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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – February 2009

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

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G'day everyone and welcome to the latest issue of your newsletter. It has been the week from hell, so please forgive us if we are brief and to the point. Cathy and I have been living on our nerves for longer than we can now remember and the days are beginning to blur into one another. It all started on Wednesday 28/1/09 when our local mongrel firebug lit the first fires on the northern outskirts of Boolarra, which for some unknown reason was labelled the Delburn fire (Delburn is a locality around the junction of the Ten Mile Creek Road and the Mountain Hut Road, now Strzelecki Highway, some 4km away). These were controlled, but the next day more fires were deliberately lit along Creamery Road, west of Yinnar and in the Lyrebird Walk, near Mirboo North, burning in a south-easterly direction and merging. Thursday 29/1/09 was 45°C in Boolarra and Friday 30/1/09 was 43°C, but luckily the winds were light, so although we were surrounded by fire as close as 100m on Friday, we experienced few problems with ember attack. Not so in other parts of Boolarra, with 31 homes lost, most of which we heard were not defended by their owners. No serious injuries to humans were reported.

From Saturday onwards, we have been involved with wildlife rescue activities, with a DSE Ranger being made available to us, to allow us access to the fire-ground in the early stages following the fire. We are very grateful for this opportunity being made available to us from the Incident Management teams. The 14 hour workdays are not pleasant, we have many more losses than wins, but one win such as the Koala that wandered up the main road at the height of the fire, dodging fire trucks all the way, that we were able to pick up and move to safety, makes up for a lot of the losses.

Then there is yesterday, Saturday 7/2/09. More deliberately lit fires all over the state, this time combined with high temperatures and strong winds. Hundreds of homes lost, dozens of fatalities. Lots of people we don't know, a few we do know. It throws a different perspective on events, makes our worries from last week look a bit trivial, makes us think how lucky we were that conditions for our little fire were as benign as they turned out. A nice, slow burning at the stake would seem a fitting penalty for a convicted arsonist!

Delburn Complex Fire – Boolarra 30/1/09



February Activity

The next episode in our Weed War series is programmed for Sunday, February 15 2009. We will meet at the Junction Road gate at 10am, armed with lunch and refreshments, clothing and footwear suitable for walking in the creek and the weather conditions on the day.

Weed Wars – Episode XXI **January Activity Report by Cathy Beamish**

We commenced weed removal for 2009 by driving up to the first creek crossing, to begin walking back downstream. We were very disappointed to find way too many Tutsan plants as well as more foxgloves and thistles. It looks like our war on Tutsan is going to continue for some time yet. Wendy, Darren and I made good progress though and were pleased with our efforts. Rob had a couple of other small jobs within the park that he needed to take care of, so he left us to our own devices and then caught up with us for lunch.

We were only a small group and were all able to travel with Rob in his vehicle. Wendy, Darren and I were the regulars, and I am very pleased to say that Laura also came along for the day and is hoping to make the monthly activity a regular occurrence.

I apologise for the briefness of this report but my memory is a bit shot after dealing with the Boolarra fires and wildlife rescue, (which is ongoing), and now hearing about the Churchill fires and the devastation these have also caused to so many families.

Vale – Dorothy Reinkowsky

It is with great regret that we have learned of the passing of Dorothy, on January 31 at the Narracan Gardens Aged Care Facility. Dorothy was a very enthusiastic and active member until the last couple of years and will be greatly missed by all of us. Our sincere condolences go to all of her family and friends and we really hope that she is now peacefully at rest. Cathy and I are ashamed to admit that circumstances around Boolarra prevented us from learning of the date of Dorothy's funeral service until after the event, as we would have liked to attend.

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