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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – August 2006

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

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G'day everyone, welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. Hopefully, when you read this, Cathy and I will be well on our way to Vanuatu, if not already there enjoying the warmer weather and the absence of rat race, children and the pressures of modern life. Don't be too envious, I'm sure it will be over all too soon.

Foraging for Fungi **July Activity Report**

I never thought I'd see the day, but I think I've finally found a group of people more obsessive than those I've met in all the groups I've been involved with. Yep, more obsessive than the Orchid Society (ANOS), who think nothing of oohing and ahing over some innocuous, barely visible orchid. More obsessive than the various plant groups (APS Vic and APS LV), who think nothing of stopping every couple of metres for a head down, bum up look at the latest unidentified green thing. These people like fungi. So much so that they are prepared to ignore leeches, don't mind grovelling around in the mud and slush for a closer look or a photo of the objects of their obsessions and welcome the worst of weather and conditions in which their favourite subjects thrive. Everyone to their own, I suppose.

The day was Sunday, July 16, when we joined the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Fungi Group for their outing to Mt Worth State Park, along with local Field Naturalists and members of the Friends of Mt Worth. Fog was a feature of the drive to the park; it was a grey morning that threatened to stay that way for the afternoon as well. Cathy and I arrived a few minutes early to be greeted by a couple of earlier arrivals being entertained by a resident lyrebird having a good old scratch about and a preen, all the while singing his heart out. Peter arrived shortly after, with Rob turning up with Ken and Reg as passengers at the nominated start time. Various other participants from other groups trickled in, with the host party last to arrive about 20 minutes late.

Cathy and I were fascinated by the preparations of those participants who apparently had experience of what to expect. All manner of attire was donned; none of it could be called fashionable but was no doubt practical for the events that followed. All sorts of unfamiliar apparatus, such as mirrors on sticks, were readied for action. The purpose for the day was to gather information for the FungiMap Project, an enterprise to map habitat and distribution of about 100 common and readily identifiable species of fungi around the nation. It was all rather informal though and turned out to be more of a walk, talk and gawk session, with the more knowledgeable imparting their pearls of wisdom to the more ignorant. Being part of the latter group, I couldn't really tell you what we found, but there seemed to be a reasonable variety. Some of the common terms I can recall include puffballs, bracket fungi, coral fungi and truffles. Some were visually appealing, others a bit small, drab or just plain ugly. I did take a couple of photos that took my fancy, but for the most part we just watched the enthusiasts do their stuff and listened to the commentary, even though a deal of it was over our heads.

The morning ramble over, we parked ourselves in the picnic ground for a bite to eat and a warm cuppa. The weather was still grey and sitting around proved a bit too cool, so at the earliest opportunity we were champing at the bit for the afternoon session to begin. Coats were donned for extra warmth, which proved to be a good move, as the rain began to fall shortly afterwards. Deteriorating weather didn't deter the intrepid fungimappers, only the lateness of the day forced the decision to call a halt to proceedings. Once the decision was made, no further dawdling was required as we made a beeline for the carpark, most making a relatively quick exit. Following is a report from one of the Field Naturalists, much more informative than me!

FNCV FUNGI GROUP FORAY 16th July 2006

Mount Worth State Forest

The aim of this series of fungal forays is to increase recognition of fungal species in the field.

By Virgil Hubregtse

Mount Worth State Park is situated on the western rim of the Strzelecki Ranges, approximately 125 km south-east of Melbourne. It encompasses 1040 ha of Mountain Ash *Eucalyptus regnans* forest and regenerating native bush. On this foray we had the pleasure of the company of several members of two other groups, the Friends of Mount Worth State Park and the Friends of Morwell National Park. Although the autumn flush of fungi had finished, there still proved to be much of interest.

The first fungus to attract attention was *Barya agaricicola*, a tiny yellow flask fungus that parasitises other fungi. From a distance it looks like little yellow spots or scales on the host fruit-body. It was growing on an old *Mycena* on a dead tree trunk next to the car park. Other fungi in the car park included Velvet Foot *Flammulina velutipes* with its golden caps and dark, velvety stems, and some old puffballs *Lycoperdon pyriforme*. Both species were growing on a *Cassinia* trunk.

As we proceeded along the track to the 'Standing giant circuit' we found more fungi growing on wood. Some of these, such as *Galerina patagonica*, *Ganoderma applanatum* and *Trametes versicolor*, were species that we see fairly often on forays. Others were less obvious. Old blackened 'King Arthur's Cakes' *Daldinia concentrica*, also known as 'Cramp Balls', were seen on a dead Silver Wattle *Acacia dealbata* trunk. If you cut one of these fungi open you can see the concentric growth zones inside. An especially sharp-eyed forayer spied a group of the uncommon *Chlorovibrissea melanochlora*, a very small pin fungus with a round green head and a dark stem, growing on a piece of rotting wood under the bridge spanning Larkin Creek.

Three species growing on tree-fern trunks surprised us. The first was a yellowish, finely-branched coral fungus, possibly a *Ramariopsis*. Next came *Beenakia dacostae*, a creamy-white fungus with teeth on the underside of the cap, which we had previously seen only on dry, woody debris under logs. (Its microscopic features were examined later, to make sure it really was what it appeared to be.) Then we found both simple and complex (tiered) forms of the beautiful Pagoda Fungus *Podoserpula pusio* growing together on the one tree-fern trunk.

Mycena clarkeana was growing on a small dead stump beside the track. The pink, bell-shaped caps have a grooved margin. This pretty fungus grows in caespitose groups, and has been seen in several localities this year. Half buried in soil where lyrebirds had been scratching was the truffle-like *Zelleromyces* sp. – a small orange fungus that exudes a milky latex when cut – as well as some truffles that were white both inside and outside.

Two species of Vegetable Caterpillars, *Cordyceps gunnii* and *C. hawkesii* were seen. These specialised fungi parasitise moth larvae. A slime mould *Leocarpus fragilis* was also found, with its sporangia attached to a piece of grass lying on top of a gum leaf.

Needless to say there were many fungi that we could not identify, including several *Cortinarius* species, a small white fungus possibly related to *Mucronella*, and a strange yellow fungus covering some cut ends of Fireweed *Senecio linearifolius* twigs. Altogether 49 species, including 12 Fungimap Targets, were recorded. A big thank you to Paul George for leading the foray and giving us so much interesting information about the species seen.

August Activity

Our next activity is scheduled for Sunday, August 20, to commence at 10am. On the calendar is Wendy's favourite activity, tree guard removal, so the plan is to meet at the Junction Road gate to the Billy Creek section of the Park and await further guidance. You will need to bring your own lunch and refreshments, and suitable clothing and footwear for the weather conditions on the day and the environments you may be working in.