

PO Box
19
Churchill
3842



President:
5122 3137

Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – June 2008

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

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G'day everyone and welcome to this month's edition of your newsletter. Dry again, isn't it! After a few cold days and the promise of a bit of precipitation, it seems to have all fizzled out and we are back into an autumn weather pattern. Or is it spring? Nice weather anyway for wandering around the garden or the bush, but it doesn't bode well for our water supplies down the track.

Things have been pretty quiet as far as the mailbox is concerned, not much has appeared on the Editorial desk in recent times. A couple of items that have landed are:

- A Department of Sustainability and Environment report entitled 'Making a Difference- Weeds and Pests on Public Land Initiative 2003-2007', which reports on various projects around the State, such as Weed Warriors, the Southern and Glenelg Ark Projects and many others. Our little weed control project doesn't rate a mention, but we are listed as a partner in the index at the back of the booklet.
- Primary Voice- Winter 2008, a newsletter put out by the Department of Primary Industries presenting articles on a variety of topics, such as Giant Earthworm relocation at Bena/Loch, tunnel erosion in East Gippsland, aquaculture, clean coal, 1080 poison, dairy farms powered by effluent-derived methane and many more.
- FriendsNet Newsletter no. 63- May 2008, with a variety of articles of relevance to Friends Groups. One that caught my eye reported on a suspected severe reaction to pulling plants of St John's Wort, which is closely related to our beloved Tutsan. Hopefully, this won't ever happen to our members!

June Activity

Track maintenance is on the calendar for Sunday, June 15. We will meet at the Junction Road gate at 10am, ready for the transfer to the far reaches of the Billys Creek Track, so we can take a look at the state of the Coprosma Track. You will need to wear clothing and footwear appropriate to the chores to be undertaken and the weather conditions on the day and you will need to bring your own lunch and refreshments.

Weed Wars, Episode XIX **May Activity Report**

We were a bit dubious as we fronted up to the Junction Road gate. It had been raining overnight and looked like it would do so again. Nevertheless a staunch bunch of Friends showed up and Rob filled us in on the latest happenings (flood repair works completed, Muttonwood Creek bridge replacement and a grant application for continued Californian Thistle and Tutsan control) while the male members were distracted by a shapely female jogger strutting her stuff through the carpark, twice. Once our minds were back on the job, we split into 3 groups and trundled up the track to our designated starting spots. It was a fairly typical weeding session, my group's tally was 3 Crack Willow suckers, 4 Pussy Willow seedlings, sporadic Tutsan and Ragwort, 2 groups of Foxgloves, lots of Teasel and various thistles. The big patch of Blue Periwinkle is still thriving, but the large Honeysuckle up the gum tree is dead, although there were suspicious creepers growing in the ferns nearby. We were finished by lunchtime, which we ate at the table in the carpark while waiting for Rob to reappear from home, where he had headed for a change of clothes after taking a couple of swims. Our repast was cut short by a looming squall, we all dived into the cars and headed for home.

Fungi in Morwell National Park- continued

By Ken Harris

Another variation on the organisation of the spore-producing surface occurs in the Hedgehog Mushroom - **Hydnum repandum**, which has been found in Fosters Gully. This fungus has the underside of the cap covered with spines (hence the name hedgehog) and the spores are formed on the sides of these spines.



Most of these fungi are found only in Australia, but there are also widespread species that occur in the park. One cosmopolitan species that grows on fence posts and dead stumps is the



bracket fungus is the Golden Curtain Crust - **Stereum ostrea**. This usually grows on a dead branch on the ground. It has concentric rings of various colours on the upper surface. The underside is golden yellow, and unlike many other bracket fungi that have fine pores, the underside is smooth.

Common Split Gill - **Schizophyllum commune**, which has been found in several spots in the Park. This species has gills, but they are different. The gills have a lot of branches along them, but the name split gill comes from there being a groove down the centre of the edge of each gill, splitting it in two.

A number of fungi grow with a shelf-like form usually out of a stump or sometimes a live tree. These are collectively called bracket fungi. Several species occur in the park. An attractive



Other fungi that decompose trees can be very different in appearance. The rare Coral Tooth - **Hericium coralloides** is very beautiful, forming a large mass 30 cm high with multiple coral-like branches. This one was found growing on the

trunk of a living eucalyptus tree in Fosters Gully.



There are several ground fungi with a coral-like form, some of them very beautiful, like this Small Coral Fungus - **Ramariopsis crocea**.





Another unusual form among fungi is the little Pagoda Fungus - **Podoserpula pusio**, which can be found on the ground as with this example, but also grows in the park on the trunks of soft tree ferns.

Another interesting group of fungi are the Puffballs, such as this Pear-shaped Puffball - **Lycoperdon pyriforme**. Puffballs develop their spores internally and when mature an opening appears at the top of the ball and any pressure on the outside will cause a puff of spores to vent from the opening as most children will know. Some puffballs, such as the giant puffball are edible in their early stages when the flesh is still white right through, but there are also poisonous puffballs so it is safer to leave them alone.



Related to the puffballs and releasing their spores in the same way are the earth stars, rather like a starfish, with a puff ball at the centre. This

example from the park is the Earth Star - **Geastrum triplex**.

All the fungi shown are decomposers or form mycorrhizae. There are many fungi that attack animals alive or dead, but we do not usually see the fruiting body. One very interesting fungus that grows in the park is the Dark Vegetable Caterpillar. This species is usually found under Acacias (in the Park it has been found under Varnish Wattle – **Acacia verniciflua**).



It does not however grow on the Acacia or its roots, but on a caterpillar. The caterpillar feeds on the roots of the Acacia and the fungus feeds on (and kills) the caterpillar. When the fungus is mature it puts up a fruiting body from as much as 30 cm underground, producing a blackish tongue-like fungus on the forest floor. The second picture shows the complete fungus after excavation and the mummified remains of the caterpillar can be seen at the left hand side.

Many more fungi are found in the park and illustrations of the 127 identified species can be seen on the Morwell National Park web site at <http://morwellnp.pangaean.net/>. A full list of these fungi is on the page <http://morwellnp.pangaean.net/browser/fungi.html> and selecting any named species will bring up images of the fungus and a link to the distribution of the fungus in the park.

Distribution of Fungi and FungiMap Project

Distributions of fungi within the park are available on the web site, but none of the fungi is unique to the Morwell National Park. Fungi generally have fairly wide distributions. The spores that are their means of propagation are minute and are easily carried for great distances on the wind. Their distribution is mainly limited by the distribution of their host species (if they are specific to a particular plant or animal).

FungiMap is an Australia-wide organisation which is attempting to map the distributions of fungi within Australia. It commenced with the mapping of 100 easily-recognised fungi and encourages anyone with an interest in fungi to submit records for any of the selected species (the list has expanded to slightly more than 100).

Several fungi from the park are in the target list, including from those illustrated above:

Amanita xanthocephala

Dermocybe austroveneta

Mycena interrupta

Omphalotus nidiformis

Schizophyllum commune

Podoserpula pusio

Boletellus obscurecoccineus

Hericium coralloides

Stereum ostrea

and several records for each of these fungi have been entered into FungiMap and more will be added as they are found in different locations in the park. To learn more about FungiMap, connect to their web site: <http://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/fungimap/welcome>

In addition to mapping the distributions, FungiMap have published a book giving details and illustrations of the initial 100 target species. This excellent book is:

Fungi Down Under – The Fungimap Guide to Australian Fungi by Pat Grey & Ed Grey, 2005. The web site provides a link to a bookshop from which the book can be purchased.

None of the fungi known from the park have become extinct so far, although some like the Honey Fungus are perhaps not welcome. There are I am sure many more species still to be found in Morwell National Park and anyone finding a fungus not illustrated on the park web site is welcome to contact me, Ken Harris on 51223137.