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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – January 2006

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

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G'day everyone and welcome to the new year and the latest edition of our newsletter. To tell the truth, we very nearly didn't have a new edition of our newsletter, since Cathy has had me so busy worrying about painting the house, everything else has been deleted from memory. As a consequence, there has been no holidaying this season, it's all work and no play and the house looks like a tornado has been through it. Still, if I can keep my employer (the one that actually pays me wages) at bay for a couple more weeks, we should be able to get the job done. Cathy has gotten off easily; she went back to her cushy job last week, leaving me with the shambles she created during her Christmas break.

We did actually manage to get one day off and joined the Native Orchid Society on their expedition to Mt Baw Baw. Very enjoyable, lovely weather, lots of dirty, great, hungry March flies, but plenty of spectacular orchids to compensate. The Veined Sun Orchid (*Thelymitra cyanea*) was flowering in profusion in the Sphagnum bogs and Alpine Leek Orchids (*Prasophyllum alpinum*) and Green Bird Orchids (*Chiloglottis cornuta*) could be found scattered around the plains and under the alpine shrubbery. At lower altitudes, the Mountain Greenhood (*Pterostylis monticola*) grew in some impressively large colonies, usually in mosquito-ridden, snake-infested swamps. Amazing what some people will do for entertainment! It was a good opportunity to give my Christmas present, a digital SLR camera, a proper test run. You'll be delighted to know that it is just as much a hassle to use as my old film SLR, except you don't run out of film as quickly to end the pain.

Anyway, enough rambling on, on to subjects Parky.....

In the Mailbox

More stuff to read, including:

- FriendsNet Newsletter No 53, November 2005- includes a rundown of the last Friends Conference and articles and info from other Friends Groups.
- Friends of Coolart Newsletter 4/05- short articles and reports on the activities of this group.
- Canopy Newsletter No 27 from Parks Victoria- short articles on all things Parks Victorian.
- A Christmas card from Danny Barclay to all members of the Friends Group.

Please let me know if you would like to read any of these items, I'll be passing them on to our Secretary at the earliest opportunity, for archiving and filing.

January Activity

Our first activity for the year will be a seed collecting expedition to wherever we can find suitable seed. Our main target will be Varnish Wattle, to bolster our stocks for contractors to grow and plant out Blue Gum Hill, but I'm sure if the opportunity presents itself, we'll raid any suitable tree for its offspring. The calendar says we should meet at the Braniff's Road entrance at 10am on Sunday, January 15. As always, bring your own refreshments and lunch, and wear clothing and footwear suitable for the weather conditions on the day, and for walking through the shrubbery in search of the perfect seed tree.

Weed Wars, Episode VIII **December Activity Report**

A small, but intrepid group turned up at the propagation shed for our activity last December. Rob, Wendy, Reg, Sheina, Cathy and I were silly enough to brave the weather and whatever activity Rob had dreamed up to occupy us with. As it turned out, the next episode of Weed Wars was on the cards, to be acted out on the soggy slopes of Side Creek in the Billy Creek section of the Park. When it was apparent that no-one else would appear (Ken was excused due to his knee operation), we jumped into our vehicles for the trip to Braniff's Road, into the Park, up the creek to the base of the Lodge Track. In the prevailing drizzle, the girls disappeared up the track along the creek, while Rob sorted out some Tutsan on the slopes above the cars and Reg and I crossed the creek, braving a hillside of nettles, to sort out various weeds, such as Mullein, Teasel and other thistles. The main aim was to find and pull Foxgloves while they were still in flower (and obviously visible) and before they could develop seed.

Several nettle stings later, we had completed our first sortie and joined Rob to follow the ladies up the track. On the way, we spied a dirty, great Tutsan plant on the bank of the creek that was just sitting there, daring us to tackle it. After a brief consideration of logistics, Rob decided that it would not win and made his way into the waterway to commence his attack. Not wanting to get our feet wet, Reg and I used lack of fighting space as an excuse and left him to it.

As we trundled along after the girls, ample evidence was seen in the piles of weeds along the track to indicate they had been doing their job. Even so, we found a few overlooked escapees. We caught up to the girls, where they had stopped to admire a lyrebird singing and scratching around on the hillside opposite. A few metres further on and a Rufous Fantail darted and displayed his wares in the streamside foliage. Despite the weeds, it was heartening to see all the natural regrowth, particularly of Muttonwoods, along the creek. Even the weeds thinned out until we reached the Park boundary, where blackberry and thistle ruled the far side of the fence. Then the patch of white flowers opposite turned out to be a large patch of Foxgloves, that required a fair bit of dedication and determination from Sheina and Reg, to reach them through the screen of nettles surrounding them. Meanwhile, Wendy was clambering around on the cliff opposite, trying to locate and remove some stray Teasel. Rob was most impressed with their efforts when he found us after his battle with the Tutsan. Our reward was, of course, a delicious BBQ back at Rob's place, a fitting way to end another year of activities around the Park.