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# Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

## *Newsletter – March 2006*

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

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G'day everyone and welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. You have all been saved! A number of items have appeared in the mailbox or on the desk, so there is no need for me to continue rambling on about painting or thunderstorms. Ken Harris is recovering nicely from his surgery and has provided a report on a recent walk in the Park. Here goes.....

### News and Views

In the mailbox this month we have:

- Friends of Tarra-Bulga NP Newsletter for Summer 2005/06. Several small articles on recent and upcoming events.
- Ken Harris received an invitation to a civic reception on 21/2/06 to welcome the latest medical students at Monash Gippsland.
- The Friends Group have received an invitation to register for participation in the development of a future Morwell River Neighbourhood Environment Improvement Plan. I will consider providing my contact details for this, since I live near the river and should probably keep an eye on proceedings if my busy schedule allows.
- Danny Barclay has sent me an email, letting us know he is still around and what he has been up to. He reports that he has been working in security, which clashes with our activity schedule and is the reason we haven't seen much of him lately. He also reports a sighting of a Lace Monitor along Brewster's Road, not far from the Park boundary.
- Ed Steenbergen has been in touch by email, congratulating us on our progress with activities in the Park.
- Friends of Coolart Newsletter 1/06. Plenty happening there, if you want to know, let me know.
- Under Control Number 32, December 2005. Lots of articles about weeds, but nothing specifically about this area.

### March Activity

On Sunday, March 19, we will continue our weeding along Billy Creek, concentrating on Tutsan, but taking every opportunity to dispose of thistles, teasel, ragwort, foxglove, mullein and whatever other nasty we might come across that we are able to deal with. We will meet at 10am at the Junction Road gate. As always, appropriate clothing and footwear, lunch and refreshments need to be brought along.

### Churchill Festival

This event is running again this year, on Saturday, April 1 at Glendonald Park in Churchill between 10am and 3pm. Rob and Cathy have been sharing duties in getting our participation organised, in conjunction with the APS Latrobe Valley group. We will need volunteers from both groups who are willing to give up some time to be available to chat with members of the public and promote our various activities. The day is not intended to be a fundraiser, merely an opportunity to advertise ourselves, hand out brochures and other freebies, and hopefully entice an increase in membership. Please consider helping out on then day. No doubt more details will be available at our March activity or by getting in contact with Rob or Cathy.

## **A New Bird Species for the Park**

Today, Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> February, I went for a walk on Stringybark Ridge, giving my new knee its longest workout so far, with a walk of about 4.5 km. It proved to be a remarkable day for birdwatching. The outward journey was uneventful, following the Stringybark Track to its outer end. Turning at the far end, I was delighted by sighting a Rufous Fantail, *Rhipidura rufifrons*. Instead of continuing round the Stringybark Track, I continued across to the Western Boundary and walked back along the boundary track. About 100 metres along the track, I saw a flash of colour fly into a tree and with binoculars, was delighted to recognise a Sacred Kingfisher, *Halcyon sancta*.

I took the chance to check up on the Banksia plants and was able to locate 12 healthy plants, although most are quite small and only 3 had flowers or flower-buds visible. Not one of them has at present any seed capsules bearing any seed. Continuing along the boundary there were lots of Grey Fantails and Superb Fairy Wrens, often sitting on the boundary fence. At one point I saw a female Scarlet Robin and a little further on a pair of Willie Wagtails, *Rhipidura leucophrys*. Willie Wagtails are common in the area, but very few are seen in the Park as they prefer a more open habitat. Most if not all sightings are on the edge of the Park adjacent to farmland.

Walking on to the northern end of the boundary track, I saw two more species that are infrequent in the Park. A couple of Yellow-rumped Thornbills, *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*, were sitting on the boundary fence and a Dusky Woodswallow, *Artamus cyanopterus*, was hawking for insects above the boundary track. This is one of the few areas of the park where I have often seen Dusky Woodswallows and I suspect that in some years they nest in that corner of the Park.

Then in the last 20 metres of the boundary came the biggest surprise of all. A small bird flew up from the nearby paddock and landed in the gum tree which stands in the corner of the Park. Its silhouette as it flew up looked to me like a small parrot and when I got a little closer and got the binoculars on it I was delighted to recognise a Blue-winged Parrot, *Neophema chrysostoma*. This lovely little parrot has not been recorded from the Park before. With its relatives they are called Grass Parrots and they often feed in open grasslands sometimes in quite large flocks, but they move into forested areas to nest. This one appeared to have been feeding in the grassy paddock, but I did not see any sign of any companions.

Ken Harris  
14/2/2006

## **Weed Wars, Episode IX** **February Activity Report**

Cathy and I were early for a change, turning up at the Junction Road gate at 9.45am. Still feeling a bit seedy from a Saturday night binge, we were content to sit quietly in the car until Beryl, Ken, Wendy and Rob turned up in due course. Cathy took much pleasure in informing everyone of my delicate condition. After much undue hilarity and discussion of recent reports and events, we organised ourselves into two groups of three, Cathy, Beryl and myself to head for the weir to work downstream, and Rob, Wendy and Ken (for supervision only, due to his knee surgery) to start at the Braniff's Road gate and work down the small creek to Billy Creek and then upstream to meet up with us. Contractors had already worked upstream from the weir, saving us the trouble.

The drive in was uneventful, as was our foray into the creek at the weir. Far too many Tutsan plants were found, mainly small seedlings a couple of inches tall, sometimes in clumps of a dozen or more, but occasionally a larger plant that had been previously missed entirely, or had regrown from a previously poisoned stump. Plenty of thistles and teasel were extracted as well, with the odd ragwort plant. Progress was slower than we would have liked, but necessary to thoroughly cover the banks of the stream. Plenty of small trout were startled by our presence and the discovery of succulent bunches of blackberries whet our appetites for lunch. Although the surrounding hillsides were covered with yellowing clumps of sprayed bushes, enough had missed spraying along the creek to provide a taste. Ken arrived at 12.45pm to collect Beryl and our gear, as we had to depart at 1pm for another engagement. Whatever transpired after our departure will no doubt be conveyed next month!