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# Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

## *Newsletter – December 2015*

Website: <http://morwellnp.pangaean.net>  
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Welcome to this month's newsletter. At the October Koala count with had a reporter from ABC Gippsland and her article is included below. She has taken a liberal interpretation of what Matt told her.

The last Green Walk for the year will on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December (10am) completing the Foster's Gully Walk. Meet at Kerry Rd car park and for registration and program updates go to [www.heartfoundation.org.au/greenwalks](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/greenwalks) or call 1300 362 787.

### John's Jottings

This month I am providing ongoing snippets lifted from the Morwell National Park Management Plan (1998) which I'm sure will make interesting reading for you too.

#### **"5.2 Visitor recreation activities and facilities, 5.2.1 Access**

Parks Victoria aims to provide a range of access conditions to ensure that people (including those with limited mobility) are given the opportunity to use existing and new recreation facilities, participate in a wide variety of programs and have access to a range of natural environments.

Existing vehicle access to Morwell National Park is via Jumbuk Road and Kerry Road to the Kerry Road picnic area at Fosters Gully. From there further access in the Park is by walking or bicycle only (section 5.2.3, table 4 and figure 3).

The proposed access into the Billy's Creek Valley is via Braniffs Road. All other public access in this part of the planning area is via walking tracks only.

Access for management purposes, search and rescue, and fire vehicles is provided.

#### **TABLE 3 - EXISTING AND PROPOSED FACILITIES AT BILLY'S CREEK VALLEY**

LOCATION	PROPOSED FACILITIES
Main gate	Major entrance sign, main gate, Park regulations sign.
Main road	Main road from entrance to bridge across Billy's Creek to car park. (Braniffs Road entrance & bridge at Braniffs ford)
Main car park	Picnic tables, gas barbecues, main car park, toilets, information shelter and walking track signs.(display board area adjacent to 1 <sup>st</sup> crossing)
1st creek crossing	Picnic table, foot bridge (existing).
2nd creek crossing	Picnic table, foot bridge (existing).
Potato Flat	Picnic tables, signs.
Grassy area	No formal facilities, area to be slashed for dispersed picnicking.
3rd creek	Foot bridge (existing).
Weir	Picnic tables, signs interpreting the history of the weir, visitor safety, 'swimming at own risk' sign (toilets as demand requires)."

*To be continued next month.....*

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

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**Vice-President:** Ken Harris

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**Other members:** Mary Austin, Margaret Barker, Mike and Cathy Beamish, Eulalie Brewster, Kerry Campbell, Brenda Chatham, Tamara Leitch, Wendy McDonald, Joan Sikkema, Neil Slater, Wendy Steenberg, Australian Plant Society (Latrobe Valley).



# Record number of koalas spotted in annual count of Morwell National Park

[ABC Gippsland](#) By [Zoe Ferguson](#)

A record number of koalas has been spotted in Parks Victoria's annual count in Morwell National Park.

The event is part of a long-term strategy to document koala numbers within the park.

Matt Campbell, president of Friends of Morwell National Park which undertakes the annual survey, said despite the count's unscientific methodology, the numbers had been steady throughout the years.

"We split up into groups and cover three tracks," he explained.

"It's purely waking along to see if you can spot some koalas, record some details about what tree they were in, whether they were male or female and if there were any young with them.

"It gives us an idea of population stability — whether they're declining or increasing.

"We can get varying numbers, but they've been in a range over the years so our population is pretty steady."

Since the annual count started more than 25 years ago, the number of koalas in the Morwell National Park has ranged between seven and 11, and this year a total of 12 koalas were counted.



Mr Campbell said the population in the park appears happy and healthy, but had as a whole become very fragmented.

[Photo: A Parks Victoria volunteer photographs koalas in Morwell National Park \(ABC Gippsland: Zoe Ferguson\)](#)

"Koalas are in trouble despite the numbers and culls you hear about," he said.

"There are a lot of areas where their habitat is being destroyed."

The koalas found in the national park are of the Strzelecki strain, which differ in genetic diversity compared to other koala populations in

Victoria.

"In the 1930s, koalas were hunted to near extinction in Victoria and so nearly the whole population came from an inbred population from French Island," Mr Campbell said.

"With low genetic diversity, there are lots of problems with disease and health issues, but the Strzelecki's remnant population managed to hang on and these koalas are as original as you can get."

The annual counting day was open to the public, which the volunteers said was key to raising interest and passion about koala conservation.

Tinamba resident Kimberley attended with her husband and three daughters aged 11, seven and four years of age.

"We came to the count for our daughters, to see koalas, because they've never seen them before, and just to go for a nice walk," Kimberley said.



## November Activity Report

At this activity we had Matt, Peter, Ken, Tamara, Japanese student Yuto and Darren from FMNP. Also in presence was Landcare Australia and members from a number of local Landcare groups. The representatives from Landcare were joined by 10 members of different Landcare groups.

On arrival everybody was welcomed by Nicole and asked to sign up on the Landcare enrolment list. Matt welcomed the group and Ken had discussions with the organizers about the value to using a 500m grid in comparison to the 250m grid planned. A 500m grid was agreed to. The smaller grid has four times the coordinates and would take four times the work to map the Park. After welcoming the large group, Matt and Ken left to undertake the Butterfly Orchid Survey.

The training then began. Nicole discussed the project through the Strzelecki Ranges making a koala corridor along the northern side of the Strzelecki's between Boolarra and Morwell National Park. A brochure about living with koalas is currently being printed and will go to 900 property holders along this corridor. The training began with a session from Jenny about Eucalypts plant identification. Factors like venation, capsules, values, leaf shapes and buds are used to identify different eucalypts species. A range of techniques were demonstrated and trialed.



Training then moved to scat and site analysis techniques. The techniques of site identification and tree location was discussed. 30 trees over 100mm in diameter are recorded at each site. Each tree is marked, measured and identified by type. Raking and exploration are used to find koala scat in a meter circle around each tree. 2½ hours of training were then followed by lunch.



After lunch the group then moved off the first survey site. The grid reference was beside the Foster's Gully walking track, so movement around the site was easy. The central tree was located and marked. The group broke into pairs with some doing tree identification and others recording the results. The identification teams worked an arc around the central tree identifying 29 trees, which were then numbered, measured, tree type identified and scat evidence called out. The recorders documented the results. In this site there were only two gums (most of the others Muttonwood or Sweet Pittosporum) and these were the only trees with scat evidence. After two hours at the first site, the group was ready to move on.

Since it was now past 3pm, some of the group left while the rest moved onto the next survey site near the west boundary.

On returning to the car park we found Matt and Ken who had completed the Butterfly Orchid Survey. They had had a good day, finding each of the sites without great troubles and without any incidents. They had a successful count finding more orchids at each site and all orchids were in good health with more flowers. Considering the recent low local rainfall (10mm in October and 17mm in November) it was great to see the orchids in such a health state. On the walk back from the last plot, they counted the Butterfly Orchids seen along the track and the count came to 180. Two of these orchids are shown below.



## December Activity

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December

### **Activity 1 – 9am Junction Road Car Park: Nesting box survey.**

We will use the pole-mounted camera to view the animals in the different boxes.

For this activity you will need to bring clothing and footwear suitable for the weather conditions on the day.

**Note:** the early start time (9am) so that all boxes can be surveyed before lunch.

**Activity 2 –** The Christmas BBQ celebration will celebrate the year and will start at about 1.00pm. You can come of one or both activities.

## **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 20<sup>th</sup> December

**Time:** 1.00pm

**Where:** Kerry Road picnic area

**What to bring:** BYO plate, cutlery, cup/glass and bring either a salad or sweet.