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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – February 2006

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

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G'day everyone and welcome to our second edition for the year. There is very little to report at the moment, as far as Morwell NP is concerned, I have received nothing from the postbox and have not heard any news from Parks or our members. So there is no alternative, I'll just have to continue rambling from where I left off last time.....

The painting of our house has come to a grinding halt at the moment. We did manage to almost finish the living area, with only the fiddly bits like skirting boards and window frames to go, but the rest of the place is still a construction zone, with wallpaper stripped but still waiting for the preparation prior to painting. The rot set in, in late January when we were invited to spend a week with the crowds at Tidal River, Wilson's Prom NP. Off we went to swelter and stew, much like the rest of the State. We kept an ear to the radio to keep abreast of the various fires, sweated a lot, swam whenever the sweat got too much, swatted the March flies during the day and hid from the hordes of mosquitos that arrived en masse at dusk. Sounds a trifle unpleasant, but is the glass half full or half empty?

Upon arriving home on the Friday after Australia Day, we managed to unpack the car before succumbing to the heat and humidity, only to be hit by a freak microburst about 5pm, which demolished half the town, took the power out for 14 hours, did a fair bit of damage to the garden and flooded a couple of rooms with roof guttering overflow. Apparently the winds clocked 135 km/h, lasting about ten minutes, along with an unknown amount of rain. I have 2 rain gauges, one had 13mm in it, the other had 23mm! I reckon we had about 40mm in 15 minutes, but most of it was horizontal and didn't make it into the gauges. From our lounge windows, we couldn't see the other side of the street, less than 30 metres away, due to the water and debris in the air. Scary stuff.

That episode cost me a couple of days in clean-up time and then it was time to get back to the real world, the one where I get paid for time and effort expended. The boss showed no mercy and immediately sent me to all parts of the State, in the name of commercial necessity. Consequently, whenever I have a moments peace, painting the walls is the last thing on my agenda.

February Activity

On the calendar for Sunday, February 19, is our next episode of Weed Wars, number nine by my count. We are programmed to meet at the Junction Road entrance at 10am. As always, bring your lunch and refreshments and wear clothing and footwear suitable for the weather, the terrain and flora and fauna we may encounter. Our most likely target will be Tutsan, which we are expecting to find in quantity from seed germination over the last couple of months.

Seedy Business **January Activity Report**

No doubt still hung over from Christmas and New Year celebrations (more likely worn out from efforts of redecoration), we were a little bit tardy in arriving at the Braniff's Road entrance. We were almost the last there, with Rob, Wendy, Reg, and Beryl all waiting and Sheina appearing moments later. Even Ken and Fay were there for a quick visit and chat, before seeing us off. It was good to see Ken up on his feet and relatively mobile, after a slower than expected recovery from his knee surgery.

Once pleasantries were dispensed with, it was into the vehicles and on our way to the top of the Lodge Track, all the way out to the Moran's Road entrance. Apart from a pause just above the hairpin to clear a fallen tree off the track, the trip was uneventful, unlike the last time I had driven up there, when a bit of moisture on the surface and some balding tyres caused a little anxiety as we slid backwards down the slope. Our target for the morning was mainly Varnish Wattle, with Prickly Moses on the cards if we could find some seed still on the trees. We were a little worried that we might be a bit late, as seed had already dropped in other areas of the Park.

Our concerns were unfounded as we found ample Varnish Wattle seed at the top of the hill. Even so, it is amazing how some shrubs can have little or no pods, right next to one that is loaded. Everyone wandered around at their own pace in loose groups of two or three, gradually heading off the top of the hill onto the slopes above the steep hillside we planted out a couple of years ago. Having found enough Varnish Wattle to satisfy requirements, we began to seek out Prickly Moses, which seemed to be even more patchy as far as seed set was concerned. What little seed there was we collected with great care, as the plant is not named 'Prickly' for nothing. We could have used gloves, but then our sense of touch was greatly hindered, making the delicate operation more difficult. The occasional Prickly Currant Bush bearing berries distracted us from the Prickly Moses, but at least we gained some succulent reward for our injuries.

We had our lunch overlooking the Billy Creek valley with the Jumbuk hills opposite. Another hour of seed collection and Rob decided we had enough to go on with and called a stop to proceedings. On the way back we paused at the weir for a while, enjoying the splashing of water over the wall, the hum of the insects and the twittering of the little birds in the undergrowth. A pleasant and peaceful way to finish the afternoon before heading home to watch the cricket over a cold stubby or two.