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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – July 2007

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

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G'day everyone, welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. Nice drop of rain lately, don't you think? Perhaps not, if you're one of those who live on the local floodplain and had water running through the premises. I didn't, so I'm rapt with my 161mm for June, about double the local average for the month over the last 15 years. That brings the total for the year to 409mm, about an inch more than the local January-June 6 month average over the same period. Rob hasn't told me yet the figures for the Park, but I expect they will be similar. I also don't know if there has been any flood damage in the Park, but it seems a distinct possibility, judging by the amount of water lapping at the Monash Way bridge over Billy Creek, after the heaviest of the downpours on June 27. It is a pity though, that it had to get so cold in June, spoilt as we were by the mild weather and above average temperatures in May. We've had a number of ripper frosts, 5 in a row before the rain event and the temperature has consistently struggled to reach the June average. It's funny though, watching the honeyeaters skating around on a frozen bird bath first thing in the morning, as they try to work out how to get a drink!

I mentioned last month that Rob had organised the latest grant application for us, to finance some work along the Coprosma Track. Hopefully, we will be successful in getting some, if not all of the \$10,000 applied for, most likely though, it will be a percentage of that figure. Also received this month was an expression of interest application for our participation in the Churchill Festival on March 15, 2008. Without being overly enthusiastic about it all, it was decided that we should front up once again in the hope of attracting some more interest from the local community. I spoke to APS Latrobe Valley to see if they would like to share premises again, with a positive response and the proviso that they would like to promote APS LV more in their own right rather than as a joint effort. We'll have to put our heads together and plan a display aimed at promoting both groups to best effect!

July Activity

On Sunday, July 15, we are going to continue with Wendy's favourite (and Rob's least favourite) activity, Tree Guard Removal. Since the crew was so efficient last month and completed all the work we were supposed to do this month, we now have no alternative but to bite the bullet and tackle the last remaining stronghold of feral tree guards, the heights of the Lodge Track. Yes, yes, I know I said it was too damp last month and the month before that, and we've only had 8 inches of rain since then, but apparently the logistics have been thought out and the decision made that we can do it, we have the technology. We will meet at the Junction Road car park at 10am, organise some transport up to the end of Moran's Road, walk in to the worksite and use a four-wheeler bike to carry the gear, tools and guards. As always, wear clothing and footwear suitable for the environment and weather conditions on the day and bring your own lunch and refreshments.

Two and a Half Days Work in One Working Bee

June Activity Report

By Ken Harris

We met for our working bee in June in the Kerry Road picnic area. It looked a good turn out, but Mike and Cathy were only there for the discussions before we started. One key item for discussion was what to do at the next working bee. We debated between collecting tree guards at the top of the Lodge Track, but the more accessible site behind the pines off Jumbuk Rd was preferred and was pencilled in for the next activity.

By about 10.20, a group of six friends and Rob set out to collect tree guards on Peel's block, at the southern end of the Western Boundary Track. By 11.00, the job was done. Our task for the day was complete!!! There was not a high survival rate of the trees, but a reasonable number seem to be getting going. We thought of going to look at the Muttonwood Track, but with so much time to spare, we decided to head off up to Jumbuk Rd and have a go at next months activity as well. On our way out, we met Les Reinkowsky, who had arrived late and was searching for us. We picked him up and continued on our way.

The site was very different, being on a steep slope, below the track, but with Les to help, we finished that off as well, by about 12.15 and settled down to a leisurely lunch in beautiful sunshine looking out over the valley, still clearly shrouded in mist. What more could we do? Someone suggested that there were still some tree-guards to collect on the Potato Flats, so after lunch we were driven down the Zigzag Track into Billys Creek.

No tree-guards were found on the Potato Flats, so we drove out along Billys creek and at intervals along the drive someone would spot a tree-guard. Each time we spotted one, a bit of searching soon turned up more and by the time we reached Junction Rd, we had collected quite a lot of extra tree-guards including at least 5 different types going right back to chicken wire guards (only one of those).

Nothing very special to report in the wildlife, but collecting a pile of tree guards from across Billys Creek, I raised the last one and found underneath it two different skinks, a Mccoys Skink - *Nannoscincus maccoyi* and a Weasel Skink - *Saproscincus mustelina*. Not the time of year for finding lizards, but these two were presumably resting deep under the pile of tree guards. I left them to find fresh shelter, but since Mike asked for an illustration, here is a Weasel Skink I photographed in the park back in 1986.



We finished off by resuming the debate over what to do next month, since we had already completed the planned task, and it was agreed that there was no escaping the Lodge Track, so the July activity will be tree guard collection at the top of the Lodge Track, with access being on foot from Moran's Rd. Meeting will be at the Junction Rd car park at 10.00 am. See you all there!!!