

PO Box
19
Churchill
3842



President:
5122 3137

Friends of
Morwell National Park Inc.
Newsletter – September 2005

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

A0016319X

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. Another successful AGM has been completed and you will find much of this newsletter devoted to that subject, along with the usual activity report and latest news. As a result of the AGM, quite a few non-renewed members have been deleted from the mailing list of this newsletter, particularly those that we have not heard from in some time. If you know or hear of any ex-members who have been mistakenly deleted, please grab their renewals and let me know to put them back on the list.

September Activity

Our next activity will be held a week earlier than normal, due to the clash with the Friends Conference in the Grampians and the school holidays on our scheduled weekend. Our plan is an excursion to the Button Grass Walk in the Bunyip State Park (Tynong North), followed up with a visit to Mt Cannibal (Garfield North) if time and energy permits. The Button Grass Walk is an easy self-guided walk of about 2km in length on a mostly level, formed track. Mt Cannibal is not quite so level, but the track is reasonably well defined and the views from the top are worth the effort. The brochure reckons it takes 40 minutes, but this will depend on your pace and fitness. We will meet at the car park opposite the Morwell Post Office at 10am on Sunday, September 11 to finalise numbers and organise some car pooling. Be self-contained for the day, wear clothing and footwear suitable for the weather and bushwalking, bring your own lunch and refreshments and a chair to sit on.

Weed Wars, Episode VII

We thought we were abnormally early, but on arriving at the Junction Road carpark, we obviously weren't as abnormal as others! Rob, Ken, Denis and Reg were all waiting patiently. Cars kept filing in behind us, as Sheina, Beryl, Robyn and Wendy competed for parking space. A good turnout, 11 of us, counting Zack who had ulterior motives in wanting a taxi service from us following the activity. The wind was a bit lazy, going straight through us instead of around, so we didn't waste time in donning our fashionable wading attire (particular Denis in his camouflage gear) and loading ourselves into the vehicles for the trip upstream. Wendy, Cathy, Zack and I stopped at the first (Braniff's Road) ford to work our way upstream from there, while Reg, Denis and Sheina drove to the weir to work their way downstream towards us. Rob, Ken, Beryl and Robyn went to the end of the track to work back to the weir.

We found far too many Tutsan plants, both seedlings and previously poisoned plants re-sprouting from their bases. As much as we like to sadistically maim and destroy the damn things, it was disappointing to have our fears of a comeback confirmed. We can only expect there to be a continuing resurgence as the no doubt huge seed reserves along the stream germinate with the warming season. Not too many other weeds were sighted, just a few young teasels and foxgloves. The patch of Madiera Winter-cherry we sorted out last year has not reappeared yet. With a short break for lunch, we were finished walking the creek by about 2.30pm.

In other news, Rob reports that he spent 2 days clearing snow damage throughout the Park. Over the three days of the event, the Park received about 95mm of precipitation, about 30% more than we received here at Boolarra. Tarra-Bulga NP copped it a lot worse, requiring contractors to be brought in to clear all the fallen debris, closing the Park to the public for a couple of weeks.

Friends of Morwell National Park
Annual General Meeting- 7/08/05

Annual General Meeting declared open at 1:50pm

Attendance: Wendy Steenbergen, Rob Howell, Jane Sultana, Denis Sultana, Cathy Beamish, Mike Beamish, Dorothy Reinkowsky, Ken Harris, Sheina Renton

Apologies: Hilma Batza, Robyn Zink, Reg Felmingham, Peter McDonald.

Minutes of previous AGM: Read and accepted as a true account. (Jane, Denis)

Reports:

The President's Report (copy included) was read and accepted. (Mike, Cathy)

The Ranger's Report (copy included) was read and accepted. (Cathy, Dorothy)

The Treasurer's Report (copy included) was read and accepted. (Denis, Jane)

Election of office Bearers:

President- Ken Harris (Nom-Wendy, Sec-Denis)

Vice President- Cathy Beamish (Nom- Denis, Sec- Wendy)

Secretary- Jane Sultana (Nom-Cathy, Sec-Dorothy)

Treasurer- Wendy Steenbergen (Nom-Dorothy, Sec- Jane)

Newsletter- Mike Beamish (Nom-Denis, Sec-Wendy)

Publicity- Denis Sultana (Nom-Wendy, Sec-Jane)

General Business:

1. Motion that the membership fee structure will remain unchanged at \$10 per person or \$15 per family or group. Passed unanimously. (Wendy, Cathy)
2. Motion that recommended payment of the Incorporation Fee forthwith. Passed unanimously. (Wendy, Denis)
3. It was suggested that a thank you letter be written to Peter North who has been auditing our Annual Report for many years now. It was decided that the secretary, Jane Sultana, would send a letter of thanks on behalf of the Friends' group.

Annual General Meeting closed at 2:20pm

Friends of Morwell National Park **Committee Meeting- 7/08/05**

Committee Meeting declared open at 2.25pm

Attendance: Wendy Steenberg, Rob Howell, Jane Sultana, Denis Sultana, Cathy Beamish, Mike Beamish, Dorothy Reinkowsky, Ken Harris, Sheina Renton

Apologies: Hilma Batza, Robyn Zink, Reg Felmingham, Peter McDonald.

Minutes of previous CM: Held on March 20, 2005 were read and accepted as a true account. (Cathy, Wendy)

Business arising from previous meetings minutes:

1. Our September activity will be moved to the second Sunday of the month (Sept 11th) and will involve a guided walk (led by Mike and Cathy Beamish) in parkland near Bunyip. Participants will meet at the Morwell Railway station for car pooling.
2. Ken Harris will attend the Friends Net conference in September. The conference will be held in the Grampians.
3. Jane will work on simplifying the membership application form to include just a little bit of information about the group and details on how to go about joining. Copies of this form will be left at the Fosters Gully notice board.

Correspondence:

Inwards:

1. Parks Victoria 2005-06 Volunteer Group Grants Program (Our application for funding for weed control has been successful and we will be granted \$5000 to be spent between July 2005 and June 2006)
2. Land For Wildlife - Information and Pizza Night - Tuesday 30th August, 6:30pm, 71 Hotham Street, Traralgon.
3. All other correspondence as listed under **In the Mailbox** 'Friends of Morwell National Park Inc', newsletters April to August.

Outwards: Nil

General Business:

1. Churchill Festival: The Friends' group has been invited to participate in the 2006 Churchill Community Festival. The festival will be held on 1st April from 10:00am-3:00pm. We have decided to accept this offer as it provides exposure for the group and a chance to attract some new members. It also gives us the opportunity to instigate some environmental education within the community. Jane will send off the acceptance form and Cathy will act as our contact person on this event.
2. The following new members were unanimously voted into the group.
-Beryl Nelson
-Sheina Renton
Moved: Cathy, Seconded: Mike.
3. Friends of Morwell National Park website: Ken's son has been subsidising our Parks website. He would like to cut back his internet usage so in the future we will have to pay for our own internet access. Ken and Mike have been doing some investigation and believe this will cost us about \$120 annually. Ken will approach Monash University to see whether they might be willing to subsidise our costs. If the university is unable to help we will investigate other avenues.
4. Our 2005 Christmas function will be take the form of a BBQ at the weir.
5. Calendar of activities 2006: Our activities program for 2006 was discussed and activities for each month decided upon. Mike will publish a copy of this calendar in a forthcoming newsletter.

Meeting closed at 3:35pm

Friends of Morwell National Park **President's Report for 2004 to 2005**

The Friends of Morwell National Park have reached the end of another year, our 19th year helping in the management of Morwell National Park. Next year will be something of a milestone and perhaps a special celebration will be warranted.

Tree planting has been an integral part of our activities, since about 1990 and we have planted a great number of trees over that time. August last year saw us come to the end (for the moment). We have completed planting all the areas we set out to revegetate and this year we did not grow any seedlings for planting in the park. We can be very proud of what we have achieved. We haven't stopped for good however. There are still some challenging areas like the slopes of Blue Gum Hill, but we are taking a pause before embarking on the next, rather difficult phase. Plans for revegetation of Blue Gum Hill are still not progressing as the fencing of the planting site is proving difficult to organise. We will get back to tree planting one day!

During the year the Latrobe Valley City Council held a Greening Latrobe forum attended by Jane and I along with representatives of a great many volunteer groups. We received a certificate of appreciation from the Council in acknowledgment of all the revegetation work we have done in the area.

Wasps were a major problem last year and a lot of work was done to eliminate their nests wherever they were found. Mike's article on the location and elimination of wasps nests in our newsletter was reprinted in the Friends Network Newsletter during the year.

Having taken a rest from tree planting our new project is to attempt to eliminate the Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*) from the edges of Billys Creek. We applied for and were awarded a \$3500 grant for carrying out this work, which included hired help to spray the plants. The Friends have now completed about 6 sessions of wading along the creek locating and destroying tutsan plants. It is not going to be cured in one season, but we have given it a nasty headache at least.

In October we made a visit to Cranbourne Australian Botanical Garden with the Australian Plant Society. Exploring the bush in the morning and being shown over the Cranbourne Australian Botanical Garden which is still under development in the afternoon.

The Koala Count was successfully completed without any rain to spoil the day, but not many Koalas were recorded, only 4, I believe. I escorted a group from Australian Plants Society South Gippsland around the Park on the Saturday before the Koala Count. Wendy escorted a group from the Barwon Older Adults Recreational Network through Foster's Gully on the same morning as our November activity.

The plans to harvest the pines on Jumbuk Rd to eliminate them from the park and replace them with native species are well advanced, but are awaiting permission of residents for the log lorries that will remove the harvested timber.

Congratulations to Hilmar Batza who had his 'History of Billys Creek' published in the Churchill News.

December started the Tutsan removal on the upper reaches of Billys Creek, combined with a barbecue lunch at the weir which revealed a crayfish making its way down the concrete face of the weir!

A seed collecting was carried out in January, targeting Varnish Wattle and Blue Gum. Varnish Wattle and some Hazel Pomarderris seed were gathered on the Lodge Track and Blue Gum seed was collected on Blue Gum Hill.

An autumn storm brought trees down all over the Park. Most tracks were closed until the obstacles were cleared. One tree fell right beside a Billys Creek bridge, but missed it by a whisker and caused no damage.

A fuel reduction burn was completed successfully in the autumn at the northern end of the Stringybark Ridge. It will be interesting to inspect the area for orchids and other wild flowers emerging after the fire.

The steps on the Eastern side of Fosters Gully Creek bridge have been reconstructed.

I led the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists club on a successful spotlight walk in Fosters Gully April 23rd and a Powerful Owl with its Brush Possum prey was observed near the Kerry Road picnic area.

In May, we destroyed a couple of well established Ivy plants by the Zigzag Track and then gathered tree guards from last years tree planting's.

Our final activity of the year was some track work repairing and clearing overgrown sections of the Muttonwood Creek Track.

I will close by again thanking our ranger Rob Howell for his sterling efforts through the year and his help in all the Friends activities,

Ken Harris - 5th August 2005

Ranger's Report – Morwell National Park 2004/2005

Last year's PV Community Grant of \$3500 to control Tutsan along Billys Creek resulted in a major reduction in the occurrence of the weed on and near the creek banks. This was achieved by a combination of chemical control by contractors and a lot of hand removal by the dedicated band of Friends who got into the creek to seek and destroy this elusive pest plant. Many thanks to all those who got down and dirty (and sometimes wet) to help with this onerous task. We knew all along that this weed was devilishly hard to kill so we were expecting there to be a need for a fair amount of follow-up works. To this end, I am glad to hear that the Grant application for 2005/2006 has been successful and that we will receive \$5000 to conduct further chemical spraying of Tutsan by contractors, do more hand removal of same and still have money to control the Honeysuckle and Periwinkle which we have recently discovered on the eastern bank of Billys Creek.

Whilst on the subject of weeds, contractors again completed extensive spraying of Ragwort, Thistles and Blackberries in spring, summer and autumn achieving control of those species over a wide area, mainly around Billys Creek and its tributaries. The areas recently added to the Park at the end of Reidy's Road were also treated extensively for those three weed species and will require additional works for some years to come, we are fortunate that Parks Victoria sees weed control as a priority at present and is providing good funding for our weed control projects. Unfortunately, as Ragwort and Thistles are spread so rapidly over large areas by wind blown seeds and Blackberries are widely distributed by birds and foxes, we can only regard even such highly successful weed control efforts as temporary in the long term.

European Wasps were not quite so bad this year due to the number of nests treated last year but we were still able to locate and destroy nine nests, several of which were surprisingly high up near the top of the Lodge Track.

The main achievement in terms of the Park's Visitor Facilities has been the construction of new steps down to the footbridge over the creek in Fosters Gully. They have been built on a gentler gradient than the old ones and have a more appealing gently curved alignment.

The long awaited fuel reduction burn on Stringybark Ridge took place in autumn this year and the results were good in terms of the amount of ground fuels removed. The other benefit from burning this area is the control of Pittosporums which are generally killed outright if the fire is hot enough. The growth of the grass trees and other ground dwelling plants will be stimulated and it will be interesting to see what orchids appear over the next few months or year and a half.

There has been no news to date on the issue of logging trucks using Jumbuk Road, but we are still optimistic that the removal and revegetation of the Pine Plantation in the Park can go ahead once a suitable compromise is reached. This will give us the chance to get back into our beloved tree planting activities with renewed vigour after the well-earned break we are having this year.

Once again it is good to see some different activities being slotted into the calendar with the track clearing exercise of last June and the possible return of the Churchill Festival in 2006. I hope the upcoming excursion in September is enjoyed by all; it will be a great opportunity for some of the newer members to get to know the old hands socially.

Finally, thanks to the committee and all members of the Friends of Morwell National Park for their valuable contribution to the management of the Park over the past twelve months. I look forward to another year of rewarding activities in and related to the Park.

Rob Howell, Ranger

Also from Rob, via email:

After the interest shown in Land for Wildlife at the AGM yesterday I thought it might be worth putting a bit of info in the next newsletter.

Lots of information is available on the internet if you go to www.dse.gov.vic.au and search for the keywords 'Land for Wildlife' (use upper case L & W). The local Land for Wildlife Officer is Kylie Singleton at the Department of Sustainability and Environment, 71 Hotham Street Traralgon. Those who aren't on-line can phone her on 5172 2123 or fax 5172 2100.

Cheers
Rob

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Calendar 2006

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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>
January 15	Seed Collecting	Braniff's Road, 10.00am
February 19	Weed Removal	Junction Road, 10.00am
March 19	Weed Removal	Junction Road, 10.00am
April 16	Tree Guard Removal	Junction Road, 10.00am
May 21	Track Construction (Silvertop)	Kerry Road, 10.00am
June 18	Track Maintenance (Coprosma)	Junction Road, 10.00am
July 16	Tree Planting	To be advised, 10.00am
August 6	AGM	To be advised, 1.30pm
August 20	Tree Planting	To be advised, 10.00am
September 17	Excursion (Organ Pipes?)	To be advised, 10.00am
October 15	Koala Count	Foster's Gully, 1.30pm
November 19	Butterfly Orchid Survey Odd jobs	Foster's Gully, 10.00am
December 17	Odd Jobs, Christmas Function	To be advised

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.