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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – September 2004

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

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter.

Ducks in the Forest by Ken Harris

Every spring, it is quite common to find that Australian Shelduck (Mountain Duck) *Tadorna tadornoides* are flying around Fosters Gully, calling and often perching on the top of the large mature Mountain Grey Gums, especially in Lyndon's Clearing. I have seen this many times and I strongly suspect that they nest in hollows in the big gum trees, even though it means that they must lead their ducklings on a long walk through the forest, before they can bring them to water.



On 3rd July, I walked into the park from the Yinnar South end, along the Silvertop Hill Track and was immediately aware of ducks flying around calling loudly and just as in Fosters Gully they proved to be Australian Shelduck and they kept landing on dead limbs on the top of a large

Mountain Grey Gum. The sun was shining and I was able to get this picture of them. If they nest there they will again give their offspring a long walk to water, although perhaps not quite as far as from Lyndon's Clearing.

September Activity

Our next scheduled activity is the combined excursion with the Australian Plant Society (Latrobe Valley) group to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne, on Sunday, September 19, mainly to check out progress on the new Australian Garden being constructed on site. We will be hosted by the Friends of RBGC and the APS Wilson Park (Berwick) group will also be there on that day. I have included a rough agenda for the day below, please let me know what you think and if you are coming.

As we didn't manage to get all of our trees into the ground at the August planting day, and that was our last scheduled planting day for the year, we need to organise another session. We have roughly 130 trees left, which should take a couple of hours to plant. At this stage, Sunday, August 29 looks to be the most convenient, so could those who are available meet us at the Kerry Road carpark at 10am. The more hands, the lighter and quicker the work!

Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne
Excursion Program, September 19, 2004.
APS Latrobe Valley and Friends of Morwell NP

Following is a rough outline of what we can expect for our trip to Cranbourne. Some of the points are my suggestion only and are open to discussion on what suits the groups best.

- 9.30am Meet at the Morwell Railway Station carpark, where we can organise car pooling if desired.
- 10.00am Depart for Cranbourne, via M1 (Prince's Freeway) to Berwick, turning left onto the Berwick-Cranbourne Rd (Clyde Rd, Melways map 111 B11) and travelling south to turn right onto Ballarto Rd (Melways 134 J11), crossing the South Gippsland Highway and entering the main gate at RBGC. Members wishing to meet us en route should let us know where to expect you.
- 11.30am Arrive Stringybark Picnic Area, RBGC (Melways 133 K10 to K12), to be met by Friends of RBGC. A variety of activities will be available, such as short walks or socialising with RBGC staff or APS Wilson Park members also visiting on the day.
- 12.30pm Lunch. The Friends of RBGC are providing a sausage sizzle for us.
- 1.30pm Proceed to the new Australian Garden construction site (not open to the public for another 12 months) for guided walks and talks.
- 3.30pm End of planned activities, gather at cars to plan our return home.

Persons attending on the day will need to bring their own drinks and snacks (and also your lunch if you don't want to eat sausages) and chairs are recommended, as we will be situated in the public picnic area and seating might be at a premium if Joe Public decides to visit. Clothing and footwear suitable for the climate, season, location and activity are highly recommended as well.

For catering purposes, the Friends of RBGC have asked me to provide numbers of people attending by Tuesday, September 7, 2004. This, unfortunately, is before our next meeting, so could everyone who is planning to attend please contact me by 7/9/04, so I can do the sums and let Cranbourne know. I can be contacted by phone on 5169 6543 or email to beamish@vic.australis.com.au.

The Almost Last Tree Planting

After a week of pretty miserable weather and not very positive weather reports, Sunday, August 15 dawned bright and sunny, albeit a bit chilly. A late night Saturday night didn't inspire us greatly to clamber out of the sack, but the right amount of nagging (not enough to annoy, but just enough to motivate) did the trick and we arrived at Kerry Road a couple of minutes before 10am. Rob was the only one there, just coming out from the office, so we propped in the carpark to see if anyone else would venture out. Denis and Wendy appeared before too long and we chatted away, looked at a few photos of our planting efforts on Peel's Block a couple of months ago, entertained the local Lewin Honeyeater with a chook or two of mandarin and were serenaded by the resident Grey Thrush. A half hour later, after a couple of false alarms, we decided nobody else would front up and we should get ourselves up the hill and to work.

A short drive up Jumbuk Road to the pines had us looking over another steep hillside that needed some trees planted on it. Rob had already laid out the gear for us, so there was no excuse for further delay. The first job was to get the gear off the track onto the hillside, so everyone grabbed an armful of guards and slipped and slithered their way downwards. Initially, it was just as easy to throw the guards to their positions, but further down from the track they had to be carried. Once enough were distributed, Denis began the chore of chopping the grass away, while the rest of us continued carting guards and trees. Soon enough we were into our normal routine, Denis digging, Cathy and Wendy making holes and planting, Rob distributing trees and guards and me doing whatever was next, carrying gear, planting, hammering stakes or catching my breath. A couple of passing showers didn't even slow us down!

Denis had to depart at lunchtime, so the rest of us had to labour on without him doing the hard stuff. By about 2.30pm, we had had enough, managing to get 183 of the allotted 320 Blue Gums, Prickly Moses and Wattles into the ground. That left 137 trees which will need to be planted in the next month or so. Hopefully, with a few extra helpers, we will knock them off in a couple of hours or so.