

PO Box 19
Churchill
3842



President:
5122 3137

Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – September 2009

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

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Hello everyone and welcome to this month's newsletter. They argue that change is good, so the changing of the Newsletter's editor could also (hopefully) been considered as good. At the Annual General Meeting a few changes in positions were made and one resulted in me looking after the newsletter for the next year. Mike needed a break and he has done a wonderful job with the Newsletter for many years. My little feet need to fit into some big shoes. So remember that change can be good and remember that I am no Mike. I am only half his size and will be probably only half as good with the Newsletter. It will be a challenge for me to keep up the high standards that Mike has set over the years. Time will tell.

I am Darren Hodgson and have been involved with the Friends of Morwell National Park for a couple of years. I am one of the few local in the group, living a very short walk from the park. I am involved in this Friend's group because I enjoy walking in the park and want to help maintain this area for others. The contribution and improvements that this Friends group has made to Morwell National Park are an important aspect of why we enjoy the wonderful park we currently have. Getting to meet the others in the group and share in their knowledge of plants, animals and the park is another benefit of the Friends group. It is amazing the knowledge that some have.

The minutes of the Friends of Morwell National Park - Annual General Meeting and Friends of Morwell National Park - Committee Meeting will be included in next month's newsletter.

September Activity

10am Sunday 20th September

We will meet at the Kerry Road entrance to complete some track maintenance. You will need your own lunch and refreshments, clothing and footwear suitable for the terrain and weather conditions on the day.

Note: this is a change from the 2009 calendar since those tracks just won't maintain themselves.

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

President: Ken Harris, 51223137

Vice-President: Peter McDonald

Secretary: Beryl Nelson

Treasurer: Wendy Steenbergen

Publicity: Denis Sultana

Public Officer: Jane Sultana

Newsletter Editor: Darren Hodgson, 90 Tebb Terrace Junction Junction 3840, 51222108, dhodgson@wideband.net.au

Members: Mary Austin, Mike & Cathy Beamish, Eulalie Brewster, Reg Felmingham, Tom Lawless, Peter & Wendy McDonald, John Pulis, Joan Sikkema, David Stickney, Australian Plant Society (Latrobe Valley).

Where in the park is this?

Your task is to identify where in the park this photo has been taken. The park has many wonderful views to see and here is an opportunity to share your prize pictures with others.

Hopefully this month we have started with an easy challenge. So where in the park has this photo been taken? To take part in the discussion of possible answers you can come along to this month's activity. For those who are really keen, you can even go on a search for the spot the photograph was taken from.



So if you have a photo of a special corner or an unusual event that has occurred in the park, please send in your photos. They could be of one of the wonderful vistas or a rarely seen part of the park.

Please send them to Darren via email at dhodgson@wideband.net.au or via mail to 90 Tebb Terrace, Junction Junction 3840.

August Activity Report

The following activity report has been kindly provided by Ken Harris. It is a demonstration that there are many wonders to be found in the park, both large and small.

A Walk in the Park – August Activity Report

For our August activity, we downed tools and took a walk in the Park. Only three of us turned up, myself, Wendy and Beryl, but Wendy brought two friends, John and Margaret and Beryl also had two companions, Anne and Trisha, so there were seven of us setting out on our walk.

The plan was to drive up Jumbuk Rd to the far end of the pines and walk into the park from there, connecting to the Muttonwood Creek Track and returning via Stringybark Ridge to the Kerry Rd picnic area for lunch. The weather threatened rain and we did get a few light showers, but I got away with leaving my coat in the car without a drenching.



We saw a couple of Swamp Wallabies on our first venture into the park. Then when we started the steep descent along the Muttonwood Creek Track someone spotted a caterpillar feeding on a Variable Groundsel – *Senecio lautus*. I took its photograph and was able later to identify it as the caterpillar of the Magpie Moth – *Nyctemera amica*, which feeds its caterpillars on various species of fireweed, particularly the Common Fireweed – *Senecio linearifolius*. I knew the Magpie Moth liked Senecios, and that helped when I tried to identify the caterpillar. The photo I took is attached, and I have also added a picture of a mating pair of the moths that I took on the Clematis track back in February last year.



Magpie Moth – *Nyctemera amica*

It was early in the year, but a few of the first spring flowers were blooming and near the bottom of the descent, I found a patch of Austral Bear's Ear – *Cymbonotus lawsonianus* with the first flowers open. This plant is not common in the park and this is a site where I have not previously noticed them.



Austral Bear's Ear – *Cymbonotus lawsonianus*

We split forces at the bottom of the hill, with the more energetic of us following the Muttonwood Creek round the border of the park down to Muttonwood Creek, while a second party headed straight up to link with the Stringybark Ridge Track.

As we walked down the last section of the boundary track in the narrow gap between the boundary fence and a steep earth bank, there were a lot of lichens growing on the earth bank. One that was quite common was *Baeomyces heteromorphus* which appears

as a green crust on the bank, with what appear to be little pink fungi scattered across it, see my picture below.



Baeomyces heteromorphus

Two more lichens were also conspicuous and were growing right next to each other. They proved to both be in the same genus *Cladonia*, the so-called cup lichens.

The first has no cups, but has tall pointed scaly podetia. It is known as *Cladonia scabriuscula* and is a world-wide species as is the second one, the so-called Pyxie Cup Lichen – *Cladonia pyxidata*. Which at maturity has cup shaped podetia the shape of little wine glasses. Younger podetia taper to a point and curl and twist.



Cladonia scabriuscula



Cladonia pyxidata

All these lichens are attractive and adorn the otherwise bare side of the earth bank.

Further on the same stretch of track we found a conspicuous pair of bracket fungi, growing near the base of a messmate tree – *Eucalyptus obliqua*. This proved to be the so called Artist's Conk – *Ganoderma applanatum*, which like the *Cladonia*'s is a world-wide species. The spores of fungi and lichens are so tiny that they can travel huge distances on the wind, so that many species have very large

distributions. The fungus causes a form of rot in the timber, but it is interesting to explore why it is called Artist's Conk. Apparently the white spore-bearing under-surface of the fungus is very thin and can be scraped away exposing the brown layer beneath it. Artists have used this as a medium for creating art-works. A superb example of this can be seen on this web page:

http://botit.botany.wisc.edu/toms_fungi/march99.html .



Artist's Conk – *Ganoderma applanatus*



Boletus barragensis

We kept a look out for orchids throughout our walk and saw a lot of helmet orchid leaves, but the first orchid flower we saw was a Maroonhood – *Pterostylis pedunculata*. We later saw several Tall Greenhoods – *Pterostylis melogramma* in flower and just before the picnic area we also found Nodding Greenhoods – *Pterostylis nutans* in flower. We also looked at the Butterfly Orchid plants – *Sarcochilus australis*, as we passed across Fosters Gully.

While still on Stringybark Ridge, we saw some whitish fungi beside the track. They looked as if they had a mould growing across the fruiting body of the main fungus, but I found one unaffected specimen, which proved to be interesting. It was one of the family known as Boletes, that have a dense cluster of tubes carrying their spores instead of the more familiar gills. This one turned out to be *Boletus barragensis*, a native species, but one that I have not previously recorded in the park. My picture of it is above.

Catching up with the rest of the party at the picnic area, we were able to eat our lunch at the picnic table despite the wet (we all sat on various plastic protectors) and the rain (which came in heavier in the afternoon) held off just long enough. A Grey Shrike-thrush and a Lewins Honeyeater both joined us but did not look for crumbs from our lunches. They both preferred to feed on the fat on the hot plate (not hot today) of the barbecue.

Ken Harris