



PHOTO: MICK STANIC, FLICKR CC

The Bogong High Plains will have a chance to heal with the removal of feral horses.

President's Report

Euan Moore



The last twelve months continued to be very busy for the organisation, with no shortage of issues for our campaign staff to work on.

Our natural areas on land and at sea continue to face threats from invasive species, inadequate resources for management, inappropriate development, and the grand designs of those who seek to profit from the public estate.

One of our major ongoing campaigns is to have commercial racehorse training removed from the Belfast Coastal Reserve where it represents a threat to the nationally endangered hooded plovers, as well as other coastal flora and fauna, and to the public at large who may wish to visit these beaches. Currently the state government through regulation and planning is supporting and subsidising a single powerful industry, to the detriment of all other Victorians. The process that is being used to allow racehorse training at this location also represents a threat to all other sandy beaches in the state.

Invasive species represent one of the biggest threats to our natural areas, yet action to control them is rarely adequate or effective. VNPA has been campaigning for many years for better control of invasive species such as feral horses and deer. Towards the end of the year we saw some positive moves from government on this front, with the release of Parks Victoria's *Feral Horse Strategic Action Plan* which will focus on Alpine areas, an indication that our campaigning is getting results.

We have been engaged in a large range of management plans and strategies, and have responded very positively to draft co-management park plans prepared by the Gunnaikurnai (Gippsland) and Dja Dja Wurrung (central Victoria) Traditional Owners.

After years of campaigning and protesting we have at last seen the release of a management plan for Point Nepean National Park, which allows for acceptable uses of the old quarantine station while maintaining the important natural values of the park. VNPA staff have put in many hours working with community groups and planners to achieve this result, and I congratulate them on the success of their efforts.

While Point Nepean has been a win for nature, inappropriate development plans continue to plague some of our other national parks. Planned redevelopment of the Chalet area at Mt Buffalo is an ecological and economic disaster in the making, where profits, if any, would be taken by the private sector and costs will be transferred to the public. The proposed Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing is another scheme, and is inappropriate for the Alpine National Park. It would require excessive infrastructure and servicing and discourage traditional bushwalkers from the route. It also presents a high risk for people who attempt the walk without proper equipment.

VNPA has also continued our campaigns for better governance of our natural areas. Good governance is essential if our flora, fauna and natural estate are to be protected. In this area we have advocated for better laws to protect marine and coastal areas, an improved *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act*, and more funding to manage our protected areas. There have been some small gains in this area, but much less than is needed for sound management of our natural heritage.

Our citizen science programs continue to gain strength and expand into new areas. Our ReefWatch program saw a record 700 volunteer divers and snorkelers taking part in the Great Victorian Fish

Count, while a new cohort of volunteers took part in the first Sea Slug Census of Western Port and Port Phillip Bays.

Back on land our NatureWatch program continues to expand into new areas, with teams of local volunteers deploying motion sensing cameras to photograph wildlife and song meters to record the sounds of the forest. In December NatureWatch celebrated its tenth anniversary, and ten years of Grass Tree monitoring in the Brisbane Ranges National Park. We're immensely proud of this program, which is a leader in citizen science.

Community engagement is an important part of VNPA's work. It is how we encourage people to appreciate our natural environment and create a desire to protect it. We are starting young with our Wild Families events for families with children under 10. These events encourage families to get out in the bush and provide education/entertainment materials to engage the children. We continue to provide an extensive bushwalking and activities program led by volunteers which enables members and non-members to enjoy our parks and other areas. The excursions group has also offered a good range of day trips to many of our members.

Finally I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone who has in various ways contributed to VNPA over the last year: our hardworking staff, who in spite of the pressures maintain a friendly office environment that is always a pleasure to visit; our volunteers who help in so many ways, as BWAG or excursions leaders, serving on committees or contributing to policy development, campaigns and the running of the organisation; and finally, our many donors, supporters and Members – without whom we simply would not exist. Thank you for your support and generosity.

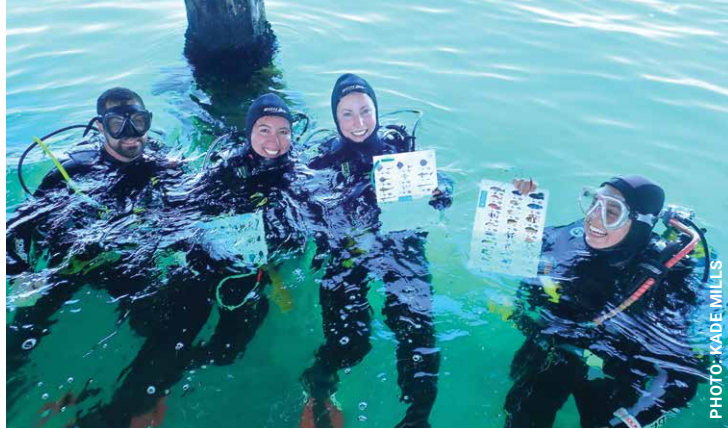


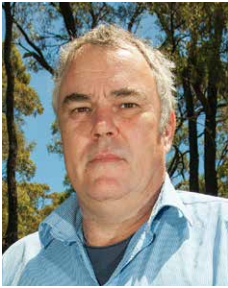
PHOTO: KADE MILLS



Divers have fun during the Great Victorian Fish Count.

The Year in Review

Executive Director Matt Ruchel



Thank you very much for supporting the Victorian National Parks Association. With you standing with us, this past financial year we've been able to continue protecting

Victoria's unique natural heritage – now and into the future.

Thanks to your support, the VNPA has the capacity to plan for the long-term which, as our history shows, is crucial to achieving results as many of our campaigns to protect nature take decades to resolve. The last year saw to finalisation a number of election commitments from the 2014 election that we have been working on. These include:

- Following decades of work with local groups, we were delighted to see the final master plan for Point Nepean National Park. It's a positive document, setting out a clear and largely appropriate vision for the site.

- We advocated for a key milestone for marine and coastal environments – the new Victorian *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*, which passed through parliament earlier this year. Whilst the reforms to this legislation did not go far enough, we have helped strengthen the Act by supporting some key amendments. We'll be keeping a close eye on how the process rolls out and giving input into strategies and policies as they are developed.
- The review of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, Victoria's key piece of threatened species legislation, and another 2014 election commitment, was also completed. Unfortunately this was largely a missed opportunity, and further work is required if we are to have legislative tools to help reverse the decline in species and habitats.
- We also made some progress on parks funding, with a significant injection at the last state budget. But this only brings funding back towards previous levels and has failed to deal with the growth in park visitation and increased costs. We're also

continuing to highlight the many threats parks face from pest plants and animals, and fire.

- We were relieved to see that feral horses ravaging Victoria's Alpine National Park will start to be brought under control. After years of campaigning and countless meetings, we are pleased that the Environment Minister and Parks Victoria chose to listen to the science and lead the way on feral horse management. The Victorian strategy contrasts greatly with an ill-advised plan from the NSW government to protect feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park.
- The fight for our forests continues across both the east and the west of the state. We continue to work with many other organisations to push for a Great Forest National Park and better protection in East Gippsland, Central Western Victoria and other special places across our state. After two years of intensive work, the Forest Industry Taskforce has been abandoned by the state government, and has not met since 2016.

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, from snowshoeing at Mount Stirling to planting trees in the Wimmera.

We held over 200 activities and social events involving an estimated 2,000 participants. We offered day walks, walk talk & gawks, base camps, easy going ambles, bus excursions, overnight pack carry hikes, under 35's walks, family activities, Meetup walks, bike rides, social nights, dinners and conservation events.

Our monthly social nights continue to offer a variety of speakers including travellers' tales and conservation issues.

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

BWAGers participated in a broad range of conservation activities: Project Hindmarsh planting event, Grow West community planting day, Forests Forever Easter Ecology Camp, boneseed weeding at Arthurs Seat and weed mapping 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 be downloaded from the VNPA website at www.vnpa.org.au/adventures

The Committee welcomed a new member, Anny Shaw. All the Committee perform invaluable functions: Gayle Davey Convenor, Rob Argent Treasurer, Lisa Sulinski Secretary, Ellen Findlay BWAG Program Coordinator, Deb Henry VNPA Council liaison and Social events, Anny Shaw and myself as acting Convenor. My personal thanks to the BWAG Committee. Their amazing efforts make all this happen.

Terese Dalman
(Acting BWAG Convenor)



PHOTO: MARY FERLIN

A BWAG overnight walk at The Crinoline, Alpine National Park in October 2017.

While progress has been made in some areas, creation of new national parks in our state has stalled. Even though there are significant gaps in the Victorian reserve system, establishment of new parks over the last two election cycles is the lowest in 50 years. In November 2017 we shone a spotlight on this fact through a detailed analysis and in the media. This was a strategic move, but the truth is not always popular in politics.

Outcomes such as legislation, funding and program reform always take longer than they should, and indeed, longer than what nature needs. But as always, persistence pays off, eventually. With the ongoing support of our Members and supporters, dedicated volunteers, Councillors and staff, we're making progress towards ensuring that future generations can also enjoy our national parks and special natural places.

Your backing is invaluable, essential and always appreciated. Thank you all.

Excursions Group

The VNPA Excursions Group, led by volunteer leaders, conducted 10 day trips by coach this year. All the trips were well attended with a total of 340 participants.

Places visited included Wilsons Prom, Noocee, Flinders, Apollo Bay, Mansfield and Whroo. 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)

COUNCIL

President: *Euan Moore* (Convenor Executive; Finance; Conservation & Campaigns; Governance, Policy & Legal)

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

Secretary: *Michael 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

Russell Costello (Conservation & Campaigns)

Michael Feller (Conservation & Campaigns)

Deborah Henry (Bushwalking & Activities Group; Executive; Governance, Policy & Legal)

Dianne Marshall (Conservation & Campaigns; Marketing & Community Engagement)

Gerard McPhee (Conservation & Campaigns)

James Thyer

Note: Committee memberships in brackets

VOLUNTEERS

We are grateful for the hard work of all our volunteer leaders.

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

Bushwalking & Activities Group: Terese Dalman (acting convenor), Gayle Davey (convenor), Rob Argent, Deborah Henry, Lisa Sulinski, Ellen Finlay, Ann Shaw

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

Excursions: Larysa Kucan (convenor), Jan Lacey.

Forest Forever Easter Ecology Camp: VNPA volunteers supporting Environment East Gippsland (convenor Jill Redwood) included Euan Moore, Jenny Rolland, Terese Dalman, Garry and Wilma Van Dyke, Mark Anderson, Mike Forster and other volunteers.

Great Victorian Fish Count: Thank you for the enormous amount of support from the dive/snorkel community for organising over 50 events and the 700+ community members that participated in the fish count.

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

Mapping and GIS: Tony Hampton.

Native Vegetation & Grasslands: Andrew Booth

NatureWatch: (Office volunteers) Genie Fleming, (Team leaders) Colin Cook, Jasper Hails, Michael Longmore, Paul Strickland, Garry van Dijk, Wilma van Dijk, Ian Vaskess, Lynda Wilson, Christine Connelly, Ann Williamson.

Park Watch Mailout Team: Mem Alexander, Colin Clark, Rowena Church, David Ellison, Jan Gay, Brian Groom, Jo Groom, Margaret Hattersley, Leonie Hudson, Ann Jacobs, Keith Lloyd, Margot Marasco, Joan McDonald, Ian McDonald, Sheina Nicholls, Joan 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, Bette Devine, Geoff Durham, Evelyn Feller, Michael Howes, Euan Moore, Jenny Norvick, Paul Sinclair, Bernard Slattery, David Tatnall, Peter Vaughan and many other photographers and authors.

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

Sea Slug Census: We are grateful to the 150+ community members who made the inaugural Melbourne Sea Slug Census a huge success.

Student Interns: Nikita Cronyn, Merinda Day-Smith, Rosanna Ker, Tabatha Loughnan, Aylah Szetey, Rebecca Vincent, Melissa von Moger.

EMPLOYEES

Executive Director: Matt Ruchel

Marine and Coastal Coordinator: Chris Smyth (to Dec 2017)

Parks Protection Project Officer: Phil Ingamells

Nature Conservation Campaigner: Shannon Hurley (from May 2018)

Fundraising Manager: Emily Clough

Supporter Development: Amelia Easdale

Finance & Operations Manager: Heath Rickard

Administration Officer: Charlotte Kandelaars

Administration Assistant: Irina De Loche

Manager, Community Engagement and Learning: Caitlin Griffith

NatureWatch Coordinator: Christine Connelly (to April 2018)

ReefWatch Coordinator: Kade Mills

ReefWatch Project Officers: Tabatha Loughnan, Tilly Reynolds, Rebecca Vincent

Publications and Online Coordinator: Meg Sobey

Conservation Projects Officer: Sarah Day

Consultants: Mary Ferlin (*Park Watch* design), John Sampson (design and communications)

Financial Report

Abridged Audited Special Purpose Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2018.

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 2018 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) & Euan Moore (President) dated this 6th day of September 2018.

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2018		
REVENUE	2018	2017
Operating Activities	\$	\$
Appeals and Donations	916,357	892,299
Bequests	195,673	8,763
Grants & Sponsorship	206,068	207,017
Membership Fees	92,441	98,223
Interest income & Sundry Sales ⁽¹⁾	51,108	49,799
Total Income	1,461,647	1,256,101
EXPENDITURE		
Employment Expenses	848,587	864,327
Campaigns, Projects, Activities & Education	111,164	125,868
Office & Administration	165,001	157,043
Printing/Publications/Web	73,028	68,513
Accommodation & Insurance	97,299	102,556
Total Expenses	1,295,079	1,318,307
CURRENT YEAR OPERATING SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	166,567	(62,206)
Comprised as		
Individual bequests received in excess of \$25,000 ⁽²⁾	159,575	
GENERAL OPERATING SURPLUS (DEFICIT) FOR YEAR	\$6,992	(62,206)

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2018		
ASSETS	2018	2017
Current	\$	\$
Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,466,626	1,107,925
Receivables and Inventory	31,370	16,275
Total Current Assets	1,497,996	1,124,200
Non-Current		
Fixed Assets (WDV)	62,220	67,894
TOTAL ASSETS	1,560,216	1,192,094
LIABILITIES		
Current and Non-Current	751,887	556,522
TOTAL LIABILITIES	751,887	556,522
NET ASSETS	808,329	635,572
Funded by:		
Total Association Funds	808,329	635,572

Under the instruction of the Auditor, this information is presented differently than in previous years.

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 \$5,348 from the Bushwalking and Activities Group (2017: \$6,194)

(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 to get 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:

Academy of Scuba
Anonymous
The Arnold Foundation
Aquability
Aquatic adventures scuba
Australian Diving Instruction
Bank Australia
Blairgowrie Yacht Squadron
Coastcare Victoria
Corangamite Catchment Management Authority
The Dara Foundation
Dive and Dive
Diveline
Dive2U
Equity Trustees Limited
Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife
Gras Foundation Trust
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
Kaplan Dascalu Fund, a sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation
Loftus-Hills Fund, a charitable fund of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
Melliodora Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation
Ocean Divers
Port Phillip Ecocentre
Scuba Culture
Sea All Dolphin Swims Queenscliff
Sealife Melbourne
Southern Cross University

RedBoats
The Nature Conservancy
Malcolm Shore
Tree Pot
Victorian Government

PROJECT PARTNERS:

1st Gisborne Scouts
Academy of Scuba
Albert Park Yachting and Angling Club
Belfast Coastal Reserve Action Group
Birdlife Australia
Coastcare Victoria
Connecting Country
Deakin University
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Dive 2U
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 Bunyip State Park
Friends of Brisbane Ranges National Park
Friends of Kurth Kiln
Friends of Mount Worth State Park
Friends of Point Addis

Friends of the Earth
Friends of the Prom
Geelong Environment Council
Geelong Field Naturalists Club
Greening Australia
Grow West
Hindmarsh Landcare Network
Killarney Coastcare
La Trobe University
Living Links
Marine Care Point Cooke
Marine Care Ricketts Point
Melbourne Water
Mount Worth & District Landcare Group
Museums Victoria
Queenscliff Environment Forum
Queenscliff Community Association
Save Our Strathbogies Forest Campaign
Save Westport
Southern Cross University
The Royal Society of Victoria
The University of Melbourne
Victorian Environment Friends Network
Westport 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, University of Melbourne and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.