

PO Box 19
Churchill
3842



Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – September 2016

Website: <http://morwellnp.pangaeon.net>
Official Address of FMNP - contactfmnp@gmail.com
A0016319X

This month we have a bit for you. Included is the report from the last activity, minutes from the recent Annual General Meeting and Committee Meeting. The 2015/16 President's Report makes very good reading.

John's Jottings

This snippet on the activities of the Friends of Morwell National Park was sourced from early Newsletter files.

13th May, 1987.

Dear Friends,

We welcome Peter, Rani, Carol and Irene to our group and thank them for their support.

A smaller group met prior to our walk and we all benefited from the extra time to discuss some issues. The extra time gained was well spent in the park with such capable guides as Ian and Os Brewster.

The saw mill was situated in the stringy bark walk area and although time, fires and vegetation has almost obscured most features it is possible to see and understand how it operated. The exact locating of the site was very much a team effort that we must thank first of all Margaret and Frank for their initial enquiries and secondly Ian for his persistence and interest in following up all their leads. Only his retelling of how it operated made us understand and see what was there.

The mine shaft we thought would be a bit of a search but Mr. & Mrs Brewster made an effort to be with us and led us directly to the site. Os and his brother had the dubious pleasure of digging this shaft to a depth of 104 ft in 1946 before it was abandoned and, it was eventually filled in without ever yielding gold or tin. Again there is little to see but listening to what Os had to say about the shaft itself and the bush around it was most interesting.

I cannot thank Mrs. Lyndon and Mr. & Mrs. Brewster enough for making the effort to join us and sharing so much of their knowledge with us. Hopefully we will slowly be able to build up a file of the history of the park so that it will be there as a reference for all future rangers and friends alike. We would appreciate hearing from anyone with anything of interest.

Our birthday was celebrated in style with a huge cake made for the occasion by Gail and decorated in the traditional birthday manner by herself and Kathleen. The candle was enthusiastically blown out by the children present, and the whole cake went very quickly the way all good birthday cakes should go. Very nice it was too. The B.B.Q. tea was enjoyed by all and accounting for all the comings and goings as people juggled a busy calendar a total of 28 adults and 11 children joined in with us. Thank you all for making a special effort to be there.

Our next meeting is the 14th June and it is planned that we will visit the proposed area of land to be purchased on Billy's creek with the object of discussing the concept plan the Dept. of C.F. & L. has sent to us. Gum boots are essential to keep dry feet. We will meet again at 12 noon for those who would like to discuss the general business of our group then at 1.30pm with the intention of walking into Billy's creek. It will be a little different this time in that instead of meeting at the park, Kathleen Long has offered her house as the meeting place, her property backs on to Billy's creek so we can walk in from there. Needless to say a billy tea will be available at the end of the day. Let's hope the weather will hold out.

Yours most sincerely, YVONNE APLIN.



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

Official Address of FMNP - contactfmnp@gmail.com

President: Matt Campbell

Vice-President: Ken Harris

Secretary: Beryl Nelson

Treasurer: John Barker

Publicity: Peter McDonald

Public Officer: Beryl Nelson

Newsletter Editor: Darren Hodgson, hodgson.darren.d@edumail.vic.gov.au

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

August Activity Report

Over the last month the Grand Strzelecki Track has been in the news. There was a recent article in the Latrobe Valley Express and it has been discussed on the ABC that the track is in trouble. Opened in May 2012, the Grand Strzelecki Track now only has five signed up volunteers. It is struggling to maintain the 110km of tracks between Tarra Bulga and Morwell National Parks with a lack of funds and volunteers. With its annual budget of \$17,000 from Latrobe City and Wellington Shire, it is needing to pursue grants and government support to maintain and clear tracks. It is not known how many locals and visitors use the track but about 200 maps of the track were sold each year.

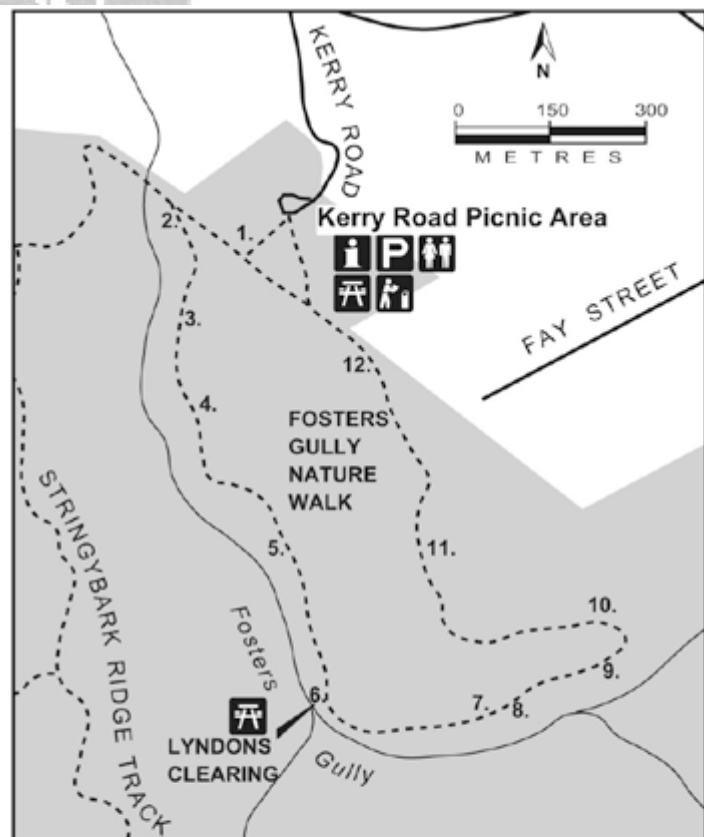
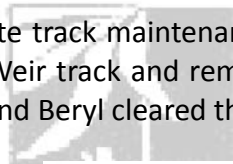
Matt has spoken with the Grand Strzelecki Track Committee and made a commitment to them that the Friends of Morwell National Park will conduct track maintenance along the Grand Strzelecki Track within Morwell National Park twice a year.

At this month's activity we had Matt, Tamara, Ken, Peter, Wendy, John, Beryl, Rose and Darren. We also had Japanese exchange student Yuto and Chinese exchange student Spring. The day started off wet with rain just before the activity had begun.

Group divided into three groups to complete track maintenance along three different tracks. Matt, Peter, Wendy and Rose drove around the Billy's Weir track and removed a few obstacles. The rest of the group drove to the Kerry Road car park and John and Beryl cleared the Stringybark track.

Ken, Tamara, Darren, Yuto and Spring went around the Foster's Gully track and surveyed the peg markers from the guided walk in the Park Notes. All pegs were found with two being out of the ground but all pegs were found to be rotting and loose in the ground. The visitor guide needs to be updated since some of the listed features are not in locations on the map and there is a need to add new markers for information about koalas and the logging history. Ken collected the list of revisions that need to be made. We will need to look into options for replacing the numbered pegs which are rotting away.

Around Foster's Gully and the Kerry Road picnic area, 7 koalas different were located and more heard off the track. A great day for koala spotting! The groups reformed in the picnic area for lunch and finished the day's work after lunch. The rain had not returned, so we all went home dry!



Fosters Gully, Morwell National Park



Mapping: Nature Tourism Services 08/06



September Activity
Sunday 18th September 10am

The group will meet in the Junction Road car park to complete track maintenance along the Lodge and Clematis tracks. You will need to bring your lunch along with clothing and footwear suitable for the weather conditions on the day.

Friends of Morwell National Park

Annual General Meeting Sunday 7th August 2016

Annual General Meeting declared open at 1.45pm

Attendance: - Beryl Nelson, Wendy Steenbergen, Ken Harris, John & Margaret Barker, Peter McDonald, Matt Campbell, Rose Mildenhall, Tamara Leitch.

Apologies: - Wendy McDonald, Darren Hodgson, Mike & Cathy Beamish, Shane Atkins (Ranger in Charge).

Previous AGM minutes held on 2nd August 2015 were read and accepted as a true account.

Moved by Ken Harris, **Seconded** by Margaret Barker.

The President's Report was read and accepted **Moved** by Wendy Steenbergen, **Seconded** by John Barker.

Ranger's Report - No Ranger's Report due to change over of Rangers and change to guidelines related to Sunday employment.

Treasurer's Report was read and accepted - **Moved** by John Barker, **Seconded** by Beryl Nelson.

The Treasurer reported that we have 19 financial members for 2015-16.

It was decided to re-invest the Term Deposit – as the Friends Group has no commitments to buy any new equipment.

Motion was **Moved** by John Barker that Incorporation fees (\$55.80) be paid for this financial year, and that membership fees will remain the same - \$10.00 per person, \$15.00 per family or group (**Seconded** by Matt Campbell) - passed unanimously.

Election of Office Bearers:-

President – Matt Campbell (**Moved** – Ken Harris, **Seconded** – John Barker).

Vice President – Ken Harris (**Moved** – Margaret Barker, **Seconded** - Beryl Nelson)

Secretary/Public Officer - Beryl Nelson (**Moved** – Wendy Steenbergen), **Seconded** - Ken Harris)

Treasurer - John Barker (**Moved** - Beryl Nelson, **Seconded** – Matt Campbell)

Newsletter - Darren Hodgson (**Moved** – John Barker, **Seconded** - Wendy Steenbergen)

Publicity – Peter McDonald (**Moved** – Tamara Leitch, **Seconded** – Rose Mildenhall).

Annual General Meeting declared closed at 2.20pm

Friends of Morwell National Park

President's Report for 2015 to 2016

The past year has been a big one for me personally. When I left my place of full time employment back in February of 2013, I did so as a 'spur of the moment' decision and suddenly found myself with a lot of spare time. I was able to say yes to many things, including taking on more for the Friends group. I also started 2 businesses, one of which has pretty much done nothing while the other has doubled year on year, meaning this free time has diminished somewhat. However, I kept saying 'yes' to requests and when asked at last August's AGM if I would take on the role of President, I decided that I was ready to give it a go. Since then I've said yes to that same request elsewhere as well as getting the ball rolling on a new house. So in 3 years I've gone from thumb twiddling to sometimes working 15 hours a day. I hope that despite this decrease in free time, I have managed to carry out the job to everyone's satisfaction.

The past year has also seen some major changes to the Friends group, most notably us no longer getting a Ranger along to our monthly activity. This had led to us having to look after ourselves and take even more responsibility of the maintenance of the Park, along with having to purchase our own equipment. It also led to Parks providing us with magnetic signs for our vehicles as in the past we've always had a Rangers vehicle with us, quite clearly showing Park users that we had authority to be driving inside the Park.

Further to this, our long term head Ranger, Craig Campbell, recently informed us that he was no longer the Ranger for MNP and that Shane Atkins would be taking over. I would like to thank Craig for all he has done for us in the past. I've found him to be someone that genuinely cares about MNP and I have no doubt that he will continue to take interest in how it is run and maintained. I hope we can do him proud. Rangers are people and just like the rest of us, they all have their different ideas and objectives and Shane has already discussed with me the things he'd like to do in his role. I will discuss these today with the group rather than spell them out here. I would also like to welcome Shane to his new role and look forward to working with him in the future, whatever my role should be within the group.

At last year's AGM, as per usual, we set out a calendar for 2016. Then on August 16th, we got on with our monthly activities for 2015. The most exciting part of the day for me was setting the motion sensing cameras up at the top of Potato Flat where Tamara and myself had found a large number of interesting looking diggings. Tamara had suggested that they could be bandicoots. Sadly, the cameras did not turn up any bandicoots but it may have been that we set the cameras too late. Should any such diggings show up again, we should endeavour to get the cameras set immediately. Unfortunately, the cameras did capture a feral cat, something that has been turning up on the cameras across the Park. Other work on the day included some track maintenance, primarily using a brush cutter to clear the wall of stinging nettles along Section A of Blue Gum Hill. This work revealed a large log which I will come back to later.

September's event was rather straight forward. A small number of us attended and we split into two groups. Peter, Grant and Darren used a brush cutter and hedge trimmer to tidy up Fosters Gully while Craig and I took a couple of chainsaws in to remove a section of a very large Mountain Grey Gum limb that had fallen across the track. This limb was bigger than most trees and took some time to get through. Excitingly for me, I found a skink on the limb. It was *Pseudemoia spenceri* and this was only the third it has been recorded on in the Park. Little did we realise at the time but due to savage funding cuts to Parks Victoria, this would be the last time that Craig officially joined us for our monthly activity.



October saw our annual orchid walk and koala count. The mornings walk was well attended by members of the friends group and many different orchids were found, despite the number of individual plants being a little lower than other years. Rainfall up until the end of August was pretty much spot on the long term average and then suddenly, come September, the rain stopped. Maybe this contributed to the lack of orchids flowering? After lunch we had a few members of the public show up for the koala count along with an ABC news reporter, Zoe Ferguson. We were able to show Zoe and a kiwi family their first ever wild koalas. The count for the day was 12 in total with the majority being found around Fosters Gully.

November saw yet another orchid and koala related activity. We were joined this month by members of various Landcare groups. Nicole Walsh had organised the Landcare side of things. It was also Nicole who had organised the SAT (Spot Assessment Technique) training for those of us who had attended the course the year before. After a brief welcome from yours truly, Ken spoke to the group about using a 500m grid rather than a 250m one. If the latter was to be used, it would be too much work for the FMNP to conduct surveys due to the number of grid points falling with the Park boundaries. Following this, Ken and myself left to conduct the annual Butterfly Orchid survey while everyone else had a 2.5 hour rundown on the SAT method of surveying before breaking for lunch and then putting the mornings training into practice during the afternoon.

For the record, the orchid survey showed an increase in both the number of plants and flowers which was a contrast to the previous months findings along Stringybark Track. Even more surprising was that Ken and I managed to find all 5 survey coups with relative ease!

December saw a small number of us conduct the nest box survey with several more members able to come along later for the annual BBQ. The day was a warm one with temperature reaching the low 40's. This made one mammal (ie, me) very happy but seemed to make the resident Sugar Gliders very restless. Often we have one or two gliders leave a nest box but on this day it happened time and time again, suggesting that our presence combined with the heat was affecting them. We even managed to observe one scale a tree to the very top before leaping off it and gliding 20m to another tree.

Perhaps the most surprising find was at box 50 where a 1.2m Tiger Snake was found near the box. For some reason the camera was handed to me to survey this box! Anyway, the snake departed after a few photos and the camera revealed a dead glider in the box. A closer look at the photos we took of the snake revealed a

glider sized lump suggesting that this snake at least had learned where to find an easy feed. A total of 43 Sugar Gliders and a lone Agile Antechinus were counted.



The BBQ was well attended and enjoyed by all, even if some (you can read that as me) ate way too many sausages! An impromptu meeting was held under the shelter as some black clouds that had built sent us a sudden downpour. Things discussed included the Ranger issue and the associated need to purchase equipment along with a new procedure that we must follow in order to obtain grants. The group agreed that this new procedure formulated by Parks made grants even more difficult to obtain than they already were and was very much a step in the wrong direction.

January was a busy month for a few of us. Ken and myself had driven to the end of the Grand Strzlecki Track to retrieve the motion sensing cameras and while we were there, we took the opportunity to see what we could find. A number of insects and plants were added to the Park list or had their distribution increased. We also took the opportunity to do a 'reccy' of Blue Gum A to see if one, we could get a vehicle in and two, find a suitable location to set up the mothing sheets. Whilst doing so, I managed to get the Navara stuck on the large log mentioned way back at the start of this report. A bit of maneuvering saw us free and we somehow managed to move the log off the track. This revealed a Rawlinson's skink, only the second record of this beautiful little lizard in MNP.



January's activity was well attended and saw the group head to the top of Reidy's Road where we cleared the area just inside the Park gate. From there, some returned to Billys Creek while the rest of us continued down Blue Gum hill in 2 directions. While we cleaned up a lot, we also made the decision to return at a later date to remove the big trees that had been across the track for some time now.

A little mix up with some calendar dates saw only a few of us show up for the February activity and it would have been one fewer had Tamara not mentioned to me that it was a week earlier than usual. Anyway I made it along with Tamara, Darren and Yuto. Ken also showed up for the car park meeting but decided he'd probably best skip the planned task, the Blue Gum Hill trees. We slugged up the steep Southern end of the track with chainsaw and jerry can in hand. By the time we reached the trees we were all that worn out we could have just turned around again. But we got on with the task at hand and soon had the track cleared. Darren and Yuto had to leave at midday so after some lunch, Tamara and I returned to Reidy's Road to remove the apple and boobialla trees found there in January.

The following week (our second February activity) John and Beryl joined me and we did another Grand Strzelecki drive, stopping here and there to remove small obstacles. We also set the cameras again. It felt almost spooky when I collected them to find someone had been watching us and turned off one of the cameras after we set it. Speaking of cameras, February also saw the Traralgon Secondary College set cameras up in the Park for the second year running. Sadly while I attended the day, this year they were collected by DELWP and I never got to see the results.

March was a 'day off' with us enjoying a BBQ at the Kerry Road facilities followed by some mothing and a spot light walk. John and Margaret had very kindly been carrying out nest box repairs in their own time and while in the Park noted that a lot of trees had come down across Billys Creek and Weir Tracks. They could only drive in so far meaning not all work could be completed. John had also purchased a ladder and some straps for the group following Parks directive and guidelines for us checking the nest boxes.

April saw us splitting up to do a few jobs. Some of us took the chainsaw around Stringybark to clear a few trees, others donned waders and tackled the tutsan issue while John and Darren headed off to complete the nest box work from last month. During the day, the process for us buying ourselves equipment was explained and we found out that whether we bought them outright or got Parks to help out by saving us the GST, they still remained the property of Parks Victoria!

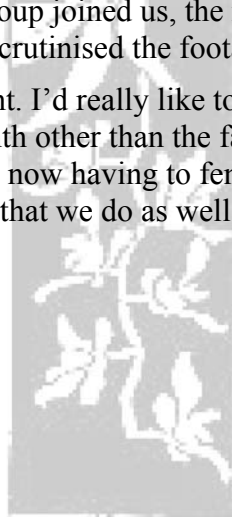
April the 26th also saw me invited to a meeting in the Park with the new CEO of Parks Victoria, along with about 20 staff, mostly desk jockeys from Melbourne. What I didn't realise at the time was that the meeting was all about myself and Richard Appleton from the GST committee giving talks on our respective roles and how they benefit the Park and the public. Then a few of the Parks staff gave some speeches. Never have I heard so much said with so little coming out of it.

May and while we drove into Kerry Road to do some track clearing, we found that our work was going to start earlier than usual, as well as a little bit outside of the Park boundary. A large limb had fallen across the road, blocking entry to the car park. After this was dealt with, we drove up West Boundary and then down both sides of Stringybark. After all that we then drove along Billys Creek where even more obstacles were found. A good and very productive day!

Grant and his brother Wayne met us in the Kerry Road car park at the start of the June activity to run us through his method of dealing with European wasp nests. It was decided at the meeting that the group would reimburse Grant for the chemicals he needs. He has done a fantastic job and while there's bigger battles to be fought on this front, his work is doing an enormous job to keep the numbers down. I was also able to show the group the new brush cutter and hedge trimmer. That put an end to a long and drawn out process. From there we headed around to Silvertop Hill and cleared what we could from the track, taking in a fair section of Muttonwood Creek as well.

Finally we come to July and our second nest box survey for the year. The day started slowly with myself and Tamara managing to locate and check 23 boxes before the scheduled 10am start. These 23 boxes produced only 3 Sugar Gliders. Once the rest of the group joined us, the remaining boxes turned up another 44 gliders. The total count (after the video referee had scrutinised the footage) was 47.

So that was our year and my first as President. I'd really like to thank everyone for their efforts this year. There's no reason for us to turn up each month other than the fact we love it and we truly care about the Park and its flora and fauna. I believe that with us now having to fend for ourselves (i.e. no Ranger), we can and will continue to carry out the essential work that we do as well as enjoying ourselves along the way. Thank you again for a fantastic year.



Friends of Morwell National Park

General Meeting held Sunday 7th August 2016

General Meeting declared open 2.30pm.

Attendance:- Beryl Nelson, Ken Harris, Wendy Steenbergen, John & Margaret Barker, Matt Campbell, Peter McDonald, Rose Mildenhall, Tamara Leitch.

Apologies: Wendy McDonald, Mike & Cathy Beamish, Shane Atkins (Ranger In Charge), Darren Hodgson.

Minutes of previous meeting held on 2nd August 2015 were read and accepted as true account.

Moved by Ken Harris, **Seconded** by Peter McDonald.

Business arising from Previous Meeting:-

- Green Walks – the Friends Group decided to withdraw from them, as more was expected from members and there were fewer walkers.
- The official email address of Friends Group has been lodged on Gmail as follows – contactfmnp@gmail.com
- Grant Pengelly is receiving financial help to eradicate European Wasp nests, within the Park boundaries.
- Signs to alert visitors that work is being carried out on tracks haven't yet been used as there have been plenty of Group members around or on tracks that aren't used a lot. Will be necessary to bring them out if the Group splits up during a monthly track maintenance activity.
- Braniffs Road notice board will be painted by John Barker, during one of our activities.

Inwards Correspondence:-

- Letter dated 22nd Sept 2015 from Andrew Marshall (Regional Director, Eastern Region, Parks Victoria) replying to the FMNP letter objecting to the ban on Rangers working on Sundays.
- Friends NET 93- November 2015
- Letter dated 29th October 2015 from Dept of Environment, Land Water and Planning, advising that the Completion Report for Braniff's Track Bridge has been accepted
- Email dated 6th November 2015 from Darren Hill (Parks Victoria) setting out guidelines for external grants.
- Flyer dated March 2016 from Latrobe City regarding a Morwell Community Groups Forum.
- Email from Ann-Marie (Parks Victoria Traralgon) dated 24th March 2016, setting out the procedure to purchase equipment through Parks.
- Email from Nicole Walsh dated 30th March 2016 asking Friends Groups whether any member was interested in participating in SAT survey, being held in Alberton West and Wron Wron State Park.
- Email dated 16th May 2016 from Jessica O'Reilly (Parks Victoria) regarding the payment of equipment purchased by Friends MNP through Parks Victoria. Invoice attached.

Outwards Correspondence:-

- 13th August 2015 Friends MNP wrote to CEO Dr Bill Johnson (Parks Victoria) expressing our objection to the ban on weekend work by Rangers.
- 18th August 2015 – Submitted Annual Statement and paid the annual fee to Consumer Affairs via Post Office.
- 18th August 2015 – Change of Rules Request submitted by FMNP and fee paid via Post Office.
- 29th April 2016 letter to Parks Victoria to make a donation/contribution for the purchase of equipment – to carry out track maintenance work.

- 22nd May 2016 Email to Tracey Podmore asking for FMNP to be removed from her database.

General Business:-

- Richard Appleton from Grand Strzelecki Track Committee emailed Matt Campbell enquiring whether the FMNP can help with the maintenance of the track, was discussed and decided that FMNP has only limited funds and resources – the group would keep the track up to the boundary maintained and monitored.
- Ken expressed an interest in becoming a member of the Committee but not as an office bearer.
- Friends group discussed tree planting – in response to an email sent to Allen Riseley (Mirboo North SC), the Friends Group isn't in a position at the moment to buy any trees, as the only place they can be planted is Blue Gum Hill (very steep).
- Billy's Creek sign needs fixing, at the Junction Road entrance.
- John Barker enquired about the need for another brush cutter – members decided that we would look at the situation next year.
- John Barker asked whether two cameras were sufficient for our purposes, members thought that we had enough cameras.

Calendar of Activities:-

Date:	Activity:	Venue and Time:
January 15th	GST Track Monitoring	Junction Road – 10.00am
February 19th	Weeding/Track Maintenance	Junction Road – 10.00am
March 19th	Weeding/Track Maintenance Barbecue Moth Survey/Spotlight Walk	Junction Road – 10.00am Kerry Road – 5.30pm Kerry Road -
April 16th	Weeding/Track Maintenance	Junction Road – 10.00am
May 21st	Weeding/Track Maintenance	Junction Road – 10.00am
June 18th	Track Maintenance	Junction Road – 10.00am
July 16th	Nesting Boxes Survey	Junction Road - 9.00am start
August 6th	AGM	TBA 1.30pm
August 20th	Track Maintenance	Junction Road - 10.00am
September 17th	GST/Track Maintenance	Junction Road – 10.00am
October 15th	Orchid Walk Koala Count	Kerry Road - 10.00am Kerry Road - 1.30pm
November 19th	Orchid Survey	Kerry Road 10.00am
December 17th	Nesting Boxes Survey Christmas Function	Junction Road – 9.00am start Kerry Road - 1.00pm

Please be advised that this activity calendar is only a guide, activities may change on the day.

Meeting declared closed at 3.50pm