

ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015



President's Report Russell Costello



What an amazing year! We started on the financial ropes, opposing many government actions that were damaging the environment, and with a massive and potentially expensive court

case looming on Alpine cattle grazing. And then came recovery.

It was a year of two contrasting halves. In the first, we were defending the natural environment against one attack after another, and were totally excluded from government consultation. In the second, consultation was reinstated and there was renewed optimism for a range of positive environmental achievements.

In one of my President's introductions I pointed out the poor performance of the former Coalition administration compared with those of the past, particularly the golden era of the Hamer Government and Conservation Minister Bill Borthwick.

This time, we had environmentally disastrous policies, a developer's paradise at the expense of the environment, national park 'sales' through 99-year leases and no environmental achievements of note.

What's our take-home message? That we must work closely with all sides of politics to encourage the development of sound environmental platforms. I'm certain that failing the environmental test in the eyes of the community contributes to electoral failure, and even to one-term governments.

We survived these difficult years because of our very generous donors, our hard-working staff and volunteers, and eventually because of a change of State Government.

Whether we are entering another golden time for the environment remains to be seen, but the signs are much better. The Environment Minister has already reversed some of the negatives of her predecessor, including alpine cattle grazing and the Point Nepean lease, with more under review.

We are now working with the government on a number of fronts, though our capacity to meet the requests for input, even with volunteer support, is being severely stretched.

With government grants such a rarity and philanthropic trusts still recovering from the GFC, we need a reliable income to serve your expectations.

Regular Giving has been steadily growing by about 10% per year. Our monthly donors now contribute around 8% of our income. This is really important to us.

As Regular Giving grows, particularly Regular Giving Plus (which includes membership), our revenue becomes steadier and more predictable. That makes program planning so much easier. I encourage you to consider it if you can.

Our Executive Director Matt Ruchel mentions many of the achievements of the past 12 months. In addition, Council has elected to invest in a new on-line system for managing membership, contacts, payments and so much more. Our clunky old system was costing too much staff time.

The next step is to develop a new website, linked to the new system, to provide a smooth service to all. This will make online enquiries, payments and event registration much easier.

It may also lead the many fleeting visitors to our site to stay, find what they are looking for, return regularly, and perhaps become supporters.

We all want our Association to grow. And with your help, it will.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

President: *Russell Costello* (Conservation & Campaigns; Executive; Governance, Policy & Legal; Membership & Marketing and Education & Events)

Vice President: *Euan Moore* (Executive; Membership & Marketing and Education & Events)

Secretary: *Charles Street* (Conservation & Campaigns; Executive; Governance, Policy & Legal) to June 2015;
Michael Forster (Executive; Finance Governance; Policy & Legal; Education & Events) from June 2015

Treasurer: *Gary Allan* (Executive; Finance; Governance, Policy & Legal)

Ann Birrell (Executive; Governance, Policy & Legal)

Russell Bowey (Bushwalking & Activities Group)

Michael Feller (Conservation & Campaigns)

Deborah Henry (Bushwalking & Activities Group; Membership & Marketing and Education & Events)

Bruce McGregor (Conservation & Campaigns, Executive)

Kyle Matheson (Finance; Governance, Policy & Legal)

Libby Smith (Membership & Marketing and Education & Events)

James Thyer

Note: Committee memberships in brackets



PT NEPEAN PHOTO: MATTHEW MACKAY, INNER LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY; CATTLE PHOTO: PHIL INGAMIELLS; NATUREWATCH PHOTO: TRACEY KOPER, VCMC

The Year in Review

Executive Director Matt Ruchel



When I look back on this past year, I'm reminded what can be achieved with the support of like-minded and passionate people in small organisations like the VNPA.

The past 12 months saw a change in government at the November state election, and a change in the atmosphere for conservation in Victoria. Our ongoing defence of natural areas has taken on a more positive outlook, with some significant outcomes.

First, we saw the delivery on an election commitment to ban cattle grazing in Victoria's Alpine and Red Gum national parks. This ban closes loopholes in the legislation and will hopefully see the end of this antiquated and damaging practice in our park system.

We also worked successfully with local communities on the Mornington Peninsula to block a proposed large-scale private development at the Quarantine Station in Point Nepean National Park.

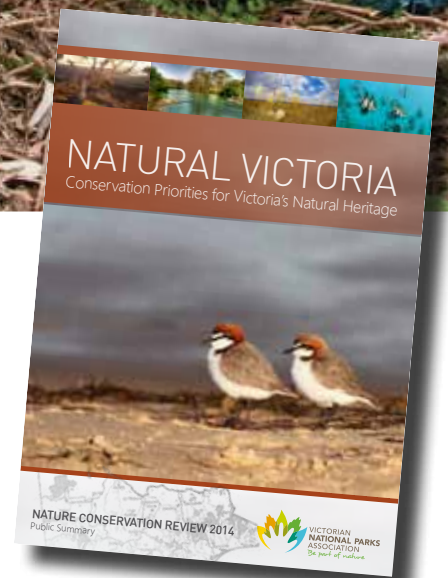
We now look forward to helping develop a more permanent and sustainable future for the site which maintains its significant natural, cultural and recreational values.

We continued our role in working on complex policy issues such as fire management, native vegetation controls, grassland protection and urban growth, and protection of biodiversity state-wide.

As part of this, we released our fourth Nature Conservation Review – *Natural Victoria, conservation priorities for Victoria's natural heritage* – which synthesises the condition of, threats to and challenges facing our unique natural areas.

Forest protection has also gained momentum, with widespread recognition of the plight of the tiny Leadbeater's Possum and the proposed creation of a Great Forest National Park front and centre in the state election.

The VNPA has been campaigning for our parks and nature for more than 60 years, so it is good to know that what we stand for has widespread public support. Polling commissioned by the VNPA last year showed almost unanimous support for national parks across the Victorian community.



On the organisational front, with your support our funding base remains stable. We worked hard through the year to improve our operations and capacity, and service and support our members and supporters, with the difficult job of introducing a new database.

Our community engagement and education work such as NatureWatch continued to flourish, though we have had to halt our Reef Watch project for the time being, due to a shortfall in funding.

Significantly we have had a number of staff changes, with Nick Roberts (Red Gum campaign), Simon Branigan (Marine and Coastal campaign) and Wendy Roberts (Reef Watch) moving on this year. We thank them for their hard work and dedicated service.

Many thanks and congratulations to the VNPA Council, staff and our many committed volunteers, members and supporters for a great team effort. We look forward to another good year in 2015-16.

Bushwalking and Activities Group

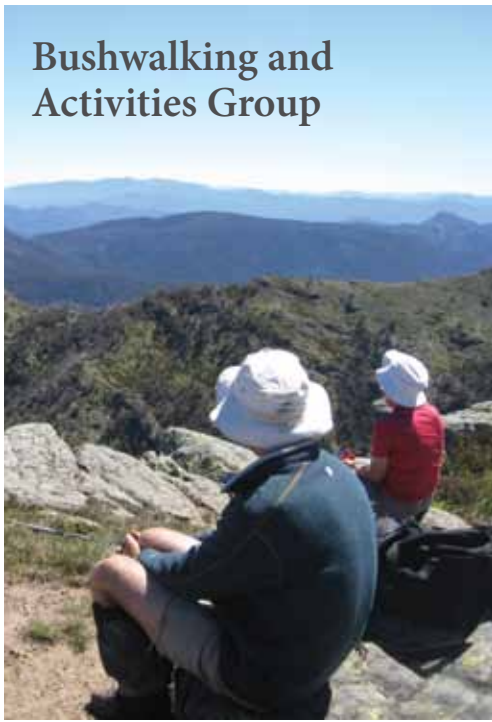


PHOTO: MARY FERLIN

Mt Howitt, Alpine National Park.

First, I'd like to thank all our volunteers: walk leaders, Emergency Contacts, leader mentors, event coordinators and committee members. They made it possible to offer over 250 activities and social events for the year.

35 weekend trips (overnight and base camps) were offered, and their leaders deserve special thanks for the extra commitment required.

These activities are not just enjoyable and healthy – they help people appreciate our natural places.

Highlights among the many activities included a family overnight walk at Mt Baw Baw, family bike rides, canoeing on the Goulburn, and snow shoeing. Overseas, John Bales led a hiking trip to Canada.

Social Nights

Presentations at these monthly social events included Euan Moore on the Antarctic Peninsula; controlling weeds in the Central Highlands; a foray in the fungi world; Caught on Camera footage; and John and Ruth Stirling's Japan trip.

Other social activities were the regular Christmas and mid-year dinners, and monthly Under 35 dinners. Sue Catterall organised our very popular Odd Ball.

Prospective leaders attended a Leadership Briefing by Russell Bowey.

Some of our leaders deserve a special mention. Larysa Kucan has done a wonderful job coordinating the coach excursions, Geoff Durham led his Easy Going Ambles, and Ruth Stirling and Sue Parkhill continued their great Monday walk series.

Richard Tagg continued to promote BWAG activities through the website 'MeetUp', and

Volunteers and Committee Convenors

VOLUNTEERS

Administration Assistants: David Alberton, Jilly Casey, Christine Cockayne, Colette Findlay, Margaret Hattersley, Raimonne McCutchan, Graham Trigg, Fredrick Tropp-Asher.

Research Assistants:
Evelyn Feller, Dianne Marshall.

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

Native Vegetation & Grasslands:
Andrew Booth, Adrian Marshall.

NatureWatch: (Office volunteers) Emma Barnett, Margreet Drijfhout, Jill Johnson, Meg Loyn, Ann Williamson. *(Team leaders)* Colin Cook, David De Angelis, Jasper Hails, Michael Longmore, Julia Pickwick, Garry van Dijk, Wilma van Dijk, Ian Vaskess. *(Equipment management)* Eddie Schambre.

Publications: Geoff Durham, Evelyn Feller, Euan Moore, Jenny Norvick, Bernard Slattery.

Park Watch Mailout Team:
Mem Alexander, Murray Bird, Betna Dryden, Jan Gay, Brian Groom, Jo Groom, Margaret Hattersley, Leonie Hudson, John Hutchinson, Robyn Lateef, Keith Lloyd, Margot Marasco, Ian McDonald, Sheina Nicholls, Mary-Lou Phillips, Joan Phillips, Barbara Prouse, Lorraine Ratcliffe, Paul Stokes, Graham Trigg, Pat Witt.

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE CONVENORS

Bushwalking & Activities Group:
Terese Dalman.

Conservation & Campaigns:
Bruce McGregor.

Executive: Russell Costello.

Excursions: Larysa Kucan.

Governance, Policy & Legal:
Ann Birrell.

Finance: Gary Allan.

Membership & Marketing and Education & Events: Euan Moore.

COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS

Other than VNPA Councillors and staff, the following volunteers have been members of VNPA committees:

Fredrick Tropp-Asher, Liz Forbes, Darren McClelland, Linda Parlane, Maelor Himbury, Larysa Kucan, Deirdre Slattery, Evelyn Feller, Fred Gerardson, John Renowden, Joan Lindros, Gerard McPhee, Bernie Mace, Lindsay Hesketh, Terese Dalman, Rob Argent, Gayle Davey, Sue Catterall, Julia Pickwick, David Moore.

David Moore got our walks included in the Seniors Week program. We've also continued our 'Bring a Friend for Free' initiative.

Conservation

BWAGers participated in a range of conservation activities including Project Hindmarsh, Grow West, boneseeding on the Mornington Peninsula, rabbit warren surveys in Hattah-Kulkyne NP, NatureWatch activities, Clean Up Australia Day, and a Malleefowl nest survey. Walk, Talk and Gawk leaders offered 14 WT&Gs, with one especially for children.

BWAG contributed \$7,000 to VNPA with income from walks and other activities.

I especially want to thank outgoing Convenor Russell Bowey for his excellent leadership of the Group over the past three years. He's so dedicated that he has stayed on the Committee as Secretary! And thank you to Geoff Durham, who introduced the Walk, Talk and Gawk concept. Geoff has now stepped down as Coordinator.

And a final thank-you: thanks to the committee members for giving their time to make all this happen. Rob Argent, Russell Bowey, Gayle Davey, Sue Catterall, Deb Henry, David Moore and Julia Pickwick – you've done a great job!

Terese Dalman (Convenor)

Coach excursions

The Excursions Group conducted ten day trips in 2014-15, all well attended by both members and visitors – a total number of 432 people. Places visited were Coolart Wetlands, Wilsons Promontory, the Maribyrnong River by tram boat, Mt Baw Baw, Mt Buangor SP, Morwell NP, Yea, Kinglake to Seymour, Eynesbury and Blackwood, and lastly Walhalla.

On these trips, all led by volunteers, we enjoyed walks in national parks and along rail trails, picnics, and visiting farmers markets, historic homes and galleries.

The VNPA has been using the services of McKenzie's coaches since the early 1960s and we thank them for their continued support. Their expert drivers contribute greatly to the success of the excursions.

As a result of these trips the group contributed \$5,742 to the VNPA, up from the previous year's \$5,299.

Many thanks to the trip leaders, and to all the members and visitors who participated in the excursions.

Larysa Kucan (Convenor)

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 2015 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 3rd day of September 2015.

Financial Report

Abridged Audited Special Purpose Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2015.

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015		
REVENUE	2015	2014
Operating Activities	\$	\$
Appeals, Donations & Bequests	854,142	847,167
Grants & Partner Contributions	106,379	159,527
Membership Fees	109,067	116,668
Interest Income & Sundry Sales	59,906	62,304
Total Income	1,129,494	1,185,666
EXPENDITURE		
Employment Expenses	594,400	712,957
Campaigns, Projects, Activities & Education	100,747	89,114
Office & Administration	157,750	164,656
Printing/Publications/Web	54,558	70,032
Accommodation & Insurance	99,627	103,246
Total Expenses	1,007,082	1,140,005
OPERATING (DEFICIT) SURPLUS BEFORE TRANSFERS (TO) FROM RESERVE FUNDS	122,412	45,661
Transfers from (to) Reserve Funds	(109,426)	(20,089)
OPERATING (DEFICIT) SURPLUS AFTER TRANSFERS FROM (TO) RESERVE FUNDS	12,986	25,572

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2015		
ASSETS	2015	2014
Current	\$	\$
Receivables and Inventory	30,079	142,414
Cash and Cash Equivalents	926,256	748,088
Total Current Assets	956,335	890,502
Non-Current		
Fixed Assets at Written Down Value	23,151	32,421
TOTAL ASSETS	979,486	922,924
LIABILITIES		
Current and Non-Current	302,556	368,406
TOTAL LIABILITIES	302,556	368,406
NET ASSETS	676,930	554,518
Funded by:		
Association Funds	676,930	554,518
TOTAL ASSOCIATION FUNDS	676,930	554,518

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.

VNPA - ACTIVITIES ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2015		
	2015	2014
The operating accounts for the Bushwalking and Activities Group have not been consolidated into the general accounts above and are reported separately as follows:	\$	\$
Opening Bank Account Balance	3,125	4,142
Income	10,060	9,365
Expenditure	(75)	(382)
Funds Contributed to VNPA	(7,000)	(10,000)
CLOSING BANK ACCOUNT BALANCE	6,110	3,125

VNPA Employees

Executive Director: Matt Ruchel

Fundraising Manager: Emily Clough
(maternity leave from Dec 2014)

Direct Marketing Officer: Maxine Hawkins

Finance & Operations Manager: Heath Rickard

Administration Officer: Charlotte Kandelaars

Administration Assistants: Irina De Loche,
Ann Williamson, Tilly Reynolds

Marine & Coastal Project Officer: Simon Branigan
(to Oct 2014); Chris Smyth (from Feb 2015)

Parks Protection Project Officer: Phil Ingamells

Habitat Protection Project Officer: Yasmin Kellsall

Red Gum & River Rescue Project Coordinator:
Nick Roberts (to Jan 2015)

Manager, Community Education and Engagement: Caitlin Griffith (from March 2015)

Nature Watch Coordinator: Christine Connelly

Reef Watch Coordinator:
Wendy Roberts (to Sept 2014)

Park Watch Editor/Publications Officer:
Michael Howes

Conservation Review Project Coordinator:
Andrew Cox

Media & Communications Consultant:
John Sampson/EcoType

VNPA supporters, donors and partners

The VNPA acknowledges and thanks our key supporters, donors and partners for their generous support.

Donors:

The following subfunds of the Australian Communities Foundation:
Alf and Meg Steel Fund
BB & A Miller Fund
Melliodora Fund

The Arnold Foundation

The Dara Foundation

Equity Trustees Limited

Field Naturalists Club of Victoria

Gras Foundation Trust

Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife

The Ian Potter Foundation

Rowe Family Foundation (Perpetual)

Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

Parks Victoria

Port Phillip and Westernport

Catchment Management Authority

Project partners:

bankmecu

Bendigo and District Environment Council

Ecology Australia

Environment East Gippsland

Environmental Justice Australia

Friends of Bunyip State Park

Geelong Environment Council

Grow West

Hindmarsh Landcare Network

Museum Victoria

Practical Ecology

Preserve Westernport Action Group

The Wilderness Society

The University of Melbourne

Volunteering Western Victoria

Westernport & Peninsula Protection Council

Wombat Forestcare