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VNPA Annual Impact Report, 2022-23

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Cover: Wild Families investigating seaweed at Point Addis Marine National Park, Wadawurrung Country. Credit: Consuelo Quevado
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Our community has been working to protect wildlife and nature in Victoria for over 70 years.

Since 1952, we've helped shape the agenda for creating and managing national parks, conservation reserves and other important natural areas across land and sea.

We work with all levels of government, scientists, and the community to achieve long-term, best-practice outcomes for nature. We provide opportunities for the community to enjoy and learn about nature through our activities and citizen science programs.

It is because of the generosity of our members, supporters, volunteers and partners that we can bring our shared vision to life. With the support of our community and generous donors we:

- Advocate for the establishment and proper management of an extensive, representative and healthy system of national parks and protected areas.
- Promote conservation of native wildlife and landscapes and defend natural areas and systems from adverse impacts.
- Foster enjoyment and interest in Victoria's natural heritage and respect for nature conservation through community involvement and education.
- Conduct and promote scientific research and investigations for the benefit of nature conservation, collaborating with people and organisations of similar purpose and interest.

“ Victoria’s national parks and other conservation reserves are a gift to our children and grandchildren, the nation and the world.

We support Traditional Owner joint-management of parks and public land and waters for conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

We advocate for conservation with thoughtful representation and achievement of results, inspiring an understanding of nature by sharing interesting and relevant information.

We set the agenda for science-led, evidence-based nature conservation in Victoria. We foster a quiet enjoyment of nature with a range of nature-based activities and experiences.

We are an inclusive community-focused organisation that encourages and enables support for and participation in nature.

VNPA acknowledges the many First Peoples of the area now known as Victoria and honours their continuing connection to, and caring for, Country. We support Traditional Owner co-management of parks and public land.

Year in review

WITH YOUR SUPPORT WE'VE COVERED A LOT OF GROUND AND MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS ON THE PROTECTION OF NATURE IN OUR STATE



End of native forest logging in the east!

In May, the Victorian Government bought forward the transition out of native forest logging in the east of the state to 1 January 2024. We've been campaigning for this outcome for decades.

For our wildlife, our community (that's you!) and colleagues across the conservation movement, the announcement couldn't have come soon enough. But the work for us doesn't stop here. While forestry in the east will end shortly, the future of our western forests will take longer.

Powerful Owl (Ninox strenua)

Keeping our parks on track

After a long, combative process, the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination – which would have irreparably damaged the fragile habitat of the Mount Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly and hectares of Cool Temperate Rainforest – was finally cancelled.



Mt Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly (Riekoperla darlingtoni). Jacob L'Huillier Lunt



Nature Stewards joins VNPA

This year we welcomed Nature Stewards into VNPA's community learning and engagement team. With a motto like 'Learn. Connect. Act', every day is one of discovery and insight.

Nature Stewards programs are taught by experts, and hosted by local councils. They connect curious people with their local habitats and wider Victorian ecosystems.



Rogue logging exposed

Under the guise of fire management and storm clean up, important forest understorey is being significantly damaged and vital trees are being sold for commercial gain. VNPA and our supporters launched a campaign condemning the practice.

Rogue logging in Wombat Forest, Wurundjeri and Dja Dja Wurrung Country. Ben Gill



David Nugent
President

The Victorian Government's announcement to end native logging (in the eastern parts of the state) by 1 January 2024 makes this a milestone year for nature conservation in Victoria. We now have an opportunity to redefine how we care for our nature in a way that supports both nature conservation, people's livelihoods, and community interests.

Over our 70-year history, the VNPA community has had a tremendous impact on nature conservation. With the end of native forest logging in sight, the next few years will be very important. We'll work to make sure our elected representatives create an evidence-based, inclusive strategy to grow our national parks and improve the protection and management of our natural heritage.

It is a pleasure to work with such a fantastic team, as we continue to work on a broad range of community engagement programs and nature conservation campaigns. I'd like to thank the Council members, VNPA team and all our supporters for your focus, commitment, and dedication.

It only takes a few hours in the bush to understand and realise the important and impactful outcomes our community delivers. Thank you for sharing and supporting our vision of Victoria as a place with a diverse and healthy natural environment protected, respected and enjoyed by all.



Matt Ruchel
Executive Director

From powerful tools to protect strange bugs, to pushing back on high-end Alpine glamping, it's been quite the year for our community.

When we first heard the announcement that the Victorian Labor Government planned to speed up the transition out of native forest logging, we were thrilled. It was a significant act of leadership by the premier for an outcome we've been working towards for many decades. However, on closer inspection, it soon became clear that while logging in the east of the state would be phased out by 1 January 2024, the future of the west was not as clear and looks like it will end at a later date.

Holding government to account and promoting institutional reforms is difficult (if not a little dry). With your support our work pushing parliament to legislate the promised suite of new central west parks continues. As you know, we're in this for the long game and are confident our dogged persistence will result in long-term protection for the living wonders of the west.

On the other side of Port Phillip Bay, we've been collaborating with local groups to gain higher protections for the little known but much revered Western Port Woodlands. And we've coordinated a diverse movement aiming for a more holistic approach to managing Western Port Bay.

It's been an exciting year for our education work, with NextGen Nature and Nature Stewards joining the ReefWatch, NatureWatch, Wild Families and Bushwalking programs. Each of our nature-based programs have grown over the last year. We've seen hundreds of people of all ages involved in a diversity of activities, including (but not limited to): setting up wildlife cameras on remote trips to East Gippsland, counting sea slugs in local rockpools, learning about algae and nature photography and bushwalking across Victoria.

Thank you for making all of this work possible!



Measuring big trees in Wellsford Forest, Dja Dja Wurrung Country. John Tjhia

Conservation of Victorian nature and protection of natural heritage



Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Zanda funerea*), Marengo, Gabadanud Country. James White

Protecting, defending and restoring nature

STRIVING FOR A WORLD-CLASS AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PROTECTED AREAS



Greater Glider (*Petauroides volans*). Justin Cally

Mt Cole Grevillea (*Grevillea montis-cole* subsp. *montis-cole*), Mt Cole Forest, Djab Wurrung Country. David Tatnall



Legislating the central west national parks

Your support has made it possible for us to keep a close eye on what's happening in the forests and woodlands of the central west.

It's been over two years since the Andrews Government promised to create the new Wombat-Lerderderg, Mount Buangor and Pyrenees national parks. We've spent the last year keeping up the pressure on our elected representatives to prepare legislation for the parks.

We had only just revealed a surprising number of Greater Gliders in the proposed Wombat-Lerderderg National Park when the Federal Government moved them from Vulnerable to Endangered on their threatened species list. Protecting the habitat of the gliders in Wombat Forest is now, more than ever, a matter of urgency. We've continued surveying these forests, worked closely with local groups to share our findings and made sure they are followed up with real conservation efforts.

Coming six years after being listed as Vulnerable, their change in status highlights the rapid (but preventable) decline of this unique creature. With your support we continue to seek the highest protection for Victoria's western-most populations of Greater Gliders.

We've been successful in gaining a commitment from the Andrews Government to create new parks and

phase out native forest logging in the east. But we're still finding industrial-like salvage operations in the west, in future national parks.

Alongside the push for legal protection we've been out monitoring rogue logging by state-run agencies. We've revealed instances where VicForests' biodiversity surveys have failed to detect threatened plants and wildlife. We've also conducted field assessments that demonstrate how often they neglect to use legally required protections. We've been raising red flags in the Cobaws and in Wombat, Mt Cole, Pyrenees and Wellsford.

We've been working with local groups and media to bring attention to ongoing fire prevention and 'clean up' works. Our key concern is that the work forest fire agencies are doing is often indistinguishable from intensive logging practices. At Mt Cole, we're supporting a new Friends group; we toured independent members of federal parliament around Wombat Forest; and in the Pyrenees, we continued surveying for threatened wildlife.

Until the government legislates these parks, the wonders of the west are at serious risk. With your support we'll continue to defend these special places and the wildlife and communities that depend on them.

vnpa.org.au/central-west

Protecting wildlife habitat in the Dandenong Ranges National Park

Late last year, we discovered nefarious operations in the Dandenong Ranges National Park. We soon confirmed that Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV) is working with VicForests to salvage logs from the park.

Under the guise of fire management and clean-up, these unprecedented operations involved removing fallen trees (the least flammable parts of the storm-impacted forest). We documented Powerful Owls in the proposed logging areas, whilst others have recorded Yellow-bellied Gliders, Greater Gliders and Sooty Owls in the landscape.

When the use of fire management legislation to override national park and conservation laws began to gain

traction, we worked at a local and state level to query what seemed simply like exploitation of natural weather events for profit. We united with local partners to report our findings back to their elected representatives with recommendations for policy change.

We called on the Federal Environment Minister to investigate the logging operations for possible non-compliance with national nature laws (EPBC Act). With your support, our intensive investigations continue to reveal a lack of direct regulation or oversight of salvage logging being conducted in the name of fire prevention.

vnpa.org.au/rogue-logging-our-special-places



Cement Creek, Yarra Ranges National Park, Wurundjeri Country. Meghan Lindsay

Keeping development out of national parks

We're seeing a serious escalation in attempts to privatise our national parks and protected areas for profit. Too often the exploitation of our precious natural places and wildlife comes from our own government and its agencies.

With our independence, history and extensive knowledge of land tenure and policy, we are uniquely placed to intervene and defend the integrity of our special places.

Your support meant we were able to call on the Victorian Government to protect the integrity of this natural wonder from unnecessary harm.

vnpa.org.au/warburton-bike-tracks

Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing

For many years we've has been raising serious concerns about the proposed Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing. When Parks Victoria released their master plan to build privately-operated luxury huts, our team developed a comprehensive campaign to tackle this misguided attempt to privatise the Alpine National Park.

We coordinated a community response to the public consultation for the crossing that generated online and print media. Through a series of stakeholder meetings, education resources and communications, we highlighted the negative impact the plan would have on the alpine landscapes and wildlife. We created opportunities for our supporters and the public to advocate against large-scale construction that would forever compromise the natural and cultural heritage of Victoria's high country.

While this campaign is not over, our hard work protecting these parks is a reminder of how vigilant we must be when defending nature in Victoria. And it highlights the need for early and clear assessment of any proposal that seeks to develop or commercialise our protected natural areas.

vnpa.org.au/stop-alpine-park-development

Blake Nisbet, Nature Conservation Campaigner, in an area proposed for rogue logging, Dandenong Ranges National Park, Wurundjeri Country. Meghan Lindsay





Early Nancy (*Wurmbea dioicea*), Evans St Grasslands, Sunbury, Wurundjeri Country. *Jessie Borrelle*

Guarding our grasslands

With your help, we spent much of last year highlighting the endless failures of government to protect our ancient grasslands.

We're pleased to continue hosting the Grassy Plains Network (GPN). This partnership is enormously beneficial for our critically endangered Victorian grasslands.

Together we raised the profile of grasslands, appearing on ABC News, and on radio and in print, highlighting illegal clearing and gross mismanagement.

We worked closely with the GPN to stop the gratuitous clearing of Ajax Road Grassland and Section G Grassland in Cairnlea. Their efforts for Ajax Road paid off, with a victory at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

We've held all levels of government to account and made submissions to planning panels, Environmental Effects Statement hearings, and senate inquiries. We were proud to support the listing of

the tiny grassland predator, the Fat-tailed Dunnart, as Vulnerable.

We developed community educational materials on the importance of our grasslands, including, through a Parks Victoria grant, videos for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. We ran tours and talks and brought together the wider grassland activist community.

With your support, we'll continue to track what's happening at the 36 Conservation Areas in Melbourne's growth corridors and push for active protection of the last high-quality grasslands in the Melbourne region.

The grassy plains that are the focus of so much of our time are routinely abused, ignored, dumped on, congested with weeds and missing many of the glorious plants and critters that can make them so amazing. We are progressing the protection and awareness of this troubled but tenacious ecosystem.

vnpa.org.au/grasslands

Paddle boarder, Western Port Bay, Bunurong Country. *Julian Meehan*



Greater marine protection

Two decades of Victoria's marine national parks and sanctuaries

In 2022, we celebrated 20 years of Victoria's marine national parks and sanctuaries, marking an important moment to celebrate the parks and people who continue to care for these special places.

Together with local friends groups and Parks Victoria, we celebrated the marine champions who snorkel, dive, survey, and fend off threats to the marine life that call them home.

However, this considerable achievement urgently needs upgrading if our unique marine ecosystems are to be secured into the future. Victoria now needs to revise the 5.3 per cent protection to the global standards of 30 per cent protection, a goal VNPA remains committed to.

vnpa.org.au/marine-parks

Act for Western Port Bay

Our bold new plan to protect Western Port Bay and support sustainable marine and tourism industries gained momentum during the year 2022-23.

We grew the number of supporters, with over 60 local businesses, community groups, committees of management, the four local councils, Traditional Custodians and local MPs now backing this new vision. As the growing threat of inappropriate industrialisations continues to risk this internationally important wetland, our alliance is focused on getting the state government to publicly support and fund the Western Port Bay Framework.

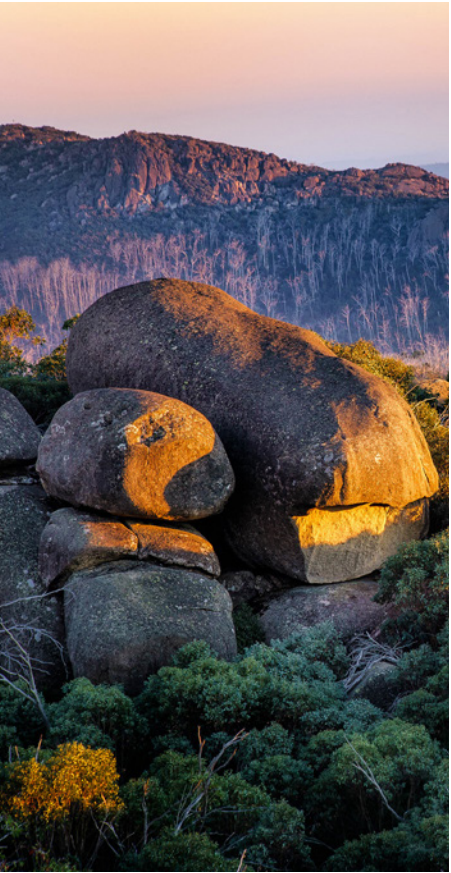
With the Port of Hastings earmarked to supply the offshore wind industry, it is essential proper spatial planning is used so marine habitats and wildlife are not sacrificed in the transition to renewable energy.

www.actforwesternportbay.au



Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea major*), Western Port Woodlands, Grantville, Bunurong Country. *Hartley Tobin*

Mahomet's Tomb, Mt Buffalo National Park, Taungurung Country. *dutchy42/flickr*



Western Port Woodlands

The much-loved Western Port Woodlands are the largest remnant of intact coastal woodlands in the region, but currently they are under threat from industrial sand mining.

The Gurdies and Grantville Nature Conservation Reserves that make up part of the woodlands are home to Grass Trees, tree ferns and 54 different species of orchids. Wildlife includes the Powerful Owl, Lace Monitor and marsupials such as the Common Wombat, Black Swamp Wallaby, Eastern Grey Kangaroo and the Bobuck (thought to be locally extinct but rediscovered in 2005).

Together with local groups Save Western Port Woodlands and the South Gippsland

Conservation Society, we gave and organised extensive expert evidence to the state government's Distinctive Areas and Landscapes (DAL) plans for the area. We put forward the case for better planning controls for the area to the DAL hearing panel. We engaged ecologists, mycologists, botanists and planning experts to help push for science-led future protection of the woodlands.

We want protection for this important wildlife corridor, home to endangered animals like Southern Brown Bandicoots, Long-nosed Bandicoots and Powerful Owls, and the extraordinary Tea-tree Fingers fungus.

vnpa.org.au/western-port-woodlands

Strengthening our nature laws

Parks and protected areas with comprehensive plans and resources thrive. Not only as habitats for threatened plants and wildlife, but as places of connection and inspiration for people. This is a core part of the work we do on behalf of our community and nature.

In March 2023, we nominated the habitat of the Mount Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly for protection under one of Victoria's never-used-before nature laws. A Critical Habitat Determination makes it possible to protect areas that are essential to the survival of threatened plants, animals

and communities. Until now this tool been completely neglected, and we are yet to see its full powers in play. If approved, this would be a game-changer for the future of the Mount Donna Buang Stonefly. It could set a major precedent for the protection of threatened wildlife in Victoria.

VNPA contributed to the reform of our national environmental laws (the EBPC Act), and continues to monitor proposed reforms to the state Wildlife Act, public land review and other regulations.

vnpa.org.au/campaigns/critical-habitat

Reducing the impacts of feral species

Invasive plants and animals continue to drive ecosystem decline across Victoria. We have been active in advocating for sound and science-based management through submission writing, participating in roundtables and working with Traditional Owners about their concerns.

We have been an active member of the Victorian Deer Control Community Network, and a consistent and guiding voice in the writing of the Victorian Deer Control Strategy. We pushed hard for stronger targets and more resources to

manage, and, where possible, eradicate feral deer across Victoria.

We have also drawn attention to the impacts of feral horses in the Alpine National and Red Gum parks. This included a detailed submission into the impacts and management of feral horses in the Australian Alps. And we participated in the launch of the Decade of Biosecurity, which will place the spotlight on the importance of biosecurity, and attended and submitted to the Victorian Biosecurity Strategy Consultation.



68
site investigation visits



28
investigation reports to agencies

Shaping the agenda

Our campaign staff formulate policy, collect and analyse data, and collate maps and tables for our strong, science-based responses to government inquiries, plans and proposals.

The key submissions we delivered to government in 2022-23 were:

Future uses of our forest and Immediate Protection Areas: Strathbogie Ranges and Mirboo North

We highlighted our concerns with the purposes and historic uses of Forest Parks, outlining opportunities and commenting on specific forest areas.

Impacts and management of feral horses in the Australian Alps

Submission included an aim for a horse-free Alps across all public lands by 2050, and strengthening the legislation for threat abatement planning.

Inquiry into Victoria's recreational native bird hunting arrangement

We shared our position that duck hunting should end because of the steep decline in duck populations, wounding, death and disturbance of threatened birds, and damage to wetlands.

Land Management Plan – Wilsons Promontory and surrounding parks and reserves

We noted the growing threats of climate change, invasive species and rising visitor numbers are causing a decline in the ecological health of the park, wildlife decline, and an overall loss of park values.

Mackenzie Falls/Migunang wirab revitalisation project

Our submission discussed how this is an example of a park being loved to death, with native wildlife and habitats being degraded.

Mount Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly critical habitat determination

We made a successful critical habitat determination nomination to the scientific advisory committee and DEECA Secretary.

National Feral Deer Action Plan

Deer are an immediate and growing threat to Victoria's national parks and natural areas, and will cost the state more than \$2 billion over the next 30 years.

New draft management plan for the South-east Marine Parks Network

We strongly supported expanded marine sanctuary protection for the South-east Marine Parks Network.

Offshore wind transmission roadmap

Our submission to the Victorian Transmission Investment Framework Preliminary Design declared our belief that sustainable energy needs sustainable planning.

Wilsons Promontory Revitalisation #2

VNPA voiced concerns about the overall lack of detail in the draft designs survey for visitor areas, accommodation and park interpretation.



Beach at Wilsons Promontory, Bunurong and Gunaikurnai Country. Zac Porter



Inspiring and enabling Victorians to love and protect nature through obtaining deep knowledge, experience and the ability to act

Setting up a wildlife camera in the Wombat Forest, Wurundjeri and Dja Dja Wurrung Country. Sandy Scheltema

Getting into nature

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE HAVE COME TOGETHER TO PROTECT, RESPECT AND ENJOY NATURE



Setting up wildlife cameras, Cabbage Tree Creek Flora Reserve, Gunaikurnai Country. *Sera Blair*



Success in the Sea Slug Census, San Remo Bridge, Bunurong Country. *Consuelo Quevado*



Merri-bek and Moonee Valley Nature Stewards graduates, Wurundjeri Country. *Charlotte Napper*



NextGen Nature weekend trip to East Gippsland, Gunaikurnai Country. *Consuelo Quevado*



Wild Families algae activity day, Point Addis Marine National Park, Wadawurrung Country. *Martin Griffith*



Bushwalking Program in the Dandenong Ranges National Park, Wurundjeri Country. *Darren McClelland*

NatureWatch

OUR LAND-BASED CITIZEN SCIENCE PROGRAM

In our eleventh year of wildlife monitoring in Bunyip State Park, we deployed wildlife cameras at 20 research sites across the park and ran four spotlighting evenings to survey possums and gliders. We ran two Community Discovery Days with guided bird, wildflower and fungi walks, Wild Families activities, guides for wildlife monitoring at home and art activities where the nature around us inspired art projects. Life After Fire ran its final year of fieldwork in East Gippsland conducting a range of wildlife surveys (cameras, audio, spotlighting, scats) at ten sites from Swift's Creek to Nunniong, Mitchell River and Colquhoun. Joined by our intrepid volunteers, we explored the forests, getting to know their habitat values and conservation challenges while sharing our skills and knowledge. The outcome being interesting and valuable adventures that were always great fun!

vnpa.org.au/naturewatch

“Joining NatureWatch expeditions has taken us to beautiful national parks and taught us techniques for surveying wildlife... We will always remember the first time we saw a Greater Glider when spotlighting.” DAVID AND KAYE

ReefWatch

OUR MARINE CITIZEN-SCIENCE PROGRAM

ReefWatch ran 15 events to entice people to take a closer look and learn more about Victoria's marine life. Our partners ran an additional 62 events to count fish across the state and remove over 4,000 invasive Wakame (*Undaria pinnatifida*) plants which ended up as dinner for some and fertiliser for many. People also contributed their time and over 10,000 images to our Marine Life of Victoria iNaturalist project which now has over 30,000 images of 1,456 marine species. This huge effort helps everyone that wants to learn more about marine life in Victoria. ReefWatch continues to be the state's leading marine citizen science program that invites people to 'take a dive that counts'. Over 500 people carried out 51 surveys of fish along the coast on the Great Victorian Fish Count, with almost 300 people taking part in our Sea Slug Census, and 200 submitting images.

vnpa.org.au/reefwatch

“ReefWatch introduced me to citizen science... and created a greater purpose in my hobby, adding another enjoyable aspect to it.” JEREMY

Nature Stewards

SHORT COURSES CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH THEIR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Nature Stewards joined the VNPA family in January 2023, having previously been run through Outdoors Victoria. The program promotes environmental literacy and stewardship of nature through discovery, action, and ongoing learning. It directly supports participants in training and volunteering, thereby generating benefits for the wider community and the environment. Run and funded in cooperation with local councils across the state, Nature Stewards is a 6 to 10 week course of study and fieldwork. It connects curious people with their local and wider habitats, establishing great ways to gain knowledge, learn practical skills and meet like-minded others in the local community.

vnpa.org.au/naturestewards

“I felt incredible moved when I found this course online and my expectations were met and so much more. I feel like I have been in another world every weekend – one that I want more of.” SELINA

NextGen Nature

INSPIRING YOUNG ADULTS TO EXPERIENCE NATURE

NextGen Nature (previously called the Youth Team) is an evolving VNPA project that aims to inspire, mobilise and empower young adults (mostly between 18 and 35 years old) to love and protect nature. NextGen runs diverse, accessible, and fun events with hands-on experiences and upskilling opportunities. This program is led by young adults through the NextGen Nature Collective which is made up of a coordinator and eight young adult volunteers. Over the past year, NextGen members have been snorkelling to record fish on the Great Victorian Fish Count, taken a three-day expedition to East Gippsland on the Life After Fire Project, organised a Lyrebird walk and participated in a webinar on science communication in conservation.

vnpa.org.au/nextgennature

“I liked the skills and information I gained that I can take out into my own bushwalking and future volunteering.”

Wild Families

HELPING FAMILIES TO ENJOY, DISCOVER, LEARN ABOUT AND LOOK AFTER NATURE TOGETHER

Our Wild Families got out and about on a range of activities this year. Parents and children joined us for expeditions to experience the worlds of algae, fungi, sea slugs, grasslands, wildflowers, birds in places such as Point Addis Marine National Park, San Remo and Bunyip State Park. They also had the opportunity to learn about the Yarra River/Birrarung, and First Nations experience and connection to this special river on a learning experience led by Koori Heritage Trust. Our autumn 2023 Wild Families activity sheet was all about families discovering and learning about fungi together. Did you know that some fungi glow in the dark?

vnpa.org.au/wild-families

“I really liked making artwork out of seaweed and I really liked finding all different types of seaweed and all the different colours. I also really liked all the cool facts.” SAM, AGE 10



Bushwalking Program

FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE VICTORIA'S GREAT OUTDOORS, GETTING OUT AND ABOUT IN NATURE AND MAKING NEW FRIENDS

Over 2022-23, volunteer bushwalking leaders have taken people walking to waterfalls, amongst wildflowers, along the coast, through rocky outcrops and to nature-based suburban areas. We also learnt new environmental photography and birdwatching skills, took a scar tree walk with Koori Heritage Trust, got creative on an 'art walk' and pulled weeds at Mount Clear in western Victoria. All of this has happened while we've been giving the program a refresh behind the scenes, including new registration processes, an integrated calendar of events and a new name and tagline: Let's get into nature!

vnpa.org.au/bushwalking-program

“I love leading bushwalks with VNPA. It's an opportunity to get into nature, while showcasing some of the spectacular natural locations and habitats in Victoria. I do really enjoy showing others these places and nature.” DOUG





A strong independent and influential community-based organisation that continues to grow and empower our supporters

Telling nature's story

OUR COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS AND MATERIALS SHARE VALUABLE INFORMATION, INSPIRE AND EDUCATE, AND GIVE OUR COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP PROTECT NATURE AND WILDLIFE

Wind the clock back 300 years and you might be surprised to see much of the Country we know as Victoria was blanketed in grassy plains of wildflowers. And living in these native prairies were Bettongs and Bandicoots, along with native mice, lizards and several kinds of wallaby. It's true, and it took only 200 years to almost destroy these incredible habitats. Now most grassland plants and animals are endangered and nearly all native mammals that once made their homes in grasslands are extinct.

Telling the story of nature in Victoria is enchanting, and confronting. Our small team brings to life the many challenges and opportunities we have to help nature become more resilient, respected and protected.

The hard graft our campaigners do out in the field, in conference calls and meeting rooms is transformed into media releases, articles, supporter emails and social media stories. Their analysis, reports and investigations become updates in our print and online membership magazine *Park Watch*, which is also dispatched to state and federal MPs.

Our staff are called upon by journalists, educators, colleagues and policymakers for insights and expertise. This year we published comments, statements and positions in dozens of media stories, with appearances on television and radio. We delivered high-capacity webinars and briefings on the end of native forest logging, our new framework for Western Port Bay and the deconstruction of the 2023 State of the Environment Report.

We conducted powerful pre-election polling to complement our work putting nature conservation issues on the agenda of decision-makers. The results affirmed the important role we play in advocating for greater protections of our natural heritage. It showed support for existing and new national parks (86 per cent of Victorians), along with

support for comprehensive policies, programs and laws to stop extinction of local plants and animals (83 per cent of Victorians) continues to soar.

We believe that the community should be able to understand, engage with and contribute to discussions and decisions on how nature is managed and looked after in our state. Much of our time is spent translating technical language into plain English. If information that drives decisions for nature is buried in bureaucracy, fewer people will become involved in nature conservation. We need as many people as possible to use their voice, time and love for our land, sky, waters and wildlife. We simply won't be able to achieve our goals of protecting, defending, and restoring nature without you.

By offering guidelines, resources and workshops on key submissions, we made sure our community and beyond were empowered and informed on important issues. These ranged from new mountain bike trails in the Yarra Ranges National Park to feral horse impacts on our Alpine National Park to how to contribute to draft management plans for landscapes like Wilsons Promontory.

Elected representatives and Parks Victoria were sent thousands of unique messages. They heard from people who want to see invasive species removed so native wildlife can recover. From people who want them to listen to the science and not to the pressures of damaging industries and lobby groups. From people who want their decision-makers to use their power to build resilience to a warming climate, to end native forest logging and habitat destruction, and to strengthen the laws that protect nature. They heard from thousands of people in our community, in their emails, on their phones, in their post boxes.

And they will continue to. Thank you for being in this with us.



L-R: *Park Watch* #292 (June 2023), #291 (March 2023) and #290 (Nov 2022). Cover images: David Tatnall, Hanna Geeson, Sandy Scheltema




Executive Director, Matt Ruchel, interviewed on ABC News 24 on Tuesday 13 June 2023.



Parks and Nature Campaigner, Jordan Crook, speaking during the End of Native Forest Logging webinar, June 2023.



178
pages of *Park Watch*



5000+
postcards sent to politicians



13,197
actions taken by our community

Wild Families' Birdwatching for Beginners at Coburg Lake, Wurundjeri Country. *Jessie Borrelle*



In November 2022, we designed and distributed a set of 'protect nature now' corflute signs to make sure nature issues were visible and on the agenda of ministers and members of parliament. The signs focussed on six strategic areas of our work using eye catching visuals and linked information. Supporters and members placed hundreds of our signs in windows, yards (and even on bicycles) across Victoria.

Design & illustration: Jessie Borrelle, Jacob L'Huillier Lunt



MPs and key ministers were asked to act on issues such as rogue logging, the Western Port Bay framework, and protecting Wellsford Forest. Hundreds of postcards were signed and sent off by our members, supporters and friends.

Images: Hanna Geeson, Justin Boord, Celeste de Vis



We published an open letter in local papers across the Yarra Ranges and in the electorate of the then minister for planning, Lizzie Blandthorn. The letter, signed by over 13 nature groups and thousands of individuals, called on the Victorian Government to protect the integrity of this natural wonder.

Jessie Borrelle

Thank you

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF OUR COMMUNITY. TOGETHER WE'LL CONTINUE TO GO ALL OUT TO PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF OUR SPECIAL PLACES, AND THE NATIVE WILDLIFE THAT RELY ON A HEALTHY, RESILIENT NATURE FOR THEIR SURVIVAL

Our work protecting Victoria's natural places is only possible thanks to the generosity of our wonderful donors and philanthropic supporters

We would especially like to acknowledge the following generous supporters.

- The Arnold Foundation

Caroline Durré Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation

Dominic & Anne Gallace Family Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation

EC Curwen-Walker Charitable Trust

Fairer Futures Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation

Gras Foundation Trust

Helen Macpherson Smith Trust

Isaacson Davis Foundation

JRA Support Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation

Landcare Australia
- Loftus-Hills Fund, a charitable fund account of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

Malcolm Shore

Melliodora Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation

Meta Lazarus Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation

Ros & Elsie Garnet Memorial Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation

S.T.A.F. – Allan Sisson and Vera McMahon Donation

Victorian Government

Dr William N. Holsworth

Bequests

VNPA acknowledges the generosity of those who have given via a gift in their Will:

- Estate of Charles McCowan Roxburgh
- Estates of Loretta and Sidney David Forsey
- Estate of Violet Elaine Harding
- Estate of Bruce Ewen Malcolm Miller
- Estate of Thomas Reidy
- Estate of Janna L Thompson
- Estate of Wallis Jenkyn
- Estate of Merle Evelyn Stewart
- Estate of Monica (Jill) Casey
- Estate of William Finighan
- Estate of Thomas Reidy
- Estate of Mary Julie Chandler OAM
- Estate of Judith Rutherford



Red-capped Robin (Petroica goodenovii). Chris Tzaros

My legacy: Libby Smith

I have been a bushwalker all my adult life and am passionate about the need to protect our natural environment. National parks are where I spend much of my leisure time, where I seek renewal and where I am often awed by the beauty of the natural world. Yet national parks are continually threatened, whether it be by inappropriate development or by invasive and feral species.

I came to be involved with VNPA in 2005 to support their efforts to have national parks better protected and extended. Over the years since I have been a member of VNPA Council and the Convener of the Marketing and Community Engagement Committee, so I have seen how the organisation works from the inside.

Since I left these roles, I have continued to financially support VNPA because I know that, for a small organisation, it is highly effective and has an amazing record of

achievements, including being at the forefront of campaigns to create new national parks (e.g. River Red Gum national parks, and the network of marine national parks and sanctuaries), working to have cattle removed from the Alpine National Park, and opposing inappropriate commercial developments in national parks, such as at Wilsons Prom in 1997.

I will continue to support VNPA and, by leaving them a gift in my Will, I hope I will help them to continue to advocate on behalf of Victoria's unique natural places and the many animals and plants that inhabit them.

vnpa.org.au/support/gifts-in-wills

“...by leaving them a gift in my Will, I hope I will help them to continue to advocate on behalf of Victoria's unique natural places.”

Thank you to our partners

We're honoured to collaborate with many other groups to advocate for nature and deliver our community engagement programs. Our key project partners are:

Alison Pouliot Photography
AMES
Andrew Robb Films
ANGAIR
Aquamarine Australia
Australian Diving Instruction
Australian Parents for Climate Action – Bellarine, Geelong, Surfcoast
Australian Plants Society (Victoria)
Barwon Estuary Project
Batesford Fyansford and Stonehaven Landcare Group
Bayplay
Bellarine Landcare
BERG Mt Martha
Birdlife Australia
Briars Native Nursery
Brunswick Community for Nature
Bunurong Coast Education
Bunurong Land Council
Cardinia Environment Coalition
City of Ballarat
City of Greater Geelong
City of Melbourne
City of Melton
City of Merri-bek
City of Moonee Valley
City of Whittlesea
Coastcare Victoria
Cool Geelong
Corangamite Catchment Management Authority
CSIRO
Daktari Surf and Dive
DEECA
Dive La Trobe
Dive2U
Diveline

East Gippsland Conservation Management Network
Entomological Society of Victoria
Environment East Gippsland
Environmental Volunteers and Agency Network (Central West)
Euroa Arboretum
Federation TAFE
Field Naturalists Club
Friends of Barwon Bluff
Friends of Bats and Bushcare
Friends of Bats and Habitat Gippsland
Friends of Bunyip State Park
Friends of Canadian Corridor
Friends of Cowies Creek
Friends of Darebin Creek
Friends of Deep Creek
Friends of Edwardes Lake
Friends of Grasslands
Friends of Harmers Haven
Friends of Kororoit Creek
Friends of Merri Creek
Friends of Mount Stirling
Friends of Ocean Grove Flora and Fauna Reserve
Friends of Plenty Gorge
Friends of Royal Park
Friends of Skeleton Creek
Friends of Sparrow Ground
Friends of the Bannockburn Bush
Friends of the Earth Melbourne
Friends of Woodlands Park
Friends of Yarowee
Friends with Honey
FunFungiEcology
Gardens for Wildlife Ballarat
Gardens for Wildlife Moonee Valley
Gecko Clan Landcare
Geelong Field Naturalists Club
Gippsland Environment Group
Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre
Holmesglen TAFE
Jawbone Sanctuary Marine Care Group
Koala Clancy Foundation
Koorie Heritage Trust
La Trobe University
Living Culture
Main Creek Landcare
Marine Care Point Cooke
Marine Care Ricketts Point
Melbourne Mermaids
Melbourne Water
Merri Creek Management Committee

Moonee Valley Sustainability
Mornington Peninsula Intrepid Landcare
Mornington Peninsula Landcare
Mornington Peninsula Scuba Dive Club
Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
Mount Cole Pyrenees Nature Group
Museums Victoria
Napoleons Enfield Landcare Group
NatureWest
Ocean Divers
Outdoors Victoria
Parks Victoria
People for a Living Moorabool
Port Phillip EcoCentre
Redmap Australia
Roxburgh Park Community Garden
Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne
Save Westerport Woodlands
Scuba Scouts
Sea All Dolphin Swims
Seeding Meliora
South Gippsland Conservation Society
Southern Brown Bandicoot Recovery Group
Southern Dandenongs Landcare Group
Southern Fauna Resources
Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association
Strathbogie Ranges Conservation
Strathbogie Shire Council
Studio Hibiscus (Liz Dalglish)
Swinburne TAFE
Taungurung Land and Waters Council
Trust for Nature
University of Technology, Sydney
Urban Bushland Initiative
Victorian Forest Alliance
Victorian Landcare Program + Melbourne Water
Victorian Sub Aqua Group
VVP Biosphere
Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
Wandoon Estate – Coranderrk Aboriginal Station
Wattle Flat Landcare
Westport Biosphere
Westgate Biodiversity – Bili nursery
Whittlesea Community Connections
Wildlife Experiences
Wildlife of the Central Highlands
Wombat Forestcare
Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation



NextGen Nature group in East Gippsland, Gunaikurnai Country, April 2023. Sera Blair

Thank you to our volunteers

Many thanks to the hundreds of dedicated volunteers who work with us to achieve so much for nature in Victoria.

Bushwalking Program

Committee members: Terese Dalman, Deb Henry, Izzy Sherrer, Eva Klusacek, Evelyn Feller, Richard Tagg.
Activity leaders: Doug Palmer, Cheryl Walker, Darren McClelland, Euan Moore, Philip Sharp, Glenn King, Larysa Kucan (coach excursions).

Campaigns

Russell Carrington, Mike Forster, Sandra Geitz, Phil Ingamells, John Kotsiaris, Tanya Loos, Bernie Mace, Euan Moore, Gayle Osbourne, Steve Platt, John Renowden, Chris Schuringa, Trevor Spiers, Charles Street, Brendan Sydes, Dr Chris Taylor, Roger Verwey, Marcus Ward.

Grassy Plains Network

Andrew Booth, Bonnie Gelman, Debbie Reynolds, Dee Smith, Emily Scicluna, Geoff Robertson, Gordon Lescinsky, Jane Canaway, John Thorpe, Katherine Horsfell, Lincoln Kern, Megan O'Shea, Paula McGlashan, Stuart McCallum, Jesse Gerger, Simon Jolly, Tim Handfield, Chris Clarke, Dylan Wishart, Ben Courtice.

NatureWatch

Thank you to the amazing volunteers who have helped us develop projects and lead our research teams in the field: Allan Milne, Baeckea Driscoll, Alex Daniel, Anita Stec, Ann Williamson, Annie Preston, Catriona King, Christina Chua, Christophe Etienne, Claire Morgan, Clare James, Daniel Chandler, Daniel Lim, Darren McClelland, Dave Archer, David Cole, Denise Rado, Dylan Coleman,

Elodie Etienne, Emily Blackburn, Emma Campbell, Erin Walser, Evelyn Feller, Geoff Lockwood, Graham Duell, Hayley Sharp, Ian Vaskess, Jason Lu, Jasper Blair, Jasper Hails, Jeffrey Preston, Jo Duthie, John Smith, José Vaskess, Julie Kidd, Karli Lycett-King, Kat Wilkie, Kathy Alexander, Katie Butcher, Kay Cole, Kirby O'Brien, Laura Conley, Lesley Haine, Linda Date, Loredana Ducco, Luke Gittings, Maddie Rafferty, Megan McIntosh, Michael Feller, Michelle Phillips, Neil Duncan, Nicci Starke, Oliver Hunt-Stapleton, Qing Cui, Rachael Moloney, Ray McMahon, Robyn Tarrant, Rose Cindric, Rujirawan Rattle, Sandra Geitz, Sarah Bryson, Sarah Dilges, Sarina Cox, Serena Gillott, Simon Robbins, Suzanne Charlton, Suzanne Lockwood, Tessa Lamin, Tina Berghella, Vic Willms, William Wong, Xavier Charlton, Yong Ly.

Nature Stewards

Ann McGregor, Bruce McGregor, Max Campbell, Lawrie Conole, Lee Harrison, Andrew Knight, Melanie von Schorlemer, Bob Prewett, Estelle Morrissey, Dianne Crawford, Tony Varcoe, Izzy Sherrer.

NextGen Nature

Annie Preston, Catherine Prentice, Eliza Shields, Kelly Van, Melissa Makarewitsch, Michael Loo, Oliver Hunt-Stapleton, Rose Cindric.

Publications & Photography

Claire Beck, Bill Blackburn, Justin Boord, Justin Cally, Stacy Chillcott, Celeste De Vis, Ed Dunens, Geoff Durham, Julian Finn, Don Garden, Carl Gardiner, Hanna

Geeson, Paul Gibson-Roy, Glenn Hilling, Phil Ingamells, Margaret Macdonald, Caleb McElrea, Darren McClelland, Julian Meehan, Samantha Metcalfe, John Miller, Jess Racklyeft, Reiner Richter, Sandy Scheltema, Ian Scholey, Emily Scicluna, Helen Scott, Harriet Searcy, Andrew Silcocks, Fran Solly, Jon Sullivan, David Tatnall, Chris Taylor, Matt Testoni, Eddie Tsyrlin, Chris Tzaros, Phil Watson, James White and many other photographers and authors.

ReefWatch

Thankyou to the ReefWatch community for contributing their time, enthusiasm and data to the Sea Slug Census, Marine Life of Victoria, Great Victorian Fish Count, and Underwater Weeding projects. Many thanks also to Bob Burn for his insights and expertise in identifying Victorian sea slugs, Consuelo Quevedo for volunteering and Melbourne University science communication students Yihong Hu, Maia Germano, Erin Theodore, Fernada Farias Zorrilla.

Research and Campaign Assistants

Hayley Forster, Conor Logan, Sarah Wingard, Alex Maisey, Meghan Lindsay and many others in the scientific and conservation community.

Student Interns

Deanne Smith, Eliza Shiels, Melissa Makarewitsch.

VNPA Committees

Mike Forster, Maelor Himbury, Greg Noonan, Izzy Sherrer, Nola Wilmot.

Our people

We are governed by a Council of elected Members and several committees who volunteer their time. They work together with our staff, volunteers and partners to protect nature and national parks.

Council

It's been a year of farewells and welcomes on VNPA Council. Our long-standing and highly respected president, Bruce McGregor, handed the reins to former Vice President David Nugent. Luckily for VNPA, Bruce remains on Council to welcome new members and continue his great work guiding the organisation. Lara Bickford stepped up as Vice President, Doug Robinson took over the reins as Secretary from Jan Brueggemeier, and Marilyne Crestias continued her excellent work as Treasurer. Long running Councillor, Ann Birrell stood down from Council as did Paul Strikland and Rosemary Race. They were replaced by Askin Morrison, Michael Young and Chris Harvey. Chris has taken over as convenor of the Governance, Policy and Legal Committee. Gerard McPhee and Michael Feller, co-convenors of the Conservation Committee, and Di Marshall and Jan Brueggemeier remained as Councillors rounding out the 12 required under our constitution. Thanks to retiring Councillors for all their good work and welcome to new Councillors.

vnpa.org.au/about/council

- David Nugent, President ^{1,2,3,4,5}
- Lara Bickford, Vice President ^{1,4}
- Marilyne Crestias, Treasurer ^{1,3}
- Dr Doug Robinson, Secretary ^{1,5}
- Dr Jan Hendrik Brueggemeier
- Dr Michael Feller ²
- Chris Harvey ^{1,5}
- Dianne Marshall ²
- Dr Bruce McGregor ^{2,3,7}
- Gerard McPhee ^{1,2}
- Askin Morrison ³
- Michael Young ²

Committees

- 1. Executive
- 2. Conservation and Campaigns
- 3. Finance
- 4. Marketing and Community Engagement
- 5. Governance, Policy and Legal
- 6. Nature Activities
- 7. Nature Stewards

Staff

Executive Director, Matt Ruchel

Campaigns

Jordan Crook, Parks and Nature Campaigner

Shannon Hurley, Nature Conservation Campaigner

Ben Gill, Nature Conservation Campaigner

Blake Nisbet, Nature Conservation Campaigner

Adrian Marshall, Facilitator Grassy Plains Network

Community Engagement

Caitlin Griffith, Community Learning and Engagement Manager

Sera Blair, NatureWatch Coordinator

Kade Mills, ReefWatch Coordinator

Dr Maddy Willcock, Nature Stewards Coordinator

Consuelo Quevedo, NextGen Nature Program Coordinator

Emma Campbell, NatureWatch Fieldwork Support Officer

Nicole Mertens, Conservation Project Officer (to Dec 2022)

Rachel Nalliah, NatureWatch Project Officer (to April 2023)

Communications

Jessie Borrelle, Digital Engagement and Communications Manager

Paul Clifton, Publications Coordinator

Jacob L'Huillier Lunt, Digital Campaign Producer

Meghan Lindsay, Community Learning and Communications Officer

Fundraising

Jane Crouch, Fundraising Manager

Amelia Easdale, Supporter Development

Kristian Lang, Philanthropy Executive

Emily Clough, Fundraising Manager (to Dec 2022)

Operations

Heath Rickard, Finance and Operations Manager

Lucy Permezel, Office Coordinator

Michelle Klaric, Accountant

vnpa.org.au/about/staff



VNPA staff at Darebin Parklands, Wurundjeri Country. Meghan Lindsay

Financial report

Abridged Audited Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2023.

Statement by Members of the Council

The Committee of the Association declare that:

- The financial statements and notes, as set out on pages 1 to 17, are in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and:
 - Comply with Australian Accounting Standards Simplified Disclosure Standard; and
 - Give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 30 June 2023 and of the performance for the year ended on that date of the Association.
 - In the Council's opinion, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Association will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.
- This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee.

Marilyne Crestias (Treasurer) & David Nugent (President) dated 21 September 2023.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023		
	2023	2022
REVENUE	\$	\$
Appeals and donations	1,255,709	1,341,471
Bequests	601,664	235,340
Grants and sponsorship	430,382	509,927
Membership Fees	79,280	79,090
Publication sales, events, outdoor activities	86,928	7,643
Interest and investment distributions	30,365	27,181
Total Income	2,484,328	2,220,652
EXPENDITURE		
Employment expenses	1,782,508	1,534,828
Campaigns, Projects, Activities and Education	217,158	273,773
Office and Administration	156,067	127,353
Printing/Publications/Web	124,747	80,906
Occupancy and Insurance	35,806	50,791
Depreciation and Amortisation expense	86,864	85,322
Other expenses	4,462	6,743
Total Expenses	2,407,612	2,159,716
CURRENT YEAR SURPLUS FROM OPERATIONS	76,716	40,936
Net gain on revaluation of other financial assets	62,499	(36,902)
Realised gain on disposal of other financial assets		(9,950)
SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	139,215	(5,916)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2023		
	2023	2022
ASSETS	\$	\$
Current		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,735,647	1,713,590
Trade and other receivables	115,976	112,198
Other financial assets	454,253	401,396
Other assets	12,729	6,769
Total Current Assets	2,318,605	2,233,953
Non-Current		
Other financial assets	0	31,884
Property, plant & equipment	43,495	45,324
Right-of-use-assets	81,080	145,945
Total Non-Current Assets	124,575	223,153
TOTAL ASSETS	2,443,180	2,457,106
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities	728,186	787,867
Non-Current Liabilities	53,833	113,861
TOTAL LIABILITIES	782,019	901,728
NET ASSETS	1,661,161	1,555,378
Funded by:		
Accumulated Surplus	416,269	521,750
Reserves*	1,244,892	1,033,628
TOTAL EQUITY	1,661,161	1,555,378

*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.

The full Independent Auditor's Report will be tabled at the 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.



VICTORIAN
NATIONAL PARKS
ASSOCIATION
Be part of nature

