

PO Box  
19  
Churchill  
3842



President:  
5122 3137

# Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

## *Newsletter - June 2003*

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

### June Activity

June was the month that we had left vacant, just in case something came up. To tell the truth, we couldn't think of anything that needed to be done in June when we were formulating the calendar last year, so we left it blank. Well, something has come up! We have about 800 trees in the nursery, more than we really need, but we don't want to waste them, so we will need an extra planting day to get them into the ground. The Junction Road gate at 10am on Sunday, June 15 will be our meeting place and hopefully Rob will have sorted out somewhere for us to plant. Suitable clothing and footwear for outdoor work in the cold season is essential, lunch (hot soup??) and refreshments (hot tea??) are recommended. See you there!

### Walking on the Wildside

On a cool, overcast morning in April, the drizzle started falling before we got out of the driveway. However, it did not last until we reached the Junction Road gate a shade before 10am. Yes, you read it, we were early!! Waiting for us were Ken, Wendy, Hilma and Kai Ming, with Danny and Denis and Jane soon following us in. Rob appeared from the other direction, inside the gate, towing the trailer. Much debate ensued as to our plans for the day, with Rob all for getting stuck right into the tree guards, Ken keen on a scamper through the backblocks and the rest of us fair to middling. In the end, tree guards were on the roster for May, so the walk won.

We piled into the 4WD's and made our way to the weir. After a brief pause to get organised, we were on our way, trundling along Side Creek with Danny setting a mean pace and Rob, Hilma and myself bringing up the rear, gazing at the remnants of old log bridges, track cuttings and the bright green growth of scores of young thistles raising their prickly heads along the gully. Among the rocks in the middle of the creek below the ford, a young Muttonwood (*Rapanea howittiana*) was growing nicely, while nearby some seedlings of Twining Silkpod (*Parsonia brownii*) had sprouted in the middle of the track, close to the parent plants that we put in a few years back. Good to see some of the local natives managing to succeed amongst the weeds, but I don't like their chances come the next bout of track maintenance.

The drizzle started up again before we began climbing the Blue Gum Hill Track, with areas of mist hanging around the hillsides. Ken found a couple of plants of Horehound, which we promptly pulled out, noting the presence of a couple of orange and black bugs sitting on the seed capsules. Ken remarked that he had found the same bugs on Horehound plants elsewhere in the Park, and he has since tracked down the ID of the critters by entering 'Horehound Bug' into his internet search engine, the first time he has had success by guessing a common name! Further up the hillside, Zack found a large, brown feather about 18 inches long, presumably from one of the resident Wedge-tail Eagles. It was a bit grubby, but kept him amused for the rest of the walk.

As we puffed and panted our way to the saddle, Hilma and Danny were nowhere to be seen, having left us stragglers for dead. We cooed for a bit and tried to con Zack into sprinting up to the seat to see if they were there, but he would have none of it. No one else felt fit enough to be bothered, so, as we

knew Hilma was familiar with our route, we headed down the gully to the tree line. As Ken and Rob cast about looking for the route markers, Hilma caught up to us, minus Danny. While Hilma headed back up the top in search of Danny, the rest of us sat tight and had our lunch. Hilma reappeared a while later to report no sign of Danny, despite more cooees and yahoos. We could only hope he would make his own way down and meet us at the bottom.

The drizzle continued steadily, not enough to soak us, just enough to make things a bit slippery underfoot. Down through the trees we went, skirting the hillside around a steep drop that may well be a nice little waterfall with a lot more rain. Cathy did not enjoy this part of the walk. Onto an open ridge of tussocks (*Poa labillardieri*), we gradually descended in an arc which brought us down into the gully, then across the flats to Billy Creek. A quick splash from rock to rock and we were on the overgrown section of track coming in from the base of Blue Gum Hill. Not long after that, Danny was greeting us as we stepped on to the 4WD track. A quick stroll and we were back at the cars, organising a hot cuppa and a piece of cake. We woke up the resident Koala, checked out the watercress and mulberries (*Hedycarya angustifolia*) growing in the creek, discussed the differences between Soft and Rough Tree-ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica* & *Cyathea australis*) and the Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) and Manna Gums (*E. viminalis*) growing nearby, pulled a couple of leeches of Cathy before she freaked, did a bit more 4WDing to get us out of there, then went home.

## **Tree Dis-guarding**

May was no different to April, with the rain starting to fall as soon as we walked out the front door. The sky was clear to the east and south, but north and west was slate grey with fog hanging around the hilltops. I kid you not, we were the first into the car park at Junction Road, but, to be fair, we were only just in front of Rob, while Denis and Jane were parked over the road for a last minute pitstop. Kai Ming and Peter McDonald trundled in shortly thereafter, while Hilma caught up to us just as we began attacking tree guards a short way in from the gate. Ken and Wendy were absent, Ken attending a conference on fungi at Rawson, whilst Wendy was doing her bit feeding the masses at the Thumpernats at Loy Yang.

The rain did not ease up at all, maintaining a constant pattering through the trees over our heads as we struggled with the old mesh guards. We all worked pretty well as a team, toiling in a line, dropping the guards into small piles for Rob to pick up and cart to the trailer. Under the thicker parts of the canopy where the grass was shortest, a quick slash with the pocket knife had the guard cut in half and removed from the trunks, but where the grass was longer or the tree had grown sideways through the mesh, the job was much more difficult. Despite the rain, it was surprising how dry the ground was around the bases of the trees, underneath their collars of Kikuyu.

We toiled on diligently, getting wetter and wetter, until, on delivering a load of guards to the trailer, the girls (Nicole and her friend, Abbey) asked me why Rob was dancing around waving his arms about. Sure enough, there he was, flailing about, seemingly in the process of undressing. Luckily enough for us, he stopped as soon as he had gotten his coat off, threw it on the ground and hastily trotted away from it. As he approached us, it soon became apparent what he was up to, as a large, angry European Wasp was perched on the midriff of his jumper, trying valiantly to get his attention. We soon despatched it (thick, leather gloves are really good for crushing wasps if they are sitting still), as Rob explained what had happened. As he had knelt down to pick up a pile of guards, a number of wasps had zeroed in on him, resulting in a single sting, a hasty retreat and his subsequent antics. Cautious inspection of the area from a respectable distance revealed a swarm of wasps congregating around the base of a tree a couple of metres from the pile of guards. It appears that the nest had been disturbed by one of our de-guarders removing a guard from that tree. Luckily for that person, the cold and wet weather had slowed down the reactions of the wasps enough for whomever it was to move off before the wasps were awake enough to attack.

No more dramas unfolded, as, with one false stop until someone found some more of the wretched things, we finished off the area known to contain the mesh guards. It was about lunchtime, we were soggy and bedraggled, much more so than Old Man Roo camped under the big Apple Box a short way up the slope, so we decided to head back to the Office to find a dry spot to sit and eat. Kai Ming had had enough and went home, while the rest of us made our way to Kerry Road. Hilma detoured for a dry change of clothes and rejoined us as Rob was trying to get his little bar heater going. A couple of

sangas and a hot cuppa hit the spot, as the pitter-patter of rain on the roof eased off and stopped. Typical.

To finish off the afternoon, some sightseeing was in order. Hilma was keen on getting Rob's slant on some of the historical features along Billy Creek and Jane needed some photos of the proposed locations of new picnic tables for our grant application, so it was back into the vehicles for the drive to Junction Road, then into the four wheelers for the greasy stuff. First stop was to pick up a couple of stray tree guards (Rob was still towing the trailer), next stop was on the sweeping curve down from the Braniff's Road gate to look for remnants of the wooden pipeline that used to carry water from the weir to Morwell. It didn't take long to locate the exposed ends of the pipe where it crossed the small creek (see the photo below, courtesy of Denis and Jane and their trusty digital camera), and much discussion followed as we enjoyed basking in the sun, steam rising from damp clothing, watching the kangaroos relaxing in the old orchard across the way. As we made our way back to the cars, some very industrious looking ladies strode past with a distance measuring wheel thingy (I can't for the life of me remember what they're called) and arms full of witches hats. When Rob enquired what they were up to, he was informed that Traralgon Little Athletics were running a cross-country run to the weir later that afternoon! A trifle nonplussed, Rob further enquired whether they had the necessary permits for running organised events in a National Park, to be told that they had done the same thing last year!

Next stop was at the bottom of Clematis Track, for a quick trot up the hill to look at the remnants of a chimney and the old Rover Hut remains. Heaps of little Clematis and Wonga Vine plants could be found scrambling through the leaf litter, but not too many of our trees, planted by the scouts last year, have survived the dry summer. Onto Potato Flat, Jane took her photos of the old picnic table, resplendent with a lovely coat of moss, lichen and fungi in the rotting cracks and grooves. A similar routine followed at the weir, where the normally resident koala was nowhere to be seen. Retracing our route back to Junction Road, we called it a day, leaving Rob to track down the chief organiser of the Little Aths for a final showdown. Perhaps we will know the outcome next month.



Thanks to our Secretary, Jane Sultana, for the minutes of the Committee Meeting held at Ken's residence last month.

Friends of Morwell National Park  
*Committee Meeting- 7/05/03*

**Committee meeting declared open 7:10pm.**

**Attendance:** Ken Harris, Wendy Steenbergen, Jane Sultana, Denis Sultana and Michael Beamish.

**Apologies:** Rob Howell.

**Minutes of the previous Committee Meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2002 were read and accepted as a true account. (Moved: Ken Harris, Seconded: Wendy Steenbergen)**

**Business arising from previous minutes: nil**

**Correspondence:**

*Inwards:*

National Heritage Trust re: Revegetation of the Pine Plantation.

Latrobe City re: Community Forum on Biotechnology.

Latrobe City re: Community Groups and Networking Information Forums.

Latrobe City: Community Groups News.

Two letters from Eualie Brewster re: Past Newsletters.

Ed Steenbergen: Resignation from his role as Vice President.

Latrobe Visitor Information Service: Request for more brochures.

Parks Victoria: 2001/02 Annual Report.

Latrobe Shire: Payment for two copies of 'Flowers and Ferns of Morwell National Park' purchased through Latrobe City Information.

NRE: Payment for ten copies of 'Flowers and Ferns of Morwell National Park'

*Outwards:*

Two letters written by Ken Harris to Eualie Brewster re: Past Newsletters.

Thankyou letter to Ed Steenbergen for his commitment to the Friends of Morwell National Park

'Get Well' card for member Ray Felmingham.

**Treasurer's Report:**

As attached.

It was agreed that \$500 would be withdrawn from the main account and another \$500 from the book account to be added to the term deposit.

Moved: Wendy Steenbergen, Seconded: Jane Sultana.

**Ranger's Report:** None

**General Business:**

The following new members were unanimously voted into the group.

- Mark and Sharon Waller
- Elizabeth Collins
- Kai Ming Ting

Moved: Jane Sultana, Seconded: Ken Harris.

Ken Harris has obtained some archive material from the old Shire of Morwell relating to the History of Morwell National Park. Jane Sultana will file this information in the brown suitcase.

Denis Sultana was elected to stand in as Vice President following Ed Steenbergen's resignation.

Nominated: Wendy Steenbergen, Seconded: Michael Beamish.

The closing date for the 2003/04 Volunteer Group Grants is Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May '03.

It was decided that the group would put in an application for funding for picnic tables, along with signs, to direct people to picnic areas in the park. The tables would be placed at the weir (to replace an old one), on Potato Flat (to replace an old one) and near the Junction Rd car park (where there is no table). Jane will call Rob for costing then complete the application.

The forthcoming AGM will be held on 3/08/03 at the residence of Ken Harris, RMB 4318, Haverbrack Crescent, Hazelwood South.

**Meeting Closed at 8:20pm.**