealand increased by 300% when the government began marketing the country as a major 'wilderness adventure' destination. For this strategy to work in Australia we must allow our spectacular forests to live and flourish.

PO Box
19
Churchill
3842



President:
5122 3137

Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Activities Calendar 2002

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

A0016319X

Here is the revised calendar for the remainder of the year. May we have great attendances and get heaps of work done.

Activities are scheduled for the third Sunday of each month, with extra days scheduled as required.

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Activity:</u>	<u>Venue and Time:</u>
May 19	Tree Guard Removal	Junction Road, 10.00am
June 16	Tree Planting	Junction Road, 10.00am
July 21	Tree Planting	Braniff's Road, 10.00am
August 4	AGM	Ken's House, 1.30pm
August 18	Tree Planting	Braniff's Road, 10.00am
September 15	Exploration Walk	Foster's Gully, 10.00am
October 20	Koala Kount	Foster's Gully, 1.30pm
November 17	Seed Sowing	Prop. Shed, 10.00am
December 15	Odd Jobs, Christmas Function	Foster's Gully, 1.30pm

For all activities, it is BYO food, drinks, suitable clothing and footwear, and other personal items.

Up to date details of each forthcoming activity are provided in the monthly newsletter.