



37° 53' 42"S, 145° 21' 46" E

PARK *watch*



VICTORIAN
NATIONAL PARKS
ASSOCIATION
70 years protecting nature

SEPTEMBER 2023 #293

In this issue...



BEN GILL



MATTHIAS KLAPPERSTUECK



GEOFF HEARD

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GEOFF DURHAM

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MEGHAN LINDSAY



SERA BLAIR



MICHELLE J PHOTOGRAPHY

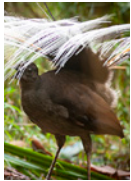
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Front cover: A male Superb Lyrebird in full mating display on in Sherbrooke Forest, Dandenong Ranges National Park, Wurundjeri Country.
MEGHAN LINDSAY

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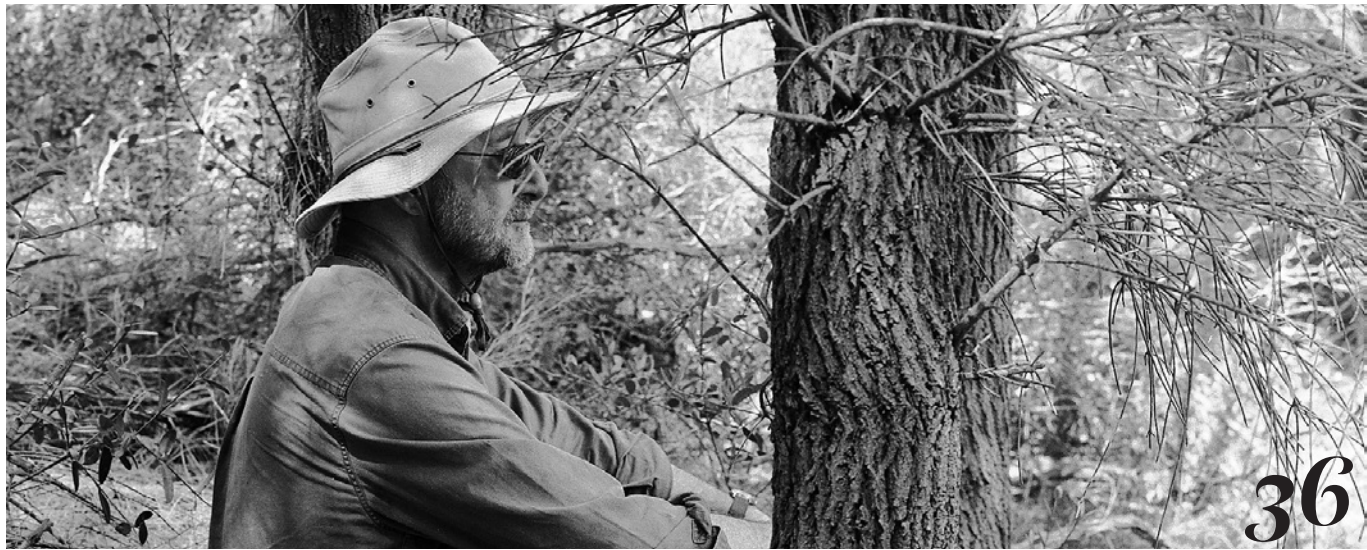
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VNPA acknowledges the many First Peoples of the area now known as Victoria, honours their continuing connection to, and caring for, Country, and supports Traditional Owner joint-management of parks and public land for conservation of natural and cultural heritage. Our office is located on traditional land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We offer our respect to Elders past, present and future.



DAVID TATNALL

From the President

Welcome to the September 2023 edition of *Park Watch*.

The government's landmark decision to cease native logging by 2024 provides a major turning-point for the growth and stewardship of our native forests and parks. Now the decision has been made, the important work must commence. The Andrews Government has the opportunity to redefine our approach to nurturing and enhancing our natural environment for the collective benefit of all Victorians.

Recognising this opportunity, the government has announced that it '... will establish an advisory panel to consider and make recommendations to government on the areas of our forests that qualify for protection as national parks, the areas of our forests that would be suitable for recreation opportunities – including camping, hunting, hiking, mountain biking and four-wheel driving – and opportunities for management of public land by Traditional Owners'.

This significant undertaking will define the future of nature conservation in Victoria. A holistic evidence-based approach, with good community consultation is necessary. Framed by the IUCN Protected Area Categories,

the process must consider all aspects of nature conservation including classification, recreational use, fire-management, conservation of the natural environment, threatened species and regeneration. All in the context of a changing climate.

We are all very shocked and saddened to learn of Phil Ingamells' sudden death. Over many decades, Phil's contribution to nature conservation has been truly remarkable.

Existing discredited agencies like VicForests should be abolished. An independent and appropriately funded and empowered agency should be given full responsibility for the implementation of both the report recommendations and the ongoing



management of our native forests and parks, including an expanded and strengthened regulator to cover all activities including fire management.

We are entering an unparalleled period of opportunity for nature conservation in Victoria. Strong community support coupled with sound evidence-based advice should encourage good government.

We are all very shocked and saddened to learn of Phil Ingamells' sudden death. Over many decades, Phil's contribution to nature conservation has been truly remarkable. Phil's passion for the environment, his integrity, friendships, gentle manner, clear thinking, encyclopaedic knowledge and dedication to facts and evidence has been the basis for his significant contribution. Phil will be sadly missed.

This is a very exciting time for nature conservation in Victoria, and this *Park Watch* edition provides a great summary of the work our fabulous VNPA team is undertaking. Thank you for your ongoing support and generosity to allow us to continue this important work.

Enjoy the Read! 🍷

David Nugent, VNPA President

What's the plan for the Prom?

WILSONS PROMONTORY LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN – PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

When we ask Victorians about their favourite national parks, Wilsons Promontory always gets a raving endorsement.

From the awe-inspiring mountain slopes to the lush rainforests and vibrant coastal heathlands, this beloved landscape is home to a vast array of native plants and animals.

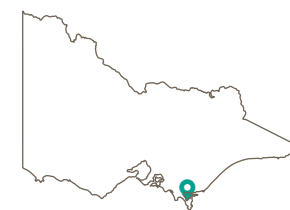
In early winter, Parks Victoria released their intent to update their Landscape Management Plan for Wilsons Prom National Park, including all of its marine parks and reserves.*

We know that parks and protected areas that have comprehensive and effective plans to look after them thrive, so our submission addressed every available opportunity to strengthen and make more ambitious the plan.

Many management plans for our parks and sanctuaries haven't been updated since the early 2000s, so this review is a rare chance to strengthen the plan with knowledge gained in the last 20 years.

The plan will oversee the creation of the Prom Sanctuary predator-proof fence across the Yanakie Isthmus. This will make Wilsons Prom National Park a sanctuary free of invasive predators, and a climate refuge, for an array of endangered and threatened wildlife.

Restoring the Coastal Grassy Woodlands at Yanakie Isthmus, in the northern section of Wilsons Prom,



We acknowledge this location is part of the unceded traditional lands and waters of the **BUNURONG AND GUNAICKURNAI** and recognise their ongoing role in caring for Country.



Wombat in Wilsons Promontory National Park, Bunurong and Gunaikurnai Country

is an amazing project between Parks Victoria, La Trobe University and Friends of the Prom. It is helping bring Banksias and Casuarinas back to the woodlands, Eucalypt canopy trees to areas impacted by successive fires and disturbance events like past logging and grazing, and removing the Tea Tree thickets that cover most of the area.

A missing aspect from the draft documents are any plans or strategies to reduce visitor pressure on the parks. Our submission suggested limiting the number of cars able to access to the park, instead using shuttle buses. Also missing are limits on times and places boats can be anchored in bays around the Prom and a ban on industrial-scale boats (including cruise ships) using Corner Inlet, the marine parks and sanctuaries.

There is a chance for Parks Victoria to release ideas and strategies to the public prior to publishing the Draft Management Plan. We believe this can help keep the public updated and informed, while also empowering them to have a say on these ideas before cementing them into a management plan.

As for our sandy and salty spaces, it is welcome to see aspirations for bringing together management of the mountains together with the extension out to sea. All the parks included have historically existed under separate management plans.

We hope this ensures that our marine environment receives no less attention, addressing some of

the most challenging management issues. Marine pest detection and management, the threats of increasing boating and cruise ship traffic, and illegal harvesting are all threatening Victoria's largest marine national park and surrounds.

The Prom is recognised as an international biodiversity hotspot, and rightly so for its playful seal colony, colourfully lined caves, sponge gardens, kelp forests, fish life and invertebrates. It is critical that the Prom's marine gems are cared for through the continuation of comprehensive and well-resourced science monitoring programs, marine education activities, and compliance efforts. 🍷

** The new Landscape Management Plan that will incorporate the Wilsons Promontory National Park, Wilsons Promontory Marine National Park, Wilsons Promontory Marine Park and Marine Reserve, Corner Inlet Marine National Park and the Seal Islands Wildlife Reserve.*

Keep up to date via email alerts about the next stages of this management plan processes

engage.vic.gov.au/wilsons-prom



Snow Myrtle in Grampians/Gariwerd National Park (Phil Ingamells)

Celebrate the life of someone special

Commemorate and celebrate the life of a loved one by making a donation to the Victorian National Parks Association.

By making a donation in memory of someone special, you are ensuring that Victoria's national parks, natural places and wildlife flourish – in memory of your loved one.

If you wish, a card acknowledging your gift can be posted to the next of kin.

To make a gift in memory, please contact Kristian via support@vnpa.org.au, or on **03 9341 6506** or download a donation form at vnpa.org.au/gifts-in-memory

If you would like to request donations to VNPA instead of flowers at a funeral or memorial service, please get in touch with our office.



The end of native forest logging is finally coming...but now for some real work



EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR, **MATT
RUCHEL**, UNPACKS
THE IMMINENT
END OF AN INTRACTABLE
INDUSTRY

It was indeed a long-awaited and welcome milestone, when on 23 May the Andrews Government announced the end of native forest logging in Victoria. This has come after decades of community struggle against the industrial logging of our native forests.

Largely unequivocal, the announcement still raises some questions about future processes and decisions still to be made.

Speeding up the transition

The Andrews Government made it clear their decision to bring forward the transition was to remove '... the uncertainty that has been caused by ongoing court and litigation process and increasingly severe bushfires ...'. They also noted that 'there are no options for regulatory reform'.

The fact is that most logging in the state's east had been on hold for six months. This was due to multiple community court cases against VicForests and the closure of the native-forest-eating white paper machine at the Opal Australia Paper mill. Combined these factors proved to be the final nails in the coffin of this widely unpopular and damaging practice.

Key points in the premier's media release included the '...transition away from native timber logging earlier than planned – by 1 January 2024'. This is an important commitment, grounded in a firm date.

Workers and industry will be supported through an \$875 million transition package that includes:

- Victorian Forestry Worker Support Program.
- Sawmill Exit Payment or Sawmill Voluntary Transition Package to compensate sawmills.

- Forestry Transition Fund to provide grants of up to \$1 million to expand, diversify or start new businesses.

Harvest and haulage (usually the machine operators who actually cut the tree down and truck drivers who take them for pulp or sawlog) were not eligible for payouts. Instead, they would be redeployed in the delivery of strategic fuel breaks, ongoing recovery works on public land and the treatment of hazardous trees in the preparation of planned burns and along critical firefighting roads and tracks.

A later statement clarified this with a Harvest and Haulage Support Package made available for forest contractors, which includes contract and equipment compensation and worker redundancy payments. Harvest and Haulage would also be eligible for Timber Innovation Grants to change sectors, with government clarifying they will continue to consult with forest contractors about retaining them for ongoing management of public land (with genuine opt-out packages available for those who choose to exit). We understand there are about 30 harvest and haulage contracts across the state.

The scope of the announcement unpacked

Warning: technical information!

The phase out was linked to 1.8 million hectares of forest covered in what's called the allocations order. This is a legal instrument under Part 3 of the *Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004*, which defines a forest area. Once the order is issued, the timber allocated becomes the property of VicForests. This is restricted to the east of the state (technically called the 'Eastern defined forest area') and logging schedules are typically called Timber Release Plans.

VicForests can only operate outside of an Allocation Order if issued a Forest Produce Licence under section 52 of the *Forests Act 1958* by the minister for the environment or delegate. This is what happens in western Victoria,

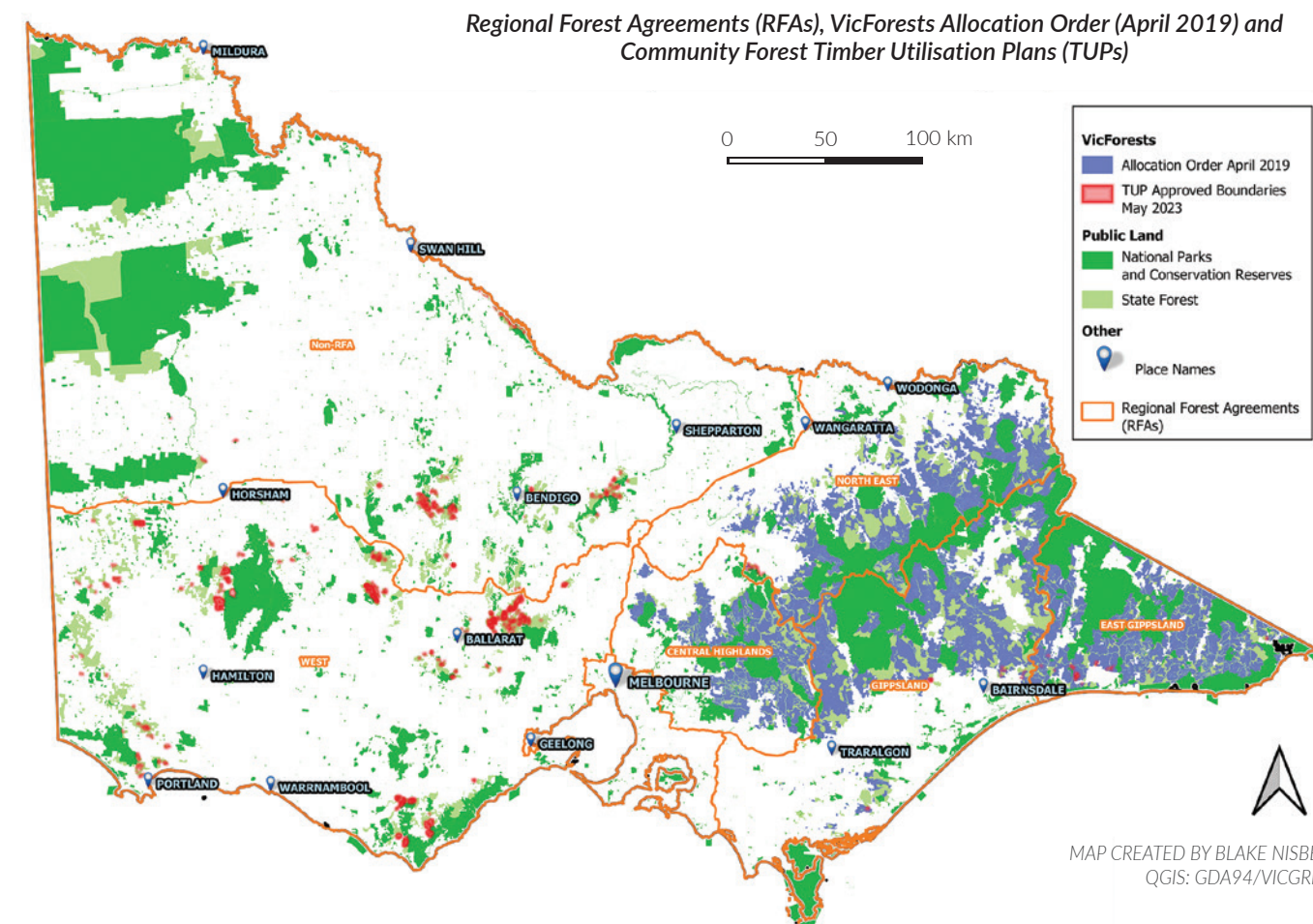
and some smaller areas in the east. The logging plans are formalised through a schedule called the Timber Utilisation Plan (TUP).

What about the west?

The current TUP covers 124 logging areas totalling approximately 65,000 hectares, in west and north, with some areas in the east bigger than Wilsons Promontory National Park. It also includes clearfell operations in Mt Cole, storm clean operations in the Wombat Forest and other logging in some of the most fragmented forests in the state (see map, opposite page).



Rogue logging in the Cobaw Ranges, Wurundjeri Country **BEN GILL**



The statement that 'The government will be required to deliver a program of land management works to manage the 1.8 million hectares of public land currently subject to the timber harvesting allocation order' leaves unanswered questions about the forests of the west, and logging under forest produce licences.

In the Victorian Parliament, Ellen Sandell, Greens Party environment spokesperson and Member for Melbourne, sought clarification about the status of the west. She directed her questions to the Minister for Agriculture, Gayle Tierney at the Public Accounts and Estimates Inquiry into the 2023-24 budget estimates on 6 June 2024.

A spokesperson for the minister responded '... they operate under a forest produce licence. There are about 50 licences that are current. Most of those will expire in the end of June next year, June 2024. They will be managed as a separate decision that needs to be made about the ongoing community forestry part of that.'

Alarm bells ring around 'community forestry' loophole

This set off alarm bells for VNPA. While this is a smaller area than the east, continuing logging in the west, and keeping in place a mechanism for logging that could be used right across the state, creates a major loophole. This is alarming as since VicForests took control of the so called 'community forestry' operation in 2014, there has been a 52 per cent increase in coupe areas listed under the TUP since 2017.

While there are currently around 55 licenses and 40 jobs, much of the forest to be logged is for low value uses like firewood. However, since 2008, sawlog extraction has increased 300 per cent in the west. So called 'Community Forestry' is taxpayer subsidised and runs at a loss. In 2021-22 revenue was \$0.5 million against a program cost of \$1.1 million with the shortfall funded by a state government grant. A familiar story of loss-making forestry.

What's more important is that native forest and woodland logging occurs in highly fragmented landscapes in some of the most cleared areas of the state. There are large numbers of threatened animals, and more nationally-listed wildlife than in the state's east. According to 2017 VNPA analysis *Western Forests & Woodlands at Risk*:

- More than 20 threatened native animals and 14 threatened native plants were found in or closely adjacent to a third of all proposed logging areas. These include Grey Goshawk, Regent Honeyeater, Little Egret, Swift Parrots, Powerful Owls, Brush-tailed Phascogales, Long-nosed Potoroos and Southeastern Red-tailed Black Cockatoos.
- Threatened wildlife has been found either within or near 33 per cent of planned logging coupes. In some forest management areas, including the Portland Forest Management Area, that figure leaps to 67 per cent.
- Seventy per cent of the area targeted for logging contains native

continued on page 8...



Pholiota communis. SANDY SCHELTEMA

vegetation types that are either endangered (19 per cent), vulnerable (11 per cent) or depleted (40 per cent). In the Horsham Forest Management Area, 54 per cent of vegetation is endangered.

We wrote our concerns in a letter to the Premier, and ministers for the Environment and Agriculture. The Minister for Agriculture clarified in correspondence that existing small-scale operations under Forest Produce Licences will continue until their expiry in June 2024. This was confirmed in a letter from the DEECA's Secretary, on behalf of the Premier and Environment Minister, assuring us that native timber logging would end in 2024, including VicForests' commercial operations under the Timber Utilisation Plan. The closure of commercial operations was also flagged in statements from VicForests.

A government announcement on 23 August 2023 saw community forestry sector become eligible for the expanded Worker Support Payments, and redundant equipment compensation, plus payments for under-supplied timber, and a one-off hardship payment.

So, while commercial forestry will end in June 2024, an intent to continue some sort of timber extraction in the forest remains. Activities like seed collection and regenerating areas after logging are cited as examples, but as yet there doesn't appear to be any firm plans.

The critical question is now: happens next and how will our forests be managed into the future. There are some who see this as way of continuing forestry, who see restoration as another form of extraction, logging under another guise. This is sometime framed as ecological logging or thinning, or even fire mitigation where wood is just a by-product and need to be used for its 'best possible use'. It all hinges on the intent, purpose and methods employed, which there are a spectrum of views and approaches.

In a world facing dramatic shifts in climate there is a need for forests and woodlands to be actively managed for ecological and cultural purposes. This requires resources, science and knowledge, and doing work that is properly monitored, evaluated, overseen and regulated.

What's next?

The government's public statement committed to '...an advisory panel to consider and make recommendations to government on the areas of our forests that qualify for protection as National Parks, the areas of our forests that would be suitable for recreation opportunities – including camping, hunting, hiking, mountain biking and four-wheel driving – and opportunities for management of public land by Traditional Owners.'

This appears to be similar to the process Eminent Panel for Community Engagement set up to consider Immediate Protected Area, such as Strathbogies and Mirboo North. This included a VEAC assessment and panel and relevant First Nations representation, to undertake community consultation and makes recommendations.

In March 2023, VEAC was requested to assess the values of the Immediate Protection Areas in the Central Highlands and East Gippsland, and adjacent state forests. A report on the values should be completed by 30 September 2023 with a final report by 30 April 2024. The area defined for assessment appears broader than the Immediate Protected Areas announced in 2019.

There is no detail on who might be involved in this panel or a timeline for its establishment, or even if the existing panel is still operating. Whatever the process they have an incredibly important job and the right mix of expertise is essential if they are to be successful.

The future of disgraced taxpayer-funded VicForests and legislation like the *Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement)*

Act 1996, (which in many ways drove unsustainable logging, particularly in the Central Highlands) is also uncertain.

To properly manage our future forests our leaders must:

- Align the phase out of 'community forestry' with the rest of native forest logging under the allocation order, by 1 January 2024.
- Liquidate/abolish VicForests by 1 January 2024.*
- Commit to no logging within the promised central west parks and IPAs, effective immediately.
- Legislate the central west parks by 1 January 2024.
- Develop and release a science-based proposal for ecological restoration and 'program of land management works' across Victoria's forest estate.
- Fast-track a qualified and well-resourced assessment process within two months to '...consider and make recommendations ... on the areas of our forests that qualify for protection as national parks...'
- Remove legislation and agreements that enable native forest destruction such as the *Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Act 1996* and the *Regional Forest Agreements*.
- Put in place regulation and independent regulatory oversight of Forest Fire Management Victoria. 🌿

**On 5 September, the government took what appears to be the first step around the future of VicForests by changing its status from a stand alone state-owned enterprise to that of a 'reorganising body'. This allows them to make changes to its constitution, governance arrangements and capital structure.*

VNPA in support of YES vote for the Voice

Next month, Australians will be asked to vote on whether to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution and establish a Voice to Parliament.

The Victorian National Parks Association strongly supports the collective call from First Nations Peoples for Voice, Treaty and Truth. We support writing Yes.

Australia is home to the oldest continuous culture on Earth. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been caring for Country for millennia, and prior to colonisation flourished sustainably on this land and surrounding seas for generations.

Recognising and respecting the knowledge, cultures, stories, and languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will help us move forward from our past and progress together towards a brighter future.

Together we share a vision for the future as a nation that values justice, equity and fairness for all people.

Here are five reasons we support the YES vote:

1. Our vision is that Victoria is a place with a diverse and healthy natural environment protected, respected and enjoyed by all. To achieve this vision, we need improved and respectful systems for listening to and understanding First Nation communities and their connection to Country.
2. We recognise as unacceptable the historical and ongoing destruction of nature across Victoria and Australia. To create a liveable, equitable world, there must be a structural change to how government approaches policies that effect nature and First Nation communities.
3. Establishing a Voice to Parliament acknowledges the enduring connection and custodianship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have had over this land for tens of thousands of years. This invaluable knowledge and commitment to caring for Country is evident in the success of First



YES23.COM.AU

Nations land and sea rangers across protected areas.

4. First Nation communities should have a say in matters that directly affect their lives, including policies related to health, community, cultural heritage protection, and healing Country.
5. This is why VNPA strongly supports the collective call from First Nations Peoples for Voice, Treaty and Truth. A Voice to Parliament is a critical step towards rectifying historical injustices, promoting cultural understanding, and building stronger relationships between First Nations and non-First Nations Australians.

By supporting the yes vote in the referendum, we demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation, social justice, and the fundamental role First Nations knowledge has in environmental stewardship.

Together, we can build a stronger and more inclusive nation that respects and celebrates the rich cultural heritage of First Nations people. 🌿

VNPA Council formally endorsed the support for the Voice after consultation.

"Australians want to be part of a moment of national unity to recognise Indigenous people as the First Peoples of our nation. Australians want to make a practical change in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."



Dean Parkin
Director → Yes23

Find out more about the Voice to Parliament referendum
yes23.com.au

Rogue logging attempt reduced due to community pressure, but plans still afoot



JORDAN CROOK,
PARKS AND NATURE
CAMPAIGNER,
WONDERS WHEN
OUR STATE AGENCIES WILL
STOP WORKING AT CROSS
PURPOSES AND PUT NATURE
FIRST

The tree removal program in the Dandenong Ranges National Park continues to throw up more questions than are answered by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

Authorised by Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV) but executed by VicForests, the reason for the work seems to change depending on who you ask and where they work.

A very concerning line in the memorandum of understanding between the two to remove the fallen trees for 'highest and best use' from the park, with profits split 50/50 between VicForests and FFMV as 'cost recovery'.

VNPA worked with local Dandenong Ranges groups to demand a more ecologically sensitive approach from DEECA than the broad acre log removal program that was planned to be finished prior to Christmas 2022.¹

As fire management operations are subject to both Commonwealth and state law, VNPA and local groups wrote to the federal environment department with our concerns. After months of effort, DEECA delayed



We acknowledge this location is part of the unceded traditional lands and waters of the **WURUNDJERI** and recognise their ongoing role in caring for Country.

their plans due to concerns about the impact on state and Commonwealth listed plants and animals in the area, such as Greater and Yellow-bellied Gliders, Gang Gang Cockatoos, Powelltown Correas and high densities of hollow-bearing trees.

We received fantastic news in mid-2023, when FFMV scaled back the log removal operation from a 'broad acre' program to 'road and track side removal', reducing the impact area of the operations by half, from 110 hectares to 50 hectares.

While good progress, the fact that it took concerned locals, wildlife experts and VNPA to highlight VicForests' log removal technique – driving 30 tonne machines through the national park These huge machines are rolled over bushland areas, damaging habitats and vegetation, and causing further disturbance and injury to a forest recovering from a former extreme weather event.²

FFMV allowed to mark its own homework

We also learnt some very concerning facts about the regulation of fire management operations, and the transparency of planning of these operations. It turns out that the federal

environment department handballed responsibility back to FFMV:

Thank you for providing information regarding listed threatened species that may occur within the proposed storm debris removal areas. The department has engaged with the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) to ensure they are aware of obligations to protect threatened species under the EPBC Act. I understand that DEECA has undertaken a self-assessment to identify relevant protected environmental values and implement appropriate management controls and will refer proposals if a significant impact on a protected matter is likely to occur.

Department of Climate, Energy, Environment & Water, Feb 2022

Communications from the Office of the Conservation Regulator, said 'There is no regulatory body to oversee fire management, however, concerns around operational activity continue to be best brought to the attention of director forest management.'

Essentially, this means FFMV can mark its own homework. The need for more transparency in FFMV's planning and operations, as well as independent oversight and regulation of the



FFMV fuel breaks on Board Track, Dandenong Ranges National Park, Wurundjeri Country. JORDAN CROOK

organisation, has never been greater Without intervention, it's the harm it causes will spread across the state.

After meetings with FFMV representatives in mid-2023, where they outlined their plans to reduce the work area to roadside area 30-40 metres off the track, we learnt that the tree removal and commercial sale were still on the table.

This included the removal of woody debris from the national park to feed into a local bio-char facility, and the clearing of two log landing areas within the park. One of these was in an area of the forest not impacted by the previous storm event.

When given the chance to reduce the harm to the park, by taking out smaller length of wood and debris with smaller machinery with rubber tyres, the agencies dismissed it on the grounds it would make the operation 'unviable'.

But isn't the point of the operation to manage fire impacts?

Setting a dangerous precedent

The proposal to remove fallen logs from the national park under the guise of fire management is both concerning and disappointing. We are without doubt that it will set a dangerous precedent for our parks and other conservation areas.

VNPA Community Learning and Communications Officer, Meghan Lindsay, detected an active Superb Lyrebird nest within the log removal area in the Dandenong Ranges National Park.

VNPA and local groups submitted a detection report to the Chief Fire Officer about this finding. We raised serious concerns that the mother would abandon its nest and egg or chick if large machinery was bought into the nesting area.

All wildlife – not just those listed under state and federal legislation – is protected in national parks. FFMV have promised a buffer zone for the nest and chick, but made no mention of a delay to allow the chick to move around undisturbed We are actively monitoring the situation.

Another small win has been the commitment by the Yarra Ranges Council confirming that 'Council and its contractor do not plan to source timber from the Dandenong Ranges National Park as a feedstock material for producing biochar'.

This concerning development from DEECA would have potentially seen wood and woody debris removed from the national park to be burnt for biochar.

As the climate continues to warm, impacts such as windstorm events will increase and so will the impacts on our parks and natural areas. How

we manage the aftermath of these events will dictate if these areas adapt and recover (by managing pest plants and animals), or collapse (by extracting fallen trees or over-burning them).

Here we have yet another example why VicForests must be closed down. Ecologically-focused land managers must be allowed to deal with storm impacts without the threat of VicForests circling overhead, looking for at the forest as a resource to exploit, instead of a living web of nature to protect. 🌿

Read more about our
rogue logging campaign
vnpa.org.au/rogue-logging



Endnotes

1. This was covered in *The Age* on Christmas Eve 2022: <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/conservation/entirely-inappropriate-alarm-over-dandenongs-national-park-tree-removal-20221215-p5c6i1.html>
2. Read more here about the reduction in the scope of works by FFMV: <https://rangestrader.mailcommunity.com.au/news/2023-06-30/dandenong-ranges-national-park-debris-clearing-plan-complete/>

Desolation row: harvest after the windfall

 **BEN GILL**, NATURE CONSERVATION CAMPAIGNER, CHRONICLES THREATENED NATIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN SEVEN ROGUE LOGGING SITES IN THE WOMBAT AND COBAW FORESTS

Wildlife listed under national and state nature laws, *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act):
E = Endangered V = Vulnerable



Babbington Hill
Size: 123.1 ha • Coupes: 5 • VicForests
Harvested: June–November 2022
Hardhead (*Aythya australis*)..... V
Musk Duck (*Biziura lobata*)..... V
Southern Greater Glider (*Petauroides volans*)..... V
Dwarf Silver-wattle (*Acacia nanodealbat*) ..E
Wiry Bossiaea (*Bossiaea cordigera*)E
Brookers Gum (*Eucalyptus brookeriana*).....E
Wombat Bush-pea (*Pultenaea reflexifolia*). V
Fuzzy New Holland Daisy (*Vittadinia cuneata* var. *morrisii*).....E



We acknowledge these locations is part of the unceded traditional lands and waters of the **DJA DJA WURRUNG and WURUNDJERI** and recognise their ongoing role in caring for Country.



Osbourne Road, Bullarto
Size: 113.8 ha • Coupes: 4 • VicForests
Harvested: August–November 2022
Southern Greater Glider (*Petauroides volans*)..... V
Dwarf Silver-wattle (*Acacia nanodealbat*) ..E
Wombat Bush-pea (*Pultenaea reflexifolia*). V



Pinchgut Rd, Barkstead
Size: 23.2 ha • Coupes: 0 • FFMV/DEECA roadside and broadacre clean-up
Harvested: June–October 2022
Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*)..... V
White-throated Needletail (*Hirundapus caudacutus*) V
Spotted Hyacinth-orchid (*Dipordium pardalinum*).....E
Brookers Gum (*Eucalyptus brookeriana*).....E
Creeping Grevillea (*Grevillea repens*)E
Wombat Bush-pea (*Pultenaea reflexifolia*). V



Barkstead Sth Rd, Barkstead
Size: 19.34 ha • Coupes: 2 • VicForests
Harvested: March 2023 (on pause)
Spotted Hyacinth-orchid (*Dipordium pardalinum*).....E
Wombat Bush-pea (*Pultenaea reflexifolia*). V



Wombat Creek Rd, Bullarto
Size: 47.28 ha • Coupes: 3 • VicForests
Harvested: July 2022 – January 2023
Wombat Bush-pea (*Pultenaea reflexifolia*). V



Spring Hill Road, Spring Hill
Size: 84.57 ha • Coupes: 2 • VicForests
Harvested: August–November 2022
Spotted Hyacinth-orchid (*Dipodium pardalinum*)E
Brookers Gum (*Eucalyptus brookeriana*).....E
Wombat Bush-pea (*Pultenaea reflexifolia*). V



Cobaw Ranges
Size: 2,400 ha • FFMV
Cobaw is a biodiversity haven. Over 2,000 habitat logs have been extracted with works to continue when the rains cease.
Hardhead (*Aythya australis*)..... V
Little Eagle (*Hieraaeetus morphnoides*)..... V
Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*)..... V
Blue-winged Parrot (*Neophema chrysostma*)..... V
Brush-tailed Phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa*) V
Brown Treecreeper (*Climacteris picumnus*) V
Tufted Club-sedge (*Isolepis wakefieldiana*). E

Immediate Protection Areas are failing nature: the government must take action

 **NATURE CONSERVATION CAMPAIGNER, BLAKE NISBET**, ON THE SHORTFALLS OF IPAS


In May this year, citizen scientists from Wildlife of the Central Highlands (WOTCH) and the Victorian Forest Alliance (VFA) were shocked to discover that state-owned logging company VicForests have illegally destroyed numerous endangered Tree Geebungs (*Persoonia arborea*) while doing 'regeneration' works in the Central Highlands Immediate Protection Areas (IPAs). One endangered tree was estimated to be hundreds of years old.
The findings of WOTCH and the VFA highlight a key issue with the IPAs – in that these areas are still under threat from logging despite the government's claims that they are protected or exempt. The process of formalising any proper permanent protections over the IPAs has been frustratingly slow, and clearly ineffective at safeguarding the environmental values in which the IPAs were intended to protect.
A lengthy assessment process involving an eminent panel has been completed for the Strathbogies and Mirboo North IPAs, but the government is yet to act on these recommendations and formalise protected areas.

As part of the government's decision to end native forest logging in eastern Victoria, an eminent panel will not only assess the remaining IPAs for future land tenure but will also assess the broader eastern forest estate for suitability for new parks and reserves. VNPA welcomes this process but has urged the government to fast-track it so that parks and reserves are formalised prior to any changes in government, which could once again see these forests threatened by destructive logging.
These findings also reiterate the incompetence of VicForests in protecting Victoria's unique and special plants and animals during logging operations, even under the lens of regeneration works.
The groups have reported the illegal logging of the endangered plants and are calling for VicForests to be charged for violating state environment laws yet again. The Office of the Conservation Regulator (OCR) is investigating the breach and is well within their powers to hold VicForests to account. VNPA has sent a joint letter alongside WOTCH, VFA and the Australian Plants Society (Victoria) to highlight this issue with the Minister for Environment, Ingrid Stitt. The following recommendations were made to the minister:
• The IPAs must remain off-limits to VicForests whilst the Andrews Government formalises permanent protections for these areas, including

- in the context of regeneration and restoration operations.
- Direct DEECA to investigate and prosecute VicForests for illegal logging of Tree Geebung, in contravention of the Code of Practice for Timber Production.
 - The Andrews Government must act upon the recommendations from the Eminent Panel in relation to the Strathbogie and Mirboo North IPAs and formalise these permanent protections immediately.
 - The Eminent Panel's task of assessing state forests across eastern Victoria (including the Central Highlands and East Gippsland IPAs) needs to fast-track the process to ensure that permanent protections are formalised urgently.
 - Permanent protections across Eastern Victoria include more expansive areas than what is currently drafted, so that the 35+ threatened species (plus old growth forests) the IPAs were designed to safeguard are covered.
- The Andrews Government should acknowledge that its logging entity has been lawless, discrediting Victoria's claimed land management as 'sustainable'. The government must liquidate VicForests by 1 January 2024, as they cannot be trusted with any future management of Victoria's forests. 🌿



Ancient Tree Geebung destroyed by logging in the Central Highlands IPAs, May 2023. BLAKE NISBET



Explainer: What is an IPA?
An Immediate Protection Area is a temporary form of protection given to a landscape, habitat or area that requires assessment for environmental or cultural values.
IPAs to date haven't had an official change in land tenure but a political commitment has been made to not log forest areas while they are assessed.
IPAs were announced by the state government in 2019 to protect some of the habitats and populations of rare and declining plants and animals that rely on these forests.

Plant Blindness with Neil Marriott



Royal Grevillea
Grevillea victoriae subsp. *victoriae*

This plant is endemic to Victoria, being confined to cold, alpine and subalpine mountain tops in the north-east of the state. Named by Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, Government Botanist, in honour of Queen Victoria, it was first recorded on Mt Buffalo. It is a beautiful medium to large bushy shrub to around 2m x 2m with masses of attractive large red to red-orange flowers that are full of nectar and are pollinated by our honeyeaters. The plants can cope with heavy snow cover over the winter months but require moisture in the soil and dappled shade over the summer months. Logging normally exposes plants to too much summer heat and exposure with many succumbing over the long summer months once their overhead shade has been removed. This is one of the many alpine plant species that is already succumbing due to our drying climate, and logging of sites where it still survives is simply speeding up its demise.



Royal Grevillea. BLAKE NISBET

There is another Royal Grevillea (*Grevillea victoriae* subsp. *nivalis*) that occurs primarily in the Snowy Mountains of NSW with a few rare isolated populations in north-east Victoria. This name *nivalis* is Latin for snow and refers to the Snowy Mountains where it is mostly found, along with its silky white stems. It is occasionally found in the nursery trade and is often sold as *Grevillea victoriae* 'Snowy Queen'.

Neil Marriott is a Conservation Officer with the Australian Plants Society (Victoria), based in Stawell

Protecting sub-alpine plants from logging



Lilac Bitter-cress. FRIENDS OF CHILTERN-MT PILOT NATIONAL PARK



BLAKE NISBET,
NATURE
CONSERVATION
CAMPAIGNER, ON
THE NEED TO PROTECT
PLANTS IN THE STIRLING-
ALPINE LINK

Eastern Victoria's high country is destined for reprieve from logging as we inch closer to 2024. VNPA, in collaboration with the Victorian Forest Alliance (VFA), has continued to survey the Stirling-Alpine link to make sure this landscape is protected up until, and beyond the end date, of native forest logging here in Victoria. Our ecological surveys targeted rare and declining sub-alpine plants in areas which VicForests have recently flagged for logging. Amongst our recent findings are new populations of the endangered Ovens

Everlasting (*Ozothamnus stirlingii*), a shrub found at elevations around 1000m in montane forests, with a narrow distribution between Mt Buller, Mt Buffalo and Omeo across Victoria's high country. The stronghold of Ovens Everlasting occurs across Victoria's north-east but frustratingly, the plant does not trigger protections from logging across this key part of its range. Plants have likely been directly impacted by intensive logging and the government is yet to undertake a risk assessment on what protections from logging are required. One particular area flagged for logging hosted four unique endangered plants – with our surveys identifying populations of Fringed Rice-flower (*Pimelea ligustrina* subsp. *ciliata*), Hairy Eyebright (*Euphrasia lasianthera*), Royal Grevillea (*Grevillea victoriae* subsp. *victoriae*) and Lilac Bitter-cress (*Cardamine lilacina*). These plants do

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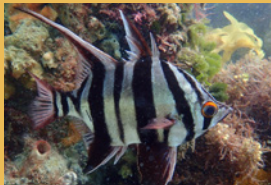


Park Watch Quiz by Dorian Battistella

- 1. How long can a Long-snouted Boarfish live for?
A. 5 years B. 10 years
C. 20 years D. 50 years
- 2. The Dusky Morwong is only found in Victoria. True or False?
- 3. Where are a Six-spined Leather Jacket's 'six spines' found?
A. Within its dorsal fin
B. At the base of its caudal fin (tail)
C. Below its eye
D. Behind its operculum (gill plate or gill)
- 4. The Long-snouted Boarfish is also known as an Old Wife. True or False?
- 5. What length can the Western Blue Groper reach?
A. 60cm B. 1.2m
C. 1.75m D. 2.8m
- 6. A Southern Blue Devil is highly nomadic, making its way around large areas of rocky reefs. True or False?
- 7. Male Weedy Sea Dragons carry the eggs instead of females. True or False?
- 8. The Smooth Stingray is the largest stingray in Australian waters. True or False?
- 9. The Southern Fiddler Ray or Banjo Shark is what type of fish?
A. Guitarfish B. Shark
C. Stingray D. Skate
- 10. Port Jackson Sharks are active hunters during the day. True or False?
- 11. The Spotted Wobbegong and Flathead are closely related species. True or False?
- 12. Elephant Fish find and consume food using which method?
A. Filtering water through their mouth for microscopic organisms like zooplankton.
B. Chomping bits of macro algae and kelp of rocky reefs.
C. Hunting in open water for small fish.
D. Sifting through the surface of the reef floor for invertebrates and small fish.



Long-snouted Boarfish. JOHN TURNBULL; Old Wife. KADE MILLS



See p.41 for answers

trigger protections under the rules that govern logging in Victoria, and state-logging agency VicForests will need to adhere to buffer zones and exclusion zones to make sure they are not destroyed. VNPA and VFA have collectively submitted a detection report to DEECA which will trigger the formal process for establishing the protections. A joint letter from community nature groups has also been submitted to the environment department urging the government to undertake the necessary risk assessments for these sub-alpine plants, to determine if additional protections from logging are necessary. In the absence of such assessments, we have urged that no logging takes place across the geographical ranges of these species. Following our correspondence with DEECA, an ABC inquiry reported that VicForests said it '...had no current plans to conduct timber harvesting in the Mount Stirling are', and declined to comment further. We hope this to be true, but VicForests' choice of language certainly leaves some wiggle room, as their plans seem to change daily.



Ovens Everlasting. MURRAY FAGG

Spotlight on Nature with Sera Blair

Lace Monitor
Varanus varius

Lace Monitors are the largest reptile in Victoria. We always get excited when we find them on our wildlife monitoring cameras.

Lace Monitors can reach two metres in length and weigh up to 20kg. They are found all along eastern Australia, from Cape York Peninsula to south-eastern South Australia. They frequent both open forest and coastal plains. They can cover long distances whilst searching for food, up to 3km a day.

They are mainly active from September to May and rather sluggish in cooler weather, sheltering in tree hollows or under fallen trees or large rocks in winter. Females lay their leathery eggs in termite mounds, returning 6-8 weeks later to dig out their young, who then have to fend for themselves.

Lace Monitors are apex predators, though Dingoes, Wedge-tailed Eagles and invasive species like feral Cats and Red Foxes occasionally prey on them. Like all Australian goannas, they are a favourite traditional food of First Nations peoples. They are endangered in Victoria.



Lace Monitor in Bunyip State Forest, Bunurong and Wurundjeri Country.

We captured the Lace Monitor above on our wildlife monitoring cameras in Bunyip State Park last October, along a track in damp Messmate Stringybark forest.

This area of the park burned in the 2019 bushfires, but wet gullies and creek edges were spared, providing important refuge areas for wildlife post-fire. The area had not burnt for 80 years, and the fire burnt through areas of older forest. Large trees in this old forest survived and will likely form new tree hollows after being burnt. Tree hollows are important habitat for Lace Monitors and many other animals like possums, gliders, parrots and owls.

Seeing the woodlands through the sand

Throughout March and April, we organised and gave extensive expert evidence to the state government's Distinctive Areas and Landscapes (DAL) plans for the Western Port Woodlands.

The findings of the Standing Advisory Committee have now been sent to the Minister for Planning, Sonya Kilkenny. For the hearings, we pooled our resources and knowledge with Save Westernport Woodlands and the South Gippsland Conservation Society to form the Woodlands Alliance. (Read more from Catherine Watson in Park Watch, June 2023 'Alliance for woodlands bears fruit'.)

Although the DAL process initially neglected protections for the woodlands, we took a strong stance to the hearings. Together, we engaged lawyers, ecologists, mycologists, planning and biolinks connectivity

experts to make an evidence-based case for better protection of this rare bushland corridor.

We spent hours writing our joint submission, wrangling experts and attending the hearings, backed by 550 community responses.

On behalf of our Woodlands Alliance we've petitioned the planning minister and Minister for the Environment, Ingrid Stitt for better protection through the findings of the hearings process.

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

Jordan Crook, Parks and Nature Campaigner



Cryptoides pollinating a bird orchid. DICK WETTENHALL

To contribute to help cover the extensive DAL costs

vnpa.org.au/support-wpw



Autumn falls into place for Nature Stewards graduates

MADDY WILLCOCK, NATURE STEWARDS COORDINATOR, WRAPS UP A SUCCESSFUL SEASON

It's been an exciting autumn season for the Nature Stewards program. We had new courses with the Mornington Peninsula Shire, Strathbogie Shire, and Moonee Valley Council, together with the opportunity to again support community in the City of Melbourne and Merri-bek Council areas. We thank our Council partners, Landcare Regional Programs Victoria, and the Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action (Hume Region) for funding and supporting the courses.

We were thrilled to bring on three new facilitators for this season – Carolena, Anton and Kylie – thank you all for your incredible efforts guiding and inspiring the classes.

In our autumn cohort, we had 78 students, with 72 graduates. Three-quarters (75.6 per cent) were female. Just over half (54 per cent) were employed (full-time or

part-time), with almost a quarter (23.6 per cent) retired. Half of the students had previously, or were currently, undertaking environmental volunteering. Only one-in-five had previous environmental training.

Thank you also to all guest presenters and the Nature Stewards board members for your wisdom sharing, enthusiasm, and support of our participants in their connections with and support of nature and community network building. It's thrilling to hear how the program impacts the participants and your contributions are fundamental.

We are now deep into our winter delivery and soon leaping into spring! We wish you a wonder-filled next few months in nature.

Check if there's a Nature Stewards course coming to your area
vnpa.org.au/nature-stewards

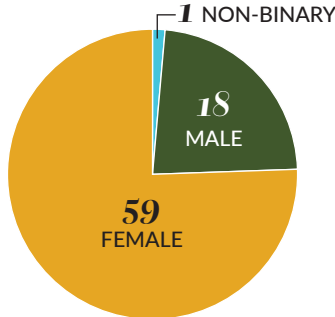


Fig. 1: Gender of participants

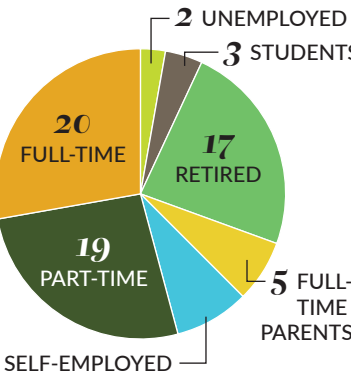


Fig. 2: Employment status

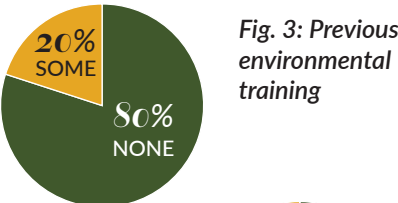


Fig. 3: Previous environmental training

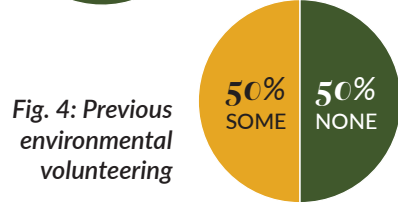
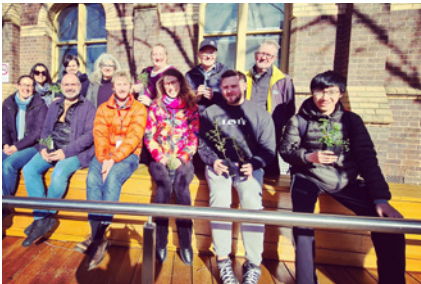


Fig. 4: Previous environmental volunteering



City of Melbourne graduates, Wurundjeri Country



Merri-bek and Moonee Valley graduates, Wurundjeri Country



Strathbogie students at Tabilk, Taungurong Country



Mornington Peninsula graduates, Bunurong Country. ALL IMAGES MADDY WILLCOCK

In quest of Superb Lyrebirds

This past June, NextGen Nature walked through Sherbrooke Forest in the Dandenong Ranges National Park, Wurundjeri Country, in search of the iconic Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novaehollandiae*).

We met early at Grants Picnic Ground and hiked approximately 5km through Cool Temperate Rainforest and giant Mountain Ash trees, led by forest ecologist Dr Alex Maisey. The further we went, the more the wonders of this ecosystem revealed themselves: a variety of colourful mushrooms, tree ferns, the tallest moss in the world, *Dawsonia superba*, and even Swamp Wallabies munching on shrubs who seemed unbothered by our presence.

It was a cold, wet morning, with the wind blowing strong, which could have diminished the chances of finding the iconic bird.

But suddenly we could hear it! We found ourselves in the middle of what appeared to be a heated conversation over territory between two lyrebirds, with loud sounds coming from both sides of the trail. We formed small groups, and with the help of our guide and binoculars, took turns going into the forest and witnessing close-up the makers of such a symphony.

After that, we followed the trail until we heard a creature noisily scratching the ground. Our guide, Alex, so very familiar with the area and the resident Superb Lyrebird population, smiled at us and said, 'This is Red!'

Red, a young male lyrebird with a red leg tag, was peacefully scratching the forest floor for insects and terrestrial invertebrates for his lunch. Beside him, an Eastern Yellow Robin (*Eopsaltria australis*) was cleverly taking advantage of the ground movement and came frequently for a snack.

For many participants, this was the first time they had the opportunity to encounter a Superb Lyrebird. They were amazed by its versatile vocal range, size, and the amount of dirt Red moved while foraging. It is not for nothing that these birds are said to be 'forest engineers' capable of moving and burying up to 200 tonnes per hectare of litter and soil each year, disturbing the ground to a greater extent than practically any other animal. This soil disturbance accelerates litter decomposition and increases the rate of nutrient cycling in the ecosystem.

Our forest adventure ended around 11:30 am when we shared a hot drink



at the cafe next to the picnic area while discussing the hidden wonders of the Dandenong Ranges.

Take action!

Feral cats, foxes, logging, and human urban development threaten lyrebirds. You can learn a lot about the Superb Lyrebird and protect their population by joining a friend's group in your local area or joining us for another lyrebird walk next year! 🐾

If you're interested in hearing more about NextGen Nature go to vnpa.org.au/nextgen
Our activities are released across our social media



bush walking program

Let's get into nature!

Our Bushwalking Program has a new name, new look, but the same fantastic volunteer-led bushwalks in nature. The program – previously called the Bushwalking and Activities Group – has been a treasured part of VNPA for decades and is one of our key programs.

The Bushwalking Program has evolved over many years. For those of you who have been a part of VNPA's community for a long time, you may have noticed some of these recent changes:

- New name, logo and tagline: *Let's get into nature!*
- New Activities Calendar, combining all of our opportunities to get into nature with VNPA.
- New online registration process for bushwalks.

We're also working hard behind the scenes on a number of things including training and supporting new and experienced bushwalking leaders.

What is still the same?

The Bushwalking Program is still led by the VNPA community. Trained

volunteer bushwalking leaders run bushwalks and other adventures in Victoria's national parks and other natural areas. It's a great way to bring the VNPA community together to experience treasured parts of the state.

Where have we been lately?

Volunteer bushwalking leaders have recently run walks to waterfalls, birdwatching experiences, gorge walks and urban nature-based experiences.

All of our volunteer led bushwalks over winter were well and truly booked out. So if you're keen to get out on an adventure with others, make sure you check our online Activities Calendar and book in early! 🐾

vnpa.org.au/activities

Spring activities

Our online Activities Calendar brings opportunities to get into nature through bushwalking, citizen science, short courses and activities for all ages. Right now there are plenty of opportunities to join us for an adventure in nature.

A snapshot of our spring activities calendar

All our activities can now be booked online through the Activities Calendar. You can check the calendar at any time for the latest opportunities to get into nature with VNPA. New activities are added regularly!

Nature Stewards course in Geelong
Saturdays from 23 September - 9 December

Learn how to help nature locally and meet like-minded people.

Bushwalk – Sherbrooke Forest, Dandenong Ranges
Friday 29 September

Listen for lyrebirds and admire the towering Mountain Ash on this 13km walk.

Bushwalk/art & nature in the You Yangs
Sunday 1 October

Capture the beauty of the You Yangs in your own way on this creative outdoors activity.

Grassy Plains Network Spring Fling
Sunday 8 October

Wander amongst the wildflowers in Iramoo Grasslands and visit the Iramoo Nursery.

Bushwalk – Stieglitz Area Circuit
Sunday 12 November

How many wildflowers can you spot on this 12-14km walk near Brisbane Ranges National Park?

Discover more at vnpa.org.au/activities
Subscribe to our mailing list to receive updates: vnpa.org.au/activities-sign-up

Where we went in winter

Over winter, volunteers and supporters joined us for citizen science, special activities for young adults, learning opportunities and bushwalks including:

- **Budding birdwatchers** learnt tips and tricks for birdwatching at a beginner birdwatching workshop.
- Young adults explored **Sherbrooke Forest** in the Dandenong Ranges and learnt all about Superb Lyrebirds and Mountain Ash forests.
- **Bushwalkers** explored the Great Otway National Park, Lerderderg State Park, Lilydale to Mount Evelyn, Long Forest Reserve, Eltham to Hurstbridge and Bendigo.
- **Marine citizen scientists** searched for sea slugs at San Remo.
- Gardening enthusiasts learnt all about how to **garden with grassland plants** at a Grassy Plains Network seminar.
- **Wild Families** built insect hotels and searched for birds at Lake Coburg Reserve.

Building insect hotels at Lake Coburg, Wurundjeri Country. JESSIE BORRELLE



Sea Slug Census at San Remo Bridge, Bunurong Country. SERA BLAIR



Birdwatching at Lake Coburg, Wurundjeri Country. JESSIE BORRELLE



SHANNON HURLEY, NATURE CONSERVATION CAMPAIGNER, SAYS

THE LATEST SCIENCE IS REVEALING MORE ABOUT THE SPECTACULAR LIFE OF A GIANT SPIDER CRAB

While the winter cold marks a time for us humans to slow down, hibernate and keep our clothes on, Port Phillip Bay's Giant Spider Crabs (*Leptomithrax gaimardii*) have a different idea, gathering in groups to embrace the cold and take off theirs!

Shedding their shells (their form of garb) does have a purpose. It decreases the risk of being eaten by predators and allows them to undertake an important life event – moulting.

They don't always make it easy for us to spy on their spectacular strip tease. They like to keep us guessing about where and when it will happen each year.

Last year's crabs almost stayed under the radar, but thanks to the many eyes of our aquatic citizen scientists aggregations were confirmed in St Leonards on the Bellarine Peninsula. This year's season saw the Giant Spider Crabs congregating on the Mornington Peninsula at Blairgowrie.

The moulting aggregations of spider crabs have become easy fishing targets in recent years, sparking concern among the public. Fortunately thanks to funding from

the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA), Deakin University have helped reveal more about the science behind these strange and spectacular sea creatures.

The research has already revealed interesting findings from an aggregation near St Leonards on the west side of Port Phillip Bay. In 2022, Deakin ran the pilot program using traditional research and citizen science activities. They deployed crab cameras and acoustic listening stations, tagged 50 crabs, and facilitated a program where sightings were encouraged to be logged through the citizen science platform. VNPA helped to support the citizen science work.

Some of the results include:

- Over 66,000 images and over 7,000 spider crab images captured by timelapse cameras.
- Thousands of volunteers dedicating their time to help analyse images.
- An estimated 31,012 and 50,729 crabs in the St Leonards aggregation



Spider Crab with tracking tag. DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

using diver-operated videos to estimate the aggregation size at St Leonards.

- An increased interest in and appreciation for marine, and specifically spider crab, research.

Social science research to determine the value of the crabs is currently being undertaken and will be published in a separate study.

While the project saw an increase in the quantity and quality of spider crab sightings compared to previous years, little is known about Giant Spider Crab ecology, distribution and habitat use. More funding is required to develop a longer-term data set to be able to make better management decision for the future of the crabs.

Until then, VNPA maintain our position of a no-take period until we know more about the crab's complex life cycles and how they interact with people and the nature of the bay. 🌊

More info including our Spider Crabs fact sheet vnpa.org.au/campaigns/crabs

If you saw spider crabs this winter you can still help contribute by logging your sightings on iNaturalist at inaturalist.org/projects/spider-crab-watch



Sea Slug Census shortlisted for national citizen science award



REEFWATCH COORDINATOR, KADE MILLS, REPORTS ON THE EUREKA AWARD NOMINATION FOR THE SEA SLUG CENSUS

We were blown away when the Sea Slug Census was short-listed for the prestigious Australian Museum Eureka Prize for Innovation in Citizen Science. Kade Mills attended the ceremony, suitably attired in a penguin suit, with former VNPA Conservation Project Officer, Nicole Mertens. Eureka Prizes are awarded for contributions to and the understanding of science in Australia. Since its inception in 2013, the Sea Slug Census has seen over 3,000 divers, snorkellers and ocean enthusiasts photograph more than 930 species, some never before documented in Australian waters. The project feeds into global biodiversity databases that allow scientists to detect important changes in the distribution of Australia's sea slugs. Run by VNPA, Melbourne is the Census' third location and the most successful site to date.

The slug-loving support and enthusiasm of the ReefWatch community was vital to the nomination. A key assessment of the award is the impact the project has on

participants. We were lucky enough to share these words from Point Lonsdale photographer, Jeremy Bishop:

The Sea Slug Census has showed me how my observations can aid in real scientific research and opened my eyes to the small creatures found underwater. This has changed my perspective and understanding of the natural world and its complexity. It has created a greater purpose to my hobby (diving and photography) adding another enjoyable aspect to it.

After sharing images of sea slugs online many local friends and families started asking about how they could find them. So now when I go looking for sea slugs, I often take people who haven't seen them with me. Over thirty people aged 5-75 have joined me and thanks to the fantastic Sea Slug Book and waterproof slates produced by VNPA we get to identify and read more about each species as we find them. This has inspired many people to go looking for sea slugs and spend more time in the marine environment.

Congratulations to the winner, 1 Million Turtles – a community conservation program which uses the TurtleSAT app to involve citizen scientists in hands-on activities. Worthy fellow finalist was Dr Grey Coupland from Murdoch University for her Miyawaki Forest Outreach Program which immerses students in climate and biodiversity action. 🌱

Above: Setting up a macro shot for the Sea Slug Census at Point Lonsdale, Wadawurrung Country. NICOLE MERTENS

Below: Kade Mills and Nicole Mertens at the Eureka Awards, Sydney, 26 August 2023. TIM LEVY

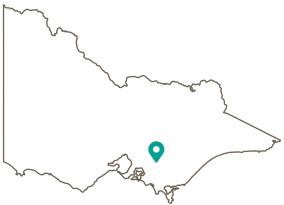


Sign up to the next Sea Slug Census: vnpa.org.au/programs/sea-slug-census

Watch the Sea Slug Census Eureka Prize video at: vnpa.org.au/sea-slug-video



NATUREWATCH
COORDINATOR, **SERA
BLAIR**, CELEBRATES
MORE THAN A
DECADE OF CITIZEN SCIENCE
IN BUNYIP STATE PARK



We acknowledge this location is part of the unceded traditional lands and waters of the **BUNURONG** and **WURUNDJERI** and recognise their ongoing role in caring for Country.

We have completed our eleventh year of wildlife surveying in Bunyip State Park, and this year we got a bit more creative, extending our efforts to put more of a ‘Spotlight’ on our work. We continued our wildlife camera monitoring and added evening spotlighting surveys for nocturnal possums and gliders, as well as running two community discovery days to increase our community engagement in the area. As always, we worked in partnership with Friends of Bunyip State Park and the Parks Victoria team at Gembrook.

Wildlife camera surveys

Wildlife cameras were installed across 20 sites in the park and photographed wildlife over 952 days combined. Our amazing volunteers contributed over 440 hours to fieldwork, and it was

great to have our regulars back and many new faces as well! This year we were joined by many tertiary students looking for fieldwork opportunities to complement their nature conservation courses. The results of our efforts are 35,403 images of wildlife representing 11 native mammal species, 11 native bird species, one native reptile and five species of introduced mammals. As usual, our delicious-smelling small mammal bait lures – made of oats, peanut butter and golden syrup – attracted Bush Rats (*Rattus fuscipes*) and Swamp Wallabies (*Wallabia bicolor*) to pose for our cameras on most sites. They both tend to hang around for a while, investigating the delicious bait they can smell but not actually eat because it is enclosed in tea strainers in a wire cage. Nevertheless, they stop for a sniff and a scratch and give us lots of beautiful photos.

continued on p. 24...

Opposite: NatureWatch volunteer Rachael and NatureWatch student placement Eliza, enjoying camera training by Vic from Friends of Bunyip State Park.
Right: Volunteers Baeckea and Elodie installing a wildlife camera.
Below: NatureWatch student placement, Melissa, helping out in the field.
ALL IMAGES SERA BLAIR



Native animals recorded on wildlife camera surveys	No. of sites
Agile Antechinus	12
Dusky Antechinus	1
Long-nosed Bandicoot	16
Southern Brown Bandicoot	6
Bush Rat	17
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	6
Swamp Wallaby	17
Common Brushtail Possum	4
Eastern Ringtail Possum	2
Wombat	5
Echidna	5
Crimson Rosella	1
Eastern Yellow Robin	4
Golden Whistler	1
Grey Currawong	3
Grey Shrike-thrush	5
Laughing Kookaburra	2
Painted Button-quail	1
Superb Fairy-wren	1
Superb Lyrebird	4
Wonga Pigeon	1
White-browed Scrubwren	8
Lace monitor	1
Introduced animals recorded	
Dog	1
Fallow deer	1
Sambar	2
Cat	1
Red fox	1



Swamp Wallaby (top) and Bush Rat caught on our Reconyx cameras in the field.

Spotlight on Bunyip continued...

After many years of scarcity, we were excited to record endangered Southern Brown Bandicoots (*Isodon obesulus*) at six sites, five Heathy Woodland and one Riparian Scrub, and four of them recovering from being burnt in the March 2019 fires. Long-nosed Bandicoots (*Perameles nasuta*) are more common across the park, and while they are regularly recorded in Heathy Woodland, they were also found in wetter and lowland forests. The Long-nosed Bandicoots are larger than the Southern Browns and have some striping in their fur pattern. Plus, their nose is unmistakably longer, looking like they have an extra bit attached!

Introduced animals were less common than previous years, with Sambar Deer only recorded on two Lowland Forest sites and Fallow Deer on one Heathy Woodland site. However, with our camera locations off the roads, it is possible deer are still present but choosing to travel the easier path along the open roads rather than through the thick post-fire regrowth vegetation at the sides.



Above: Southern Brown Bandicoot (top) and Long-nosed Bandicoot visiting the same site

Below: Feral deer



Spotlighting surveys

Our camera surveys cannot record animals that do not come to the ground, so we have a specific gap in our knowledge around possums and gliders in the park and their survival after the 2019 fires. Of particular interest to Friends of Bunyip State Park and Parks Victoria is the presence of Southern Greater Gliders (*Petauroides volans*) and Yellow-bellied Gliders (*Petaurus australis*) around the park.

Our four spotlighting evenings were very popular, allowing us to survey multiple sites per night. Each site was one kilometre long along a road or track and took two hours to complete. We had a minimum of three volunteers and one leader on each survey to allow us to walk the survey route in two sets of pairs approximately 200m apart, thus increasing our chances of spotting animals. We used large capacity, handheld LED spotlights with red filters to allow us to spot an animal's eyeshine over 100m away. Volunteers were trained on animals' physical characteristics, vocalisations, behaviours, style of tree use and general movement to help with identification. We had 38 volunteers help us survey 9km of roads, which allowed us to observe ten wildlife species and hear a further three species.

continued next page...



A team of spotlighting volunteers ready to go!

Native animals recorded on spotlighting surveys	
Common Brushtail Possum	2
Mountain Brushtail Possum	1
Eastern Ringtail Possum	8
Southern Greater Glider	16
Yellow-bellied Glider	7
Sugar Glider	5
Superb Lyrebird	1
Swamp Wallaby	2
Wombat	1
Sambar Deer	1
Animals only heard	
Boobook Owl	1
Owlet Nightjar	1
Victorian Smooth Froglet	2



Fungi found on our Discovery Day



Clare James running Art in the Park activities. ALL IMAGES SERA BLAIR

Community Discovery Days

We've learned so much in the last decade of wildlife monitoring in Bunyip State Park, we knew we had a lot of interesting information to share with the local community, so we created two opportunities to encourage them into the park. In early December 2022 we had our first event themed around wildflower discovery. Thanks to the wet spring season there were still plenty of wildflowers to see and birds to hear on our guided walks.

Along with the walks we welcomed the community into the park with resources covering our citizen science

program, along with tips on how to do it at home, and fun Wild Families activities for all ages.

A second discovery day ran in a new location in April 2023 with a focus on fungi. We had a bird walk led by Geoff Lockwood of Southern Fauna Resources and some fun displays and activities, but many people came to hunt for the wild and varied fungi treasures bursting out all over the park. Once the hunt was over we were guided by local nature artist, Clare James, to create our own fungi sculpture out of clay and sticks so everyone could take home a bit of fungi inspiration. Both Discovery Days were well attended. We loved

meeting new people from around the area and beyond and sharing our knowledge of the plants and wildlife in the park.

After another great year in Bunyip State Park, we would like to thank our dedicated project partners and wonderful volunteers who made this such an enjoyable season. A Parks Victoria Innovation Fund grant allowed us to extend our usual program to include more community engagement and to help promote the Friends of Bunyip State Park.

We look forward to getting back out there again soon!

vnpa.org.au/naturewatch



Bunyip wildflower walk led by Nikki Starke, Cardinia Environment Coalition



Bunyip bird walk led by Geoff Lockwood, Southern Fauna Resources

Risks of seismic blasting



SHANNON HURLEY, NATURE CONSERVATION CAMPAIGNER, REPORTS ON THE NOT-SO-SILENT PLANS THREATENING OUR COASTLINE

A gigantic seismic testing area of 55km² has been proposed by TGS and SLB-Schlumberger in the Otway Basin and is currently being considered by the Federal Government. If granted, it will likely have an enormous environmental footprint that spans well beyond: across the entire coastline of Victoria, Tasmania, and parts of South Australia and New South Wales.

Seismic testing, more accurately known as 'seismic blasting', is where powerful airguns fire loud blasts of compressed air every 10 to 15 seconds to test for oil and gas reserves under the seabed.

Seismic airguns are the second highest contributor of human-caused underwater noise, following nuclear and other explosions. They have also been called a 'serious marine environmental pollutant'. As you can imagine, it's far from being a safe worksite for marine life.

Plans to open one of the largest areas for seismic testing in the Otway Basin off Victoria's coastline is alarming to many. The incredibly large impact area alone should be an outright rejection of this project. Especially given evidence of the harmful impacts on marine life is growing.

Science tells us already that:

- Seismic air guns extensively damaged fish ears at distances of 500m to several kilometres from seismic surveys.
- Zooplankton, which are the base of marine ecosystems are killed by each seismic blast within 1.2km.
- Marine mammals experience hearing impairment (temporary or permanent) and physiological changes such as stress responses, behavioural changes, displacement, or a change in communication.
- Rock lobsters sense of coordination is affected, with research showing they do not recover if exposed directly to an air gun array. Intervals between moulting increased in those exposed to seismic signals, going from 16 to 18 days to between 23 and 30 days, potentially resulting in slower overall growth rates.
- Significant adverse effects may be experienced by divers at distances of up to 27km from the source,

according to the UK Diving Medical Advisory Committee. This distance would be well within many areas of the Great Ocean Road where surfing, scuba diving and snorkelling activities occur.

In July, an Environmental Plan was released by the proponent for public comment. VNPA put in a submission, along with many other groups concerned about the impacts on marine life as well as the places we live work and play. Concerns include:

- Impact on critical feeding and calving grounds of whales, such as Blue Whales and Southern Right Whales (listed under state and national environmental laws).
- Lack of sufficient mitigation measures to protect threatened species, specifically whales.
- Impacts on the Zeehan and Nelson Marine Parks.
- Lack of sufficient research to back up claims that there will be a low risk to marine life.
- Lack of assessment of the impacts on areas of high conservation value such as Victoria's marine national parks and sanctuaries.

The Environmental Plan is not consistent with the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and should be rejected.

Let's hope the Federal Government oil and gas regulator, National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA), agrees with our raft of concerns. The risks are far too great.

Read our submission
vnpa.org.au/publications/submission-tgs-environmental-plan/

Homes for wildlife and people



WE CAN GET THE BALANCE BETWEEN LOOKING AFTER PEOPLE AND LOOKING AFTER NATURE RIGHT, SAYS **JESSIE BORRELLE**, DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Read more about making the plan better for nature and people

vnpa.org.au/geelong-grasslands



The rolling farmlands that flank Geelong were once abundant wildflower meadows, cared for by First Nations for millennia. Eastern Quolls rustled through Kangaroo Grass and Spiny Rice-flowers, along with bouncy Bettongs and Fat-tailed Dunnarts.

Today our cities are bursting at the seams, and our towns and cities are looking for ways to accommodate our growing communities.

The farmlands that were once grasslands are now set to become Geelong's newest suburbs. Amazingly, endangered creatures like Striped Legless Lizards and Golden Sun Moths still live in these changing landscapes.

While Eastern Quolls may be long gone, the challenge now is finding room for everyone without destroying the remnant grasslands and their critters.

More houses on grasslands

The City of Greater Geelong has proposed a growth area that covers over 7,000 hectares and houses 110,000 people. They've created a plan, the Geelong Strategic Assessment (GSA), for how they'll protect nature while the new housing estates are built. The GSA includes clearing important habitat for endangered plants and animals. Some land will be protected for conservation, but most will go under the bulldozer.



- Geelong Growth Areas
- 'Strategic Conservation Areas'
- 'Opportunity areas', inadequately protected
- VNPA/NWAlliance proposed Strategic Conservation Areas
- Existing urban areas

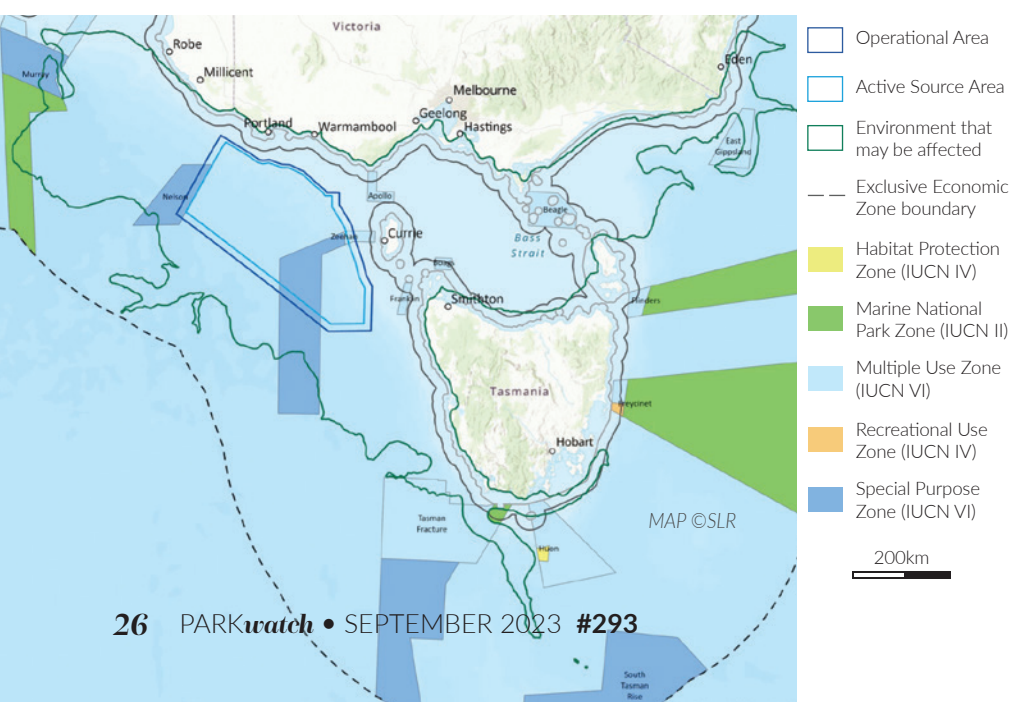
Surveyed populations:

- Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*)
- Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*)
- Growling Grass Frog (*Litoria raniformis*)
- Grasslands

How we plan the housing needs of growing populations is complicated. But it's often the most vulnerable whose stories end badly. In Victoria's case, it's been the grasslands and its original inhabitants who have been forced to make way for urban growth.

The truth is that while we need homes for both – looking after wildlife habitat is not just about frogs, flowers and lizards. It's about clean air, water, a healthy climate and soil for our food, livelihoods and wellbeing.

We can have homes for wildlife and people.



Pushing up native daisies



Donnybrook Cemetery, Wurundjeri Country. ADRIAN MARSHALL

Truganina Cemetery is famous for Australia's most important population of Button Wrinklewort (*Rutidosia leptorrhynchoidea*), a native daisy. At Donnybrook, there are native peas found far from the understood boundaries of their range. At Rokewood, woven through all the rare plants, there's a sea of Sundews, distinctive insectivorous plants of the grassland. At Teesdale, the Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*) is thick and sun-kissed and reminds you how Golden Plains Shire got its name.

It's not all peaceful though. 'Trug' made the news earlier this year when arborist contractors cut down its Sugar Gums (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*). Those trees were suppressing the growth of the Kangaroo Grass, and in that grassless 'halo' the famous Button Wrinklewort had found a place to thrive. Now suddenly that most important population is at significant risk. Oversight had failed.

And just a few months later, we lost a small portion of Donnybrook's grassland, turned to churned mud by earthmoving equipment. Where's the respect? Donnybrook is in a sad state; long-unburnt, cars parking on the grassland, graveside roses getting established where they shouldn't.


Both these grasslands are state government Conservation Areas under the Melbourne Strategic Assessment but are managed by Cemetery Trusts. If the MSA can't ensure good behaviour, maybe we need a grassland 'cop on the beat' to ensure appropriate protection.

It couldn't be more different at Melbourne General Cemetery. There is no grassland there – yet – but starting this month 'Project Cultivate' will be planting 127,000 native grasses and local plants.

The culture of cemeteries is changing. Once places for the dead, cemeteries are becoming places for the living, with coffee shops and playgrounds.

Grasslands are a symbol of resilience in the face of relentless destruction. Let's celebrate the tiny one per cent that remains of the great grassy plains, return to them some of their former glory, and celebrate life in all its magnificent diversity.

Long live grasslands! 🌿

 GRASSY PLAINS NETWORK FACILITATOR, ADRIAN MARSHALL, CELEBRATES PLANT LIFE AMONGST THE GRAVESTONES

Felled Sugar Gums in Truganina Cemetery, Bunurong Country. ADRIAN MARSHALL



Better ways to protect growing trees



Paper and plastic tree guards in local council planting. JESSIE BORRELLE



ROBERT IRVINE, FRIENDS OF ORGAN PIPES NATIONAL PARK, INVESTIGATES THE ALTERNATIVES TO USING PLASTIC TREE GUARDS

Plastic tree guards. ROBERT IRVINE



It is glaringly obvious we are spoiling earth more by using plastics guards when planting trees.

For years at the Organ Pipes National Park on Jacksons Creek, the Friends group has collected plastic debris that has been flushed down from Sunbury. It is obvious we are spoiling the environment more by using plastics when planting trees.

Plastic is cheap and is even marketed as recyclable, though we know most of it ends up in landfills, leeching more contaminants.

Friends of Organ Pipes National Park, just like the UK Woodlands Trust, have resolved to never use plastics in any of our plantings again.

Are tree guards necessary?

Let's go back to the start. Is your tree frame really necessary at all? Is there really a grazing risk from rabbits, kangaroos etc? Is it such a harsh environment that your trees need shelter?

Are you cutting down trees for your wooden tree stakes? Could you fence a large area that can be relocated after use?

What are the alternatives?

Alternatives to plastic include chicken wire, recycled paper, cellulose, hessian

or other nature-friendly materials. If you must use cheap plastic, try reusing old ones from previous plantings.

Question to pose before planting are:

- Will all plastics tree guards be removed within 12 months, especially from hard-to-reach locations?
- Have the trees outgrown your plastic, which now must be cut to be removed and cannot be reused?
- Can you carefully slide them off the trees, so you can reuse them?
- Do you equally fund plastic guard removal, or just forget about them?

Friends of Maribyrnong Valley use the plastic-free biodegradable GreenGuard and Mallee 2L cardboard carton tree guard. During a recent flood, they found that both stayed in place while the plastic corflute guards lifted off and washed away. They have reused them on occasions, but the carton is pretty much single use and biodegrades.

These are both cheaper and have the advantage of not having to be removed later. When the time and expense of removing guards is factored in, the paper is likely cheaper, too.

On this basis, it makes no sense to use plastic corflute in hard-to-get-to bushland settings. 🌿

Top dog needs protection



AUSTRALIAN DINGO
FOUNDATION
DIRECTOR, MELINDA
BROWNING, CALLS
FOR AN END TO KILLING
DINGOES ON PUBLIC LAND

Dingoes (*Canis dingo*) are currently being killed to the point of endangerment in Victoria.

Despite the fact that Dingoes are listed as Threatened, they are relentlessly killed across their remaining range on both private land and in 3km buffer zones on public land. On public land they are unprotected under an Order In Council and legislated as 'wild dogs' and 'pests'.

Dingoes slaughtered under the guise of 'wild dog' control

The killing of Dingoes on public lands is undertaken by DEECA Wild Dog Controllers in the form of 1080 poison ground and aerial baiting, trapping and shooting. Recreational hunters are paid \$120 bounty for a 'wild dog' scalp.

In the past decade, more Dingoes have been destroyed in Victoria as 'wild dogs' for the bounty alone than reported livestock losses to predation (being a relatively small 200 to 500 a year).

These killings occur are despite the fact Dingoes are culturally and spiritually significant for First Nations and provide ecosystem stability and resilience as native apex land predators.

Contrary to the claim of Dingoes as wild dogs, recent research proves that remnant Dingo populations are overwhelming pure with little to no domestic dog ancestry.

This highlights the question as to why the wholesale, taxpayer-funded killing of Dingoes continues on public lands.

Opposite: Dingo, Kosciusko National Park, Walgalu and Ngarigo Country. MICHELLE J PHOTOGRAPHY
Right: Pure Wilkerr (Big Desert) Dingo. This Dingo ended up being shot by a local farmer and an ear snip sent to Dr Kylie Cairns for DNA testing. It tested pure to 195,000 DNA markers. WILDLIFE CAMS VICTORIA

Champions of biodiversity

Native wildlife has survived and thrived for thousands of years under the protection of Dingoes, shaped by nature to fulfil the critical role of apex predators. Dingoes pick off old, sick and genetically weak individuals, slowing the spread of disease and ensuring healthy populations of their prey.

Dingoes prey on both introduced and native herbivores, regulating the numbers of kangaroos, rabbits, deer, feral pigs and goats, resulting in improved vegetation cover and soil health. They also keep foxes and feral cats in check, which in turn gives life to many small-to-medium mammals, marsupials, native birds and other creatures.

DNA reveals Dingo truth

The truth about the purity of Victorian Dingoes has been revealed in a ground-breaking study by UNSW Conservation Geneticist, Dr Kylie Cairns.

Cairns found that previous DNA testing grossly misrepresented the amount of dog ancestry in Dingo populations, with a startling 87 per cent of supposed 'wild dogs' in Victoria testing as pure Dingoes.

The study also found the Dingoes form their own genetic cluster. Four geographically distinct populations of Dingoes were discovered: West, East, South, and Big Desert.

Wilkerr (Big Desert) Dingoes at serious risk of extinction

Dingo DNA samples from the small, geographically isolated remnant Big Desert population in the Victorian Mallee region, showed zero domestic dog ancestry and demonstrated the highest level of inbreeding.

Wilkerr is the Dja Dja Warrung and Wotjobaluk Nations word for a Dingo. This population is a totem species for the Wotjobaluk Nations and ongoing lethal control is putting them at serious risk of extinction



With the Order In Council due for review on 1 October 2023, the Australian Dingo Foundation is calling on Dingo-lovers to contact their local MPs to request the removal of the 3km buffer zone so Dingoes are fully protected on public lands.

Government funds currently spent on lethal control could be used to support farmers in non-lethal livestock protection, with lethal control on private land reserved as a last resort. 🐾

Read the letter to state
ministers signed by
25 academic experts,
including Dr Kylie Cairns
[vnpa.org.au/dingo-policy-
Victoria](https://vnpa.org.au/dingo-policy-Victoria)



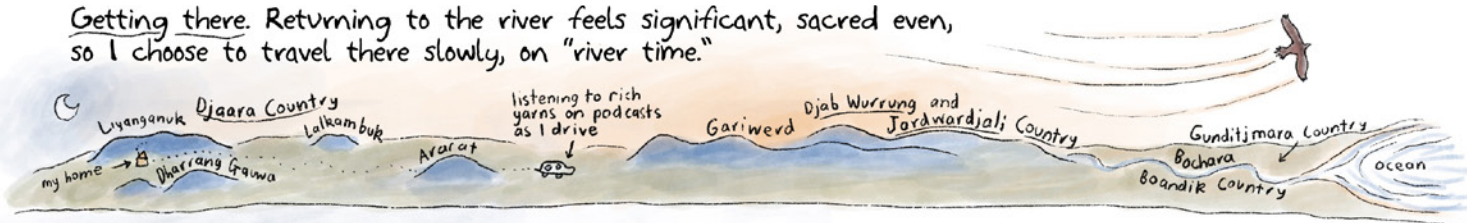
Sign the Humane Society
International letter to state
ministers asking to restore
the protection of Dingoes
[hsi.org.au/australian-
wildlife-habitats/dingoes/
protect-dingoes-in-victoria](https://hsi.org.au/australian-wildlife-habitats/dingoes/protect-dingoes-in-victoria)



Dingo pack, Kosciusko National Park, Walgalu and Ngarigo Country. MICHELLE J PHOTOGRAPHY

In 2012, Trace Balla went on a 10-day paddling trip on the Glenelg River/Bochara. It inspired her first children's book, *Rivertime*. Eleven years later, her ninth book, *Leaf-Light* will be published by Allen & Unwin this month. Recently, Trace returned to the river for a completely different experience.

Getting there. Returning to the river feels significant, sacred even, so I choose to travel there slowly, on "river time."



First Stop - Gariwerd, (the Grampians), Djab Wurrung and Jarwardjali Country. A friend and I spend the day wowing on the southern peaks of Baingug and Mud-Dadjug.



glimpses of silver, like a serpent, The start of the river reflecting the sky

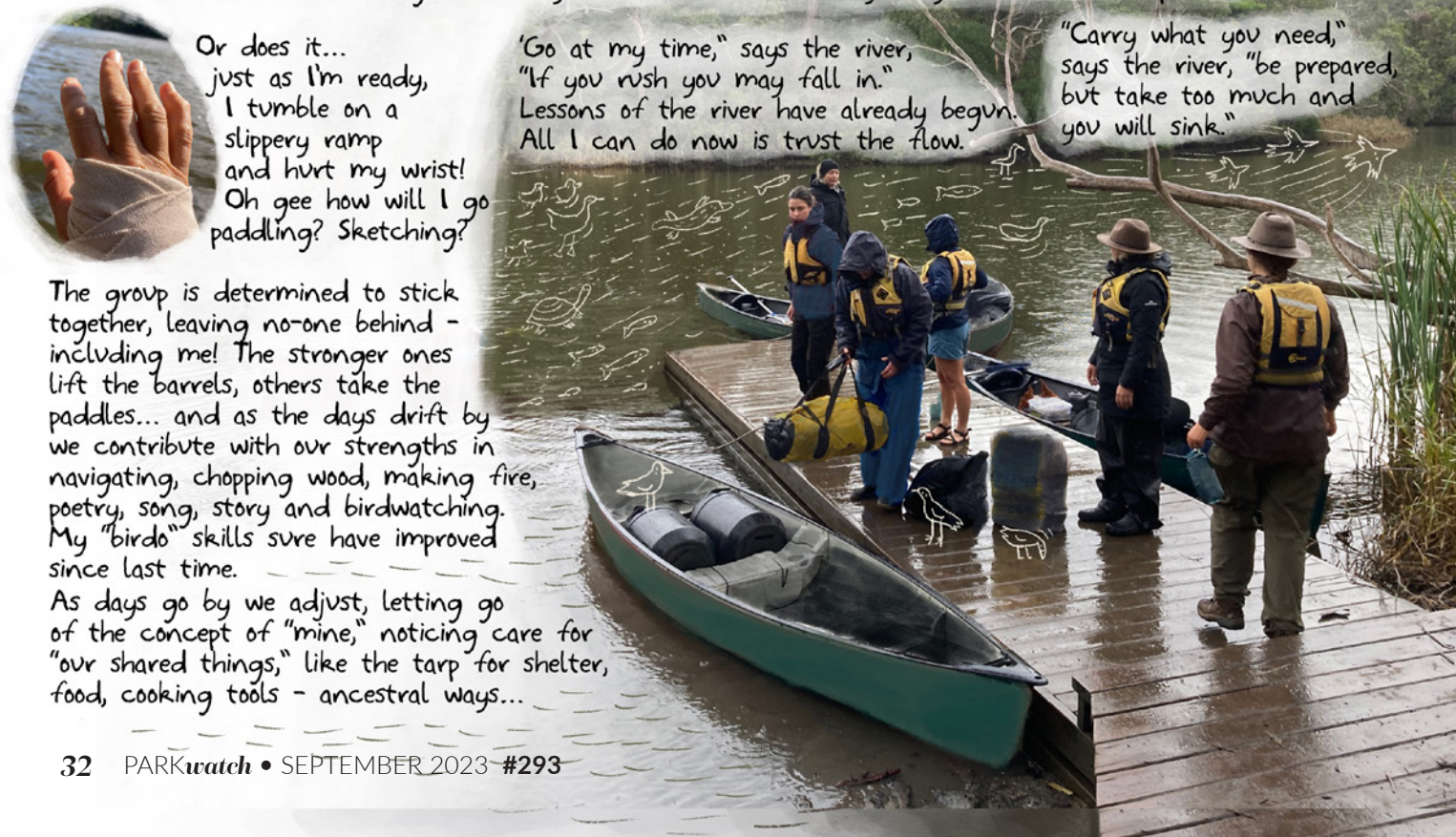
Up top the water trickles out of the mosses, making little pools and streams. Perhaps I'll be paddling in those actual drops of water.

Oh dear, it looks like big rains on the way - I guess there wouldn't be a river without the rain...

Long ago we might have seen smoke from camp fires of local mobs, and maybe even giant wombats roaming around.

Eventually I arrive at Bochara - Gunditjmarra and Boandik Country. I bow in greeting, rinse my face and set some leaves and bark adrift with a request for safe passage. Last time I paddled this river with a partner, this time with eight others, most I have never met, on a guided "women's immersive nature journey," lovingly organised and led by Laura Jayne of Wilderness Within.

Across the water a raven sings out - my breath slows a bit - my body remembers this place...



Or does it... just as I'm ready, I tumble on a slippery ramp and hurt my wrist! Oh gee how will I go paddling? Sketching?

'Go at my time,' says the river, 'If you rush you may fall in.' Lessons of the river have already begun. All I can do now is trust the flow.

"Carry what you need," says the river, "be prepared, but take too much and you will sink."

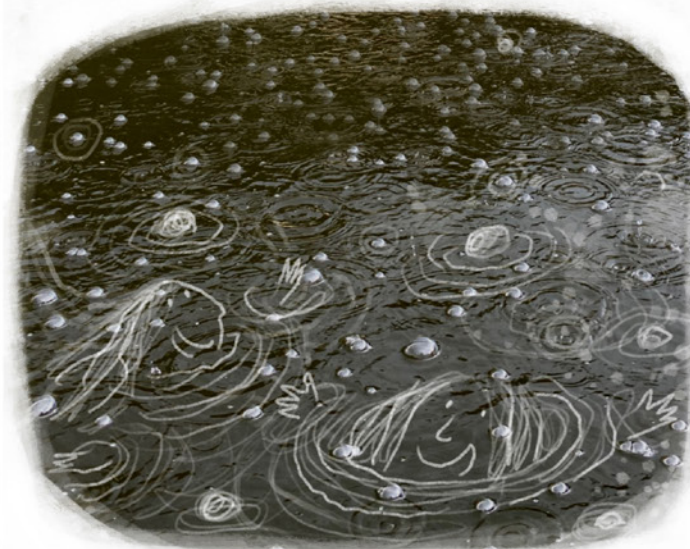
The group is determined to stick together, leaving no-one behind - including me! The stronger ones lift the barrels, others take the paddles... and as the days drift by we contribute with our strengths in navigating, chopping wood, making fire, poetry, song, story and birdwatching. My "bird" skills sure have improved since last time.

As days go by we adjust, letting go of the concept of "mine," noticing care for "our shared things," like the tarp for shelter, food, cooking tools - ancestral ways...



The rain doesn't stop us, rather it bonds us together more, at times so sublime, it's like drifting through an ancient dot painting.

When the rain is at it's heaviest we gasp in elation at the utter beauty of the ecstatic state of the river - and at the cold!



Slowly we make our way along the sacred river, amongst waterbirds grazing on the banks, stunning nankeen night heron, azure kingfishers who bob their heads at us, a cavorting seal, drowsy koalas in overhanging branches, shy platypus and ancient limestone cliffs.

Now and then Laura beckons us over to make a "raft" joining our boats together, for cups of tea and home baked sweet treats, a look at the map, and a check in of how we are travelling on a deeper level. We share river songs, that we carry with us as we drift apart again along the river. That "rafting" feels significant, a growing together, stronger as a group - inspiring my inner poet - "like each drop of rain, moving as one, stronger together, we're stronger as one".

As we come to the final stretch of our paddle trip, I weep salty tears into the glassy waters, tears for my love of this sanctuary, and of the reverence and softening we all feel from slow time on this wild waterway... a timeless ancient feeling, that I wish to be normal, and felt by all people on this beautiful, yet damaged planet. I thank the river, and our "raft of women," bowing again in deep gratitude for this once in a lifetime experience - twice now!



Dawn paddle

Down by the river-mouth, I watch the waters spill out, just as waters of all rivers of all times have, from downpours and drizzle, mountains and mosses, streams and rivers,... out into the ocean, so vast and alive the ocean of everything.



Find out more about Wilderness Within immersive nature journeys for women at wildernesswithinoofferings.com and about Trace's work at traceballa.com

POINT NEPEAN NATIONAL PARK

Cheviot Beach, Point Nepean National Park,
Bunurong Country. *PETER BOND/FLICKR*



GEOFF DURHAM VISITS A PARK WITH NEW ADDITIONS
AND MUCH HISTORY TO DISCOVER

Camping is now available at the Quarantine Station in Point Nepean National Park, on Bunurong Country. Not traditional camping, but what Parks Victoria markets as 'Discovery Tents'. Glamping it is not.

The tents have stretcher beds with mattresses and a little basic storage, but no bedding. You bring your own pillow, sleeping bag, doona or blankets and sheets, and chairs. There is no electricity so you also need to bring a light.

When I visited on a windy day in July, the tents had been removed but the timber platforms on which they are erected were in place. There are 36 standing-height canvas tents: 25 two-bed (two are disabled accessible) and 11 four-bed. The current cost is \$120 per night for a two-bed tent and \$165 per night for a four-bed tent. Pre-booking is required.

The tents are open from September until the King's Birthday long weekend. They are fairly close together at the end of the cypress avenue between Hospital No 5 and the Port Phillip Bay coastline, on a green open space with gravel paths. The Isolation Hospital has been converted into a community building including hot showers, toilets

and basic kitchen facilities. There is an outdoor barbecue and dining area. Much planting of shrubs has greened the area. Trolleys are available to take your gear from the car park to your allotted tent.

'Discovery Tents' is an appropriate name – there is so much to discover in Point Nepean National Park. To spend two nights under canvas enables you to soak up the island-like atmosphere and spend a full day exploring this fascinating area. Explore by car, bicycle or walking. Car parking is at the park entrance, the Quarantine Station and at Gunners Cottage, about 3km from the entrance. Bicycles can be hired through the Information Centre at the Quarantine Station. A shuttle bus operates between the entrance and the actual point from 10:45 am to 4:15 pm with designated stops along the way. Daily fares only – adult \$12, child \$8, payable on the bus.

Point Nepean is the eastern headland of the entrance to Port Phillip Bay. The Nepean Peninsula is a narrow strip running about 6km easterly from Portsea, with Bass Strait on the south and Port Phillip Bay to the north. It has spectacular coastal scenery and panoramic views; geological and



Top: Historic Quarantine Station. *JOHN GOLLINGS/PARKS VICTORIA*. Bottom: Shelter and tent platforms, with recent new plantings. *GEOFF DURHAM*

geomorphological features of state significance; and vegetation, habitat and flora and fauna values of high conservation significance. There are problems of erosion, pest plant invasion and pest animals. In many places, *Polygala myrtifolia* is a major weed.

From quarantine to conflict

In 1840, when the barque *Glen Huntly* arrived in Port Phillip Bay with 50 cases of typhoid fever, a quarantine site was established at what is now Point Ormond. This proved unsuitable and eventually in the 1850s a permanent quarantine station was established at remote Point Nepean. The station operated continuously until 1978.

It was given its current name by Lieutenant John Murray in 1882, after Sir Evan Nepean, Secretary to the Admiralty. The area had a few European settlers who lived on the proceeds of lime burning and fishing. The earliest surviving European building is the Shepherd's Hut at the Quarantine Station site.

Before Federation, Point Nepean was Victoria's main defence facility. It became Commonwealth property and was out-of-bounds for more than 100

years until reverting to the state and opening to the public in 1988. The Army occupied the Quarantine Station from the early 1950s with the Officer Cadet School to 1978, and then the School of Army health until the early 1980s. In 1999, 400 refugees from Kosovo were accommodated here.

In 1973, the National Trust classified the Quarantine Station as having major national importance, and in 1974 it classified the landscape of the whole of Point Nepean. In 1979 this was included on the Register of the National Estate, in 2004 on the Victorian Heritage Register, and in 2006 it was added to the National Heritage List.

Building a park

The Point Nepean National Park comprises former Commonwealth land which has been progressively transferred to Victoria. The first park, known as Point Nepean National Park (which included the former Cape Schanck Coastal Park) was created in 1988 and was renamed Mornington Peninsula National Park in 1985.

The current Point Nepean National Park was created in 2005, comprising the former Commonwealth land at Point Nepean, with further

Commonwealth land added in 2009 and 2013. The area of the park is 578 hectares, and it adjoins Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park and Mornington Peninsula National Park.

Other facilities

There is much to interest visitors, including a complex of fortifications at the point with forts and tunnels dating from the 1880s (and from which the first shots of World Wars I and II were fired) an historic cemetery, and Cheviot Beach, where Prime Minister Harold Holt disappeared in 1967.

Swimming is prohibited on the ocean side and not recommended in the bay.

There is good interpretation at the Quarantine Station and the fort. The Parks Victoria Visitor Guide lists variety of walks. 🌿

Find out more at:
[parks.vic.gov.au/
places-to-see/parks/
point-nepean-
national-park](https://parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/point-nepean-national-park)



We acknowledge this location is part of the unceded traditional lands and waters of the **BUNURONG** and recognise their ongoing role in caring for Country.

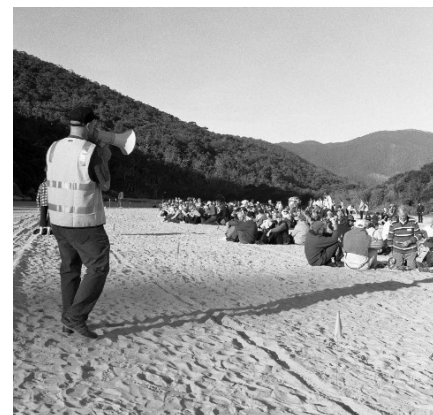
Vale Phil Ingamells, defender of nature

VNPA staff and supporters were shocked and saddened by the unexpected death of Phil Ingamells, our long-time Parks Protection Advocate, friend, mentor and ally. Phil died suddenly at home on 25 August.

Phil was a legend in conservation circles and a tireless campaigner for parks and nature. We all owe him a great debt of gratitude for his work. Nature in Victoria is better for his efforts, and we are all the wiser.

A thoughtful, persuasive writer and eloquent speaker, Phil played a critical role in protecting Victoria's natural places and national parks. With his rare skill for clearly explaining complicated (and often dry) policy conundrums, his pieces in *Park Watch* transported us to the heart of Victoria's natural places.

He was a warm friend and colleague, a lover of robust conversation and argument – a talent that was not lost on ministers and officials alike. With expansive skills and knowledge honed over the past two decades at VNPA and beyond, Phil played a key role in numerous park management plans.



Phil rallying the troops at 'Shine a light', 2013



Phil speaking at a public meeting on cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park, 2011

He filled his hours advocating for action to protect the incredible wildlife and places he spent so much time hiking, photographing and surveying.

Some of the memorable highlights of his time with VNPA include the long-and-hard-fought campaign to remove cattle grazing from the Alpine National Park, not once but twice. He pushed back against the seemingly endless development proposals in our national parks' estate and always promoted why these places are so special.

Phil's special love of Wilsons Prom compelled him to fend off development proposals in the 1990s and again in 2013. More recently, he pushed the government to control the feral animals destroying the Alpine landscapes that bewitched him so. He also tackled the extremely difficult issue of fire management in his usual evidence-based way.



Phil photographing Grey Grass Trees



'Shine a Light' human sign on the beach at Wilsons Prom, Gunaikurnai and Bunurong Country. DAVID NEILSON



Phil on Erith Island, Kent Group National Park, Tasmania. DAVID TATNALL

He never played favourites, in Phil's mind all of our protected areas are important, the corner stone of our efforts to protect nature for all people to respectfully enjoy.

Technically retiring as a paid staff member in late 2021, Phil remained active on our various committees, was a frequent visitor to the office and a prolific contributor to *Park Watch*.

While Phil certainly didn't get enough time to enjoy his hard-earned retirement, he always had time for nature. His wisdom, dedication and tenacity will be sorely missed.

I would like to give Phil the last word, which is what he would expect.

It's been a huge privilege to spend time as a spokesperson for the VNPA, and I'll remain forever grateful for that opportunity. I've been able to engage with so many interesting people, tasked in so many ways with the protection of Victoria's great natural heritage.

I've had remarkable access to the expertise of ecologists and other researchers who have been happy to

entrust their knowledge to the VNPA. And similarly, I've had access to the formidable understanding of so many of Victoria's amateur naturalists. And though it's not always easy to find yourself trying to enlighten people who see the natural world as a resource, an opportunity for exploitation or simply a troublesome in-the-way bit of bush, knowing that I was backed by the strength and passion of our members and supporters has made it all seem possible.

Thank you, and I hope to see you somewhere along the track. 🐾

Matt Ruchel, Executive Director

We invite you to share your experiences, condolences or tributes

vnpa.org.au/phil-ingamells

Phil at the 'We Love Parks' picnic at Mt Donna Buang



Rosemary Race



ROSEMARY RACE IS A LONG-TIME SUPPORTER AND FORMER VNPA COUNCIL MEMBER

What drew you to support VNPA?

As a dedicated Wildlife Victoria volunteer, I've had the privilege of rescuing wildlife, including penguins, from life-threatening situations. These moments of connection, when a fragile pinkie is placed in my hands, reinforces my unwavering commitment to protect and nurture our wildlife and wild places. In VNPA, I found people who are committed to protecting national parks.

I had previously been a secretary for 20 years, so was pleased to be able to use these skills during my three years on VNPA Council.

If you were 'the government' and could create a new Victorian national park (land or marine), where would it be and why?

My passion and aspirations don't end with individual rescues; they extend to envisioning a more harmonious future for our beloved Victoria.

Picture this: a grand tapestry of coastal wetlands, national parks and reserves, united under the sheltering wings of a powerful act passed by our parliament. A Victorian marine national park that embraces every inch of our coastline and every heart that beats for nature. This audacious dream is my way of giving back to the land that has given me so much, a way of saying that we are all custodians of this earth, entrusted with its care.

This dream of mine resonates deeply, I believe, with the essence of the Victorian National Parks Association and the tireless work VNPA has done to safeguard our natural heritage. The dedication to preserve, the commitment to advocate, and the unwavering belief in the power of community are threads that bind us together on this shared journey.

If you could invite a famous person on a bushwalk with you, who might it be?

I would ask climate scientist James Hansen, as I am reading his book: *Storms of my grandchildren: The truth about the coming climate catastrophe and our last chance to save humanity*.

It's about cherishing memories. The crisp salt air of the coast, the rustling of leaves in the forest, the symphony of waves crashing against the rocks – it's these experiences that ignite our spirits.

For me, it's about pausing for a moment to gaze into the freezing waters of San Remo, on Bunurong Country, to watch delightful sea creatures of rainbow colours. Or listening to excited children looking up at a shrieking pelican with a fish in its mouth, or witnessing the first blossoms of spring, knowing that these bird habitats are moments of magic that deserve to be protected.

What has time in nature taught you?

What nature has taught me and what fuels my dedication to conservation is the pulse of life that beats through every living creature, every stretch of coastline, and every leaf that rustles in the wind. It's the collective heartbeat of a community that shares the same love, the same dreams, and the same determination to leave a legacy of vibrant, thriving nature for generations to come.

And it's about Benjamin, my grand-nephew, excited with his Australian fauna puppets that I bought recently for his birthday, who may be the last advocate for change – but as a guardian of dreams – a dream that is shared, cherished, and nurtured by the members of VNPA.

Our future depends on it, our lands and marine lives deserve nothing less. 🌿

Jumping into frog ID

Frogs of Victoria: A guide to Identification, Ecology and Conservation, Nick Clemann and Michael Swan.

CSIRO Publishing, 2023, 180pp, ISBN 9781486313815

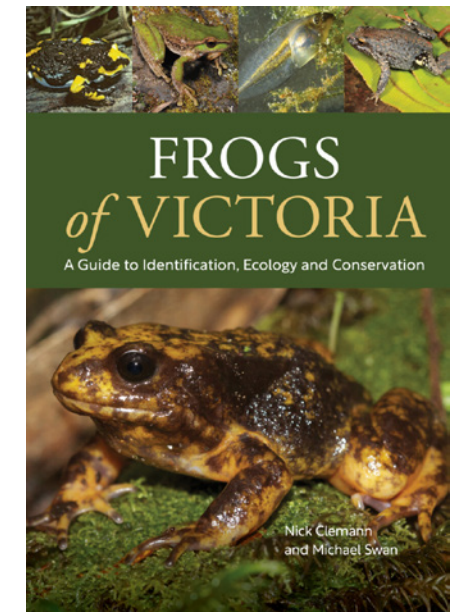
Frogs of Victoria is the perfect book if you don't know much about frogs, or even if you're hopping mad about frogs and want to learn more. It combines in depth knowledge from top frog experts into a fantastic frog field guide.

This book is way more than just a field guide though. It covers frog identification and range, so you'll be able to identify any frog you

come across in Victoria. But it also provides great information on different Victorian ecosystems, so you can learn all about the different landscapes where Victorian frogs live. It also outlines the threats that frogs face and urgent actions that we need to take to address those threats.

This book features high quality photos and detailed information about 38 different Victorian frogs. It covers distinguishing features of each frog, plus how to tell them apart from look-alikes. *Frogs of Victoria* is perfect for ecologists, land managers and frog fanciers alike. 🌿

Meghan Lindsay, Community Learning and Communications Officer



In the footsteps of giants

The Giants, directed by Rachel Antony and Laurence Billiet.

This beautifully produced documentary charts the extraordinary life of environmentalist Bob Brown. His tale is intertwined with the story of the giant trees of Tasmania and the ongoing battles to save them.

Described as 'part warrior, part man of peace', the seeds of Bob's willingness to fight for justice for the environment began at an early age. His twin sister Jan always knew that Bob would make a mark on this world.

From the age of two, Bob and his family lived in Trunkey Creek, population 100, in central west NSW. Bob found the bush absolutely magical, and it gave him a sense of perspective. He believed that no trouble could ever be so bad as to not be healed by nature. We learn that 'central to Bob's sense of spirituality, but not religion, has always been a great admiration for nature'.

Interspersed with chapters of Bob's life, the voices of a number of eminent scientists speak of the giants of the forest. The majestic Huon Pine, which can live for thousands of years. The giant Mountain Ash, the tallest flowering plant on earth. And

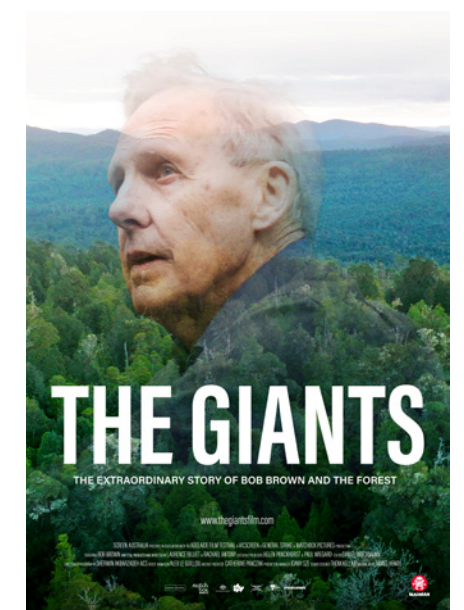
the ancient Myrtle Beech, which, as a species, have survived tens of thousands of years.

Coming from a family with no tertiary education, Bob went to Sydney University where he graduated in 1968 as a medical doctor. He took up a job as a general practitioner in Launceston and has called Tasmania home ever since.

Events like the flooding of Lake Pedder, and the nuclear powered American aircraft carrier, *Enterprise*, coming up the Derwent River, set Bob off on a life of environmental activism. 'Don't get depressed, get active' became his philosophy.

Rafting the Franklin River and leading the blockade against the area being logged and the river dammed. Leaving a career in medicine to co-found the Tasmanian Wilderness Society. Entering politics and becoming a senator and leader of the Australian Greens. Life with his partner Paul. These are some of the chapters of a most extraordinary life depicted in the documentary.

One of the film's contributing scientists, Dr Tom May, mycologist at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, speaks to some incredible visuals of fungi. Dr. May explains how they help to decompose material in the forests, extracts nutrients from the soil and



decompose plants 'like an incredible subterranean train network'. The fabulous 3D animations used to depict a forests' web of life artistically remind us of how much we have yet to learn.

The documentary concludes with a strong call to action, to end native forest logging. Bob is greatly disturbed by recent anti protest laws and believes that civil disobedience is actually an obedience to nature, standing up for the trees. The film ends by Bob asking what you would say to your grandchildren when they ask you 'What did you do when the planet was plundered?' 🌿

The Giants is streaming on DocPlay.

Ann McGregor awarded OAM

Long-time VNPA member and supporter Ann McGregor has received an Order of Australia Medal in the King's Birthday awards for service to conservation and the environment.

Along with her husband Bruce, Ann formed the Brunswick Merri Creek Action Group in 1976 and over almost half a century have helped to turn Merri Creek into the environmental and recreation asset that it is today.

As well as being President of the Merri Creek Management Committee since 2012, and Secretary for ten years before that, Ann has been Vice President of Friends of Merri Creek since 2002. As Secretary of the earlier Merri Creek Coordinating Committee, Ann played a key role in establishing the Merri Creek shared path during the 1980s. She was also the founder, in 2008, and Coordinator of the Friends of Merri Creek Merri

Birdwatch, undertaken quarterly at ten sites on Merri Creek.

Ann has also made important contributions to conservation elsewhere in Victoria. She was heavily involved in writing the State Government's Conservation Strategy for Victoria and then the Guide to Preparing Local Conservation Strategies in the 1980s, which were both very influential on state and local government priorities and investments. Most local government environmental jobs today owe their existence ultimately to these ground breaking initiatives.

Ann is a co-founder of the Nature Stewards Program, now part of VNPA, and chairs its Program Advisory Group. She was both a volunteer and consultant to the VNPA-hosted Victoria Naturally Alliance, investigating policy priorities for the critical ecological processes in Victoria. Ann served



for several years on the board of the Central Victorian Biolinks Alliance.

Ann has also written numerous submissions to public environmental inquiries and has been a community representative on public committees, such as the Community Reference Committee for the Victorian Environment Assessment Council's Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation (2009-2012). She has also been a member and supporter of many other environmental organisations in Victoria and Australia.

The length, breadth and deep effectiveness of Ann's service stands out, as does her ability to inspire, collaborate and coordinate others. Her outreach to and connection with like-minded advocates and doers across Victoria involved in similar biodiversity protection and advocacy is a remarkable contribution to wider community capacity. 🌿

With thanks to Merri Creek eNews and Bruce McGregor



Merri Creek at Coburg Lake Reserve, Wurundjeri Country. NICKW25/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

VNPA Annual General Meeting

Members and supporters are warmly invited to attend the Victorian National Parks Association's 71st Annual General Meeting.

Guest speaker Professor Sarah Bekessy will present on Designing Nature Positive Cities, followed by a presentation from Executive Director, Matt Ruchel and senior staff, and the AGM formalities chaired by VNPA President, David Nugent.

Tuesday 24 October 2023

**Melbourne City Conference Centre,
190 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne or streamed online**

RSVP is essential. Please confirm attendance by Tuesday 17 October.

Email: support@vnpa.org.au or phone Kristian on (03) 9341 6506



Professor Sarah Bekessy, guest speaker for our 71st AGM

Farewell to our long-time fundraiser Amelia Easdale

In late August we bid farewell to Amelia Easdale, Supporter Development Officer, after seven years with VNPA.

Amelia has been the key driver behind our regular fundraising appeals and taking care of supporters, including our fabulous Parks Protectors – those who make regular monthly donations to VNPA.

Amelia's event and catering management skills were much appreciated in delivering events both large and intimate, such as the 'Living Next to Nature' event held near Bendigo, the launch of Wild Families and the 'We Love Parks' picnic at Mount Donna Buang, as well as picnics at Yarra Bend Park to introduce supporters to VNPA.

If you met Amelia at a VNPA event, or spoke with her on the phone, it'd be hard to miss her incredible enthusiasm for the protection of nature in Victoria, and her recognition of how inspiring and humbling it is



MEGHAN LINDSAY

for us, to have such delightful and committed supporters.

Amelia also has a way with words and many of you would have received thoughtful notes or cards from Amelia giving thanks, seasons greetings or offering condolences. Amelia is also a caring colleague, who loves a coffee and a chat.

Amelia is taking a career break and is planning on more time to care for

family members. As a huge animal lover, we suspect the care will expand to more of her furry neighbourhood friends including a foster whippet and her apartment block's shared cat!

Amelia has made a fantastic contribution to growing support for nature and national parks in Victoria, and we wish Amelia well in her next adventures. 🌿

Jane Crouch, Fundraising Manager

Quiz answers from p. 15

1. D: Over 50 years. The maximum age recorded is 55 years.
2. False: All though common in and around Port Phillip Bay, the Dusky Morwong can be found near the bottom of rocky coastal reefs along the entirety of the Great Southern Reef. From the central coast of New South Wales, to Victoria and Tasmania, through South Australia, and all the way to southern Western Australia!
3. B: At the base of its caudal fin. Although they commonly have six spines each side of their tail, they can also be found with four or eight spines instead.
4. False: Despite very similar colourations and patterns with vertical black bands across their bodies, the Magpie Perch and Old Wife are two different species. A good way to differentiate the two is by taking note of their fins, with the Old Wife having much more prominent dorsal and pelvic fins than the Magpie Perch.
5. C: The Western Blue Groper can grow to a whopping 1.75m in length and up to 40 kg in weight, making it the second largest wrasse in the world (behind the Humphead Maori Wrasse). It's eastern cousin, although near identical, only grows to 1.2m in length.
6. False: An individual Southern Blue Devil is strongly associated to a specific rocky cave/overhang on a reef, leaving only to hunt for crustaceans, molluscs or small fish before returning 'home'.
7. True: Like all sea dragons and horses, females lay their eggs in the male's brood pouch where he protects them for roughly eight weeks before they hatch.
8. True: The Smooth Stingray can grow to 4.3m in length from snout to tail, 2m from 'wing' to 'wing' and weighing an astonishing 350 kg!
9. A: Guitarfish.
10. False: Port Jackson Sharks are actually nocturnal and can be found on the bottom

of rocky reefs hiding in caves or under ledges and overhangs, often in large groups of the same individuals each time.

11. False: All though both bottom dwellers, masters of camouflage and similar in appearance, they are not closely related. The Spotted Wobbegong is a species of shark (cartilaginous fish) while the Flathead is a type flattened fish (bony fish).

12. D: Sifting through the surface of the reef floor for invertebrates and small fish.

SCORING

1-3: Good job! Get to know more of Victoria's unique marine fish by joining us during the GVFC in November.

4-7: Very well done, build on your knowledge by collaborating with other marine enthusiasts on ReefWatch's 'Marine Life of Victoria' iNaturalist page!

8-10: The next David Attenborough? I think so! You are on your way to becoming a ReefWatch expert.

Wild Families



Say hello to some tree hollow facts

WHAT ARE TREE HOLLOWS, WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT, AND WHO NEEDS THEM?



1 A tree hollow is a hole or crack in a trunk or branch of a tree. They can be in living or dead trees.



5 Hollows in trees are created by things like bacteria, fire, fungi and termites. Hollows are also made when wind knocks branches off trees.



2 Lots of different animals need tree hollows, including different types of birds, mammals, lizards and frogs. Over 340 types of Australian animals use tree hollows as their home.



6 Different sized animals need different sized and shaped hollows to live in.



3 Some animals use hollows all year round to sleep in, others only use hollows for part of the year for nesting.



7 Hollows for animals like birds and mammals generally don't begin to form in trees until the tree is over 100 years old. They can take over 200 years to form hollows big enough for larger animals to use.



4 Eucalyptus trees are the main type of trees that form hollows in Australia.

IMAGES: MARK GILLOW, MEGHAN LINDSAY, JUSTIN CALLY, SANDY SCHELTEMA

Quiz: Who sleeps here?

Which 7 of these 10 animals use tree hollows to nest or sleep in?



Gang-gang Cockatoo



Koala



Crimson Rosella



Greater Glider



Superb Lyrebird



Powerful Owl



Leadbeater's Possum



Lace Monitor



Australian Magpie



Laughing Kookaburra

Quiz answers: 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10



Explorer's Corner

TIPS & TRICKS FOR GETTING INTO NATURE FOR EXPLORERS OF ALL AGES



Hunting for tree hollows

On your next walk in a forest, take some time to notice the tree hollows and who might live in them. Tree hollows look like a hole or crack in the trunk or branch of a tree. They can be small or hidden, so you'll need to look closely.

Here are some things your family can try along the way:



Count how many trees with hollows you can find.

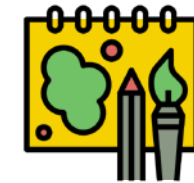


Guess how old the trees with hollows are!



Look for evidence near each hollow that could show an animal is using it.

Can you see scratch marks, rubbed bark or animal poo?



Choose one hollow and draw a picture of it and the animals you think might use it.



Choose one hollow and watch it quietly for a while during the day or when the sun goes down. Does anything go in or come out?

Threats to tree hollows

Many trees with hollows have been destroyed by land-clearing and logging in Victoria.

Introduced animals like European Bees, Common Mynas and Black Rats take over tree hollows, leaving less available for native animals.



Logging in the Wombat. WOMBAT FORESTCARE

What you can do to help

If you have a large backyard, you can plant a local type of Eucalyptus tree. One day it will be big enough to form hollows for animals to live in!

Volunteer with a local group to plant trees. These trees will form hollows one day and create homes for lots of animals.



Tree planting volunteers. GREENING AUSTRALIA

Build or buy a nest box for your backyard.

Animals can live there while they are waiting for trees nearby to grow old enough to form hollows.

Don't forget, different animals need different sized hollows, so the same goes for nest boxes. You can find designs online to make sure you build a box with the right dimensions.



Squirrel Gliders in a nest box. RAY THOMAS



Make nature part of your legacy

A gift in your will to VNPA is a simple but powerful way you can continue to help care for and protect nature into the future.

We all know that nature in Victoria is under threat – whether it be from rogue logging, inappropriate development, or a plethora of other reasons. But you can be part of the solution.

Gifts in Wills (sometimes known as bequests) are an incredible way to make sure the places and wildlife you love are looked after and protected for generations to come. They give organisations like us the security to pursue long-term, impactful campaigns with the determination and resolve that they deserve.

By leaving a gift to VNPA in your Will your legacy will help protect national parks, nature and wildlife long into the future.



For a small organisation, VNPA is highly effective and has an amazing record of achievements. By leaving VNPA a gift in my Will, I hope I will help it to continue to advocate on behalf of Victoria's unique natural places and the many species that inhabit them.

Libby Smith, former VNPA Councillor

For questions or more information on how to leave a gift, please visit

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

or contact our Philanthropy Executive, Kristian Lang on 03 9341 6506, kristian@vnpa.org.au



If you have already left a gift in your Will to VNPA, we would love to know so we can express our gratitude. All communications will be treated in the strictest confidence.

