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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – May 2006

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

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G'day everyone, it is May! Doesn't time fly these days? Everything else seems to be getting older and slower, so why does time speed by? Enough of the mental meandering, on with the newsletter.....

Congratulations and best wishes to Denis, Jane and Aaron Sultana on the safe arrival of Liam on April 7. A nice colour photo of the family appeared in the LV Express last week. Another able worker for the Friends Group, no doubt.....

According to the people I've spoken to, the Churchill Festival was not really a roaring success, but was probably worthwhile overall and something we should consider participating in again if the opportunity presents. The weather was ordinary, the site for our display was not the best, but a few books were sold, a few people expressed interest in joining the groups (possibly without any intention to follow through) and the give-away indigenous plants provided by Col Jackson proved to be a drawcard for getting people to talk to us. Next time around, perhaps we should consider putting more time, effort and money into providing a larger range of plants for this purpose? Thanks to all who donated the time and made the effort to man the display on the day.

If you have been out wandering around the Billy Creek section of the Park, you've probably already noticed the work going on, on Blue Gum Hill. The bulldozers have been busy cutting tracks up and across the hillside, in preparation for the contract planting that will commence in June or July. Our seed has been sent over to Hamilton, in the western district of Victoria, where it is being grown and prepared. The plants will be planted by hand and all will have tree guards installed around them. Imagine the difference all this is going to make to that bare hillside!

The weed control programs are in full swing throughout the Park. Apart from our own efforts with Tutsan, weeds such as Blackberry, Ragwort and various thistles are all subject to spraying programs, a large patch of foxgloves has been severely dealt with along Billy Creek, several *Prunus* plants have been found and pulled and the Pampas Grass on the Zig Zag Track is continuing to be monitored.

May Activity

On Sunday, May 21, we are scheduled to undertake some track construction in the south-western corner of the Park. The plan is to cut a track south from Muttonwood Creek, up the side of Silvertop Hill along the fenceline to meet up with the firebreak running down the fence from the top of the hill. We will meet at the Kerry Road carpark at 10am to arrange transport to the worksite. As always, be self-contained for the day, with lunch, refreshments and appropriate clothing and footwear.

Weed Wars, Episode XI

'Twas cool and cloudy, a bit threatening, as we made our way to the appointed meeting place. The thought of jumping in the creek for a couple of hours was not particularly attractive, and we were probably not the only ones to feel this way, as only Rob, Ken, Wendy and Reg joined us for the privilege! None of us were in a hurry to don the waders. Rob did give us the option of staying out of the water, but in the end we all decided to take the plunge and hopefully get the job finished.

After the usual gossip session, in which we decided to transfer the bulk of the money from our on-call and book accounts to our term account, we finally bit the bullet and organised ourselves into two groups for the day. Rob, Ken and Wendy would drive to their starting point and work downstream, while Reg, Cathy and I would start at the Junction Road bridge and work upstream. We hoped we would meet somewhere in the middle sometime around lunchtime, but just in case, we ordered a lunch break at 12.30pm.

Movement in the undergrowth caught our eye as we made our way through the gate. Peering into the gloom, we could just make out a Grey Shrike-Thrush beating the stuffing out of something. Ken gathered his binoculars and reported that it looked like a large chrysalis, perhaps of a ghost moth grub, or alternatively, the moth itself with its wings detached. In any event, the bird was certainly dismembering its prize with gusto.

When we finally commenced what we were there to do, we made steady progress upstream. We found a few Tutsan plants here and there, some were new plants grown up from seed, others obviously survivors of the spraying program last year. Whatever their history, we quickly and efficiently dispatched them. Lunch time arrived all too quickly as we suspected we still had quite a distance to go before meeting the other crew, but when we climbed out of the creek and wandered up the track a bit, we found their vehicle just around the corner. We settled in for lunch and Rob, Ken and Wendy soon joined us. Several groups of walkers gawked their way past as we enjoyed our soup and sanga's.

Despite our seeming proximity, it still took us a couple of hours after lunch to finish the job. A couple of silt jetties in the creek covered with little seedlings and a couple of large bushes that had survived spraying and were loaded with berries slowed us down considerably. A couple of small willows were dealt with in transit. At least the job is now done for the year and hopefully we will find little regrowth next year.