



VICTORIAN
NATIONAL PARKS
ASSOCIATION
Be part of nature

ANNUAL REPORT

2018 - 2019



PHOTO: VNPA

Our NatureWatch program's Caught on Camera in Wombat Forest released its five year report.



President's Report

Bruce McGregor

It is both a pleasure and an honour to present the 2018-19 Victorian National Parks Association's Annual Report.

The support and generosity of our community has powered our organization through its 67th year. We have again kept up the good fight, being the voice for Victoria's national parks, natural areas and the species that rely upon them – often against the odds. And the VNPA community were right there with us, making it all possible.

During the past year, VNPA has tackled a huge array of conservation issues and campaigns. As President, and on behalf of the VNPA Council, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Executive Director Matt Ruchel and our hardworking staff for their commitment and efforts in battling these conservation issues on behalf of all Members and supporters.

VNPA could not achieve any of this work without our dedicated Members, supporters and volunteers. On behalf of the Council, I thank you all for your support, encouragement, and generosity. I find your backing personally inspirational, and I know that Matt and our staff do, too. Thank you.

Implementing our vision of Victoria as a place with a diverse and healthy natural environment protected, respected and enjoyed by all has seen staff advocating for better protections for Victoria's natural environment and wildlife, standing up to

inappropriate private and commercial use of parks and reserves; challenging the logging industry across the state; calling for better control of pest plants and animals; influencing legislative reform and pushing for increased parks funding.

One aspect of VNPA's work that I have noticed to be particularly productive is the way in which Matt and the team work with other organisations and groups, from small groups focussed on specific local issues, to larger organisations that work across the country.

Like many VNPA Members I suspect, my passion for our natural world grew over time, thanks to a variety of experiences in nature. An important part of VNPA's work, therefore, is community engagement – encouraging the community to appreciate our natural environment and fostering a desire to protect it, through direct experience.

Our NatureWatch, ReefWatch and Wild Families programs have all expanded significantly this year, reaching increasingly broader audiences.

We also continue to provide an extensive bushwalking and activities program led by volunteers, which enables Members and others within the community to enjoy our parks and natural areas. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation, on behalf of the Council and the entire VNPA

Membership, to all those who make these activities possible. Thank you for your many, many hours of hard work.

I would also like to thank all our volunteer Council Members and members of our Committees for their tenacity and hard work to support and drive the direction of VNPA. I would particularly like to thank Euan Moore for his years of service as Council President to October 2018. We are very grateful for Euan's leadership, insight and passion for birds – and we are all very pleased that Euan remains on Council. I would also like to express our gratitude to retiring Councillors, particularly Mike Forster, who has done a sterling job over the last five years as Secretary, and Gary Allan, who as Treasurer for seven years, has provided insightful guidance.

Much of the work done by Council and Committees is in turn supported by many volunteers who contribute to citizen science projects, get Park Watch magazine in the post, keep the office running, contribute to policy development, and countless other efforts.

But of course, as an independent, not-for-profit organisation, none of this work is possible without the support of our many donors and Members. We are so very grateful for the trust that you place in the VNPA when you so generously invest your hard-earned funds.

Thank you.

The Year in Review

Executive Director Matt Ruchel



As Executive Director, and on behalf of staff, I am pleased to once again have the opportunity to thank the VNPA community

for your support over the past year. We have achieved so much together, and I am very glad to report on what your support has made possible.

Our Campaigns Team – Shannon Hurley, Phil Ingamells and I – along with the support of many within our community, have continued working hard to stop inappropriate use of national parks and conservation reserves, and better to protect Victoria's unique natural heritage. While we have worked across many issues, some of our 2018-19 highlights include:

Protecting Coasts and Parks from private interests

- Helping protect the Belfast Coastal Reserve's public beaches and their threatened hooded plover from commercial horse racing.
- Speaking against a Great Ocean Road land-grab to hand control for some of our most iconic national parks along the Great Ocean Road to a tourism-focused management authority.
- Campaigning against AGL's proposed Gas Import Terminal at Crib Point in Westernport Bay that threatens this special marine environment.
- Influencing strategic and legislative coastal management reform – we successfully advocated for strategic reform that resulted in the establishment of a new *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*. We are pleased to also be engaged in the process of developing the relevant marine and coastal policies that are a requirement of the Act.

Tackling the feral problem of environmental pests

- Populations of feral deer in Victoria are estimated at one million deer, doing extensive damage to our natural areas. We continue to push for a new, ramped-up strategy to reduce and manage them.
- Feral horses remain a problem, especially in the sensitive Alpine and Barmah national parks, and we urgently need to see government management plans completed and implemented.
- Championing the parks service. A tiny 0.5% of the state's budget is allocated to managing the parks estate, which covers 18% of Victoria. We are calling for 1% of the state budget through the 'Demand 1% for Parks' campaign, to properly manage the many threats.

Bushwalking and Activities Group

The Bushwalking and Activities Group had a diverse program again this year, providing a wide variety of opportunities to experience our natural environment.

We held over 150 activities and social events involving over 1,000 participants. We offered day walks, walk talk & gawks, base camps, easy going ambles, bus excursions, overnight pack carry hikes, under 35s walks and dinners, family walks, Meetup walks, bike rides, social nights and conservation events. The number of activities and level of participation has remained stable from the previous 2017–18 year. Many thanks to Ellen Findlay as Program Coordinator for collating the Program every quarter.

Our monthly social nights continue to offer a variety of speakers including travelers' tales and conservation issues. The evenings have had a decrease in participation and consequently there will be some changes in 2020.

BWAGers participated in a broad range of conservation activities: Project Hindmarsh, Grow West Community planting day and Boneseed weeding at Arthurs Seat.

Congratulations to Larysa Kucan and her team of Leaders for yet again organising interesting excursions by bus.

The entire BWAG program relies on dedicated volunteers and their contribution as walk leaders, emergency contacts, leader mentors, excursion organisers, event coordinators and committee members is heartily appreciated.

The updated Leaders Activity Guide will come into effect from October 2019. In conjunction with this, an informative Risk Management Workshop was held in November 2018. Particular thanks to Heath Rickard for his work in revising the Leaders Guide and organising the workshop.

The BWAG Committee will this year see the retirement of two significant long-term contributors Rob Argent and Lisa Sulinski. Rob Argent, after 15 years on the BWAG Committee and cycling through all the available Committee roles, most recently as Treasurer, is hoping to have more time to participate in BWAG activities. Rob's breadth of experience and 'committee memory' will be hard to replace. Lisa Sulinski re-joined the BWAG Committee in 2016 and she been an efficient Secretary and valuable Committee member. The experience and commitment of Rob and Lisa has been a superb contribution to the BWAG Committee. We are optimistic that their

places will be taken by fresh new faces following the 2019 AGM – please consider joining the BWAG Committee.

The quarterly BWAG Program can be downloaded from the VNPA website at www.vnpa.org.au/adventures

Gayle Davey, BWAG

Excursions Group

The Excursions Group, led by volunteer leaders, conducted nine day trips by coach this year. All the trips were well attended-a total of 310 participants.

Some of the places visited were Wilson Prom, Anakie Gorge, Phillip Island, Inverloch and Mt Worth. On these trips our members enjoyed walks in national and state parks and along rail trails. Other activities included visiting farmers' markets and historic homes.

VNPA has been using the services of McKenzie's coaches since the early 1960s. Their expert bus drivers contribute to the success of the excursions.

Many thanks to the trip leaders and all the members who participated in our excursions this year.

Larysa Kucan, Convenor

Protecting Nature

- **Encouraging the creation of new national parks and conservation reserves in the central west.** Over 58,000 hectares of forest and woodlands in the central west of the state could be better protected in new national parks if the Andrews Government agrees to Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) recommendations released in June 2019.
- **Challenging outdated logging agreements.** State and federal governments are attempting to renew Regional Forest Agreements and lock in a further 20 years of logging in our native forests – exempt from national environmental protection laws.

While we advocate on your behalf, we also work hard to engage the community in nature through events and citizen science activities – and our citizen science and community engagement team continue to do outstanding work.

Our NatureWatch Coordinator, Dr Sera Blair, with the support of dedicated volunteers has introduced 'stagwatching' to the program; a series of successful 'Caught on Camera' wildlife monitoring seasons has resulted in a lot of important data for the Bunyip State Park and Wombat State Forest; and 'Communities Listening for Nature' continues to evolve.

Under the stewardship of Kade Mills and Dr Nicole Mertens, our ReefWatch citizen science program is surging with the help of many dedicated volunteers and participants. The Great Victorian Fish Count continues to grow and we are developing new projects, such as surveying sea slugs.

Our Wild Families Program, run by Caitlin Griffith, supports families to get out and have adventures in nature, where both children and adults are learning and experiencing together.

Our quarterly *Park Watch* magazine remains a valuable source of information, keeping Members and others up-to-date on important developments in nature issues across Victoria. Thank you to editor and communications coordinator Meg Sobey and all the generous contributors of insightful articles and beautiful images.

All this could not happen with the hard work of our philanthropy team Emily Clough and Amelia Easdale, and administration staff Heath Richard, Charlotte Kandelaars and Annie Chessells.

But most of all, I thank all within the VNPA community for sharing in our vision of Victoria as a place with a diverse and healthy natural environment protected, respected and enjoyed by all. Thank you!

COUNCIL

President: Bruce McGregor
(Convenor Executive; Conservation & Campaigns; Executive; Finance; Governance, Policy & Legal)

Vice President: Gerard McPhee
(Co-convenor Conservation & Campaigns; Executive; Governance, Policy & Legal)

Secretary: Michael Forster
(Executive; Finance; Conservation & Campaigns; Governance, Policy & Legal)

Treasurer: Gary Allan (Convenor Finance; Executive; Governance, Policy & Legal)
Lara Bickford (Convenor Marketing & Community Engagement; Executive)

Ann Birrell
(Convenor Governance, Policy & Legal; Executive)
Jan Hendrik Brueggemeier

Michael Feller
(Co-convenor Conservation & Campaigns)
Deborah Henry (Bushwalking & Activities Group; Executive; Governance, Policy & Legal)

Dianne Marshall (Conservation & Campaigns)
Euan Moore (Conservation & Campaigns)

Paul Strickland
(Marketing & Community Engagement)

Note: Committee memberships in brackets

VOLUNTEERS

Bushwalking & Activity Group: Terese Dalman (Convenor), Gayle Davey, Rob Argent, Deborah Henry, Lisa Sulinski, Ellen Finlay.

Bushwalking & Activity Leaders: We are grateful for the hard work of all our volunteer leaders.

Council committees: The following volunteers (other than VNPA Councillors and staff) make a valuable contribution via committees: Russell Costello, Evelyn Feller, Maelor Himbury, John Kotsiaris, Bernie Mace, Darren McClelland, Steve Platt, John Renowden, Libby Smith, Charles Street.

Excursions: Larysa Kucan (Convenor), Jan Lacey.

Grow West: John Stirling and Terese Dalman plus VNPA planters.

Mapping and GIS: Tony Hampton.

Native Vegetation & Grasslands: Andrew Booth.

NatureWatch: (Project Team Leaders) Dan Beacom, David Blair, Christine Connelly, Colin Cook, Jasper Hails, Paul Strickland, Roger MacRaild, Lachlan McBurney, Euan Moore, Jackson O'Neill, Gayle Osborne, Jenny Rolland, Garry van Dijk, Ian Vaskess, Ann Williamson. Thanks also to the dedicated NatureWatch field volunteers who have assisted us with important data collection this year.

Office Assistants: Reg Elder, Colette Findlay, Joan McDonald, Mia Papp, Wilson Swan, Graham Trigg, Fredrick Tropp-Asher, Colin Wong

Park Watch Mailout Team: Mem Alexander, Rowena Church, Colin Clark, David Ellison, Jan Gay, Brian Groom, Jo Groom, Margaret Hattersley, Leonie Hudson, Ann Jacobs, Keith Lloyd, Margot Marasco, Raimonne McCutchan, Joan McDonald, Ian McDonald, Sheina Nicholls, Joan M Phillips, Mary-Lou Phillips, Barbara Prouse, Lorraine Ratcliffe, Phil Ratcliffe, Graham Trigg, Pat Witt.

Project Hindmarsh: Terese Dalman plus VNPA planters.

Publications & Photography: Jenny Barnett, Mark Darragh, Hayley Davis, Bette Devine, Geoff Durham, Evelyn Feller, Andrew Haysom, Michael Howes, Euan Moore, Jenny Norvick, Paul Sinclair, Bernard Slattery, David Tatnall, Catherine Tenni, Peter Vaughan and many other authors and photographers.

ReefWatch

Great Victorian Fish Count: Thank you for the enormous amount of support from the dive/snorkel community for organising over 66 surveys and the 750+ community members that participated in the fish count.

OysterWatch: Many thanks to AJ Morton, Jacqui Younger, Sharky, Kim Wright, Peter Dedrick, Ray Lewis, Bert Parker, Nick Olliff, Sandy Webb, Paul Sorenson, Madi Anderson, Andrew Christie, and all of the enthusiastic community and dive club members from Dive2U, Marine Care Ricketts Point, Marine Care Point Cooke, Jawbone Marine Sanctuary Care Group, Academy of Scuba and Diveline for their contributions to field work and data collection through the year.

ReefWatch volunteers: Annabel Owens and Ashraf Alnersh.

Sea Slug Census: We are grateful to the 100+ community members who have contributed to each of the Sea Slug Censuses held over the last 12 months.

Research and Campaign Assistants: Louise Crisp, Evelyn Feller, Michael Feller, John Kotsiaris, Geoff Lacey, Dianne Marshall, Catherine Tenni and many others in the scientific and conservation community.

Student Interns: Nick Craig, Simone Currie, Jeremy McNally, Gemma Moss, Charlie Daly, Rachel Scott.

Wild Families and other education activities: Evelyn Feller, Euan Moore, Jenny Rolland, Martin O'Brien.

EMPLOYEES

Executive Director: Matt Ruchel

Parks Protection Project Officer: Phil Ingamells

Nature Conservation Campaigner: Shannon Hurley

Fundraising Manager: Emily Clough

Supporter Development: Amelia Easdale

Publications and Online Coordinator: Meg Sobey

Finance and Operations Manager: Heath Rickard

Administration Officer: Charlotte Kandelaars

Administrative Assistant: Annie Chessells
(from April 2019)

Manager, Community Engagement and Learning: Caitlin Griffith

NatureWatch Coordinator: Sera Blair
(from July 2018)

ReefWatch Coordinator: Kade Mills

ReefWatch Project Officer: Nicole Mertens
(from August 2018)

Projects Officer: Sarah Day
(until December 2018)

Consultant: Mary Ferlin (design) and Red Letter Fundraising.

Financial Report

Abridged Audited Special Purpose Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2019.

Statement by Members of the Council

The members of the Council have determined that the Association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements and the provisions of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012.

In accordance with a resolution of the Council of the VNPA, the members of the Council declare that:

1. The financial statements and notes comply with Australian Accounting Standards and give a true and fair view of the financial position of the VNPA as at 30 June 2019 and its performance for the year ended on that date;
2. At the date of this statement there are reasonable grounds to believe that the VNPA will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due;
3. This declaration is signed in accordance with subs 60.15 (2) of the ACNC Regulation 2013.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Council and is signed for and on behalf of the Council by:

Gary Allan (Treasurer) & Dr Bruce McGregor (President) dated this 5th day of September 2019.

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019		
REVENUE	2019	2018
Operating Activities	\$	\$
Appeals and Donations	983,887	916,357
Bequests	4,000	195,673
Grants & Sponsorship	254,003	206,068
Membership Fees	96,169	92,441
Interest income & Sundry Sales ⁽¹⁾	56,328	51,108
Total Income	1,394,387	1,461,647
EXPENDITURE		
Employment Expenses	915,952	848,587
Campaigns, Projects, Activities & Education	114,793	111,164
Office & Administration	147,088	165,001
Printing/Publications/Web	89,560	73,028
Accommodation & Insurance	103,334	97,299
Total Expenses	1,370,727	1,295,079
CURRENT YEAR OPERATING SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	23,659	166,567
Comprised as		
Individual bequests received in excess of \$25,000 ⁽²⁾	0	159,575
GENERAL OPERATING SURPLUS (DEFICIT) FOR YEAR	23,659	6,992

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2019		
ASSETS	2019	2018
Current	\$	\$
Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,553,004	1,466,626
Receivables and Inventory	17,078	31,370
Total Current Assets	1,570,082	1,497,996
Non-Current		
Fixed Assets (WDV)	47,304	62,220
TOTAL ASSETS	1,617,386	1,560,216
LIABILITIES		
Current and Non-Current	785,395	751,887
TOTAL LIABILITIES	785,395	751,887
NET ASSETS	831,990	808,329
Funded by:		
Total Association Funds	831,990	808,329

The full Independent Auditor's Report will be tabled at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting as part of the Audited Financial Statements and the full text of the Report will be available at www.vnpa.org.au.

Independent Audit Report: As in previous years, the Auditor's have issued a qualified Audit Opinion on the annual financial statements on the basis that it is not feasible for organisations such as VNPA to implement accounting controls over all cash collections from donations prior to their initial processing in the accounting records.

(1) This statement includes a net contribution of \$4,077 from the Bushwalking and Activities Group (2018: \$5,348)

(2) It is Council Policy to transfer all individual bequests in excess of \$25,000 to reserves. The Reserve Policy is designed to assist with future variability in income and act as a means to strengthen the long term future of VNPA. Please contact the office for more information.

Donors, partners & supporters

VNPA's work to protect Victoria's natural places is only possible thanks to the support of dedicated and generous donors and partners. Our key supporters are listed below.

DONORS:

The Arnold Foundation
Bank Australia
The Caroline Durré sub-fund, Australian Communities Foundation
Coastcare Victoria
The Dara Foundation
Equity Trustees Limited
Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife
Gras Foundation Trust
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
Loftus-Hills Fund, a charitable fund of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
Melliodora Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation
The Nature Conservancy
Malcolm Shore
Tree Pot
Victorian Government
Anonymous (at donors' request)

Birdlife Australia
Blue Devil Consulting
Coastcare Victoria
Connecting Country
Daktari Surf/Dive
Deakin University
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Dive2U
Dive and Dive
Dive La Trobe
Diveline
Earthcare St Kilda
Eco Insights
Environment East Gippsland
Environmental Justice Australia
Environment Victoria
Far West Friends of the Hooded Plover
Flora Fauna Research Collective
Friends of Barwon Bluff
Friends of Beware Reef
Friends of Bunyip State Park
Friends of Brisbane Ranges National Park
Friends of Eagle Rock Marine Sanctuary
Friends of Harmers Haven
Friends of Kurth Kiln
Friends of Mount Worth State Park
Friends of Mushroom Reef Marine Sanctuary
Friends of Point Addis
Friends of the Earth

Friends of the Prom
Geelong Environment Council
Gippsland Environment Group
Grassy Plains Network
Greening Australia
Grow West
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club
Hindmarsh Landcare Network
Jawbone Sanctuary Marine Care Group
La Trobe University
Living Links
Marine Care Point Cooke
Marine Care Ricketts Point
Melbourne University Underwater Club
Moorabool Landcare Network
Mornington Peninsula Scuba Dive Club
Mount Worth & District Landcare Group
Museums Victoria
National Parks Australia Council
Ocean Divers
Parkdale Snorkelling Group
Parks Victoria
Phillip Island Nature Park
Polperro Dolphin Swims
Port Phillip EcoCentre
Portland Field Naturalists' Club
Red Boats
Save Our Strathbogie Forest Campaign
Salesian College
Save Westernport

Scuba Culture
Scuba Scouts
SEAL Diving Services
Sea All Dolphin Swims
Simple Dive
Somers Snorkelling Group
South East Dive
Southern Cross University
South Gippsland Conservation Society/
Bunurong Coast Education
The Royal Society of Victoria
The University of Melbourne
The University of Technology Sydney
Victorian Environment Friends Network
Victorian Sub Aqua Group
The Warrnambool Boardriders Club
Warrnambool Coastcare Landcare Network
Wellsford Forest Conservation Alliance
Westernport and Peninsula Protection Council
The Wilderness Society (Victoria)
Wombat Forestcare

VicNature2050: VNPA co-hosted VicNature2050 with The Royal Society of Victoria, Arthur Rylah Institute, La Trobe University, Greening Australia, Bio 21 Institute, The University of Melbourne and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.