

Victorian National Parks Association Summary Annual Report 2008–2009



A voice for nature

For a more detailed Annual Report,
see our website www.vnpa.org.au



President's Report

Fred Gerardson

THE VNPA has had a successful year, although one overshadowed by the Black Saturday fires and their aftermath.

In 2007-08 the VNPA Council and staff worked hard to finalise the 2020 Strategic Plan. The 2008-09 year has seen us working on some key planks of that plan.

Council has reviewed the rules by which the VNPA operates. The **Governance, Policy and Legal Committee** identified a need to update the Association's Statement of Rules and reinforce them with a comprehensive set of By-Laws covering many of the former administrative policies.

The proposed revised Constitution will be presented for voting at the coming AGM. The By-Laws were enacted by Council at a special Council Meeting in August.

Council's **Marketing and Membership Committee** has assisted staff in developing a comprehensive Marketing Plan to help the VNPA pursue its advocacy and fundraising goals.

Our Strategic Plan recognises that we are a member-based organisation with funding not based on any one source. A key focus of the Marketing Plan is to recognise and build on these strengths.

Due to our financial strength, Council has committed a significant component of the Crosbie Morrison Fund to fund the initial expenditure investment required by the Marketing Plan. This expenditure should be recouped and the Crosbie Morrison funds replenished over a five-year period.

The **Finance and Operations Committee** has continued to scrutinise the VNPA's finances and strong budgetary processes. The result is a small surplus, in line with Council's budget philosophy. Over a three-year cycle, with combined turnover of close to \$4 million, an overall surplus is an outstanding result.

Our **Bushwalking and Activities Group** once again put together a comprehensive program of activities and excursions for our members. This committee continues to astound me with its enthusiasm and organisation, and its ability to respond to events such as the February bushfires.

The **Conservation and Campaigns Committee** had a mixed year, losing



Nature Watch in action. PHOTO: CAITLIN GRIFFITH

Convenor Ian Harris and having to cope with the fallout of the bushfires. It saw successes in the Red Gum and Point Nepean campaigns, and assisted with developing new campaigns on Grasslands and Riparian environments.

As well as a personal tragedy, the sad loss of Jenny Barnett in the fires was a great blow to the VNPA, and Council must now consider how to replace or rebuild the resulting enormous loss of knowledge. A key aspect of this is increasingly to call on, and support, the many knowledgeable and experienced VNPA members who wish to play an active role in the Association's conservation work.

Council also signed off on our first official Enterprise Collective Agreement. I thank Matt and our staff for another year of significant achievement, and look forward to expanding on our talented base in the years ahead.

In conclusion, may I sincerely thank those many volunteers who help the VNPA to run so well and be so effective in its purposes, as well as those who respond to our requests for financial support, contribute to our publications, or write to our lawmakers. Your input is our major strength!

VNPA Council members 2008-09

- Fred Gerardson (President)** – elected 2006
- Libby Smith (Vice President)** – elected 2006
- Charles Street (Secretary)** – elected 2006
- Russell Falvey (Treasurer)** – elected 2006
- Andrew Freadman** – elected 2005
- Maelor Himbury (Friends Network representative)** – elected 2006
- John Renowden** – elected 2006
- Ann Buik** – elected 2007
- Linda Parlane** – elected 2007
- Ian Harris** – 2004-06; re-elected 2008 (resigned May 2009 due to appointment to VEAC Council)
- Karen Medica** – elected 2008
- Kyle Matheson** – elected 2008

Retiring councillors 2008-09

- Joan Lindros** (past President, Vice President & Councillor)



Executive Director's report

Matt Ruchel

OVER THE 2008-09 financial year, the VNPA has made significant progress on some long-running conservation projects. While the end point is very satisfying, it's the long hard years and the continuing support of members and supporters which really make a difference.

Like many in the community we've also faced great personal loss this year, when our much loved and respected colleague Jenny Barnett perished with her husband John at Steels Creek in the Black Saturday bushfires. We miss Jenny greatly, but must continue her 20-plus years of great work at the VNPA.

For a small organisation with limited resources we achieve a huge amount. But no matter how efficient, passionate and committed we are, we still need your support to continue our work.

Significant successes

• **New River Red Gum parks:** After ten years of persistent work by the VNPA, the Brumby government committed to establish almost 100,000 ha of new national parks and reserves along the Murray, Goulburn and Ovens rivers. Final legislation to declare the parks is expected in late 2009.

• **Point Nepean:** After almost eight years of negotiations, the State and Federal governments confirmed on 2 June that agreement had been reached on incorporating the 90ha Quarantine Station area into Point Nepean NP.

• **Cobboboonee National Park:** Following a long campaign in association with local groups and other organisations, we welcomed the declaration of 26,000ha of a new national park at Cobboboonee, adjacent to Lower Glenelg National Park.

Ongoing and future VNPA conservation projects

1. Park management and conservation planning

The VNPA's aim is to ensure that Victoria's parks and reserves are managed effectively. This includes:

- responding to park management plans
- producing submissions and report to Federal and State governments
- meeting regularly with Parks Victoria, DSE and other government contacts.

We have also commenced our fourth Nature Conservation Review, to be

completed in 2010.

2. Grasslands

New plans to expand Melbourne's urban growth boundary will potentially destroy significant patches of grassland in Melbourne's west. The VNPA is working with local groups to ensure that key grassland areas are protected.

3. Protecting our seas and shores

We continue to respond to issues such as Port Phillip channel deepening and the proposed Bastion Point development in Mallacoota.

We are also undertaking a major review of marine conservation priorities in Victoria as part of the VNPA's Nature Conservation Review process.

4. Victoria Naturally Alliance

The VNPA continues to lead the Alliance, a partnership of nine environment groups in Victoria established to address the dire condition of the state's biodiversity.

The Alliance has produced a number of key policy reports to feed into the Government's White Paper on Biodiversity and Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy, to be released in late 2009.

5. Fire Ecology Project

We have launched a dedicated project to increase knowledge of the effects of fire, and ensure that fire management protects not only people but nature as well. With our partners, we will undertake strategic research projects that will make a significant contribution to the Bushfires Royal Commission and other policy processes.

6. Red gum and Riparian projects

In October 2009 the current five-year grazing licences for over 30,000km (100,000+ ha) of riparian land along Victoria's rivers and streams will be up for renewal. We are working to gain commitments from the State Government to create a new riparian 'Conservation Licence', and supporting programs.

We are following up on government commitments to new red gum parks to ensure that legislation and funding are implemented smoothly.

7. Get Active for Nature

The VNPA Bushwalking and Activities Group has continued to grow with over 200 walks, 'Walk, Talk & Gawks', excursions and other activities offered by our dedicated team of volunteer leaders.

8. Small Parks Project

This project aims to build a publicly accessible register of 'small parks' – areas of

public land under 20,000ha which have good conservation values – which can be fed into the current VEAC investigation into remnant vegetation. These areas will become core building blocks for large-scale biolinks and serve as refuges for wildlife faced with climate change.

9. Engaging the community

Our hands-on work in nature conservation continues, including habitat restoration projects at Hindmarsh, Grow West and the Alps, and our own Nature Watch and Reef Watch projects.

Nature Watch completed the first year of Golden Sun Moth and grassland monitoring. Phytophthora monitoring continued in Brisbane Ranges NP and will soon begin at Wilsons Promontory NP. We also worked with Deakin University on post-fire monitoring in the Grampians.

Reef Watch, in partnership with Melbourne Museum, continues to deliver the Great Victoria Fish Count as well as underwater reef monitoring projects with the aid of an enthusiastic dive community.



10. Old-growth forests

The VNPA has supported work by local people and environment groups to protect the last significant stands of old growth currently available for logging in Victoria. Work has included a campaign base camp over the Australia Day weekend and the production of an Investigation into Labor's 2006 Election Old Growth Forest Commitments. We will continue to work to ensure these commitments are delivered.

11. VNPA 2020 Vision and Organisation

In 2008, the VNPA completed a 12-year strategic plan entitled VNPA 2020 Vision, an ambitious plan to protect nature and encourage the community to 'get active for nature'. In 2008-09 we completed a Marketing and Fundraising Strategy to develop VNPA support, membership and influence. We are working to ensure that the VNPA continues to be a strong and financially sustainable 'voice for nature'.

VNPA SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT 2008-2009

Employees 2008-2009

Executive Director: Matt Ruchel

Administration Assistants: Charlotte

Kandelaars, Irina De Loche

Administration & Membership Officer:

Amy Dyer

Conservation & Campaigns Manager:

Megan Clinton

Finance and Operations Manager:

Sue Hayman-Fox

Fundraising and Development Manager:

Anne-Maree Wheeler

Joint Media Officer (shared with other environment groups): Sacha Myers

Marine & Coastal Conservation Project

Officer: Paige Shaw

Marketing Officers: Mari Ericksen,

Joanna Slykerman

Nature Watch /Community Projects

Coordinator: Caitlin Griffith

Park Protection Project Officer:

Phil Ingamells

Park Watch/Update Editor and

Publications Officer: Michael Howes

Red Gum Icons Project Officer:

Nick Roberts

Reef Watch Coordinator: Wendy Roberts

Research Officer: (the late) Jenny Barnett

Small Parks Project Officer: Yasmin Kelsall

Victoria Naturally Alliance Project Leader:

Carrie Deutsch

Victoria Naturally Alliance Project

Officers: Karen Alexander, Jacqui Kelly

Victoria Naturally Communications

Adviser: John Sampson

Hosted Network – Victorian Environment

Friends Network Committee: Maelor

Himbury, Sue Wright, Tony Woolford,

Bernie Fox, Neil Duncan.

Volunteers & Committee Convenors

The great strength of the VNPA is its members, and in particular those who volunteer. Many people give their time and expertise to the Association's activities and committees. We acknowledge all of your efforts and extend particular thanks to the following people.

This is by no means a complete list. Through the VNPA, over 1,200 active volunteers are involved in tree planting, weeding, leading bushwalks and other activities, committees, community monitoring programs, volunteer training and much more.

Volunteer Committee Convenors

Bushwalking and Activities Group:

Lisa Sulinski

Caring For Nature Day: Reg Elder

Conservation & Campaigns: Ian Harris (part year only)

Executive: Fred Gerardson

Excursions: William Keatley, Larysa Kucan

Finance: Russell Falvey

Governance, Policy and Legal:

Fred Gerardson

Membership, Marketing &

Communications: Libby Smith

VNPA Volunteers

Administration assistants: Sandra Cutts,

Colette Findlay, Margaret Hattersley, Dipti

Jani (NMIT), Len Lock, Raimonne

McCutchan, Allan Sisson, Graham Trigg,

Felix Vereker (Holmesglen TAFE)

Education Kit coordinators: Jill Casey and

Graham Trigg

Historical documentation: Eileen McKee

Library: Beryl Halle

Marine and Coastal research: Adam

Edmonds and Sylvia Buchanan

Marketing research and advice: Libby

Smith, DB AdNews, Motive Market

Research

Biosis Research for the NatureWatch

Grasslands and Golden Sun Moth

Project: Sally Koehler and Daniel Gilmore

Professor David Cahill and Deakin University

School of Life and Environmental Sciences

(Probono work)

NatureWatch office work: Carolyn Edwards,

Clare Baxter, Barbara St John, Adrienne

Bennett

Point Nepean: Bernie Fox

Publications: John Hutchinson, Euan Moore

Reef Watch: Museum Victoria

Update and Park Watch mailout team:

Murray Bird, Rita Bonvicin, Dorothy

Carlton, Pat Cooper, Betna Dryden, Brian

Groom, Jo Groom, Margaret Hattersley,

Peter Human, John Hutchinson, Joan

Jillett, Kelvin Kellett, Keith Lloyd, Ian

McDonald, Sheina Nicholls, Joan Phillips,

Barbara Prouse, Lorraine Ratcliffe, Wally

Thies, Graham Trigg, Tom Wallace, Pat Witt

Victoria Naturally Alliance: Brian Coffey,

Bronwyn Gwyther, Ann McGregor, Libby

Smith

Conservation Review Steering Committee:

Anthony Hoffmann, Geoff Wescott, James

Fitzsimons, Dr Charles Meredith, Tim

O'Hara, Barrie Pittock and Ian Harris (for

part of the year).

Bushwalking and Activities Group 2008-09

BWAG had a very successful year, though the tragic February bushfires and severe summer heat resulted in some trip cancellations. Over 2300 people attended 154 activities, and 15 new leaders were approved.

The BWAG Committee developed a five-year Strategic Plan to guide the group.

Program highlights included a hike from Kosciuszko to Willis, canoe and hiking trips along the Snowy River, and camps at Croajingolong NP and the Errinundra Plateau. There were walking tours of Hawaii and France, a Europe cycling tour and a sea kayak/walking trip through Hinchinbrook and Fraser islands.

Mid-week walks were extremely well-attended, as were family walks, public transport trips and Walk, Talk & Gawks.

Monthly coach excursions were also well attended.

Social night topics included Climate Change action, wildlife of Kosciuszko NP and a second-hand gear sale and gear demonstration.

We developed a program to survey Under 35 activity participants, with the aim of increasing membership.

Training

We ran leadership training for 14 trainees in July at Kinglake, to support the locals following the fires, and held a training weekend at Shelley camp.

BWAG leaders participated in Bushwalking Search and Rescue training weekends and in searches.

Conservation

Major projects in which BWAG members took part included a Regent Honeyeater tree planting and nest box survey near Benalla, Grow West and Project Hindmarsh tree plantings, and NatureWatch monitoring and research in Brisbane Ranges NP.

Financial report

Financially, we had a very healthy and successful year. We donated \$13,000 to VNPA, the same as for 2007-08, and had a much smaller overall loss.

More people purchased Annual Walks Passes, which can now be obtained by direct debit. We received slightly more money through walk fees and social nights than last year.

We would like to sincerely thank Wally and Arthur Thies, who have processed walks passes for the committee for the past ten years. This has been enormously valuable to us.



Financial Report

Abridged audited special purpose Financial Report for year ended 30 June 2009

Statement by Members of the Council

The members of the VNPA 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 2009 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.

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

Russell Falvey, Treasurer

Matt Ruchel, Executive Director

Dated this 13th day of August 2009

Income Statement

for the year ended 30 June 2009

REVENUE	2009	2008
Operating Activities	\$	\$
Appeals, Donations & Bequests	624,698	395,906
Grants & Sponsorships	410,703	512,953
Membership Fees	120,570	115,312
Other Income	137,805	232,382
Total Income	1,293,777	1,256,552
EXPENDITURE		
Employment Expenses	739,341	717,159
Campaigns, Projects, Activities & Education	248,538	218,387
Office & Administration	112,032	167,844
Printing/Publications/Web	101,300	77,450
Other Expenses	91,319	88,977
Total Expenses	1,292,531	1,269,817
OPERATING SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	1,246	(13,265)

Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2009

ASSETS	2009	2008
Current	\$	\$
Cash/Receivables/Inventory	194,257	130,391
Non-Current		
Investments	1,502,257	1,254,844
Fixed Assets at Written Down Value	57,931	68,883
TOTAL ASSETS	1,754,445	1,454,118
LIABILITIES		
Current	974,407	706,275
TOTAL LIABILITIES	974,407	706,275
NET ASSETS	780,038	747,843
Funded by:		
ASSOCIATION FUNDS		
Association Funds	780,038	706,275
TOTAL ASSOCIATION FUNDS	780,038	706,275

VNPA – Activities Accounts

for the year ended 30 June 2009

The operating accounts for the Bushwalking and Excursions Groups have not been consolidated into the general accounts above and are reported separately as follows:

	2009	2008
BUSHWALKING & ACTIVITIES GROUP	\$	\$
Opening Bank Account Balance	3,316	4,956
Income	14,365	12,845
Expenditure	(2,054)	(1,485)
Funds Contributed to VNPA	(13,000)	(13,000)
Closing Bank Account Balance	2,626	3,316
EXCURSIONS GROUP		
Opening Bank Account Balance	22,584	21,432
Income	59,120	16,927
Expenditure	(42,189)	(10,775)
Funds Contributed to VNPA	(30,000)	(5,000)
Closing Bank Account Balance	9,516	22,584

NOTE

Independent Audit Report

As in previous years, the Auditors 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 Auditors Report will be tabled at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting as part of the Audited Financial Statements and the full text of the Report is available at www.vnpa.org.au

The VNPA would like to extend special thanks to all its supporters and donors. Your support is invaluable – thank you!

VNPA supporters and donors 2008-09

The VNPA acknowledges and thanks the following key supporters and donors.

- Albert George and Nancy Caroline Youngman Trust, administered by Equity Trustees
- ANZ Staff Foundation
- Australian Geographic Society
- Australian Government Envirofund
- Corangamite Catchment Management Authority
- The Dara Foundation
- Department of Planning and Community
- Exchange, Greening Australia and Australian Government
- Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations (GVEHO)
- Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
- John T Reid Charitable Trusts
- The Myer Foundation
- The Norman Wettenhall Foundation
- Parks Victoria
- Pepperstorm
- Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority
- RACV
- Reichstein Foundation
- The R.E. Ross Trust
- WildCountry Small Grants Program