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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – December 2011

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

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Hello everyone and welcome to this month's newsletter. We have had a very wet spring and November has been wet as well. I have had over 160mm in the water gauge for the month and the ground is still very wet. It is unusual at this time of the year that we need to work around rain when you want to go outside.

The ground is so sodden, falling trees is a risk. I have just spent the weekend dealing with a large tree which fell taking another five trees and the fence with it. Just when you think you are keeping up with it all, something else comes up.

The Kookaburra Awards were awarded during the last month, where we were nominated. Mike has given us a written report outlining the festivities, which is contained. Thanks Mike.

Christmas is coming soon and so is our Christmas function. See the last page for details.

November Activity Reports

At this month's activity we had John, Reg, Mike, Cathy, Peter, Ken, Emma, Roddy and Darren along. We also had Ranger Mark to help us out while Craig is on leave. Emma and Roddy were along for the first time (hopefully the first of many). It is always great to have new people along to share in the activities and it is a great opportunity to learn about the local environment.

We all met in the Junction Road car park and while we organized our work tasks and locations while Peter, John and Ken collected the equipment we needed. In the car park we separated in two groups for the two different activities.

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

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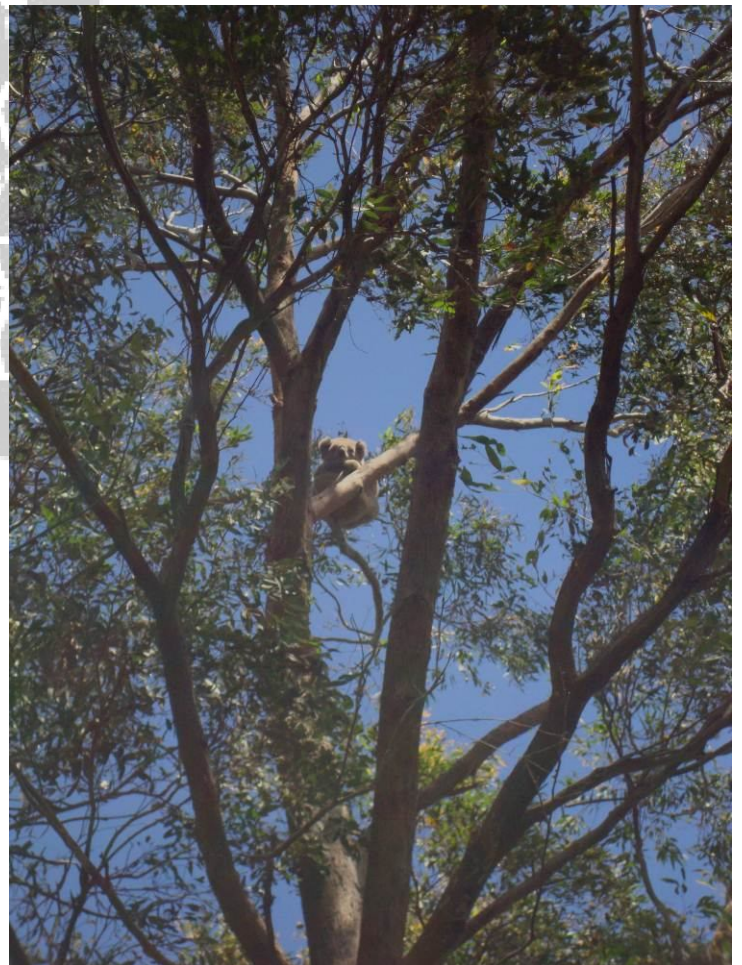
Other members: Mary Austin, Wendy Steenbergen, Margaret Barker, Cathy Beamish, Eulalie Brewster, Reg Felmingham, Wendy McDonald, Joan Sikkema, Kate Richardson, Hilmar Batza, Bronwyn Grass, Australian Plant Society (Latrobe Valley).

Star picket removal

Mike, Reg, John, Peter, Darren and Mark took two vehicles along Billy's Creek to the hill above the information board near the first creek crossing. Previously we have removed an old wire fence along with some of the concrete posts and star pickets which was part of the fence line. Today we returned to the site to remove the remaining star pickets we could not remove last year.

The softer soil conditions made it a lot easier to remove the star pickets this year. Some pickets which would not move last year could this year be removed by hand. We were able to remove all pickets either by hand or with the star picket remover. To and from the work site we checked and repaired the trees and the tree guards of the seedlings planted a few months ago. Many tree guards had come away from the seedlings. About 70% of the seedlings (separated from the tree guards) are growing and the tree guards have now been put back around the seedlings.

It was good to see that most of the large pile of wire on the Zig Zag track had been removed. Only a little of the barbed wire now needs to be removed. Now some star pickets have been added to this collection.



After travelling up and down the hill with a large heavy lot of star pickets, we broke for lunch. After lunch we travelled back to the site to work down the hill. Down the hill was another chicken wire

fence and more star pickets. We removed as much of this fence as we could before it plummeted down a steep incline to the creek. Now on the hill above the information board there is a pile of wire and star pickets to be removed. We now have three piles of wire to be removed – one on Zig Zig track, one on the hill above the information board and another beside the track near Tebb Terrace.

During the day we saw two copperhead snakes and a koala (shown in the photo).

Butterfly Orchid Survey

Ken, Cathy, Emma and Roddy undertook the Butterfly Orchid survey. Ken had earlier collected the GPS unit so that each site could be given a GPS location. Each site has been difficult to locate since it is based upon striding a number of steps along the track (in Ken steps) and then a number of steps at right angles to the track. Having GPS locations will make find the sites a lot easier in the future.

All sites were found and counted. Some were located with some difficulty since they have changed in nature with some of the major trees falling down. With the wetter conditions it made getting in and out of some of the locations a lot harder. Emma and Roddy were great in some of these harder locations. They even had to go back to some plots which the group had forgotten to GPS. Ken ended the day covered in mud.

In the first plot 4 new Butterfly Orchid were located. In the other plots there were generally not more plants, but more flowers were found. Hopefully with the greater numbers of flowers more orchids will germinate next year. Some of the plants which had disappeared in previous surveys were located again. Cathy has taken some great photos of the Butterfly orchids.

The Kookaburra Awards 2011

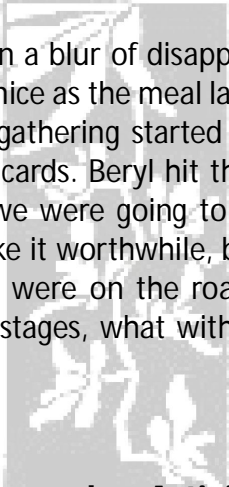
Beryl made her own way to the presentation on Saturday November 5, while Ken, Cathy and I decided to travel down to Geelong together the previous evening. Apart from a little bit of congestion on the freeway between the West Gate Bridge and Laverton, the drive was uneventful and we arrived at our cabin on the banks of the Barwon River in Belmont a shade past 7pm, just under 3 hours from home. After getting ourselves settled, the munchies kicked in and we decided to hit the town for a feed. Remembering a nice little Greek bistro from a previous trip, we managed to find the last nearby parking spot and fronted up to the bar with our fingers crossed. Despite the place appearing to be full and doing a roaring (yes, I mean loud) trade, they did have a spare table hidden around the corner, which we promptly occupied. True to our memory, the meal was excellent (stuffed mushies for all, then moussaka, souvlaki and lemon lamb with a nice red left no room for dessert) and we returned to our cabin in tiptop condition for a nice, long sleep.

The next morning arrived as another bright, sunny day. Ken had arisen earlier and had disappeared on a morning stroll, while Cathy and I hoed into our breakfast. When Ken returned with tales of Blue-winged Parrots in the park and bacon and eggs in a nearby café, we still had a bit of time to kill before duty called, so Cathy and I left Ken with a cuppa and headed off for our own exercise. Along with most of Geelong, it seemed, as the Barwon River Parklands was obviously the place to be on a Saturday

morning, joggers, walkers, cyclists and rowers everywhere. No parrots for us, only a few wattlebirds, lorikeets and honeyeaters, but the bright purple Creeping Monkey-flowers (*Mimulus repens*) growing around the margins of the wetlands just glowed in the morning sunlight.

We made our way to the Barwon Edge Boathouse, the venue for the awards presentation only a short drive from our lodgings, a little before the appointed time and settled in for morning tea. Beryl arrived in due time and we claimed a table near the front, all the better to hear the proceedings. Andy Gillham joined us before long, with a couple of members of the Friends of Baw Baw NP with him. The obligatory speeches were made, we were 'Welcomed to Country', the local pollies did their bit and all the nominations, 13 of them for the Environment Award, were announced and presented with a certificate. Cathy bolted up to the dais to accept ours, not giving anyone else a chance to steal the thunder (don't let her tell you that I invited her to do the honours, I was just scared of getting trampled). Then the runner-up was announced: not us. Then the first of two winners was announced: not us. Then the second of the winners was announced: Friends of Baw Baw NP. Rats! To the victors go the spoils. We did get a commendation/ honourable mention, so to make us feel better we did come in 4th or 5th out of 13, not bad, perhaps I won't put a hit out on the organisers after all.

The rest of the presentations passed by in a blur of disappointment, but then the meal was upon us and we chowed down with gusto. Not as nice as the meal last night, but then we didn't have to pay for this one, so it went down all right. The gathering started to break up pretty quickly after the main course, even though dessert was on the cards. Beryl hit the road and Cathy was keen to follow, but Ken and I were promised a dessert, so we were going to have it. Nice little lemon tarts eventually turned up, we had to have several to make it worthwhile, but since at least half the gang had already left, there was plenty to go around. We were on the road by 2pm, home by 5pm, it was difficult keeping the eyes open during the latter stages, what with the food and the warm weather, but we survived to fight another day.



December Activity

10.00am Sunday 18th December

The group will meet at 10.00am the Junction Road car park to conduct the nesting box survey before the BBQ celebration at 1.00pm. We will need Craig to bring the camera mounted on the long pole and the extension ladders. You will need to bring clothing and footwear suitable for the weather conditions on the day.

As part of this activity we will update the Kerry Road noticeboard with new photos and the Kookaburra Awards nominations and Ken individual award from 2009.



Friends of Morwell National Park Christmas BBQ

Come along and enjoy in a BBQ lunch to celebrate another successful year of activities for the Friends of Morwell National Park.

When: Sunday 18th December

Time: 1.00pm

Where: 10 Walker Parade, Churchill

What to bring: BYO drink and bring either a salad or sweet.

Please come along.

The BBQ is being kindly hosted at John and Margaret's home. If you need to contact them you can on 2122 1548 and yes they have a toilet (unlike the Park).