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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – March 2005

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Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. There have been lots of happenings in the Park over the last few weeks, mostly as a result of the wild weather at the end of January and beginning of February. Many large trees were bowled over in various sections of the Park, resulting in Parks Victoria restricting access to the Park until the clean-up could take place. Although only 73mm of rain was recorded at the Park office during the early February deluge, following on from 38mm a week earlier, much more must have fallen over the catchments in the Strzelecki's, to cause the 2 metre torrent that roared down Billy Creek, flattening streamside vegetation and rearranging all the silt jetties along the creek. Other streams in the area experienced similar flooding, with Middle Creek inundating the Yinnar Flats and Morwell River closing the Boolarra Road for only the third time in the 20 years we have been here.



Luckily, most of the infrastructure in Park survived unscathed. All the footbridges are in one piece, despite some near misses from fallen trees or those washed down the creeks. Plenty of work was required to clear walking and fire access tracks from debris, with Work for the Dole participants helping out in the Foster's Gully and Stringybark Ridge sections of the Park, and contractors rebuilding the washed out fords along Billy Creek, as shown in accompanying photos, courtesy of Rob Howell. These show the first ford on the Billy Creek Track the day after the flood and the excavator at work on the same ford at the end of February.



March Activity

Our activity this month is a replica of last month. Although the calendar says otherwise, we will meet at the Braniff's Road gate at 10am on Sunday, March 20 to continue our war on Tutsan. Rob will have available a selection of waders in various sizes, but you are welcome to bring your own along if you have them. As always you will need appropriate clothing and footwear for possibly wading in the creek and for warding off the pricklies and bities, as well as your lunch and refreshments. Depending on accessibility and our mood on the day, we may head for the weir to where we finished off last year, or just continue with the sections we worked on last month.

In the Mailbox

This month we have received:

- Friends of Tarra Bulga NP Newsletter for Summer 2004/5.
- Friends of Coolart Newsletter 1/05.
- FriendsNet Newsletter No.50 for February 2005.
- A survey form for the Under Control newsletter, which I have completed and returned.
- Advice via Martin O'Brien from the Scientific Advisory Committee, that the Strzelecki Gum, *Eucalyptus strzelecki*, be recommended for listing as a taxon under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. Ken tells me we do have the beastie in Morwell NP, for example, the large gum in the gully next to the Braniff's Road gate.

Workers for the Dole?



Please note, before sending your complaints to me, that the above title was not of my doing, but was the caption of the photo below, courtesy of Rob Howell. Any abuse can be sent directly to Rob, please. It is somehow unfair that, although Rob was similarly elegantly attired, somebody had to take the photo. Perhaps our next grant application should be for a camera tripod, so that he won't get away with it in future.

As you can see from the photo, Rob has used some of our grant money to purchase waders, to provide a bit of protection from the water, the vegetation and the insects as we continue to splash our way up and down the creek in our pursuit of weeds. Due to all the fallen timber and washouts, we weren't able to get to (couldn't be bothered walking to) the weir, so we split up into three groups of two, found our own section of creek and went about our business of locating and destroying Tutsan. Reg and Danny started at the Braniff's Road ford and worked downstream, while Rob and Ken wandered up the Pipeline Track to the first footbridge and commenced working back to Braniff's Road. Cathy and I walked up to the second footbridge, with the intention of working back to the first footbridge. By lunchtime, however, we had only managed to clear a distance of about 50m back to the second ford, finding it difficult to locate and then separate the Tutsan from the tangled mat of vegetation flattened by the floodwaters.

Back at the cars for lunch, we all compared notes and found we were all having the same problems, but there was not much to be done about it, so we were determined to continue on as best we could. Insects abounded, probably as a result of the warm, wet conditions of the last few weeks, with plenty of mosquitos vying for our blood and lots of centipedes and millipedes in the mats of shrubbery along the banks. Spiders and even the odd scorpion scurried away as we disturbed their hiding places. At one point, a white-naped honeyeater landed at our feet, paying us little heed in it's quest for a drink. By 3pm, Cathy and I were still only half way back to the first footbridge, so on finding a recognisable location with reasonable access between track and stream, we called it a day and headed back to the cars. Reg and Danny were waiting for us and watching an echidna foraging up the fenceline on the hillside above. Rob and Ken appeared after ten minutes or so, Rob limping along because he had managed to drop his secateurs down into his waders and was finding it a tad uncomfortable. There is more than enough streamside still to work on, to keep us busy for some time to come.