

PO Box
19
Churchill
3842



President:
5122 3137

Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – April 2008

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

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G'day everyone and welcome to the April edition of your newsletter. I've broken the trend this month, with plenty of time to spare before the deadline. That's what happens when I don't have to write the whole thing, thanks to Ken, and when the weather is cold, wet and windy, so that I can't escape into the garden. What a difference in the weather! Stinking hot one minute, cyclones the next. I hope you all survived with minimal damage to your homes and gardens. It will be interesting to see if the Park has sustained any more wind damage.

April Activity

The program says 'to be advised' and since I haven't been informed differently, I presume we will attempt to undertake the Tree Guard Removal job at the top of the Lodge Track that was postponed last month due to the probable heat exhaustion that we would have sustained trundling up and down those hills. Keep in mind, though, that it is now cold, wet and windy and I don't know whether this will cause access difficulties to the site. If we can't get there, I'm sure the alternative will be to continue our weed removal work along Billys Creek. Whatever we end up doing, we will meet at the Junction Road gate at 10am on Sunday, April 20, armed to the teeth with tools for ripping out wire tree guards or weeds. Don't forget your own lunch and refreshments.

Three new birds for Morwell National Park

by Ken harris

On Easter Saturday an old friend from England arrived for a visit and in the afternoon he and I went for a walk in Billys Creek. We walked from the Junction Road car park, in past the Weir and back again.

The first stage of the walk revealed a wealth of birds, far more than I usually see in the revegetated area along Billys Creek. These included two Crested Shrike-tits, always a special bird to see, but the next birds we saw were even more special. I spotted a bird which at first glance I thought might be a Grey Currawong, but the moment I got my binoculars on it, I realised that it was a Satin Bower-bird. There are no previous records for the Satin Bower-bird in Morwell National Park, and I have never seen one south of the valley, although they are present in Crinigan Road Reserve in Morwell. By the time I had reached for my camera, the bird had flown behind a tree and my first picture only shows the back half of the bird, which might be mistaken for the Bassian Thrush (Ground Thrush, Scaly Thrush etc).

My friend Mike and I each took further photographs and we became aware that there were in fact two Bower-birds not just one. Our pictures leave no doubt as to its identity. Mike's picture shows the distinctive bill shape, while mine shows the plumage from the front. I am pretty sure that both Bower-birds were in immature plumage. Males take 7 years to reach their adult plumage of satiny blue-black. It would be great if bower-birds would establish themselves in the park!



We had a pleasant walk after that, going as far as the Mountain Ash stand and back, but did not see a great many birds again until the return half. When we had crossed the last bridge on the way back, we diverged to follow the boundary fire-break along the back of the Tebb's Terrace properties.



We had just reached the boundary track, when I saw a wattlebird pulling at bark on a young Eucalyptus tree. I described to Mike how to recognise the Red-wattlebird, and he said that it didn't have a red wattle. I took a look and found that it was a Little Wattlebird. Little Wattlebirds are common around Churchill, including in my garden, but none had previously been seen in Morwell National Park. I took a couple of pictures, which served to confirm the identity, but are not good enough to display here.

Two new birds for the park in one walk seemed something rather out of the ordinary, but we hadn't finished yet. We passed the little strip of land that cuts through to Tebb's Terrace and again met a Satin Bowerbird in a large gum tree at the edge of that strip. This was only 100 metres from where we saw the other two, so may well have been one of the same birds.

At that point I could hear a lot of parrots in trees just ahead of us and felt that the calls were too shrill to be just Crimson Rosellas. There were Crimson Rosellas about, but after a while we got to see a small flock of Musk Lorikeets. They were feeding on eucalypt blossoms on private property next to the park, but we saw one fly into the park and perch in the top of a gum tree. Musk Lorikeets are also common in Churchill and seem to have increased in numbers a lot in the last few years, but rather surprisingly the Musk Lorikeet has also not previously been recorded in Morwell National Park, so our little walk has added three new birds to the park list.

Churchill Festivities and Weed Wars – Episode XVIII

On Saturday, March 15, several of our members helped to man our stall at the Churchill Festival in Gaskin Park, Churchill. Thanks to Rob, Ken and Cathy for spending the whole day on site, and to Darren, Kai Ming and Wendy for putting in an appearance. Mary, Mark, Delma and John all did their bits on the APS LV side of the display. I suppose we could call the day a success to some degree; we did attract some interest from the public for both groups, we did sell a number of books and the give-away plants provided by APS LV were again a significant drawcard. It remains to be seen if any of the interest translates into increased membership for either group.



The following day was just as hot for our programmed activity. Too hot for pulling out tree guards, it was decided, so we continued with our weed removal along Billys Creek. Rob, Ken, Reg and Darren started working downstream from the Potato Flat ford, while Wendy, Beryl, Cathy and I worked upstream from the Braniff's Road ford. Our timing was good, as both groups met at the ford in between, just in time for lunch. After lunch, the boys went downstream to work their way up, while the girls and I again started at the Braniff's Road ford, this time heading downstream. Not a lot to report, really, a few birds at lunch (fantails, black cockies, yellow robins), a few trout in the stream, a few March Flies in the carpark (captured for photos), a paper wasp that escaped and the usual Tutsan, thistles, teasels and nightshade, with the occasional willow and foxgloves.