



VNPA members Marie and Wolfgang Krause take action against willows at the Alps Rehabilitation weekend in February 2011.

Photo: Charles Street

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Each year as I write this report I find myself in awe of the work done by our volunteers. No other environment group can claim to be as community based as the VNPA, and this underpins our strength in these challenging times.

Apart from the 13 Councillors there are some 20 other members doing a powerful job on the various sub-committees. A further 90 are involved in the Bushwalking and Activities Group and Excursions, and over 700 volunteers assist with mailouts, office work, events, publications and more.

I sincerely thank all our volunteers. Your input is our major strength.

Much of this year has, of course, been dominated by the issue of cattle being re-introduced into the Alpine National Park. In April our public meeting attracted a phenomenal 500 people and was addressed by Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke.

Council meanwhile signed off on the **Community Education and Engagement** working group's strategy paper in May. The group grappled with identifying what 'education and engagement' means to the VNPA and its volunteer activities groups, and how to translate this into action.

The strategy recommends that we

Fred Gerardson President



increase 'education' aspects of our existing activities, and try to target new audiences. Council also adopted the recommendation to form a new **Education and Events Committee** to coordinate implementation of the strategy.

The **Marketing and Membership Committee** has been overseeing a major brand strategy review. This has meant understanding our strengths and also why the VNPA has fairly low recognition in the general community, and looking at what we have to do to be more widely recognised.

The committee has briefed Council and obtained sign-off at each stage to ensure that the work undertaken and guided by our consultants remains true to the VNPA's core culture and purposes. We will be consulting with members on final outcomes.

The **Conservation and Campaigns Committee's** major review of VNPA conservation policies has involved many

committee members in meeting pro bono each week to produce a new framework and flesh this out into detailed policies. This is in addition to the committee's role in advising on our various campaigns.

The **Bushwalking and Activity Group's** program saw the welcome reintroduction of snow-based activities. Along with the Excursions Group, BWAG has maintained its diverse range of activities and we look forward to it powering ahead as the Community Education and Engagement strategy is implemented.

The **Governance, Policy and Legal Committee** completed a major review of VNPA by-laws, administrative policies and procedures. These were adopted by Council in March.

The **Finance and Operations Committee** has continued to scrutinise closely our current finances and our strong budgetary processes. This year's result met expectations as our fundraising strategy met its early targets.

2012 marks our 60th anniversary, a major achievement in anyone's language. With our wonderful members, supporters and volunteers, we are poised to go from strength to strength.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

- **President:** Fred Gerardson (Executive, Governance, Conservation)
- **Vice President:** Russell Costello (Executive, Conservation)
- **Secretary:** Charles Street (Executive, Conservation, Governance)
- **Treasurer:** Russell Falvey (Executive, Finance)

- Ann Buik (Membership & Marketing, Education)
- Andrew Dodd (Membership & Marketing)
- Maelor Himbury (Membership & Marketing, Education)
- Kyle Matheson (Executive, Finance, BWAG)
- Euan Moore (Conservation)
- Libby Smith (Executive, Membership & Marketing)

- Linda Parlane (Membership & Marketing, Education)
- The late Mavis Rennie (Membership & Marketing)
- John Renowden (Conservation)
- Lisa Sulinski (BWAG, Education)

Note: Committee or group positions in brackets.

VNPA ANNUAL REPORT 2010-2011

THE YEAR IN REVIEW: A SNAPSHOT

Yet again the VNPA has had a busy year, focusing on building our capacity in community engagement, education, marketing and fundraising, and making progress on many conservation issues.

As always, we base our conservation work on the best available science, thoughtful policy solutions, persistence, and a passion for protecting and appreciating nature. We use communication, education and activities to encourage people to become engaged with, and active for, nature.

Engaging the community

We have recently completed a Community Engagement and Education Strategy focusing on improving the learning components of all our activities.

Our community monitoring programs NatureWatch and Reef Watch have made a wonderful contribution to scientific data collection. NatureWatch monitored threatened grassland species. Reef Watch held the annual Great Victorian Fish Count in December, a record 400 volunteers monitoring their local marine area.

Over the past 12 months the VNPA's many dedicated volunteers have developed another fantastic program of nature-based activities. In addition, VNPA volunteers joined in habitat restoration activities such as willow control in the Alpine National Park, and in the Grow West and Project Hindmarsh tree-planting initiatives. In 2010 these projects saw some 18,000 trees and shrubs being planted by over 330 VNPA volunteers.

Nature conservation

VNPA's conservation work is focused around four key areas.

Park protection and management

Stop alpine cattle grazing: Our campaign on this issue went very well, culminating in a well-attended public meeting. Unfortunately the State Government has said that it intends to continue the cattle grazing 'trial' this



Matt Ruchel
Executive Director

summer. We will keep campaigning strongly and ensure that the Federal Government maintains an active role.

Threats to national parks and reserves:

We are focusing on ways to protect our parks from commercial development, pest plants and animals, climate change and fire. We are also supporting the proposal to protect national parks under Commonwealth law as well as state law.

Fire and biodiversity: The VNPA influenced a number of the Bushfire Royal Commission's recommendations for better monitoring and research on the impact of fire on biodiversity, but we are still very concerned about the proposed statewide targets for fuel reduction burning, and in October we are hosting a scientific symposium to further discuss the issue of fire and biodiversity.

Protecting special places

Red gum parks and rivers: We are working to ensure that our new red gum parks have the water they need. Next year will be challenging as the final negotiations on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan play out. We are also following up on the management of publicly owned riparian land in Victoria.

Endangered grasslands: Many native grassland remnants are in Melbourne's fringe growth areas. We are working to ensure high conservation areas are retained and protected, and through NatureWatch we will continue our grasslands monitoring work.

Better protection for special places: We launched an interactive website featuring 20 special places in Central Victoria, and we continue to work with local and regional groups to ensure that these places are better protected and managed.

Protecting our seas and shores

In August 2010 we released a major scientific review of marine conservation priorities for Victoria. This comprehensive document generated significant community debate.

The Victorian Government has begun a VEAC marine conservation investigation. This is in part a result of VNPA's community campaign. We will be making submissions and ensuring that the community is informed and active during the VEAC investigation.

We also launched a new interactive marine website www.exploreunderwater.vnpa.org.au and a new edition of the field guide *Life on the Rocky Shores*.

Reconnecting Victorian habitats

Victoria Naturally Alliance: Over the last year, the VNPA-led alliance of ten environment groups undertook major policy work on regional development opportunities from large-scale biolinks, and developed a social marketing strategy for nature.

Native vegetation: We are working on issues around native vegetation regulations and issues relating to national environmental laws in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Thank you

Volunteers are integral to the success of the VNPA and we were very sad at the passing of two very special friends. VNPA Councillor Mavis Rennie gave invaluable fundraising and marketing advice, and long-time member William Keatley ran the VNPA's Excursions program for the past 13 years. We acknowledge their work and miss them greatly.

We would also like to thank all our supporters, volunteers, members and partner organisations for their generous contributions to the work of the VNPA. We just couldn't do it without you!

EMPLOYEES

- **Executive Director:** Matt Ruchel
- **Fundraising & Marketing Manager:** Emily Clough
- **Direct Marketing Officer:** Maxine Hawkins
- **Finance and Operations Manager:** Shanti Fowler
- **Administration & Membership Officer:** Amy Dyer
- **Administration Assistants:** Charlotte Kandelaars, Irina De Loche
- **Marine & Coastal Project Officer:** Simon Branigan
- **Communications Adviser:** Michaela Farrington until November 2010
- **Nature Watch /Community Projects Coordinator:** Caitlin Griffith until August 2010 (maternity leave), Ada Nano
- **Park Protection Project Officer:** Phil Ingamells
- **Red Gum and River Rescue Project Coordinator:** Nick Roberts
- **Reef Watch Coordinator:** Wendy Roberts
- **Park Watch/Nature's Voice Editor and Publications Officer:** Michael Howes
- **Victoria Naturally Alliance Project Leader:** Karen Alexander
- **Victoria Naturally Alliance Community Engagement Project Officer:** Yasmin Kelsall until November 2010
- **Victoria Naturally Alliance Project Officer:** Carrie Deutsch until July 2010
- **Media Officer (shared with other environment groups):** Louise Matthiesson

BUSHWALKING & ACTIVITIES GROUP

Many happy skiers celebrated the confirmation this year that the Bushwalking and Activities Group could conduct snow activities after a nine-year gap.

In all, the year's programs offered over 280 activities and events. Nine new leaders were approved, with new cycling and Walk, Talk & Gawk leaders. BWAG also began implementing strategic plan proposals for increased education, training and communication.

Highlights included extended walking trips in Victoria and Lord Howe Island, as well as 28 inspiring Walk, Talk & Gawks.

Flood damage early in 2011 was a challenge for leaders – trips were relocated or cancelled due to widespread damage to parks, roads and tracks across the state.

The committee sincerely thanks all our leaders and other volunteers who made our program and operations possible.

Social nights: Over 60 people attended a Snow Activities night where Charles and Jessica Street and Mark Bek presented a history of cross-country skiing and the Mt Stirling campaigns.

George Appleby shared his sea kayaking adventures across Bass Strait. Matthew Higgins spoke on the heritage of the Australian Alps, Ely Hamilton-Smith on his experience with World Heritage sites in China, and Ruth and John Stirling on the landscapes of Southern Chile and Argentina.

The June trivia night was highly entertaining, attracting 60 people and generating over \$1100. Thanks to organisers



BWAG cross-country skiers enthusiastically took part in snow activities again. Photo: Russell Bowey

Cheryl Mioch, Russell Bowey and Tracey-Ann Hooley, and the sponsors of books and other prizes.

Training: BWAG leaders attended training sessions for navigation, beginners' geocaching, and Walk, Talk & Gawk leadership. We were also active in Bushwalking Search and Rescue training weekends, and searches.

Conservation: Members participated in the Regent Honeyeater, Grow West and Project Hindmarsh tree plantings, as well as VNPA's NatureWatch projects and Friends group work.

Financial: BWAG contributed \$4000 to

VNPA, down from the previous year's amount because of lower participant numbers and more trip cancellations. The committee is working with council and staff on strategies to boost memberships and participation.

– Lisa Sulinski (Convenor)

Excursions

The Excursions Group ran eleven day coach trips in 2010-11. They included visits to Wilsons Promontory, Lorne, Anglesea, Torquay, Daylesford and other places of interest, and also a ferryboat trip along the Yarra. All the excursions were well attended.

On the trips our members enjoyed walks, picnics, farmers' markets and galleries.

As a result of these trips we raised \$6453 for the VNPA. This was less than the previous year mainly because of the suspension of the two eight-day tours. Excursion Group accounts are now incorporated into general VNPA accounts.

Many thanks to our volunteer trip leaders, and to all the members who participated in our activities. We also sincerely thank Nancye Blades, who has stepped down from her 14-year term as booking officer for the Excursions Group.

We were all saddened by the death in September 2010 of William Keatley, who was involved with VNPA excursions for over 50 years and who had been Excursions Group Convenor since 1997. But we can honour his memory by continuing the excursions into the future.

– Larysa Kucan (Convenor)

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, and we acknowledge all of your efforts.

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

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

Volunteers

- **Administration assistants:** Jill Casey, Sandra Cutts, Colette Findlay, Alec Gelgota, Margaret Hattersley, Raimonne McCutchan, Graham Trigg
- **Conservation:** Andrew Booth, Russell Costello, Ann & Bruce McGregor, Charles Street, Chris Smyth

- **Marine and Coastal:** Sylvia Buchanan, Adam Edmonds, Alec Gelgota, Freddy Leong, Christopher Francis Pape, Blair Patullo, Jennifer Thomas
- **Education Kit coordinator:** Jill Casey
- **Grow West project:** Terese Dalman, Judy Douglas, Bob Reid, John Stirling
- **Project Hindmarsh:** Terese Dalman, Bernie Fox, Sue Hayman-Fox, John Stirling
- **Habitat Restoration:** Paul Bullock
- **Library:** Beryl Haile
- **Marketing research and advice:** Libby Smith, Motive Market Research
- **NatureWatch:** Shannon Braun, David De Angelis, Carolyn Edwards, Bryant Gagliardi, Marion Shadbolt
- **Publications:** John Hutchinson, Euan Moore
- **Nature's Voice and Park Watch mailout team:** Murray Bird, Rita Bonvicin, Pat Cooper, Betna Dryden, Brian Groom, Jo Groom, Margaret Hattersley, Peter Human, John Hutchinson, Kelvin Kellett, Keith Lloyd, Ian McDonald, Elsebeth Murray, Sheina Nicholls, Joan Phillips, Barbara Prouse, Lorraine Ratcliffe, Paul Stokes, Wally Thies, Graham Trigg, Pat Witt

- **Victoria Naturally Alliance:** Chris Forster, Ray Jeffery, Marie Jones, Jacquie Kelly, Ann and Bruce McGregor, Euan Moore, Colleen Miller, Geoff Park, Frances Overmaar, Lea Scherl, Libby Smith, Tim Von Carate, and the reference group members for the Community Engagement Project and all the volunteers for the Family Nature Days

Volunteer Committee Convenors

- **Bushwalking and Activities Group:** Lisa Sulinski
- **Caring For Nature Day:** Reg Elder
- **Conservation & Campaigns:** Russell Costello
- **Executive:** Fred Gerardson
- **Excursions:** The late William Keatley, Larysa Kucan
- **Finance:** Russell Falvey
- **Governance, Policy and Legal:** Fred Gerardson
- **Membership, Marketing & Communications:** Libby Smith
- **Community Education & Engagement Working Group:** Ann Buik, Linda Parlane

Hosted Network

- **Victorian Environment Friends Network Committee:** Maelor Himbury, Sue Wright, Margaret Boyd, Neil Duncan



FINANCIAL REPORT

Abridged Audited Special Purpose Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2011

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 2011 and its performance for the year ended on that date.

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 15th day of August 2011

Income Statement for the year ended 30 June 2011

REVENUE	2011	2010
Operating Activities	\$	\$
Appeals, Donations & Bequests	764,923	812,696
Grants & Sponsorships	472,643	476,376
Membership Fees	111,070	105,938
Other Income	239,680	196,889
Total Income	1,588,316	1,591,899
EXPENDITURE		
Employment Expenses	827,112	914,304
Campaigns, Projects, Activities & Education	345,428	324,765
Office & Administration	215,245	132,911
Printing/Publications/Web	99,371	149,597
Other Expenses	97,725	97,832
Total Expenses	1,584,880	1,619,409
OPERATING SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	3,436	(27,510)

VNPA – Activities Accounts for year ended 30 June 2011

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

	2011	2010
	\$	\$
Opening Bank Account Balance	196	2,626
Income	9,964	10,219
Expenditure	(1,337)	(949)
Funds Contributed to VNPA	(4,000)	(11,700)
Closing Bank Account Balance	4,823	196

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 will be available at www.vnpa.org.au.

Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2011

ASSETS	2011	2010
Current	\$	\$
Receivables and Inventory	104,310	85,118
Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,179,162	1,459,229
Total Current Assets	1,283,472	1,544,347
Non-Current		
Fixed Assets at Written Down Value	20,396	39,274
TOTAL ASSETS	1,303,868	1,583,621
LIABILITIES		
Current	626,002	878,508
TOTAL LIABILITIES	626,002	878,508
NET ASSETS	677,866	705,113
Funded by: Association Funds	677,866	705,113
TOTAL ASSOCIATION FUNDS	677,866	705,113

SUPPORTERS, DONORS & PARTNERS

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

- The Albert George and Nancy Caroline Youngman Trust, administered by Equity Trustees Limited
- Alf and Meg Steel Fund, a subfund of the Australian Communities Foundation
- Anonymous donors
- ANZ Staff Foundation
- The Arnold Foundation
- Australian Geographic Society
- Australian Government's Envirofund
- Australian Government's Caring for Our Country
- Biosis Research
- Birds Australia Victoria
- Coast Action/Coastcare Community Program
- Coastcare Victoria Community Grants – a joint program delivered in partnership between the Australian Government's Caring for our Country and the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Coast Action/Coastcare program
- Conservation Council of South Australia
- The Dara Foundation
- Ecology Australia
- Environment Defenders Office
- Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
- The Ian Potter Foundation
- John T Reid Charitable Trusts
- Johnstone Gumption Fund, a subfund of the Australian Communities Foundation
- Loftus-Hills Trust
- Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
- Museum Victoria
- Parks Victoria
- The Poola Foundation: Tom Kantor Fund
- Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority
- The R.E. Ross Trust
- Sidney Myer Fund
- Treepot
- Trust for Nature
- Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development
- Victorian Department of Sustainability & Environment
- The Wilderness Society, Victoria

Photo: Mt Stirling, Charles Street