



VICTORIAN
NATIONAL PARKS
ASSOCIATION
Be part of nature

ANNUAL REPORT

2016 - 2017



IMAGE: BETTE DEVINE

*Hundreds of nature-lovers created
a love letter to parks in May.*

President's Report

Euan Moore



On behalf of the entire VNPA council I would like to thank you, our members and supporters. Without your support – whether it be financial,

volunteering, indicating to politicians that you agree with our position or a range of other ways – we could not and would not achieve as much as we have over the past year.

This has been another very busy year with threats to our natural environment coming from many directions. The Forest Industry Taskforce which occupied an inordinate amount of our director's time eventually fell over without achieving a resolution. The industry is still pushing for unsustainable amounts of timber, from the Central Highlands, Gippsland and more recently from the western forests. While all this has been going on we have also seen proposals for inappropriate developments in national parks and coastal areas such as Point Henry and the Belfast Coast.

This year we campaigned on invasive species which threaten our parks and the wider environment including private land. Deer are a major pest across much of the state but continue to be somewhat protected as a game animal. In the high country and along the Murray feral horses are causing damage to fragile ecosystems while poisonous salamanders have invaded some Melbourne waterways. The threat from invasive species is, like the development threat, relentless and ongoing.

The role of nature in community wellbeing and child hood development continues to be increasingly recognised. VNPA has known this for a long time

and it is embedded in our Strategic Plan, our organisational vision and increasingly in our projects. The fact that Victorian Government Biodiversity 2037 plan has an almost identical in sentiment to our own vision and objectives is in many ways a seismic shift in government approach.

An exciting development has been the piloting of our new Wild Families program. The aim is to get parents with families of predominately primary school aged children out and exploring the bush in a fun way. Encouraging kids to become familiar with and have fun in the bush and to learn about native plants and animals is essential training for our next generation of conservationists.

Under the sea, we're thrilled to have our ReefWatch program back in action. The 2016 Great Victorian Fish Count saw more than 400 divers take part, and many sightings of the blue groper. We are involved with the ongoing project to restore the oyster beds in Port Phillip Bay, which will result in major improvements to habitat and water quality. ReefWatch also took part in a world first salvage and restoration of the sponge gardens on Blairgowrie Pier when the old pier was replaced with a new structure.

Back on land, our NatureWatch program continues to grow and mature, with the original Grass-tree Monitoring project passing the 10 year milestone. Through our Caught on Camera project, we're seeing a diversity of bird and mammal species in the Wombat State Forest and Bunyip State Park. Other projects, such as our newer Listening for Nature project are also starting to collect valuable data on the health of some of our most endangered species.

We have been working closely with communities groups and the City of Bendigo, through our Bushland Ambassadors project. The project has been so popular the booklet for residents outlining how to be a good neighbour to bushland has been reprinted.

As a community based organisation in our 65th year, there is always more to do, but we hope our efforts to engage the community will both inform our policy and practice and influence and inspire others to actively care for nature. People need nature, but nature also needs people.

This year also saw the redevelopment of the VNPA website. This was a critical project as our old website was running on obsolete software and lacked adequate technical support. Our new website is a vast improvement both in look and features. It is a testament to the amount of work put in by staff and volunteers as well as the developers to get it up and running. It will continue to improve as more content is added.

I would like to thank the staff for their hard work throughout the year and especially to Matt Ruchel (executive director) and Caitlin Griffith (former NatureWatch coordinator/ now manager community engagement and learning) who both celebrate a decade at VNPA. We welcome Meg Sobey, who has taken on the role of publications and online coordinator, which includes editing Park Watch. Many thanks to Sarah Day who did a sterling job coordinating the forest conservation groups and organising the Great Forest Picnic.

It is also important to acknowledge the hard work of councillors and the council committees which provide an opportunity for volunteers to work with staff on the seemingly never ending stream of projects, submissions, issues and concerns that we deal with on a day to day basis. It has been a pleasure working with you all.



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PHOTO: SARAH DAY



Our Wild Families program officially launched this year.

The Year in Review

Executive Director Matt Ruchel



I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in our community for supporting the Victorian National Park Association in the past 12

months. Together this past financial year we've continued to give Victoria's natural environment a strong community voice. Some of this year's achievements include:

- Following years of work with local groups, we were delighted to see the long-awaited **addition of the Anglesea Heathland into the Great Otway National Park**. We've also presented detailed submissions calling for the protection of important wetlands at (near Geelong) and establishment of a new *Marine and Coastal Act* for Victoria.
- We've continued to push for **more funding for national parks**, including the delivery of a petition to the Andrews Government. We've helped get an increase in parks funding, but as you would know, more is needed. We're also continuing to highlight the many threats parks face from pest plants and animals, and fire.
- We were **invited to work with the state government on Victoria's new statewide biodiversity plan, *Protecting Victoria's Environment - Biodiversity 2037***, the first in 20 years. We're also working to improve the native vegetation clearing rules, which are critical for protecting remaining habitat on private land.
- We've continued to **oppose inappropriate commercial developments** in our national parks; and we've presented detailed submissions and public commentary on the new master plan for Pt Nepean National Park, the poorly conceived Hotham to Falls Track, the proposed commercial jet boat tours at Wilsons Promontory, and the bid for massive development at Mt Buffalo National Park.
- The **fight for our forests continues across both the east and the west** of state. We continue to work with others to push for a Great Forest National Park in the east, and in May gathered more than 400 people to create a huge 'We ♥ Parks' human sign on top of Mount Donna Buang to make the message clear. We've also presented the impacts of proposed logging in our *Western Forests and Woodlands at Risk* report. With colleagues, we've successfully pushed for the commencement of a new independent Victorian Environmental Assessment Investigation on the Wombat, Mt Cole, Pyrenees and Wellsford state forests in central western Victoria – we believe these state forests are worthy of being protected under the *National Parks Act*.
- Along the coast we're continuing to work with local groups to **campaign the environment and racing ministers**

Bushwalking and Activities Group

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

We held over 200 activities and social events involving an estimated 2,000 participants. Our program included day walks, walk talk & gawks, base camps, easy going ambles, bus excursions, overnight pack carry hikes, under 35s walks, family walks, meetup walks, bike rides, bring a friend for free walks, social nights, dinners and conservation events.

Our monthly Social Nights, as usual, were very popular with engaging and informative speakers.

Congratulations to Larysa Kucan for yet again organising interesting excursions by bus.

BWAGers participated in a broad range of conservation activities: Project Hindmarsh, Grow West Community planting day, Malleefowl Survey, Forests Forever Camp, Boneseeding and Rabbit Warren and Weed Survey at Hattah.

This is all thanks to our dedicated volunteers. We are proud to acknowledge their contribution as walk leaders, emergency contacts, leader mentors, meetup coordinators, excursion organisers, event coordinators and committee members.

The BWAG Program's new format, introduced last year, continues in popularity and can also be downloaded from the VNPA website.

The Committee welcomed two new members, Lisa Sulinski as Secretary and Ellen Finlay who will take over the activities program. All the Committee perform invaluable functions: Rob Argent as Treasurer, Gayle Davey as program manager, Deb Henry as VNPA Council liaison and Social events and David Moore as U35 liaison and publicity.

Finally, a personal thank you to the BWAG Committee. Their amazing efforts make all this happen.

Terese Dalman (Convenor)



NatureWatch citizen-science in action.

to change the unacceptable use of beaches at Belfast Coastal Reserve (near Warrnambool) by commercial horse trainers, and the associated impacts on tiny beach-nesting hooded plovers. Horses and hooded plovers don't mix, and we've found this is likely an unlawful use of this important area.

- Our regular publication *Park Watch*, our website, email updates and alerts and social media have kept our community up-to-date with conservation issues in our state. We have also engaged regularly in the media to reach wider audiences on matters of importance.

These are just some of the many successes we achieved last financial year. We are very grateful for the commitment and contributions made by our financial donors, supporters, members, volunteers, partners, council, committees and staff. We rely on, and very much appreciate, all your on-going work and support in striving to protect Victoria's natural areas. We look forward to another successful year in 2017-2018.

Excursions Group

The Excursions Group, led by volunteer leaders, conducted 11 coach trips in 2016-2017. All the trips were well attended with a total of 400 members and visitors.

We visited the You Yangs, Skipton, the Otway Fly, Cranbourne Botanic Gardens, Mirboo North and Tarra Bulga National Park. 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 McKenzies coaches since the early 1960s. Their expert bus drivers contribute greatly to the success of the excursions.

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

Larysa Kucan (Convenor)

COUNCIL

President: Euan Moore (Convenor Executive; Finance; Conservation & Campaigns; Marketing & Community Engagement; Governance, Policy & Legal; Website Working Group)
Vice President: Bruce McGregor (Convenor Conservation & Campaigns; Executive; Finance)
Secretary: Mike Forster (Executive; Finance; 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 Brueggemeier (from May 2017)
 Russell Costello (Conservation & Campaigns, Website Working Group)
 Michael Feller (Convenor Policy Working Group, Conservation & Campaigns)
 Deborah Henry (Bushwalking & Activities Group, Executive, Website Working Group)
 Dianne Marshall (Marketing & Community Engagement)
 Gerard McPhee (Conservation & Campaigns; Finance; Governance, Policy & Legal)
 James Thyer

Note: Committee memberships in brackets

VOLUNTEERS

Administration Assistants: Reg Elder, Colette Findlay, Margaret Hattersley, Joan McDonald, Raimonne McCutchan, Graham Trigg and Fredrick Tropp-Asher.

Bushwalking & Activity Group: Terese Dalman (convenor), Rob Argent, Gayle Davey, Deb Henry, David Moore, 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) have been members of VNPA committees and working groups: Terese Dalman, Evelyn Feller, Tracy-Ann Hooley, Maelor Himbury, Greg Jones, John Kotsiaris, Joan Lindros, Bernie Mace, Kyle Matheson, Darren McClelland, Steve Platt, John Renowden, Libby Smith, Charles Street.

Events: thank you to all the volunteers who helped at the Great Forest Picnic, Wild Families Launch, Living next to nature launch and other events.

Excursions: Larysa Kucan (convenor), Jan Lacey.

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

Forest Forever Easter Ecology Camp: VNPA volunteers supporting Environment East Gippsland (convenors Jill Redwood & Lizzi Jodell) included Euan Moore, Jenny Rolland, Terese Dalman, Tracey-Ann Hooley, Clive Eddington, Doug Palmer, Andrew McCutcheon, Ann Birrell, Garry van Dijk, Wilma van Dijk, Mike Forster, Susan Forster and other volunteers.

Mapping and GIS: Tony Hampton.

Native Vegetation & Grasslands: Andrew Booth, Adrian Marshall, Rowan Ewing, Oliver Field.

NatureWatch: (*Office volunteers*) Genie Fleming, David Forbes, Fiona Kealy, Catherine McNicol Madeleine Tierney, (*Team leaders*) Chris Bonnici, Merrin Butler, Colin Cook, David De Angelis, Jasper Hails, Michael Longmore, Julia Pickwick, Paul Strickland, Garry van Dijk, Wilma van Dijk, Ian Vaskess, Lynda Wilson, (*Equipment management*) Eddie Schambre.

Publications & Photography: Emma Barnett, Jenny Barnett, Melanie Dalman, Mark Darragh, Bette Devine, Geoff Durham, Evelyn Feller, Michael Howes, Euan Moore, Jenny Norvick, Paul Sinclair, Bernard Slattery, David Tatnall, Peter Vaughan, Marcel van Regteren Altena, Mark Webber (Hexacam), and many other photographers and authors.

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

Research Assistants: Evelyn Feller, Shannon Hurley, John Kotsiaris, Geoff Lacey, Dianne Marshall, Isidora Veljovic, and many in the scientific and conservation community.

EMPLOYEES

Executive Director: Matt Ruchel

**Park Watch Editor (to April 2017),
Marine and Coastal Coordinator:**
Chris Smyth

Parks Protection Project Officer:
Phil Ingamells

Fundraising Manager: Emily Clough

Supporter Development: Amelia Easdale

Finance & Operations Manager:
Heath Rickard

Administration Officer:
Charlotte Kandelaars

Administration Assistants:
Irina De Loche, Tilly Reynolds

**Manager, Community Engagement
and Learning:** Caitlin Griffith

NatureWatch Coordinator: Christine Connelly

ReefWatch Coordinator: Kade Mills

**Park Watch Editor/Publications Officer
(to Feb 2017):** Michael Howes

**Publications and Online Coordinator
(from April 2017):** Meg Sobey

**Forest Conservation Groups Coordinator,
Conservation Projects Coordinator
(to April 2017):** Sarah Day

Consultants: Mary Ferlin (*Park Watch* design),
John Sampson (design and communications),
James Vincent (events).

Financial Report

Abridged Audited Special Purpose Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2017.

Statement by Members of the Council

The members of the Council have determined that the Association is not a reporting entity and in our opinion the abridged special purpose financial report set out below presents a true and fair view of the financial position of VNPA as at 30 June 2017 and its performance for the year ended on that date.

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 for payment.

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) & Euan Moore (Vice-President) dated this 7th day of September 2017.

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2017		
REVENUE	2017	2016
Operating Activities	\$	\$
Appeals, Donations & Bequests	901,062	847,239
Grants & Sponsorship	207,017	146,132
Membership Fees	98,223	106,806
Interest income & Sundry Sales	49,799	78,357
Total Income	1,256,101	1,178,534
EXPENDITURE		
Employment Expenses	864,327	737,767
Campaigns, Projects, Activities & Education	125,868	112,693
Office & Administration	157,043	150,624
Printing/Publications/Web	68,513	65,010
Accommodation & Insurance	102,556	91,592
Total Expenses	1,318,307	1,157,686
OPERATING (DEFICIT) SURPLUS BEFORE TRANSFERS (TO) FROM RESERVE FUNDS	(62,206)	20,848
Transfers from (to) Reserve Funds	27,800	(25,000)
OPERATING (DEFICIT) SURPLUS AFTER TRANSFERS FROM (TO) RESERVE FUNDS	(34,406)	(4,152)

VNPA - ACTIVITIES ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2017		
The operating accounts for the Bushwalking Group have not been consolidated into the general accounts above and are reported separately as follows:	2017	2016
	\$	\$
Opening Bank Account Balance	4,217	5,465
Income	6,100	9,010
Expenditure	(123)	(2,258)
Funds Contributed to VNPA	(4,000)	(8,000)
CLOSING BANK ACCOUNT BALANCE	6,194	4,217

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2017		
ASSETS	2017	2016
Current	\$	\$
Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,107,925	1,122,984
Receivables and Inventory	16,275	7,188
Total Current Assets	1,124,200	1,130,172
Non-Current		
Fixed Assets at Written Down Value	67,894	36,479
TOTAL ASSETS	1,192,094	1,166,651
LIABILITIES		
Current and Non-Current	556,522	468,873
TOTAL LIABILITIES	556,522	468,873
NET ASSETS	635,572	697,778
Funded by:		
TOTAL ASSOCIATION FUNDS	635,572	697,778

NOTE: 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.

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.

Supporters, donors & partners

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:

Anonymous
The Arnold Foundation
Bank Australia
Coastcare Victoria
Corangamite Catchment Management Authority
The Dara Foundation
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Equity Trustees Limited
Gras Foundation Trust
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife
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

PROJECT PARTNERS:

Albert Park Yacht Club
Belfast Coastal Reserve Action Group
Bendigo and District Environment Council
Bendigo Family Nature Group
Bendigo Field Naturalists Club
Bendigo Sustainability Group
Birdlife Australia

Coastcare Victoria
City of Boroondara
City of Greater Bendigo
Deakin University
Dive 2U
Earthcare St Kilda
Ecology Australia
Environmental Justice Australia
Environment Victoria
Far West Friends of the Hooded Plover
Flora Fauna Research Collective
Friends of Bunyip State Park
Friends of Brisbane Ranges National Park
Friends of Mount Worth State Park
Friends of the Prom
Geelong Environment Council
Geelong Field Naturalists Club
Greening Australia
Grow West
Hindmarsh Landcare Network
Hobsons Bay City Council
Jawbone Marine Sanctuary Care Group
Killarney Coastcare
La Trobe University
Macedon Ranges Shire Council
Mandurang Strathfieldsay Landcare Network
Marine Care Point Cooke
Marine Care Rickett's Point
Merri Creek Management Committee

Mid Loddon Conservation Management Network
Mount Worth & District Landcare Group
Museums Victoria
Northern Bendigo Landcare Group
Parks Victoria
Practical Ecology
Queenscliff Environment Forum
Queenscliff Community Association
Sheepwash Creek Landcare Group
The Royal Society of Victoria
The University of Melbourne
The Wilderness Society (Victoria)
Under the Radar Abbotsford Group
Woodend Landcare
Wombat Forestcare
Yarra City Council

Great Forest Picnic: Warburton Environment, Warburton Habitat Tree, Friends of Leadbeater's Possum, Knitting Nannas of Toolangi and Save Mt St Leonard Community Campaign, The Wilderness Society Victoria, Environment East Gippsland and Goongerah Environment Centre, Nicole Paris (MC) Holy Cow Chai Tent, The Anecdote (band).

Forest Conservation Caucus: group and individual members.

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