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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – April 2007

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

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G'day everyone, welcome to the April edition of our newsletter. Has the drought broken yet? To the end of March, we've had 155mm of the wet stuff in the gauge, pretty similar to last year, but it's only in the last couple of weeks since the temperatures have backed off a bit and the evaporation rate has decreased that the soil is showing signs of holding some moisture. No doubt it is still only 'skin deep' though, there is no sign from the authorities that restrictions will be eased back, so the bucket brigade out of the laundry will continue for a while yet.

Again, there is not much to report as far as Morwell NP is concerned. Rob mentioned at the last gathering that contractors have been doing a bit of weed spraying, tackling the Tutsan in the wilds upstream of the weir and having a go at the periwinkle and honeysuckle along the lower reaches of Billy Creek. Here's hoping for a bit of success in knocking these weeds back! At the gathering before that, Rob reported a white wash on the cliff face near the junction of the Lodge and Clematis Tracks, possibly indicating the presence of a predatory bird, such as a Peregrine Falcon.

There's not been much in the mailbox, either, just a Canopy magazine (special 10th anniversary issue, no. 31, January 2007) and Annual Report Summary from Parks Victoria and a FriendsNet newsletter (no. 58 for February 2007). If you would like a browse, sing out before I turf it out.

April Activity

This month is a repeat of last month's effort, that is, track maintenance along the Coprosma Track, continuing from where we finished up last time. We will meet at the Junction Road gate at 10am on Sunday, April 15, for the car shuttle to the work site. As always, wear clothing and footwear suitable for the environment and weather conditions on the day and bring your own lunch and refreshments.

Friends of Morwell NP 21st Birthday

Yes, we're getting older! We turn 21 in early May and in the way of a celebration we would like all past and present members to front up to the Yinnar Pub on the evening of Saturday, May 12 to enjoy a meal, drinks and/or conversation with us. If enough people are interested, we will also run a tour into the Billy Creek area on the Saturday afternoon at 2pm, to have a look at what the group has accomplished over the years. Please let all and sundry know of this event and also drop a line to Wendy, Ken, Rob or myself, to let us know you are coming so we can finalise numbers for the occasion.

Weed Wars, Episode XV **February Activity Report**

It wasn't a good start to the day for me! I was on call for work on Saturday night, due to finish up at 7am on Sunday morning, but Murphy's Law came into play and I received a phone call at 7.15am, saying the bloke taking over from me couldn't be contacted and could I please front up anyway. Hoping it would be a quick fix, away I went, but of course Murphy would have none of that and it turned out to be faulty fire alarm circuits that I obviously couldn't leave unattended in case the place burnt down. So by the time I tracked down the problem and the missing availability person, the morning was well underway.

At least when I arrived at Junction Road at 11am, there were a few cars parked there, so somebody else must have turned up for the weeding. It was quite a warm morning but I left the overalls on in anticipation of jumping in the creek, soon regretting it as I wandered up the track in search of the workers. I eventually found Rob, Ken and Wendy just downstream from our finishing point last month, busily wrestling with a few burly tutsans. They informed me that I must have walked past Cathy, Reg and Beryl, as they had started working upstream from the car park. After a brief gossip I gathered a spray pack from the truck, then wandered back and found the other crew hidden in a bend in the creek, closer to the gate. While standing on the bank watching them work, an echidna waded through a shallow section of the creek just below me and proceeded to climb the bank at my feet. I retrieved some car keys from Cathy and headed back to the cars to change my boots to a more submersible version. Eventually I was organised to get to work myself.

There is not much to report about the weeding itself. We ripped out a few tutsan, thistles and ragwort, ignored the periwinkle and honeysuckle that were beyond our capabilities, frightened a few fish in the stream and met up with the other crew just before 1pm, right on time for lunch. We decided to vacate the Park and have our lunch at the table next to the gate, where we took our time to dry out and enjoy the balmy weather. That, hopefully, is our weeding program completed for the year.

Working on the Chain Gang? **March Activity Report**

Do we make a good track, or what? A good turnout of members (Rob, Ken, Wendy, Peter, Reg, Danny, Cathy and I, with a visitor, Alan) certainly helped. We were a well oiled machine. Ken, Peter and Reg led the way with slashers, Rob followed up with the chainsaw and brush-cutter to tackle the heavier shrubbery, Alan and I started with mattocks to flatten and widen the track in various places, and Cathy, Wendy and Danny brought up the rear with the rakes and rake-hoes to beautify the results. Luckily the weather was fine and cool because the work was hot. My overalls became unpopular very quickly as the sweat developed, but then I was exposed to any nettle or blackberry thorn that wanted to have a go.

Lunch came just in time for Alan to call it a morning; he was on his way to join in with a new Friends group looking after the Morwell River Falls reserve. It was also in the nick of time for me (and no doubt others) to have a spell and cool off. We parked ourselves in the 'turning circle' at the base of Blue Gum Hill and were treated to a parade of birds through the shrubbery around us. We had a family of Black Cockatoos brawling in the tree-tops, a number of Rufous Fantails working through the ferns, a crew of Silvereyes supping on Kangaroo Apples, a Crested Shrike-tit cracking open strips of bark for grubs, Tree Creepers performing their gymnastics along the branches and a Lewin's Honeyeater hoping for a titbit from our lunchboxes.

The afternoon session was a repeat of the morning except that we began working on the section of long overgrown track beyond the second creek crossing. Reg came back to help with the mattock while Wendy went forward to help with the initial alignment and slashing work. Progress was much slower as the work was much heavier and we spent as much time having a breather as we did actually working. Throwing a mattock or a slasher around when you spend most of the time working out of an office takes its toll. Still, we are happy with the work completed and impressed by the quality of the resulting track. Now the trick will be to sort out the land issues involved so that our beaut new track will have a destination to aim for!