



In our 60th anniversary year we remember founders like first VNPA President Philip Crosbie Morrison, here (left) at Mt Buffalo National Park, 1957. Photo: DSE

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

My term as President is coming to an end after four and a half years at the helm and five on Council. It has been an immensely rewarding time for me.

When I began my term I was blessed to find many capable and willing hands with me on Council. In particular, Libby Smith has brought us fantastic knowledge and enthusiasm in the key marketing area, and Russell Falvey gave staunch support, experience and enormous time to the finance field.

Charles Street had taken on the time-consuming job of Secretary, and I have never met anyone with such a strong work ethic and sense of perfection. Together we set up a broader and more inclusive committee structure to oversee the VNPA's development.

Within a month we were fortunate to have Matt Ruchel commence as Executive Director. Matt's knowledge of the politics surrounding the environment, plus his management skills, took the VNPA to the next level.

Two other Councillors I wish to pay tribute to are John Renowden, with his incredible passion and ear for grass-roots environmentalism, and Maelor Himbury, who has never missed a Council meeting and who provides a critical coordinating and research role.

Fred Gerardson President



Within the first year we had produced the 2020 Strategic Plan. There followed sub-strategies for Fundraising and Marketing, Community Education and Engagement, Branding (including a new logo and tagline) and Communications. We also overhauled the Constitution, by-laws and Governance policies.

The final step in the planning process has been the updating of the VNPA's conservation policies and the commissioning of our fourth Nature Conservation Review. The former is complete and the latter will be finished within the next year, both under the able guidance of Russell Costello. They will underpin our environment objectives in the next decade.

The Communications Strategy in particular is set to make our member and supporter activity take off. This is a very exciting time to be part of the VNPA!

But it doesn't mean that the job is done or that the future will take care of itself. A key fact is that membership fees and donations from members only contribute

around 10-15% of our budget.

However, maintaining the office, and developing and distributing our publications and other communications, takes about 50% of our budget, and all our campaign staff rely on hard-to-get philanthropic funds for their positions, hampering our ability to respond to all the challenges we face.

For the VNPA to continue to prosper in these difficult financial times, it is incumbent on our members and supporters to cover a greater share of the financial load. In saying that, Council is committed to keep membership fees to a minimum, and to rely on those who can to donate the funds we need to prosper.

With a regular donation of \$25 per month under our 'Giving Naturally' program, you will help cover our core costs and enable us to employ campaigners to respond to issues, and an activities coordinator to assist the hard-working events committees.

This is the final frontier to 'building our capacity'. You should receive a phone call soon to discuss this program further; otherwise, please just call the office on 9347 5188 and sign up today.

The VNPA is the leading voice for nature conservation in Victoria. Please join me in continuing the legacy built over the past 60 years. And thank you for giving me the opportunity to be part of it.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

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

- Russell Bowey (BWAG Convenor)
- Libby Smith (Membership & Marketing)
- Ann Buik (Executive, Education & Events, Membership & Marketing)
- Ann Birrell (Governance, Policy & Legal)
- Andrew Dodd (Membership & Marketing)

- Euan Moore (Conservation)
- Maelor Himbury (Membership & Marketing, Education)
- John Renowden (Conservation)

Note: Committee memberships in brackets

VNPA ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

In the VNPA's 60th year, it is a great privilege to lead such a successful organisation and to reflect on the past.

From time to time (like now) we have to spend time holding the line, defending past achievements.

We do our best to monitor and respond to state and federal government conservation-related policy and action at a strategic level, but attempt to stay grounded as well and respond to conservation issues and debates around the state.

Progress on new initiatives to protect the environment is difficult at this time, but while responding to issues we have continued to strengthen the organisation.

Naturally aware community

We continued to implement the Community Engagement and Education Strategy developed last year, with a consultancy on improving our education program nearing completion. Our citizen science and community engagement programs, NatureWatch and Reef Watch, are going from strength to strength.

NatureWatch continued to run and support activities on grassland threatened species, and began a new Yam Daisy monitoring project. Our Caught on Camera project was launched in Wombat Forest and Bunyip SP, involving a number of new volunteers.

Reef Watch continued its popular Sea Science seminars, the Great Victorian Fish Count (over 320 divers participating) and Feral and In Peril monitoring projects, and received the prestigious Education Award for 2012 from the Victorian Coastal Council.

Grow West and Project Hindmarsh: in 2011, some 250 VNPA volunteers planted more than 20,000 trees and shrubs in these on-going projects.

Nature conservation

What a year! The VNPA football team has spent a lot of time with the ball in the back line, working on our tackling and zone defence.

EMPLOYEES

- **Executive Director:** Matt Ruchel.
- **Fundraising & Marketing Manager:** Emily Clough (to March 2012 maternity leave).
- **Direct Marketing Officer:** Maxine Hawkins.
- **Fundraiser:** Lara Hookham (from February 2012).
- **Communications & Marketing:** Ann Strunks (from February 2012).
- **Finance & Operations Manager:** Shanti Fowler.
- **Administration & Membership Officer:** Amy Dyer (to June 2012 maternity leave).

Matt Ruchel Executive Director



Conservation policy vacuum: the Baillieu Government has been gradually undermining key conservation measures, beginning with the return of cattle to the Alpine NP under the guise of science – finally blocked by the federal environment minister in January 2012.

Parks under threat: the proposal to establish a Murray River Park linking the major red gum national parks was dropped, and areas open for firewood collection in Barmah NP extended to 2015. We have been monitoring plans for large-scale 'ecological thinning' (logging) in these parks.

The government is also reviewing restrictions on mineral prospecting and fossicking in many parks.

We continued to highlight the impacts of pest plants and animals on parks, and the need for improved management responses.

We also continue to work for the reinstatement of responsible park management plans that outline effective protection of each park's natural values.

Firewood bungle: a policy change made firewood collection free in specific state forests and led to a free-for-all, with areas cleaned out by large-scale operators, impacting on the bush and local communities and farmers who grow wood for sale.

Attacks on habitat: speculation and debate continued about opening parks up for further commercial or tourism development. Plans have also been announced to review Native Vegetation rules, and to change the native forestry strategy to lock in unsustainable long-term logging contracts.

Riverside rescue: we released a key report in July 2011 which put the case for better

management of publicly-owned riverside land currently licensed for grazing. The findings of this report were later mirrored in a Health Department report.

Seas and shores: a new VEAC marine investigation started in 2011. Although its terms of reference are restricted, it will highlight the value of our marine areas and opportunities for better protection.

We continued to work with locals against Bastion Point (Mallacoota) development proposals, and monitored other major coastal developments such as Westernport.

We were instrumental in the temporary protection of the Blue Groper, with permanent protection likely.

Fire ecology: in October 2011 we held a successful fire symposium with the Royal Society of Victoria, where issues around the damaging 5% burning target for public land were fully discussed. We continue to fight the 5% target in the media, and with regional groups.

National environmental laws: the VNPA worked with other state NPAs for better national environmental laws, especially concerning national parks. We are deeply concerned about Gillard Government proposals to hand over national environmental approval powers to state governments.

Building a stronger organisation

This year completed the refresh of our brand and communications strategy. Our new-look *Park Watch*, available on line, will help us communicate better and ultimately build a stronger support base so we can do more to protect nature and increase nature appreciation.

Thank you!

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

- **Administration Assistants:** Charlotte Kandelaars, Irina De Loche.
- **Marine & Coastal Project Officer:** Simon Branigan.
- **Nature Watch/Community Projects Coordinator:** Caitlin Griffith; Ada Nano (to Dec. 2011).
- **Park Protection Project Officer:** Phil Ingamells.
- **Red Gum & River Rescue Project Coordinator:** Nick Roberts.
- **Reef Watch Coordinator:** Wendy Roberts.

- **Park Watch/Nature's Voice Editor & Publications Officer:** Michael Howes.
- **Victorian Naturally Alliance Project Leader:** Karen Alexander.
- **Central Victorian Biolink Project Officer:** Sophie Bickford.
- **Conservation Review Project Coordinator:** Andrew Cox.
- **Media Officer (shared with other environment groups):** Ian Kenins (to May 2012).

BUSHWALKING & ACTIVITIES GROUP

Another year and another 1800 participants enjoyed over 270 activities and events including walks, rides, kayak trips and snow trips, organised and led by our dedicated volunteers. Thanks to all participants and leaders for your support!

Among the highlights were hiking in Spain, cycling in Eastern Europe, touring NSW national parks and walking Tasmania's Overland Track and Frenchman's Cap.

Local activities ranged from snorkelling just below sea-level to skiing a metre above Bogong; from the Mallee to Gippsland and from multi-day hikes to therapeutic strolls.

Encouragingly, a record number of child members discovered that Wii Walking doesn't come close to the real thing, with a rise in family-friendly walks.

Social nights

Presentations started with astro-photographer Phil Hart and his amazing selection of night sky photos and videos.

Gary van Dijk showed us Lord Howe Island; Simon Branigan and Wendy Roberts took us underwater in our own back yard.

Euan Moore presented birdlife and travels in Bali and Nusa Tenggara, Karen Alexander gave us a great introduction to Antarctica, and Basia Dziedzic took us around Iran.

We also had our annual Christmas and mid-year get-togethers. The Under 35s reinstated their monthly social nights, and while numbers were sometimes low, the cheer was high.

Conservation: BWAGers participated in activities from the classic Hindmarsh and



BWAG bike tour at Lake Mountain.

Photo: Russell Bowey

Grow West projects to Reef Watch and Clean Up the Alps. We also ran 22 of our own popular Walk, Talk and Gawks, and joined lots of NatureWatch activities.

Financial: BWAG contributed \$10,000 to VNPA, significantly up with some carry-over from the previous year.

Thank you: I'd like to thank committee members for giving their time to make all this happen. Special thanks to Lisa Sulinski, who stood down after three years as Convener but continued as Secretary until recently relinquishing this role. Tracey-Ann Hooley too is taking a break from committee work but continues to lead trips.

Other committee members Rob Argent, Terese Dalman, Gayle Davey, Geoff Durham and Kyle Matheson (Council Liaison) have all done a great job in encouraging people to 'Be Part of Nature'!

– Russell Bowey, Convener

Excursions

The Excursions Group and its volunteer leaders conducted 11 day trips in 2011-12.

In March the group celebrated its 500th excursion with a most successful day trip to Wilsons Promontory, where the VNPA's very first excursion went in 1954.

Other destinations included Portarlington, Sale, Trentham, Tarra-Bulga, Cape Schanck and Castlemaine. On these trips members enjoyed walks, picnics, photography, farmers' markets, galleries, historic homes and the company of other conservationists.

Most of the 57-seat coaches, hired from McKenzie's for the past 48 years, were fully booked. The group contributed \$9145 to VNPA, up from the previous year's \$6543 because of more participants. Many thanks to all trip leaders and everyone who came!

– Larysa Kucan, Convener

STAFF, VOLUNTEERS & COMMITTEE CONVENORS

Volunteers

- **Administration assistants:** Jill Casey, Sandra Cutts, Colette Findlay, Margaret Hattersley, Raimonne McCutchan, Graham Trigg.
- **Research assistant:** Evelyn Feller.
- **Conservation Committee:** Russell Costello, Fred Gerardson, John Renowden, Charles Street, Joan Lindros, Dr Bruce McGregor, Euan Moore, Chris Smyth, Gerard McPhee.
- **Marine & coastal:** Sharon Livermore, Christopher Pape, Nicole Noy, William Hamilton-Coates, Hugh Nugent.
- **Education kit coordinator:** Jill Casey.
- **Grow West Project:** John Stirling (Convener) and Terese Dalman, plus 17 team leaders and over 100 VNPA volunteer planters.
- **Project Hindmarsh:** John Stirling (Convener) and Terese Dalman, plus 27 team leaders and over 150 VNPA volunteer planters.
- **Grasslands:** Yasmin Kelsall, Andrew Booth

- **Firewood & grasslands assistant:** Erin Richardson.
- **Market research & advice:** Libby Smith.
- **NatureWatch team leaders & office volunteers:** Evelyn Chia, Christine Connelly, David de Angelis, Bryant Gagliardi, Luke Johnson, Marion Shadbolt, Beatrix Spencer, Allen Sun, Ned Surla.
- **Publications:** John Hutchinson, Euan Moore, Geoff Durham.
- **Nature's Voice & Park Watch mailout team:** Murray Bird, (the late) Rita Bonvicin, Pat Cooper, Betna Dryden, Jan Gay, Brian Groom, Jo Groom, Margaret Hattersley, 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:** Ann McGregor, Bruce McGregor, Libby Smith, Jeremy Press, Lea Scherl and the many people and groups associated with the Central Victorian Biolinks project, plus Victoria Naturally Alliance colleagues.

Volunteer committee convenors

- **Bushwalking & Activities Group:** Russell Bowey.
- **Caring for Nature Day:** Reg Elder.
- **Conservation & Campaigns:** Russell Costello.
- **Executive:** Fred Gerardson.
- **Excursions:** Larysa Kucan.
- **Finance:** Kyle Matheson.
- **Governance, Policy & Legal:** Fred Gerardson.
- **Membership, Marketing & Communications:** Libby Smith.
- **Community Education & Engagement Working Group:** Ann Buik.

Hosted network

- **Victorian Environment Friends Network Committee:** Maelor Himbury, Sue Wright, Michael Howes, Ray Radford, Robert Bender.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Abridged Audited Special Purpose Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2012

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 2012 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:

- Kyle Matheson, Treasurer
- Matt Ruchel, Executive Director

Dated this 16th day of August 2012

Income Statement for the year ended 30 June 2012

	2012	2011
REVENUE		
Operating Activities	\$	\$
Appeals, Donations & Bequests	914,617	764,923
Grants & Sponsorships	302,940	472,643
Membership Fees	115,045	111,070
Interest Income & Sundry Sales	123,081	107,250
Total Income	1,455,683	1,455,887
EXPENDITURE		
Employment Expenses	866,115	827,112
Campaigns, Projects, Activities & Education	180,851	345,428
Office & Administration	158,007	113,498
Printing/Publications/Web	75,764	99,371
Accommodation & Insurance	101,540	97,725
Total Expenses	1,382,277	1,483,133
OPERATING SURPLUS (DEFICIT) BEFORE TRANSFERS (TO) FROM RESERVE FUNDS	73,405	(27,247)
Transfers (to) from Reserve Funds	(72,321)	30,683
OPERATING SURPLUS AFTER TRANSFERS (TO) FROM RESERVE FUNDS	1,084	3,436

VNPA – Activities Accounts for year ended 30 June 2012

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

	2012	2011
	\$	\$
Opening Bank Account Balance	4,823	196
Income	8,425	9,964
Expenditure	(984)	(1,337)
Funds Contributed to VNPA	(10,000)	(4,000)
Closing Bank Account Balance	2,265	4,823

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

Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2012

	2012	2011
ASSETS		
Current	\$	\$
Receivables and Inventory	59,603	104,310
Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,059,966	1,179,162
Total Current Assets	1,119,569	1,283,472
Non-Current		
Fixed Assets at Written Down Value	18,909	20,396
TOTAL ASSETS	1,138,477	1,303,868
LIABILITIES		
Current	387,206	626,002
TOTAL LIABILITIES	387,206	626,002
NET ASSETS	751,271	677,866
Funded by: Association Funds	751,271	677,866
TOTAL ASSOCIATION FUNDS	751,271	677,866

SUPPORTERS, DONORS & PARTNERS

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

- The Arnold Foundation
- Australian Government's Caring for Our Country
- Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations (GVEHO)
- Hamer Family Fund, a subfund of the Australian Communities Foundation
- Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
- Loftus-Hills Trust
- Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
- Parks Victoria
- Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority
- Running Waters Fund, a subfund of the Australian Communities Foundation

- Sidney Myer Foundation
- The Dara Foundation
- The Ian Potter Foundation
- The Limb Family Foundation
- The Mullum Trust
- The Poola Foundation: Tom Kantor Fund
- The R.E. Ross Trust
- Treepot

Support and cooperation from key project partners

- Arthur Rylah Institute
- Biosis Research
- Environment Defenders Office

- Grow West
- Hindmarsh Landcare Network
- Museum Victoria
- The Royal Society of Victoria

Victoria Naturally Alliance partners

- Trust for Nature
- The Wilderness Society Victoria
- BirdLife Australia – Victoria
- Environment Victoria
- Invasive Species Council
- Bush Heritage Australia
- Australian Conservation Foundation
- Greening Australia Victoria

Photo: courtesy David Neilson