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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – December 2006

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

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G'day everyone, welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. I hope you are all keeping cool and fire free, since, as I write, it is close to 40°C and very smoky outside. There is very little wind at the moment (1.15pm, 10/12/06), but the predictions are a bit dire, they expect strong northerlies before a southerly buster. For the sake of those to the north of us, I hope the predictions are wrong and the big fires in the Alpine NP behave themselves.

Again, only a couple of items have appeared out of the mailbox: the 2005/2006 West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority Annual Report (a beautifully presented, full-colour document that no doubt cost an arm and a couple of legs to produce, most of which will probably end up in the wastepaper) and an invitation to attend the launch of Latrobe's Business and Tourism Network.

December Activity

On the calendar for Sunday, December 17, is our last activity for the year. Traditionally we sort out a few odd jobs before having a BBQ lunch, and this year will be no different, except that the odd job we will do will involve jumping into Billy Creek and sorting out some more weeds. To that end, we will meet at the Junction Road entrance to the Billy Creek section of the Park at 10am. As always you will need clothing and footwear suitable for warding off the pricklies and bites and the conditions on the day. When we have had enough of Tutsan and Willows and Thistles, we will call it a day, a month and a year and head back to the Kerry Road BBQ area to let our hair down and feet up. Meat will be supplied, but please bring along a salad and/or a dessert to share. If you don't want to join in with the weed pulling, you are still most welcome to come along to the BBQ, we would love to see you there, but it may be hard to judge when we will arrive!

Counting Butterflies November Activity Report

Arriving just about on the dot, we found Reg waiting in the carpark at Kerry Road. After a quick greeting we convinced him he should follow us up the hill to the propagation shed, where Rob was getting prepared for the day's activities. Ken, Wendy and Beryl all arrived in due course. Right from the start we had Ken under pressure, as Reg had walked into the shed with a little black and white jumping spider on his shoulder, which of course Ken needed to photograph and record as found in the Park, even though we weren't sure of its origin.

Once we were settled, Rob handed out the various assignments. Ken would commence his Butterfly Orchid survey with the assistance of Cathy, Reg and Beryl agreed to clean and sort the seed collected last summer and Rob, Wendy and myself would hop in the car for a trip over to the Zig Zag Track in the hope of finding some accessible seeds from the local Swamp Gums (*Eucalyptus ovata* or maybe *E. strzeleckii*), for propagation and planting into the bare area at the base of the Zig Zag Track, where the local wildlife had enthusiastically eaten most of our last planting efforts.

On the way along Billy Creek, Rob paused to examine the effects of some weed spraying he had organised for some Tutsan plants he had noticed on the hillside high above the creek. They were looking appropriately ill, but as we ascended up the Zig Zag Track, what did we find but a huge healthy Tutsan covered in flowers and berries. Out came the tape to mark the location for the next wave of spraying! We decided to walk from here, searching thoroughly for that low hanging or wind thrown branch that might carry our target seed. Alas, no such luck. We did sight a few other things, though. A Sacred Kingfisher sitting on a bare branch, a couple of piles of Wombat poo writhing with the activities of masses of little Dung Beetles, a pair of green stems from some Hyacinth Orchids budding up in the middle of the track and a brightly coloured looper caterpillar trying to look unobtrusive on a branch that had fallen over the track. The last I collected for Ken to have a look at.

We were still a bit early for lunch, so on the way back to the shed we dropped in to Foster's Gully to see if we could find some white clones of the Butterfly Orchids that were first located over a decade ago. Despite a thorough search in the area where Rob reckoned they were, none were seen, only normally coloured plants. Perhaps the drying climate conditions over the last few years has not been kind to them. When we returned empty handed to the shed, Reg and Beryl had finished their seed sorting and Ken and Cathy had finished two plots and had returned for lunch. Ken reported a Golden Whistler in the gully and Beryl reported a nearby Koala. While I checked on the Koala, an Echidna wandered through the old house site. Upon hearing of our discoveries on the Zig Zag Track, Ken decided some more photography and recording would be in order after lunch, in lieu of finishing the orchid survey, so after a pleasant lunch, Ken and Rob headed back to Billy Creek and the rest of us went home to prepare for the evening BBQ in Traralgon.

At the appointed time, we arrived at the Bert Thompson Reserve to find festivities well under way. Attendees from our group were Ken and Fay, Wendy and Dorothy, Beryl, Cathy and I. Roughly 50 people attended, a little less than expected, but the atmosphere, food and drink were all most pleasant, a nice way to finish the day.

Australian Native Orchid Society

On Sunday, December 3, we hosted a group of enthusiastic ANOS members for their visit to Morwell NP. Thanks to Ken Harris and Joan Sikkema for coming along and helping to promote the Park, with their knowledge and insights. The group were very happy with what they were shown, particularly the Butterfly Orchids, but also enjoyed the Stringybark Ridge walk, finding some Flying Duck Orchids still in flower, despite the poor season and dry conditions. We were disappointed not to find some Elbow Orchids in their usual locations.