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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – August 2008

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

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G'day everyone and welcome to the latest edition of your newsletter. The AGM is over once again and this issue contains all the reports and outcomes from our most important gathering of the year, as well as the usual brief tidbits of news and activities. To start off with, a couple of items that surfaced in the mailbox: Under Control Newsletter No. 37 July 2008, put out by the Victorian DPI, contains some interesting articles on weeds and rabbit, fox, goat, dog, cat and pig control programs; An invitation to attend the launch of The Latrobe City Business Tourism Association on August 13, perhaps a little outside our sphere of operation.

August Activity

On Sunday, August 17 at 10am, our calendar reckons we will undertake a 'spring excursion'. As Rob pointed out at the AGM, it is interesting that this excursion seems to be taking place in winter! Firstly, it was suggested that we join in with Friends of Tyers Park at their next activity, but contact with their leader, Jim Stranger, revealed that their August activity is an AGM, but we are welcome to join in later in the year. Another option was to walk the Koonwarra-Meenyan leg of the South Gippsland Rail Trail, but although one bridge has been opened on the trail, most of the route is still under development and not walkable at this time. So, with time running short, an executive decision has to be made. We already know a couple of you can't attend and most didn't seem keen to travel any great distance, I am on-call for work, so we propose to meet at the Kerry Road car park for a morning walk around our own Park, perhaps starting at Jumbuk Road, walking around the back of the Park and coming back down Stringybark Ridge. We can decide on the day, once we find out who is attending and where they would like to stroll to!

How to Plant Three Trees in a Day! July Activity Report by Cathy Beamish

Our July activity was on another cold and wet day but we had an excellent turnout. Everyone was there plus extras! Peter's wife Wendy had come along as had Hiedi, who will hopefully become a regular. As we chatted, waiting for any latecomers, a mob of Kangaroos dashed across the paddocks behind us and soared across the fence line into the Park. Mike left us to go into work and this meant that we just managed to squeeze into 2 vehicles. We drove all the way past the weir, stopping along the way to chase sheep up to high ground! Reg also spotted a Swamp Wallaby on the hill near the big hole past the weir and we think there was a koala very high up a gum tree on the hill above the weir.

Turning around, we drove back to the weir and got out of the vehicles to look around. We planted a couple of our Muttonwoods, then travelled back to the Zig Zag Track where we got out again, to begin wandering through the plantation looking for stray tree guards and to plant our last Muttonwood (Ken had discovered to his horror that most of his seedlings had perished, leaving us with just 3 trees to plant for the day!). We started out finding a couple of old pink guards but by the time we had got to the power lines, we had found piles of the old plastic mesh guards – and we thought we had cleared that area out ages ago!

Along the way we had also come across more sheep! We estimate we had seen around thirty in total for the day. Another job for Parks to take care of (Rob told us later that an action plan is being formulated to remove the sheep from the Park. Options include improved fencing and removal of the sheep by the

owner, removal and impounding of the sheep if the owner is unable or unwilling to do so or destruction of the sheep if they cannot be removed by other methods.).

We stopped for lunch soon after and Mike and Nicole joined us. After lunch we wandered through the rest of the plantation back to the gate at Junction Road looking for more tree guards but I am happy to say that we didn't find too many. We took the opportunity to pull some weeds as well, with any Pittosporum, Nightshade, thistles or Capeweed that we came across as fair game.

What we did find though was nesting boxes. Hiedi found the first one ten feet or so off the ground on a tree close to the river. Rob tells us that several years ago students from Mirboo North Secondary College came and placed six boxes of various shapes and sizes in the area. They were supposed to come back and monitor them but they haven't done so. We decided that it would be a good opportunity for the Friends to do something different, so I am hoping that we will be able to monitor them regularly over the next few months. I managed to find four of the six boxes and hope that with more assistance from others, we will find the other two as well.

Friends of Morwell National Park: AGM 3/08/08

Annual General Meeting declared open at 1:40pm

Attendance: Wendy Steenberg, Jane Sultana, Denis Sultana, Cathy Beamish, Mike Beamish, Ken Harris, Beryl Nelson, Darren Hodgson, Peter McDonald

Apologies: Reg Felmingham, Tom Lawless, Dorothy Reinkowsky

Previous AGM Minutes: Minutes of previous AGM were read and accepted as a true account. (Cathy, Wendy)

Business arising from Previous AGM: Nil.

Reports: The President's Report was read and accepted. (Denis, Jane)

Friends of Morwell National Park: President's Report for 2007 to 2008

There was a dramatic start to the year in the Park, with a combination of a flood down Billys Creek with a major wind storm, with the result that a large number of trees were uprooted (especially in the Weir area) and the foundations of the first bridge were undermined. This meant that our August working bee was switched to work on re-opening the Weir Track and beyond. The real clearing was far more than we could handle, but we were able to open up walking access to the foot of the Blue Gum Hill track. The full clearing was completed by contractors a few months later.

We had no September activity but instead we helped to host the Biennial Friends Conference at Rawson. Mike, Cathy and I attended and I led a walking group round Fosters Gully (where we found several orchids in flower). Along with several other Friends Groups we put up our display board and we were awarded a prize for the best display! The prize was a book and I selected the Flora of the Otway Plain & Ranges 1 by Enid Mayfield. I am holding the book, but it belongs to the Friends and is available for loan to any member who can put it to use.

October saw the annual Koala count. Despite good advertising we did not attract many helpers, but were able to survey the usual 3 walks. Fosters Gully, usually the best found 0 koalas, but Jumbuk Road found 3 including a mother and baby and 8 were found on Stringybark Ridge, making a good total of 11 Koalas.

On Oct 27th Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club conducted a spotlight walk in Fosters Gully. It was not particularly successful, but 3 Greater Gliders, 1 Koala and 1 Pobblebonk Frog were seen and the Boobook kept talking to us the whole way round!

In November I conducted the annual Butterfly Orchid survey helped by Darren. The results were disappointing, with a rather poor flowering and a continued reduction in the number of plants. The rest

of the group searched Fosters Gully for weeds particularly Douglas Nightshade (*Solanum douglasii*). They reported very few nightshade plants which was good news.

On 27th November the Great Victorian Bike Ride visited Yinnar and I guided two parties of 6 or 7 bikers on walks round Fosters Gully

On 1st December I accompanied the Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club on the annual bird count. We were very pleased to find about 10 Blue-winged Parrots were feeding in the paddocks by the western boundary and coming in to trees in the park. It is possible that they might be nesting in the area.

At the end of December we joined other Friends Groups from the area for a delicious Barbecue in Traralgon provided by Parks Victoria.

Later in the month we held our own Christmas barbecue in Fosters Gully, preceded by a walk on Stringybark Ridge looking for birds and orchids. We failed to find any Elbow Orchids.

2008 saw us back to the ongoing battle with Tutsan. We extended the area we covered a bit further upstream to the Coprosma Track creek crossings and altogether used 4 working bees, January, February, March and May to complete our coverage of Billys Creek for the year.

On March 15 the Friends joined the Australian Plant Society to run a stall at the Churchill Festival. Free plants attracted people to the stall and some interest was expressed in the Friends work, but no new members eventuated. We did sell some more books.

In April we finally got up to the Lodge Track to remove tree guards. We put this off several times (too wet or too hot), but eventually we tackled the task and thanks to two very fit members in Peter and Darren, we got the job completed. We have now finished all the major tree-guard removal, although isolated guards still keep getting discovered!

June saw us back working on the Coprosma Track adding a bit of polish to the part track that has been constructed. We look forward to being able to complete the track sometime soon!

In July we should have been planting *Rapanea howittii*, but only three seedlings survived and didn't take long to plant. We then did a thorough search for tree guards along the Billys Creek flats and gathered quite a number of several different types.

I wish to thank Rob Howell and other Parks staff for their help and support throughout the year and thank you to all of you who have helped us make further progress in developing the Park,

Ken Harris
30th July 2008

The Ranger's Report was read and accepted. (Mike, Beryl)

Ranger's Report – Morwell National Park 2007/08

The PV Community Group Grant we applied for in May 2008 to spray more Tutsan and Californian Thistle along Billys Creek was initially unsuccessful but the recent injection of funds for weeds initiatives means that the Friends Group will now be granted \$8,450 to do that project. This is a fantastic outcome as the original Grant proposal was only for \$6,200. As usual most of the works will be done by contractors but, owing to the rapid re-emergence of Tutsan and even some Willows due to scouring of the creek banks during flooding, the valuable ongoing contribution from the Friends Group will be essential to the long term success of the control program. To this end it is probably worth investing some of that extra money in new tools and equipment to make the task of weeding in the creek safer, easier and more efficient.

Following the extreme rainfall / storm event of June 2007, when 262mm fell over 2 days resulting in major damage to the creek crossings in Billys Creek and many large fallen trees over tracks, a major clean up operation to re-open the tracks and reinstate the creek crossings was undertaken. Fortunately

the Government's Flood Recovery Program meant that plenty of funding was available for this work and most of the jobs were undertaken by contractors using heavy machinery. One of the really positive things to come out of this was that the rickety old timber bridge on the track from Stringybark Ridge down to Brewsters Rd was so badly undermined that we were able to remove it and replace it with a large concrete culvert which should continue to operate maintenance free for many years into the future.

The revegetated areas along Billys Creek continue to look great and improve in terms of natural values due to the concerted effort by the Friends Group to remove old tree guards and keep the weeds at bay. The walking tracks in the Park are also making progress due to the good work done by the Friends (with a little help from Flood Works contractors) and access into more areas of the Park is slowly being made available to the public.

Roaming sheep continue to be a problem along Billys Creek so Parks Victoria has invested some money in repairing and improving the fencing along the boundary of the property they originate from and is currently negotiating with the owner to solve the problem on a permanent basis.

Still no solution from the Latrobe City Council to the issue of log trucks using Jumbuk Rd, so HVP have had to modify their harvesting program for the Jeeralangs and our plan to get rid of the pines in the SW corner of the Park and revegetate the site are on hold. The vocal minority wins again.

Recent changes to the staffing structure in Latrobe Parks have seen the day to day management of Morwell NP, along with Tarra Bulga NP and Mt Worth SP, become the responsibility of Craig Campbell (long time Ranger at TBNP) and myself take on broader rolls such as management of all Natural Values projects, budget & finance, vehicle fleet, assets, licences & permits etc. However, I will still be the contact Ranger for the Friends of Morwell National Park and will, I hope, have the pleasure of working with the group for many more years to come.

Many thanks should go to the outgoing committee of the Friends of Morwell NP for yet another successful and rewarding year of activities in the park and the local community. Thanks also to all the dedicated members who turn up for activities rain, hail or shine and work so hard to make the whole show such a success. Special congratulations to Mike and Cathy for the time and effort they put into the newsletter which, with the inclusion of Ken's articles and colour photos, has become one of the best presented and most informative Volunteer Group newsletters I have ever seen.

I have recently received several compliments about the content and quality of the Friends of MNP's website which is now seen as one of the best, (if not the best) in Australia. The site is a real asset to the Park, a great tool for the public to use to learn about the natural values of Gippsland and a credit to its author. Congratulations Ken and thanks for many years of tireless work for the Park.

Rob Howell
Ranger

The Treasurer's Report was read and accepted. (Wendy, Cathy)

Election of office Bearers:

President- Ken Harris (Nom-Cathy, Sec-Wendy)
Vice President- Darren Hodgson (Nom- Denis, Sec- Wendy)
Secretary- Beryl Nelson (Nom-Wendy, Sec-Cathy)
Treasurer- Wendy Steenbergen (Nom-Cathy, Sec- Jane)
Newsletter- Mike Beamish (Nom-Denis, Sec-Jane)
Publicity- Denis Sultana (Nom-Jane, Sec-Cathy)

General Business:

Motion that the membership fee structure will remain unchanged at \$10 per person or \$15 per family or group. (Wendy, Jane) Passed unanimously.

Motion that recommended payment of the Incorporation Fee (\$39.70) forthwith. (Wendy, Cathy) Passed unanimously.

It was decided that Jane (although no longer the secretary) will remain the Public Officer.

The committee felt strongly that they would like to recognize long standing members who have contributed in many ways to the development of the Park. It was therefore decided to create an Honorary membership category.

Honorary members will receive the monthly newsletter, invitations to social functions and lifelong membership.

Motion that Dorothy Reinkowsky and Eulalie Brewster be made honorary members.
(Wendy, Jane) Passed unanimously.

Annual General Meeting declared closed at 2:35pm

Friends of Morwell National Park: Committee Meeting- 3/08/08

Committee Meeting declared open at 2:35pm

Attendance: Wendy Steenberg, Jane Sultana, Denis Sultana, Cathy Beamish, Mike Beamish, Ken Harris, Beryl Nelson, Darren Hodgson, Peter McDonald

Apologies: Reg Felmingham, Tom Lawless, Dorothy Reinkowsky

Previous Minutes: Minutes of the previous Committee Meeting held on 3rd August '08 were read and accepted as a true account. (Cathy, Wendy)

Business arising from previous meetings minutes:

We took part in the Churchill Festival but were disappointed with the turnout to the event. There was some interest in the 'Friends of the Park' display however this did not result in any new members. Despite good publicity in the local papers the Koala count was not well attended.

Correspondence:

Inwards:

Latrobe City Grants Information Evening 2008/2009

Latrobe City Natural Environment Sustainability Strategy 2008-2013

WGCMA Public comment: Strezlecki Biodiversity Landscape Plans

Newsletters:

Under Control (October '07)

Primary Voice (Winter '08)

FriendsNet (Nov '07 and May '08)

Friends of Coolart Wetlands

Friends of Tarra Bulga Nat Park

Outwards:

Incorporation statement of Public Officer.

General Business:

Our activities program for 2009 was discussed and activities for most months suggested. Mike will publish a copy of this calendar in a forthcoming newsletter.

The following new member was unanimously voted into the group: Darren Hodgson

Moved: Wendy, Seconded: Mike.

Tom Lawless passed on his suggestion that surnames be used in the newsletter. This would make the newsletters more informative and of greater value as historical documents. He also suggested that the current office bearers' names could perhaps appear at the top of each newsletter. These ideas were discussed and agreed to have merit. Mike (our newsletter editor) has been informed and will endeavour to respond.

Meeting declared closed at 3:55pm

Friends of Morwell National Park Membership

Two suggestions were put forward by Tom Lawless, via Secretary Jane Sultana, at the AGM: that surnames are used in reports for the newsletter and that office bearers are listed at the beginning of the newsletter. Both of these suggestions were seen to have merit, so initially I will attempt to address them by including a list of office bearers and members at the end of each newsletter.

My reasoning is as follows: the main purpose of the newsletter is as a vehicle to convey relevant information about Morwell NP and the Friends Group to the members. (*Ideally, the reports that are used to achieve this should come from the members and to some degree they do, but it still seems that the bulk of the workload is done by the editor and one or two others. We still have a bit of work to do to consistently share the workload amongst the Group.*) To make reports interesting and readable is a tricky business and not everyone feels they have the time and skills to achieve this. In my view, addition of surnames would only add to the difficulties of writing an interesting and entertaining report and would be unlikely to add any enlightenment to readers who don't know the participants anyway. As most participants are usually members, a list of members at the end of the newsletter would provide a reference for those readers wishing to add a surname to those named in a report. Any historical value of the newsletters would also be enhanced in this way. Participants in our activities who are not members of the Group would need to be treated on a case by case basis, with consideration to our knowledge of these people, their personal wishes and to wider privacy issues.

The list has been placed at the end of the newsletter because sufficient contact information is already included in the banner at the start and we shouldn't clutter up the front page any further with information that most readers wouldn't need at that point. Please let me know what you think about it all.

Membership Renewals

It is Membership Renewal time once again! If your name is on the list below and you haven't yet renewed, now is the time to attend to it. If your name is not on the list below and you either think it should be or want it to be, then you must respond to this renewal notice, as you are in danger of being removed from our membership list and may not receive another newsletter. Please make use of the renewal form below if you need to.

Friends of Morwell National Park Inc: PO Box 19, Churchill, 3842, <http://morwellnp.pangaean.net>.

President: Ken Harris, 51223137,

Vice-President: Darren Hodgson,

Secretary: Beryl Nelson,

Treasurer: Wendy Steenberg,

Newsletter Editor: Mike Beamish, PO Box 112, Boolarra, 3870, 51696543, beamish@vic.australis.com.au

Publicity: Denis Sultana

Public Officer: Jane Sultana

Members: Mary Austin, Cathy Beamish, Eulalie Brewster, Reg Felmingham, Tom Lawless, Peter & Wendy McDonald, John Pulis, Dorothy Reinkowsky, Les Reinkowsky, Joan Sikkema, Mark & Sharon Waller, Australian Plant Society (Latrobe Valley).

To: Treasurer, Friends of Morwell National Park, PO Box 19, Churchill, 3842

Please find enclosed the amount of \$ _____ (\$10 per person, \$15 per family/group) being for membership 2008/2009.

Name:.....Telephone:.....

Address:.....