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Friends of Morwell National Park Inc.

Newsletter – September 2020

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Hello everyone and welcome to this month's newsletter. We are in the middle of a very strange year.

Corona Virus (Covid 19) continues to be a worldwide problem and has especially been a problem in metropolitan Melbourne where a second wave of the virus has been infecting many more. At the beginning of the month daily case numbers were in the range of 400-700. Now daily new cases are down to around 100 a day but sadly around 10-20 people a day are dying. Melbourne Metro is in strict Stage 4 lockdown for a period of at least six weeks. We are a month into these restrictions. Only essential workers are allowed to go to work (permits are required) and reasons to leave your home are very restricted. Melbourne residents are restricted to 5 kilometers from their home and there is a nightly curfew. Country Victoria has had less cases and is in Stage 3 restrictions.

Worldwide over 24 million has contracted the Corona Virus and over 800,000 have died. In Australia, over 25,000 have contracted the corona virus and most of the new cases are still occurring in Victoria. The Corona virus deaths in Australia now approach 600 with 9 active cases in the Latrobe Valley. Many states have no active Corona virus cases.

Since restrictions have not changed on our area we were not able to run our planned activity. All non-essential national park activities are cancelled until further notice.

This round of restrictions finishes on 13th September so we await to see whether restrictions will continue as they are or be modified to allow wider freedoms. Whether (and when) we have our next activity will be based upon what is allowed in the next round of restrictions.

Direct seeding update

A year ago we tested direct seeding on part of the Blue Gum Hill. We worked with the Yinnar-Yinnar South Landcare group to direct seed some test plots on different parts of Blue Gum Hill. The Yinnar-Yinnar South Landcare group organized an expert to educate both groups upon the technique. The groups then together directed seeded multiple test plots. The Yinnar-Yinnar South Landcare group plan to continue using this technique on some of their sites further up Billy's Creek. If the technique is successful it is technique we could use to revegetate parts of the park.

Since we did not have our regular activity (because of social grouping restrictions) I went for a walk to investigate the direct seeding test plots. I wanted to see what the seed strike rate was and to see what growth may have occurred.

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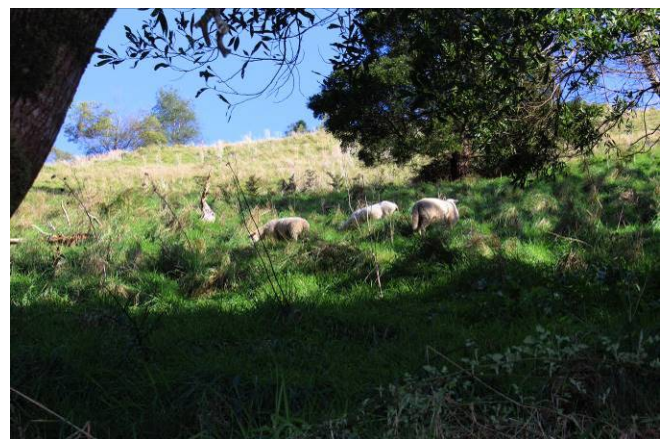
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We have had good rains this month (at least 150mm) so the tracks are wet. The tracks are slippery and muddy. It was good to get out of the house even if I had to wear a face mask. Billy's Creek is running well and the weir has a healthy amount water going over the top.



On the walk in it was good to see that parks staff have come in to remove a tree from across the main track. Sadly the animals I saw climbing Blue Gum Hill were three sheep. There were very comfortable grazing on the hill.



At the first test plot around the seat I could only find a few seedlings. Here I could only find one gum seedling and a few wattle seedlings. A few had leaves eaten off. At this plot some experimentation was done with furrows and other tilling techniques. I could not find any evidence of any of this tilling.



The next plot further up the hill was located off the access track constructed by contractors on a previous attempt at planting out Blue Gum Hill. Most of that attempt failed because of a dry summer.

In this plot I had more success in finding the till sites. About half had seedlings growing and none showed any evidence to being eaten by animals. Many of the till plots had multiple seedlings growing. Most of the seedlings that have germinated are gum species.



Just beyond this test plot there was a large tree down across the track. This was enough to stop the search and send me home before it got dark. This tree will be job for Parks staff with their large chain saws.



It was good to see that we had many seedlings growing one year after spreading the seed. It will be interesting to see what these test plots look like in the coming years.

September Activity (If we are allowed to have an activity)

Sunday 20th September 10.00pm

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