



VICTORIAN  
NATIONAL PARKS  
ASSOCIATION  
*Be part of nature*

Annual Impact Report  
2023-24

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## Our community has been working to protect wildlife and nature in Victoria for over 70 years.

We learned long ago that collaboration is essential to achieving our conservation goals. VNPA has led, or been part of, joint community campaigns to stop destructive logging, safeguard our big blue backyard, and advocate for stronger nature protection policies. We've strengthened our partnerships with nature organisations, government agencies, and First Nation communities. When we work together, we achieve greater outcomes for nature.

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

**“When we work together, we achieve greater outcomes for nature.”**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## From the President and Executive Director



**David Nugent**  
President

Whether it's the overdue demise of VicForests, the promise to finally legislate the Wombat-Lerderderg and Mount Buangor national parks or the rejection of the Port of Hastings; our triumphs (and tribulations) would not be possible without our foundation of dedicated members, supporters and donors.

Your support is what continues to power VNPA's conservation community engagement efforts. Our wish list is long, evidence-based and probably too

ambitious! But it's the kind of ambition I marvelled at as a supporter, and one that I relish as President. VNPA is the only organisation pushing for proper oversight, better management, stronger legislation and more funding for Victoria's national parks and reserves.

We are so grateful for our community's time, trust, energy and generosity. Together, we're creating a bright future for Victoria's special places and wildlife.



**Matt Ruchel**  
Executive Director

Every year, when I write this (every month, if I'm honest) I'm reminded of how vigilant we must remain when it comes to defending nature in Victoria. Sadly, and too often, the exploitation of our precious natural places and wildlife comes from our own government and its agencies.

The disbandment of VicForests is good news for our globally significant native forests and our spectacular wildlife. Unfortunately, Victoria's infamous native logging industry has cast a long shadow. We now find ourselves unravelling emerging loopholes that are emboldening a new era of logging across public and private land.

**“Every day I'm reminded of how many people are willing to back a vision of nature that is protected and respected by all.”**

Our community worked so hard to end decades of destructive native habitat logging. We simply won't sit on our hands as our precious web of life is exploited for profit again. Leadbeater's Possums and other threatened wildlife can't survive one dodgy logging loophole after another.

In our salty backyard we're just as busy. Inappropriate industrialisation and offshore development continue to threaten our oceans, coasts and wetlands. *The winds of change* report showed industry and decision-makers how proper spatial planning can be used so marine habitats and wildlife are not sacrificed in the transition to renewable energy. Our Western Port Bay alliance is

focused on getting the government to support and fund our holistic planning framework.

Our community programs continue to thrive. Hundreds of volunteers contributed their time through surveys, monitoring and data collection. Kids learned about sea slugs. Local leaders emerged, and young people experienced a day in the life of a nature campaigner.

Our expanded partnerships with universities and research institutions grew the impact of our work. We engaged experts and consulted with locals and nature groups to create submissions, present to planning panels and attend Environmental Effects Statement hearings.

We're still pushing for local, state and federal departments to do their jobs. To put independent oversight in place. To enforce rigorous surveying for threatened wildlife. To incorporate up-to-date science for effective fire management.

Every day I'm reminded of how many people are willing to back a vision of nature that is protected and respected by all. Your support means we can shield our natural wonders from unnecessary harm. It means we can keep giving people the chance to explore our landscapes, whether that's with our experts, ecologists or their own families. It means we can keep playing the long game, with the independence to share hard truths, bold solutions and the expertise to back them up.

With our independence, history and extensive knowledge of land tenure and policy, VNPA is uniquely placed to intervene and defend the integrity of our special places. And none of that is possible without our members, supporters, donors and partners.

### VNPA Annual Impact Report, 2023-24

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Cover: NextGen Nature Lyrebird Walk in the Dandenong Ranges National Park, Wurundjeri Country.  
MEGHAN LINDSAY

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



Nature Stewards group planting native plants at the Macarthur Park Wetlands, Miners Rest, Wadawurrung Country. SOPHIE HONEYMAN

# Year in review

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

## Putting NatureWatch into nature advocacy

This year, our NatureWatch citizen science program strengthened our coordination with our campaigners to provide research, evidence and advice. NatureWatch Coordinator, Dr Sera Blair and Nature Conservation Campaigner, Ben Gill worked with Wombat Forestcare to survey for threatened animals in the Wombat Forest: both Mountain Skinks (*Liopholis montana*) and Brush-tailed Phascogales (*Phascogale tapoatafa*) were found. When phascogales were detected in an imminent planned burn area, VNPA provided data to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV).

We were unable to convince them to adjust their plans to destroy critical habitat. We returned to the site to do habitat surveys and photo points ahead of the planned burn, in order to compare before and after.

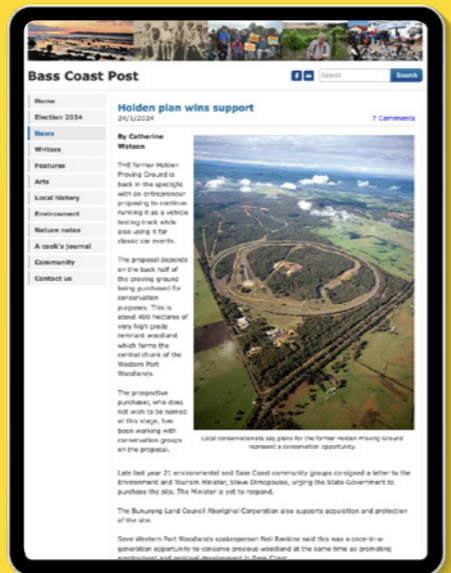
To help stop the devastation of loophole logging in areas impacted by storms in the Dandenong Ranges, Sera ran spotlighting surveys with Nature Conservation Campaigner, Blake Nisbet. They searched for threatened wildlife habitat in areas slated for clearing. The presence of Yellow-bellied Gliders (*Petaurus australis*) and Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*) fledglings reinforced the

value of leaving areas alone so wildlife can adapt to changing conditions. Sera also collaborated with Parks and Nature Campaigner, Jordan Crook to survey wildlife in the Western Port Woodlands. The former Holden Proving Ground in Lang Lang is currently up for sale, and due to its proximity to existing sandmines is very attractive to resource extractors. We joined a team of experts to see who and what lives in the area, conducting numerous camera, audio and spotlighting surveys. Discoveries include two endangered orchids – Cobra Greenhood (*Pterostylis grandiflora*) and Spurred Helmet-orchid (*Corybas aconitiflorus*) – and the largest known population of Critically Endangered Strzelecki Gums (*Eucalyptus strzeleckii*). A fieldwork expedition planned for Mt Cole was quashed when bushfires ravaged the area.

**“We joined a team of experts to see who and what lives in the area, conducting numerous camera, audio and spotlighting surveys.”**



Brush-tailed Phascogale caught on our wildlife camera in the Wombat Forest



Bass Coast Post, 24 January 2024

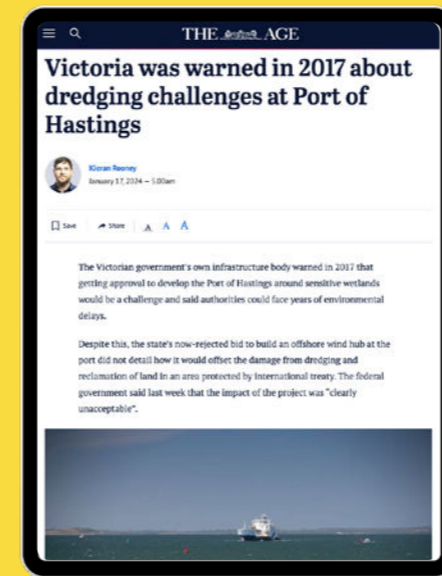
## Better planning for our seas

In March 2024, we released *The winds of change* to encourage proper marine planning for offshore wind energy. There's a surge of renewable energy proposals across Victorian waters. We need this new renewable energy infrastructure to tackle climate change,

but if these wind farms aren't put in the right places, marine wildlife and their habitats will pay the price.

VNPA identified the need for coordinated strategic planning and leadership to tackle this complex issue. *The winds of change* is a call to action for better planning to protect marine wildlife and habitats, and to save time and avoid problems down the track. We're now working with all levels of government, industry and community to put it into practice.

We were thrilled when the Commonwealth rejected the Victorian Government's plan for a new offshore wind terminal in Western Port Bay's Ramsar wetland. This internationally protected habitat is critical to the survival of threatened birds. The Federal Environment Minister called the Port of Hastings proposal 'clearly unacceptable'. Some 29 hectares of seabed and 92 hectares of seagrass, mangroves and



The Age, 17 January 2024

**“We need a fast transition to clean energy. But it doesn't need to be Eastern Curlews vs wind turbines.”**



salt marsh would've been irreversibly damaged.

We need a fast transition to clean energy. But it doesn't need to be Eastern Curlews vs wind turbines. VNPA has opposed the project since the early 2010s. We're alert to renewed attempts by the state to build this ill-thought-out development.

[vnpa.org.au/winds-of-change](http://vnpa.org.au/winds-of-change)

## Protecting our living legacies

Large and old trees are a fundamental part of a healthy, functioning Victorian landscape. Their hollows are pivotal in the life cycles of many birds, frogs, reptiles and mammals. Yet hollow-bearing and significant trees are unnecessarily cut down and damaged during fire management and land clearing operations.

Our report, *Protecting our living legacies*, outlines ways to better look after these beauties. The recommendations provide solutions for protecting significant trees so they can continue to be the life force of our forests.

The decline of large and old trees is happening across the state – from the suburbs, to farms, state forests and national parks. The loss of large, old and hollow-bearing trees is recognised as a key threat to native forests and woodlands in Victoria's nature laws.

To amplify the reach and impact of *Protecting our living legacies*, we delivered briefings on the report's 21 crucial steps to land managers and land holders. Our VNPA community amplified our call to decision-makers and land managers to use our log of claims to make sure the lives of these natural monuments aren't cut short.

[vnpa.org.au/protecting-our-living-legacies](http://vnpa.org.au/protecting-our-living-legacies)



## End of VicForests

In June 2024, VicForests was officially disbanded after the Victorian Parliament passed the *Sustainable Forests (Timber) Repeal Act 2024*.

VicForests, with its relentless lawbreaking, trashing of native forest habitat and haemorrhaging of public funds, had well and truly lost its social and ecological licence.

But it wouldn't have come to an end without years of effort by dedicated nature advocates and community groups. And without VNPA supporters. Thank you!



The Age, 13 March 2024



Dr Sera Blair in the pristine woodlands at the former Holden Proving Ground, Lang Lang, Bunurong Country. MEGHAN LINDSAY

Conservation of Victorian nature and protection of natural heritage



Swamp Wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*), Sherbrooke Forest, Dandenong Ranges National Park, Wurundjeri Country. MEGHAN LINDSAY

# Protecting, defending and restoring nature

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

## Bringing the Great Forest National Park to life

-  **6** reports & submissions
-  **6** major media stories
-  **31** social media posts
-  **14,498** engagements\*

\*public shares, likes and comments on VNPA digital channels

We've been advocating for the creation of the Great Forest National Park for many years. It would protect large areas of the Central Highlands – home to the mighty Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*). With an end to native forest logging, this year we came a step closer to seeing that protection realised.

Working together with local, state and national groups, we called for a commitment to this new national park. The Eminent Panel for Community

welcomed the long overdue release of the National Leadbeater's Possum Recovery Plan, and publicly endorsed its implementation across all land tenures.

In early 2024, VNPA and other groups notified state and federal ministers of the destruction of old hollow-bearing trees in the Yarra Ranges National Park. Even after being made aware that threatened wildlife habitat was being destroyed along 250 km of fuel breaks, we were devastated when a dead Greater Glider (*Petauroides volans*) was discovered in a large habitat tree felled by FFMV. We worked with the media to amplify the news and gain more attention on the issue.

The unique Mt Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly (*Riekoperla darlingtoni*) can only be found in a small area of the Yarra Ranges National Park. We nominated this unique animal for a 'critical habitat determination', a never-used-before nature law. The scientific advisory committee reviewed our application. They concluded that this threatened insect, and its home, should be protected.

But the final decision-makers in the environment department declined the listing. They cherry picked one key threat to address and ignored the rest.

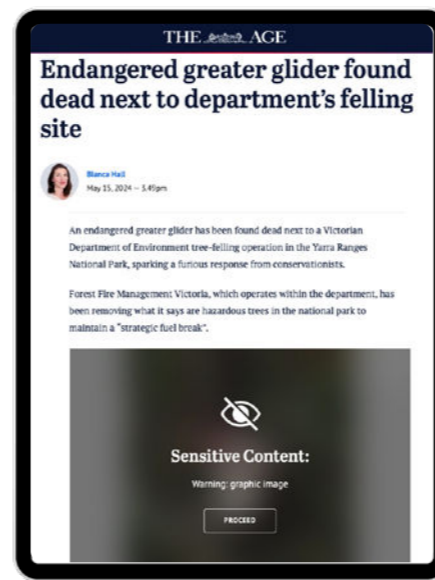
The Central Highlands are spectacular. They're home to incredible wildlife. We'll continue to advocate for their protection and the creation of this new national park.

[vnpa.org.au/central-highlands](https://vnpa.org.au/central-highlands)

**“Working together with local, state and national groups, we called for a commitment to this new national park.”**



Yahoo! News, 24 May 2024



The Age, 15 May 2024

Engagement sought community feedback on the future of forests of the Central Highlands. We created submission guideline tools and held a workshop to support community involvement. We're still waiting for the outcome of that process.

Now that VicForests has been disbanded, native forest logging has ended across large areas of the Central Highlands. But these incredible landscapes are still under threat, plagued by loophole logging both on public and private land.

We uncovered a private land logging coupe near the Yarra Ranges National Park that seems to have breached Leadbeater's Possum (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*) special protection zones and encroached onto public land. We



Despair upon discovering the dead Greater Glider. WOTCH

# Defending wildlife and habitat from loophole logging

-  **35** site investigations
-  **20** reports & submissions
-  **14** major media stories
-  **3,549** email actions
-  **58** social media posts
-  **18,366** engagements

We continue to monitor, document and query logging across protected areas in the Yarra Ranges and Dandenong Ranges national parks. Under the guise of fire management and storm clean-up, FFMV have removed fallen trees, many of which were in moist states of healthy decay. We documented threatened Powerful Owls (*Ninox strenua*) in the proposed logging areas which also have records of Yellow-bellied Gliders (*Petaurus australis*), Greater Gliders (*Petauroides volans*) and Sooty Owls (*Tyto tenebricosa*).

Following the avoidable death of a Greater Glider (see report, p.7) we continue to advocate for greater oversight of fire management works to avoid devastating impacts to wildlife in future.

Last year in Mt Stirling we found several endangered native plants, including Lilac Bitter-cress (*Cardamine lilacina*) and Royal Grevillea (*Grevillea victoriae*), in forest coupes that VicForests had plans to log (but failed to detect themselves). While VicForests is technically no more, a lack of thorough wildlife surveying is a persistent theme in government departments working in public forests. The implications are serious, and a key concern in our advocacy for greater oversight.

Logging continues in Wombat Forest and Cobaw Forest under the tired premise of 'storm recovery'. With the

support of our NatureWatch team, VNPA campaigners conducted field assessments and surveyed forests with local groups. We've reported our findings back to local elected representatives with recommendations for policy change. We continue to return to the forests to make sure our findings are followed up with real conservation efforts.

## Habitat logging on private land

We've discovered private logging operations from the Central Highlands to East Gippsland and western Victoria. At least 187 hectares (or 40 MCGs), have been cleared or logged over the last year, including breaches of Leadbeater's Possum special protection zones. More operations are planned. To bring this issue into the light, we worked with *The Age* and other media outlets on an investigative story into this disturbing new trend.

In April 2024, VNPA and Friends of Leadbeater's Possum sent letters to 58 Victorian local government councils highlighting how native forest logging on private land is a huge financial burden for them and their communities.

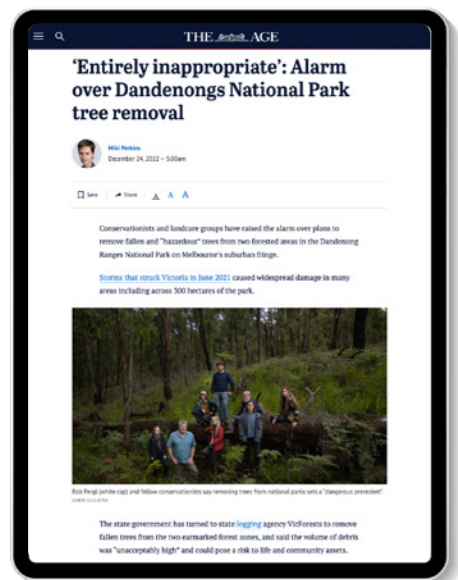
To properly look after endangered wildlife on private land we need adequate resources to enforce nature protection requirements. We'll keep advocating for federal threatened wildlife recovery plans to be put into action, for community consultation and proper transparency on native forest logging proposals.

[vnpa.org.au/action/end-private-logging](https://vnpa.org.au/action/end-private-logging)

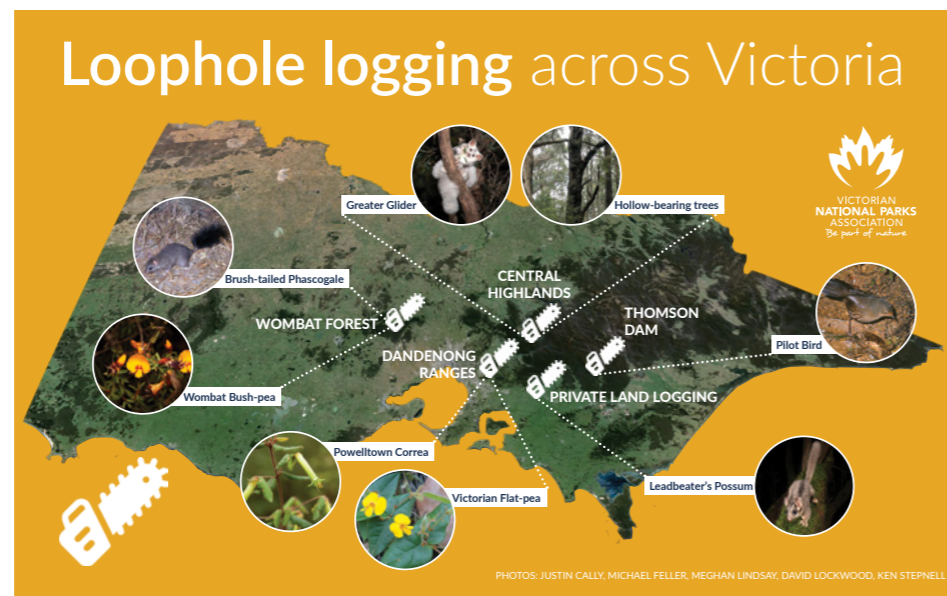


Logging in Cobaw Forest, Wurundjeri and Taungurung Country. BEN GILL

**“To properly look after endangered wildlife on private land we need adequate resources to enforce nature protection requirements.”**



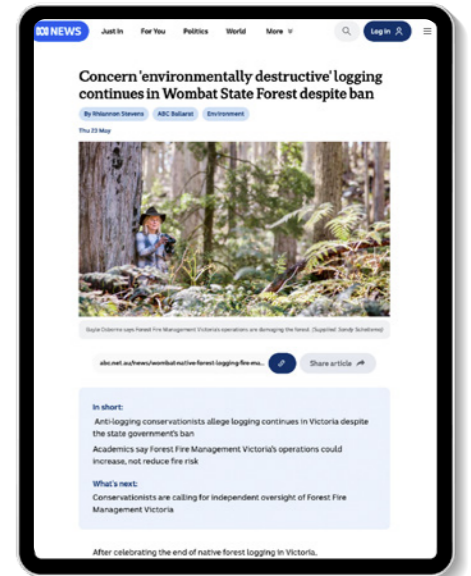
The Age, 24 December 2023



Loophole logging map, May 2024



Mountain Skink, Wombat Forest, Wurundjeri and Dja Dja Wurrung Country. GAYLE OSBORNE



ABC Online, 23 May 2024

## Creating the promised central west parks

After reaching the three-year anniversary of Victorian Labor's commitment to parks and reserves for 60,000 hectares of forest and woodlands, we've finally celebrated a breakthrough. Ministerial communications stated Wombat-Lerderderg and Mt Buangor national parks legislation will be introduced to parliament in 2024. As always, we don't take anything for granted. We're keeping a close eye on the parliamentary agenda and updating relevant ministers on emerging issues.

Wombat Forest is the largest relatively intact forest in the heavily cleared, mined and logged region of central Victoria. Every inch of this critical nature refuge matters. That's why, when our friends at Wombat Forestcare (WFC) identified endangered Mountain Skinks (*Liopholis montana*) in planned coupes, we worked with them to survey the forest. This resulted in enough evidence for WFC to drag VicForests back into court. While VicForests has ceased operating, FFMV have taken up the mantle.

Rising on an extinct volcano, surrounded by blankets of farmland, the forests of Mt Cole/Bereep Bereep are home to 16 habitat types and an array of wildlife. In February 2024, deliberately lit fires devoured the homes and habitats of several threatened plants and animals.

Tragically this included the Critically Endangered Mt Cole Grevillea (*Grevillea montis-cole* subsp. *montis-cole*). We've since been working with DEECA's Rapid Response Assessment Team on identifying the challenges for Mt Cole's struggling web of life. We've succeeded in gaining a commitment from DEECA to finance a dedicated recovery effort for the Mt Cole Grevillea.

Over in Wellsford Forest, which did not receive the level of protection recommended by VEAC, we've supported nature local groups to push back on illegal firewood extraction and mountain bike trail creation.

With your enduring support, we'll keep using all the tools available to keep the pressure on our elected representatives to prepare and pass legislation for the 26,000 hectares across the Pyrenees, Wellsford, Mt Cole, the Cobaw Ranges and regional reserves promised for protection.

[vnpa.org.au/central-west](https://vnpa.org.au/central-west)

-  **16** site investigations
-  **8** reports & submissions
-  **4** major media stories
-  **2,059** email actions
-  **24** social media posts
-  **1,534** engagements

Open letter to Premier Jacinta Allan, full page advertisement placed in eight local newspapers (print and digital) across the central west region, 18-24 November 2023



**“We're keeping a close eye on the parliamentary agenda and updating relevant ministers on emerging issues.”**



The Canberra Times, 28 March 2024

**“...our Framework will support local sustainable business and coastal communities, whilst protecting our coastlines and aquatic landscapes.”**

## Acting for Western Port Bay

We continued pushing the Victorian Government to adopt the Western Port Bay Framework. Our collaborative, holistic roadmap promotes well-designed offshore wind development. The Framework is backed by Traditional Custodians, tourism, local businesses, conservation groups and local MPs.

Any elected representative serious about safeguarding this wondrous web of life, while promoting sustainable marine and tourism businesses, would endorse it. If put into practice, our Framework will support local sustainable business and coastal communities, whilst protecting our coastlines and aquatic landscapes.

[actforwesternportbay.au](http://actforwesternportbay.au)

- 5 reports & submissions
- 5 major media stories
- 16 social media posts
- 633 engagements



Weedy Sea-dragon, Victoria's state marine animal  
STEFANO BORGHI

## Championing Western Port Woodlands

The Bass Coast's rare coastal woodland, sheltering Endangered creatures like Southern Brown Bandicoot (*Isodon obesulus*), Long-nosed Bandicoots (*Perameles nasuta*), Powerful Owls (*Ninox strenua*), and Tea-tree Fingers fungi (*Hypocreopsis amplexens*), is a core priority for VNPA. With your continued support, we keep shining light on the ongoing threat of industrial sand mining to this precious wildlife corridor.

**“...we keep shining light on the ongoing threat of industrial sand mining to this precious wildlife corridor.”**

Working alongside the South Gippsland Conservation Society and Save Westernport Woodlands, we succeeded in having the woodlands recognised as a significant landscape – named in the Victorian Government gazette for the first time.

As we await the results of the Distinctive Area Landscape process, we launched a comprehensive monitoring program to learn more about the former Holden Proving Ground's plants, animals and insects. Together with our NatureWatch team and Bass Coast Council, we uncovered one of the state's largest populations of Strzelecki Gum (*Eucalyptus strzeleckii*). A report on this important find is coming soon.

[vnpa.org.au/western-port-woodlands](http://vnpa.org.au/western-port-woodlands)

- 14 site visits
- 15 social media posts
- 636 engagements



Former Holden Proving Ground, Western Port Woodlands, Bunurong Country. MEGHAN LINDSAY

## Guarding our grasslands

The Grassy Plains Network (GPN) represents land management professionals, academics, ecologists and community members concerned about the ongoing decline of Victoria's grassy ecosystems.

A lot has happened in our tenacious but trouble grasslands in the last twelve months. Working with local groups and fervent supporters, we succeeded in getting Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*) and Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*) habitat better protected throughout Geelong's Northern and Western Growth Corridors.

In conjunction with Parks Victoria and Wyndham Council, we led a Western Grasslands Management Workshop to lift the bar on the designing of grassland parks. We expanded our outreach with a two-year Grasslands Community Education Project, and inspired Arabic,

Hindi, Karen, Mandarin and Vietnamese-speaking communities with postcards and videos about the grasslands on their doorsteps.

Our many Freedom of Information requests unearthed the systemic failures of local councils to fulfil their legally-binding duty to safeguard nature in their jurisdiction. We pushed back on poorly located and ill-thought-out big infrastructure proposals that threaten nature, including gas pipelines, wind and solar farms, big batteries, road duplications and freight hubs.

The grassland mapping project we launched is literally putting our hidden wonderlands on the map. We've run well-attended monthly 'Grassy Talks', and led dozens of tours to grasslands.

In 2024, GPN formally became part of VNPA.

[grassypains.net.au](http://grassypains.net.au)



Greetings from the Grasslands multi-lingual postcard

**“We pushed back on poorly located and ill-thought-out big infrastructure proposals that threaten nature.”**

- 2 site investigations
- 14 reports & submissions
- 11 Grassy Talks
- 6 major media stories
- 94 social media posts
- 3,694 engagements



The Guardian, 2 February 2024

## Strengthening our nature laws

Too often, Australia's national environmental laws take a back seat as the decisions and actions of state governments go unscrutinised. This is particularly true for fire management, strategic fuel break and storm clean up works, not to mention large-scale infrastructure developments.

VNPA persists in raising questions in state and federal parliaments, and lodging letters and evidenced submissions with decision-makers. We highlighted the dire lack of oversight and transparency in the media and empower our supporters to demand accountability from their elected representatives.

Over the last year we backed the push for significant reform of our national nature laws (the EPBC Act). We joined the 30x30 alliance of international, national and state charities and organisations pushing for one per cent of the Federal Government's budget to be spent on nature and protected areas.

We supported the National First Nations' Dingo Declaration and have worked with Traditional Owners, academics and community organisations to encourage our elected representative to stop the trapping, shooting and baiting of Dingoes in Victoria.

**“We empower our supporters to demand accountability from their elected representatives.”**



Dingo. AUSTRALIAN DINGO FOUNDATION

## Controlling feral species

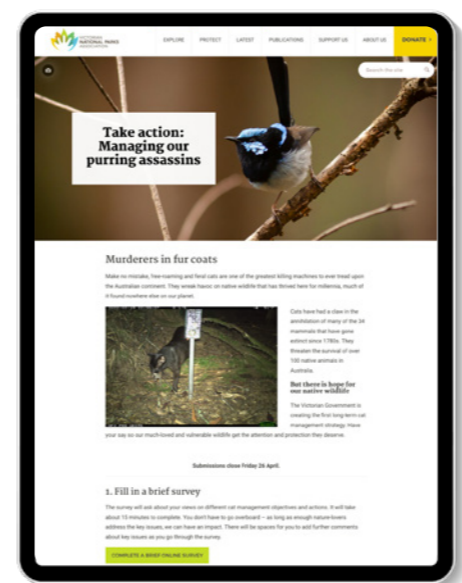
As invasive plants and animals drive ecosystem decline across Victoria, VNPA continues to actively advocate for sound and science-based land management. Whether contributing to cat management strategies, participating in roundtables or working with Traditional Owners to protect culturally significant places and wildlife, we're focussed on stronger eradication targets and more resources to manage, and, where possible, remove destructive species.

We're leading collective efforts to have deer officially recognised as a pest and

- 3 reports & submissions
- 5 social media posts
- 307 engagements

dealt with as such. Without this move, we simply cannot reverse the decades of damage to fragile and threatened ecosystems like Cool Temperate Rainforests and alpine fens.

This year our strong track record and credibility saw VNPA invited to join the Biosecurity Reference Group. The only exclusively conservation-focussed voice on the group, our input and feedback will inform Victoria's biosecurity strategy, with nature at the forefront.



VNPA cat management strategy action page

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



Young participant in the Great Victorian Fish Count, Kitty Miller Bay, Phillip Island/Millowl, Bunurong Country. CONSUELO QUEVADO

# Shaping the agenda

Our campaign staff formulate policy, collect and analyse data, and collate maps and tables for our strong, science-based responses to government inquiries, plans and proposals. The key submissions and reports we produced in 2023-24 were:

## **Spider crabs fact sheet**

SHANNON HURLEY, 2PP, JULY 2023  
Information sheet to give spider crabs a no-take break in moulting season.

## **Lyrebird nest detection report**

JORDAN CROOK & BLAKE NISBET, 12PP, JULY 2023  
Report on detection of a Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novaehollandiae*) nest at FFMV's proposed site for log removal operations, Dandenong Ranges National Park.

## **Southern Ocean Region Offshore Renewable Energy Zone**

SHANNON HURLEY, 10PP, AUG 2023  
Our submission to the Southern Ocean Renewable Energy Infrastructure area proposal.

## **Victoria's bushfire management strategy**

JORDAN CROOK, 12PP, AUG 2023  
Our submission to the draft bushfire management strategy for Victoria.

## **Victoria's biosecurity strategy**

JORDAN CROOK, 3PP, AUG 2023  
Our submission to Victoria's Biosecurity Strategy.

## **TGS Environmental Plan**

SHANNON HURLEY, 6PP, AUG 2023  
Our submission to the TGS Otway Basin 3D Multi-Client Marine Seismic Survey Environmental Plan.

## **Police Paddocks Reserve/Nerre Nerre Warrene master plan**

JORDAN CROOK, 15PP, SEPT 2023  
Our submission to Dandenong Police Paddocks Reserve/Nerre Nerre Warrene Master Plan.

## **Correa reflexa var. lobata (Powelltown Correa) detection report**

JORDAN CROOK & BLAKE NISBET, 19PP, SEPT 2023  
Report documenting significant populations of Endangered Powelltown Correa within VicForests and FFMV's proposed sites for log removal operations, Dandenong Ranges National Park.

## **Inshore trawl fisheries**

SHANNON HURLEY, 2PP, NOV 2023  
Our support to cap the octopus catch limit, as outlined in the fisheries notice Inshore Trawl Bycatch Management.

## **Listed threatened wildlife recorded in areas proposed for log removal operations**

JORDAN CROOK & BLAKE NISBET, 5PP, NOV 2023  
Technical memo regarding VicForests and FFMV log removal in Dandenong Ranges National Park.

## **Hollow-bearing tree in proposed logging zones**

JORDAN CROOK & BLAKE NISBET, 3PP, NOV 2023  
Technical memo regarding VicForests and FFMV logging operations in Dandenong Ranges National Park.

## **Platylobium reflexum (Victorian Flat-pea) detections in Dandenong Ranges National Park**

JORDAN CROOK & BLAKE NISBET, 3PP, NOV 2023  
Technical memo regarding VicForests and FFMV logging operations in Dandenong Ranges National Park.

## **Animal welfare concerns detection report**

VARIOUS, 14PP, NOV 2023  
Documenting a native wildlife habitat and refugia within VicForests and FFMV's proposed site for log removal operations, in the Dandenong Ranges National Park.

## **The winds of change**

SHANNON HURLEY, 32PP, MARCH 2024  
This report outlines how proper marine planning early in the process of establishing the offshore wind energy (see report, p.5).

## **Protecting our living legacies**

JORDAN CROOK & CHRIS SCHURINGA, 32PP, MARCH 2024  
This major publication advocates for the protection of significant trees on public land (see report, p.5).

## **Victorian cat management strategy**

JORDAN CROOK, 10PP, APRIL 2024  
Our submission to the Victorian Government's proposed cat management strategy.

## **Private land logging briefer**

BLAKE NISBET, 8PP, APRIL 2024  
Outlines some of the key legal, political and regulatory issues relating to logging of native forests on private land.



56 reports & submissions



# Writing a better story for nature

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

"Thanks so much for leading the way in helping us realise the critically important part that the nature conservation reserve system plays in our and all Victorian's mental health."

Telling nature's story is an honour, and a challenge. It can be difficult to measure how impactful our communications are. So, when supporters take the time to send us feedback like the quote above, it helps paint a better picture of how our small team are amplifying nature's voice so more people can hear it and act on it. And it reinforces why that's so important. We need as many people as possible to use their voice, time and love for our lands, skies, waters and wildlife. When we work together to achieve our goals of protecting, defending and restoring nature, we are stronger. We get more done.

One of our guiding principles is this: people have a right to engage with and contribute to discussions and decisions on how nature is managed and looked after. But often government paperwork is difficult to access, and harder to understand. When information that drives decisions for nature is buried in bureaucracy, fewer people can be involved in nature conservation. This is why so much of our time is spent translating technical information into plain language to make it more accessible. Making it easier for people to connect with nature. To stick up for nature.

By offering guidelines, resources and workshops on key submissions, we make sure our community and beyond are empowered and informed on the issues that matter to them. These have included submissions on the future of parks in the Central Highlands, how we can protect big and old trees, and a nature-sensitive way forward for renewable projects.

Our campaigners spend time across the state – in the field, on conference calls

and in meetings addressing threats to nature. They leave no stone unturned. Their analyses, reports and investigations are sent to state and federal MPs, and become updates on our website, social media and in our print and online membership magazine, *Park Watch*.

Journalists, educators, colleagues and policy makers call on our staff for insights and expertise. In the last year, we published comments and statements in dozens of media stories, with many appearances on television and radio.

We delivered webinars and briefings on many issues: the benefits of national parks, the necessity of marine spatial planning for offshore wind, how land managers can protect large and old trees, and why we must finally create



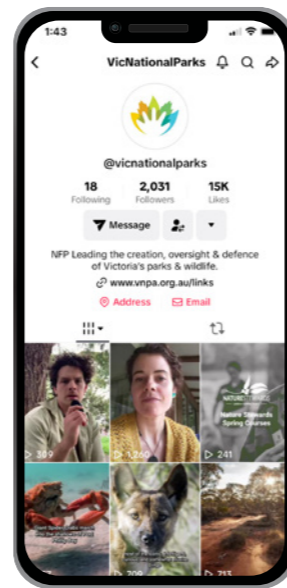
L-R: *Park Watch* #296 (June 2024), #295 (March 2024) and #294 (Nov 2023). COVER IMAGES: SANDY SCHELTEMA, JORDAN CROOK, HARTLEY TOBIN

**“One of our guiding principles is this: people have a right to engage with and contribute to discussions and decisions on how nature is managed and looked after.”**

the Great Forest National Park. We highlighted important issues across social media. In doing so we've built a strong online community of people sticking up for nature. We've also reached new audiences and told nature's story in new ways.

Our community sent thousands of messages to their elected representatives and land managers. Decision-makers heard directly from informed and dedicated people who want to see an end to habitat clearing across the state. From people who want to see the Central Highlands and Western Port Woodlands protected. They heard from thousands of people in our community, in their emails, on their phones, on social media and in their post boxes.

And they will continue to. Thank you for telling nature's story with us!



VNPA Tik Tok account, launched in early 2024



**347,751**  
people reached on Meta socials



**51%**  
email open rate industry standard 40%



**9,727**  
actions taken online

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



Nature Stewards facilitator, Jack Dewhurst at City of Knox Autumn 2024 Nature Stewards course, Koolunga Nature Reserve, Wurundjeri Country. MEGHAN LINDSAY



# Getting into nature

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



Dr Sera Blair installing a camera. Holden Proving Ground, Lang Lang, Bunurong Country. MEGHAN LINDSAY



## NatureWatch

OUR LAND-BASED CITIZEN SCIENCE PROGRAM

We had another exciting year with NatureWatch. This year we aligned our project with VNPA campaigns to provide relevant, quick information to support conservation efforts.

We returned to Wombat Forest for the first time since the 2021 storms and tried a new technique to survey for Mountain Skinks (*Liopholis montana*). We used wildlife cameras positioned in front of potential nest hollows in rocky ground to take videos. We successfully captured Brush-tailed Phascogales (*Phascogale tapoatafa*) on our cameras and conducted a series of spotlighting and stagwatching surveys.

In the Dandenong Ranges, we teamed up with NextGen Nature for spotlighting surveys and in Lang Lang we coordinated with local groups to survey wildlife in the ex-Holden Proving Ground.

As always, our volunteer citizen scientists were an amazing help and support bringing enthusiasm and adaptability into the field. They really enjoyed having their efforts directly support our campaigns.

[vnpa.org.au/naturewatch](http://vnpa.org.au/naturewatch)

“Volunteering for Sera in the Wombat Forest NatureWatch program has been rewarding, educational and fun. It is a great initiative to survey for threatened species with the aim of protecting their habitats forever.”

ROBYN



Family using slates for the Great Victorian Fish Count, Kitty Miller Bay, Phillip Island/Millowli, Bunurong Country. CONSUELO QUEVADO



## ReefWatch

OUR MARINE CITIZEN-SCIENCE PROGRAM

It was another busy year under the waves with ReefWatch. Over 1000 people took part in hands-on marine citizen science projects.

In addition to 18 ReefWatch events over the year, over 530 people took part in 61 Great Victorian Fish Counts events. Almost 175 people got their 'weed' on at 20 events of underwater weeding of Wakame (*Undaria pinnatifida*). Almost 4000 weeds were removed, ending up in the garden or on a dinner plate – or more likely a delicious bowl of soup!

Over 350 people went searching for nudibranchs during the Sea Slug Census, submitting 2072 images of at least 208 types of sea slugs (many are yet to be described, so some may be new to science). In 2023, the Sea Slug Census was nominated for the Eureka Prize for Citizen Science, with Kade Mills and Nicole Mertens attending the red carpet event in Sydney.

On iNaturalist, Marine Life of Victoria is now just a whisker short of 40,000 observations of 1569 marine species.

[vnpa.org.au/reefwatch](http://vnpa.org.au/reefwatch)

“We plan to continue searching beyond the census and may purchase some snorkels to assist us for when the weather warms up. And we are telling everyone we know about it... hopefully some of our enthusiasm will wear off on others!”

ELEANOR



City of Knox Autumn 2024 Nature Stewards course at Koolunga Nature Reserve, Wurundjeri Country. MEGHAN LINDSAY



## Nature Stewards

SHORT COURSES CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH THEIR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Nature Stewards is an introductory environmental education program connecting people with their local natural areas, and volunteering opportunities. Over 10 weeks people attend classes and field excursions. They gain ecological knowledge and practical skills, strengthen social connections and enjoy the wellbeing benefits of being active for nature.

A record number of participants completed Nature Stewards courses in 2023-24 – 186 graduates, up almost 50 per cent from the previous year. Our programs were supported by 56 showcase presenters, 80 expert presenters, and nine nurseries. We worked with 16 local governments and one local high school, as well as DEECA and Landcare. We started new programs with Horsham Rural City Council, Hepburn Shire Council, Mitchell Shire Council and the cities of Greater Bendigo, Monash, Boroondara and Stonnington.

We secured funding for development of marine and coastal curriculum through the Port Phillip Bay Fund, and for long-term evaluation of the Nature Stewards program thanks to Equity Trustees. Funding for a new program development position was also secured.

Early in 2024, Nature Stewards Coordinator, Dr Maddy Willcock, commenced a year's leave. She is being ably replaced by Dr Nicole Mertens.

[vnpa.org.au/naturestewards](http://vnpa.org.au/naturestewards)

“The generosity given through sharing of knowledge, experience and passion provided by the talented presenters within the Nature Stewards course added extra layers of interest to the learning.”

MICHELLE



NextGen Nature nest box painting day at Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve, Elsterwick, Bunurong Country. CONSUELO QUEVADO



## NextGen Nature

INSPIRING YOUNG ADULTS TO EXPERIENCE NATURE

In 2023-34, NextGen Nature placed a strong emphasis on empowering young adults by equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to take meaningful action for nature.

The NextGen Nature Collective attended a workshop on facilitation tips for environmental events, assisting us in spreading nature's voice out to even more young people.

Over summer we searched for sea slugs at Torquay and San Remo, and snorkelled at Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary in Beaumaris. We helped build underwater skills by identifying native fish and removing underwater pests at our unforgettable Wakame removal snorkel adventure in Portarlington.

NextGen Nature participants created habitat for endangered wildlife by building nest boxes for Swift Parrots (*Lathamus discolor*) with the Yalukit Willam Association.

We gained behind-the-scenes knowledge of nature advocacy by learning directly from VNPA lead campaigners and community members actively working in the field. In June, Jordan Crook took a group of young people to the incredible Western Port Woodlands where he led an insightful tour of the area and the background to VNPA's campaign.

[vnpa.org.au/nextgenature](http://vnpa.org.au/nextgenature)

“I learnt a lot about how to structure a campaign and realistically how it can look. I also got to explore an area that I wouldn't normally go and learn more about it.”

MICHAEL

48,676

wildlife records caught on camera

350

Sea Slug Census enthusiasts engaged

3,967

Wakame weeds removed

186

Nature Stewards graduates

79

expert presenters to Nature Stewards

97

young people engaged with the NextGen Nature program



Making insect hotels at Lake Coburg, Wurundjeri Country  
JESSIE BORRELLE



## Wild Families

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

Our Wild Families enjoyed connecting with nature in different ways and in different places this year. Parents and children joined us to explore nature in Bunyip State Park and search for marine wildlife snorkelling and at Sea Slug Census' at Phillip Island/Millowl.

Wild Families also created habitat for wildlife by painting nestboxes and building insect hotels to take home for their own gardens.

We continued production of the updated series of Wild Families activity sheets, adding 'Glorious grasslands', 'Superb sea slugs' and 'Making a rubbish fish' to the growing collection.

[vnpa.org.au/wild-families](http://vnpa.org.au/wild-families)

**“ I really liked the activity because it was crafty and I got to make a home for insects.”**  
BEATRIX – AGE 9



Art + Nature walk, You Yangs Regional Park, Wadawurrung Country  
EVA KLUSACEK



## Bushwalking Program

GETTING OUT AND ABOUT IN NATURE AND MAKING NEW FRIENDS

Over 2023-24, volunteer bushwalking leaders led people for walks through wildflowers, past waterfalls, under giant Mountain Ash trees and over rocky peaks.

But it wasn't just bushwalks! Our volunteers also led a bike ride from Geelong to Lara, an art and nature walk at You Yangs Regional Park, and a camping trip to Budj Bim National Park.

We visited nature across Victoria, including a walk along Dandenong Creek to Hurstbridge to visit the Wattle Festival, admiring rainforest in Toolangi State Forest, marvelling at grass trees in the Brisbane Ranges National Park and enjoying a campfire billy tea after hiking up hills at Macedon Regional Park.

[vnpa.org.au/bushwalking-program](http://vnpa.org.au/bushwalking-program)

**“ The Art + Nature walk at the You Yangs gave us a perfect opportunity to observe and appreciate our surroundings (macro and micro) in the park. We had fun trying out some new creative skills, and connected with nature and each other in the process.”** EVA

**201**  
Wild Families activity sheet downloads

**19**  
Bushwalking Program events

**170**  
Bushwalking Program participants



Geelong to Lara bike ride, Wadawurrung Country. IZZY SCHERRER

# Thank you

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

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

We would especially like to acknowledge the following generous supporters.

The Arnold Foundation  
Cathedral Wildlife Ltd  
The Caroline Durré Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation  
EC Curwen-Walker Charitable Trust  
Ellen Koshland Innovation Fund  
Equity Trustees Ltd  
Fairer Futures Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation  
Gras Foundation Trust  
Hamer Sprout, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation  
Harris Environmental Fund  
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust  
Isaacson Davis Foundation  
Life Saving Victoria  
Loftus-Hills Fund, a charitable fund account of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

Malcolm Shore  
Melliodora Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation  
Meta Lazarus Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation  
Patagonia – via CAF America  
Perpetual  
Rendere Trust  
Ros & Elsie Garnet Memorial Fund, sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation  
S.T.A.F. – Allan Sisson and Vera McMahon  
Vanessa Craigie  
Victorian Government  
Dr William N. Holsworth  
And several generous supporters who chose to remain anonymous.

## Bequests

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

Estate of Alan Hall  
Estate of Betty Whitehand  
Estate of David Lakin  
Estate of Jasmine Brunner  
Estate of Robert Steel  
Estate of Ronald G. Musker



Briggs Bluff, Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park. PAUL SCHLIEBS

## My legacy: Robin Carter

I was introduced to the 'bush' in the 1960s by the head of my department, Geoff Luke (VNPA member, 1976–2014), a passionate lover of Victorian native plants with an amazing depth of knowledge.

My colleagues and I went on many annual trips, including to Geoff's covenanted block adjoining the Little Desert National Park, which was being allowed to regenerate to its natural state.

For some years now I have been going back to the Little Desert regularly. It is like a spiritual home for me. I love the vast landscapes, the fauna and flora and its big skies, day and night. There is a real sense of peace there.



I joined VNPA after a trip to the High Country, seeing the damage done by introduced animals and hearing about the advocacy work to ban grazing in the area. Since then, I have learned so much about VNPA's great work from Park Watch magazine.

On a fascinating day trip to the Toolangi State Forest with VNPA Campaigner Jordan Crook, I was thrilled to see first-hand the areas of towering old-growth eucalypts but shocked at the damage done by logging, both legal and illegal.

I think the work of VNPA is vital for preservation of these precious areas and I am very happy to donate on a regular basis and to leave VNPA a bequest in my Will.

[vnpa.org.au/support/gifts-in-wills](http://vnpa.org.au/support/gifts-in-wills)

## Thank you to our partners

We're honoured to collaborate with many other groups to advocate for nature and deliver our community engagement programs. Our key project partners in 2023-24 were:

AMES	Environment East Gippsland	La Trobe University	South Gippsland Conservation Society
Andrew Robb Films	Environmental Justice Australia	Landcare Victoria	Southern Dandenongs Landcare Group
Aquability	Federation TAFE	Life Saving Victoria	Studio Hibiscus (Liz Dalglish)
Arthur Rylah Institute	Field Naturalists Club of Victoria	Little River Action Group	Trust for Nature
Association of Bayside Municipalities	Friends of Bats and Habitat Gippsland	Little River Community Landcare	University of Melbourne
Australian Association of Bush Regenerators	Friends of Beware Reef	Marine Care Ricketts Point Melbourne Water	Victorian Forest Alliance
Australian Diving Instruction	Friends of Cowies Creek	Merri Creek Management Committee	Victorian Mountain Tramping Club
Australian National University	Friends of Darebin Creek	Metro Trains	Victorian Sub Aqua Group
Australian Plants Society (Vic)	Friends of Grasslands	Michael Robinson	Vinfast
Batesford Fyansford and Stonehaven Landcare Group	Friends of Iramoo	Mornington Peninsula Scuba Diving Club	VVP Biosphere
Bayplay	Friends of Kororoit Creek	Mt Cole Pyrenees Nature Group	Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
BEAM Mitchell Environment Group	Friends of Leadbeater's Possum	Museums Victoria	Warburton Environment
Bellarine Landcare	Friends of Merri Creek	Naturelovers Education	Warringal Conservation Society
Birdlife Australia	Friends of Native Forests Enfield	NatureWest	Wartook Foundation
Bunurong Land Council	Friends of Skeleton Creek	Outdoors Victoria	Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative
Bush Heritage	Friends of the Bannockburn Bush	OutThere Outdoor Activities	Wellsford Forest Friends & Landcare Group
Cardinia Environment Coalition	Friends of the Bluff, Barwon Heads	Parks Victoria	Wellsford Forest Friends & Landcare Group
City of Ballarat	Friends of the Earth	People for a Living Moorabool	Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation
City of Brimbank	Future Nature	Phillip Island Conservation Society	Westgate Biodiversity – Bili Nursery
City of Greater Bendigo	Geelong Field Naturalists Club	Port Phillip Ecocentre	Whittlesea Community Connections
City of Greater Geelong	Gippsland Environment Group	Practical Ecology	Whittlesea Community Connections
City of Hobsons Bay	Gippsland Threatened Species Action Group	Salty Tribe	Wildlife of the Central Highlands (WOTCH)
City of Hume	Great Forest National Park	Save Western Port	Wombat Forestcare
City of Knox	Green Lab	Save Westernport Woodlands	Woorndoo–Chatsworth Landcare Group
City of Melbourne	Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre	Scuba Culture	Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
City of Melton	Iramoo Young Stewards	Scuba Scouts	Yalukit Willam Nature Association
City of Merri-bek	Jawbone Marine Sanctuary Group	Seeding Meliora	
City of Moonee Valley	Kinglake Friends of The Forest	Shire of Bass Coast	
City of Whittlesea	Koala Clancy Foundation	Shire of Hepburn	
City of Wyndham		Shire of Macedon	
Clean Energy Council		Shire of Mitchell	
Cool Geelong		Shire of Mornington Peninsula	
Corangamite Catchment Management Authority			
Cycling Geelong			
Daktari Surf/Dive			
DEECA			
Diveline			
East Otway Landcare Group			
Eco Connect			
Ecological Consultants Association			
Entomological Society of Victoria			



A bushwalker on the Beeripmo Track, Mt Cole/Bereep Bereep, Djab Wurrung Country. BLAKE NISBET

## Thank you to our volunteers

A huge thank you to the hundreds of incredible, dedicated and passionate volunteers who work with us to achieve so much for nature in Victoria.

### Bushwalking Program

Terese Dalman, Evelyn Feller, Anthony Fernando, Denise Fernando, Leslie Gillespie, Deb Henry, Eva Klusacek, Darren McClelland, Euan Moore, Doug Palmer, Isolde Scherrer, Richard Tagg, Cheryl Walker.

### Campaigns

Christine Baines, Bill Blackburn, Maya Burrell, Allen Davies, Hayley Forster, Sandra Geitz, Jake McKenzie, Gayle Osborne, Robert Pergl, Murray Ralph, Trevor Speirs, Les Sprague and many others in the scientific and conservation community.

### Grassy Plains Network

Sophia Blosfelds, Andrew Booth, John Bradford, Brook Caddell, Jane Canaway, Ben Courtice, Vannessa Craigie, John Delpratt, Rowan Ewing, Bonnie Gelman, Simon Jolly, Lincoln Kern, Gordon Lescinsky, Stuart McCallum, Paula McGlashan, Peter McGrath, Megan O'Shea, Debbie Reynolds, Dee Smith, Eleanor Vearing, Allison Wall, Peter Wlodarczyk, Xiao Xiao.

### NatureWatch

Jason Attrill, Tina Berghella, Jason Beynon-Fankhauser, Emily Blackburn, Ladette Bradnock, Michael Bush, Simran Chadha, Roger Chao, Suzanne Charlton, Sophia Chen, David Cole, Kay Cole, Anastasia Cooper, Sarina Cox, Michael Curran, Stephanie Davies, Elspeth De Fanti, Norhan Dehaine, Zac Drummond, Jo Duthie, Elodie Etienne, Robert Irvine, Eva Klucasek, Bertram Lobert,

Margaret Finch, Alisa Fisher, David Fraser, Serena Gillott, Montgomery Hall, Rosemary Henderson, Nicole Jameson, Adrian Jones, Arjumand Khan, Penny Lalor, Sandra Lewis, Michelle Lilford, Isabella Madsen, Meghan McIntosh, Hannah Merrett, Viola Middleton, Allannah Mott, Craig O'Brien, Conetto Palamara, Ella Petrowski, Lyn Price, Rujirawan Rattle, Madeline Reece, David Rhiderick, Simon Robbins, Shauna Rochford, Megan Rogers, Hayley Sharp, Anita Stec, Katarina Stenman, Alyson Stevens, Robyn Tarrant, James Tharle, Mick Thomas, Maria Tidore, Vicki Tiller, Claire Tingate, Adrian Tjong, Hayley Tregidga, Melissa Tuliranta, Emily Tully, Clare Ventura, Jessica Vize, Ryan Watts, Anders Wennstrom, Emma White, Clare Wilson, Laura Fae Wood, Sabine Yip.

### Nature Stewards

Max Campbell, Lawrie Conole, Dianne Crawford, Lee Harrison, Andrew Knight, Ann McGregor, Estelle Morrissey, Bob Prewett, Trevor Prowd, Isolde Scherrer, Heath Steward, Tony Varcoe, Melanie von Schorlemer.

### NextGen Nature

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

### Publications and Photography

Justin Cally, Louise Crisp, Ed Dunens, Geoff Durham, Reg Elder, Pam Habersberger, Katharine Horsfall, Robert Irvine, Eva Klucasek, Bertram Lobert,

Aunty Monica Morgan, Evelyn Portek, Annie Preston, Irene Proebsting, Wendy Radford, Jill Redwood, Reiner Richter, Sandy Scheltema, Ian Scholey, Harriet Searcy, Nick Shaw, Jenny Shield, Charles Street, Hartley Tobin and many other photographers and writers.

### ReefWatch

Thank you to the ReefWatch community for contributing their time, enthusiasm and data to the Sea Slug Census, Marine Life of Victoria, Great Victorian Fish Count, and Underwater Weeding projects. Many thanks also to Robert Burn, Elodie Camprasse, Tiffany Kosch, John Olden, Ian Scholey, Nick Shaw, Phil Watson.

### Student Interns

Dorain Battistella, Emily Beres, Lucy Hayward, Nicole Masters, Kaitlin Musset, Jonathon Sher, Jasmine Spencer, Muhammad Suhaizan, Jayde Courtney Thomas, Eleanor Vearing, Alison Wall, Clare Wilson, Xiao Xiao.

### VNPA Committees

Andrew Beswick, Holly Browne, Bryony Callander, Russell Carrington, David Cheal, Russell Costello, Vanessa Craigie, Lucy Farmer, Jessica Fernando, Chris Hibburt, Maelor Himbury, John Kotsiaris, Gordon Lay, Bernie Mace, Jackie Mansourian, Euan Moore, Greg Noonan, Stephen Platt, John Renowden, Chris Schuringa, Charles Street, Rachel Unicomb, Jeff White.

## Why I volunteer: Harriet Searcy

As a weekend painter, landscapes and birdwatching have been among my chief delights over the last 20 years or so, both as a solace and a source of renewal. Returning to Melbourne/Naarm from southern NSW just before COVID, I decided to look for a volunteer position where I could use my background as a teacher/academic editor, and preferably with an environmental organisation.



I soon realised that VNPA was the place for me. It covered all the bases – landscapes, plant life, animals and birds – a totality that was important to me. VNPA also impressed me from the start with its dedication to political activism, along with its effectiveness and efficiency as an organisation despite its size. That, and the knowledge and dedication of its staff and volunteers.

I truly enjoy being around a group of people with such an impressive commitment to the environment, and with the ability to muster both knowledge and technology (I lack the technology) for the greater good. And certainly those skills will be needed going into the future!

## Our people

We are governed by a voluntary council and several guiding committees. Together with our staff, volunteers and partners, they work to protect and defend Victoria's national parks, wildlife and special places.

### Council

It's been a year of welcomes on VNPA Council, but also sad farewells. Significantly, we were greatly saddened by the loss of Michael Feller.

David Nugent continued as President and Marilynne Crestias took on the Vice President's role, while Askin Morrison replaced her as Treasurer. Chris Harvey took on the role of Secretary and convenor of the Governance, Policy and Legal Committee. Gerard McPhee remained convenor of the Conservation and Campaigns Committee.

There has been slight restructure of some of our committees. Lara Bickford has taken on the role of convenor of the new Citizen Science and Nature Education Committee, and Bruce McGregor has become convenor of new Strategic Communications and Fundraising Committee. Doug Robinson, Di Marshall, Jan Brueggemeier and Michael Young remained as Councillors, rounding out the 12 elected members required under our constitution.

Andrew Norman, who has a legal background, was co-opted to the Council in line with the constitution.

Thanks to this year's retiring Councillors for all their good work!

[vnpa.org.au/about/council](http://vnpa.org.au/about/council)

- David Nugent, President <sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>
- Marilynne Crestias, Vice President <sup>1,2</sup>
- Askin Morrison, Treasurer <sup>1,2</sup>
- Chris Harvey, Secretary <sup>1,3</sup>
- Lara Bickford <sup>5,6</sup>
- Dr Jan Hendrik Brueggemeier
- Dr Michael Feller (*passed away Jan 2024*)
- Dianne Marshall <sup>5</sup>
- Dr Bruce McGregor <sup>1,2,4,5</sup>
- Gerard McPhee <sup>5</sup>
- Andrew Norman <sup>5</sup>
- Dr Doug Robinson <sup>5</sup>
- Michael Young <sup>5</sup>

### Committees

1. Executive
2. Finance
3. Governance, Policy and Legal
4. Strategic Communications and Fundraising
5. Conservation and Campaigns
6. Citizen Science and Nature Education

### Vale Michael Feller

VNPA Councillor Dr Michael Feller died unexpectedly and peacefully just shy of his 78th birthday on 22 January 2024.

His career as a forest fire scientist and forest ecologist was long and successful. He built an incredible legacy – one we are honoured to be part of. Michael made an enormous contribution to the protection of nature in Victoria through many campaigns, and was active in the endless forestry wars. He was a true forest activist and scientific source, as well as a gentle human being.

Michael's passing is a great loss to his wife Evelyn, to all of us and to the forests and mountains he loved. His contribution to nature protection will continue to live on.

Thank you Michael, for your work, your wisdom and your knowledge. You are sorely missed.



### Staff

Our dedicated staff coordinate our campaigns, run activities, engage citizen scientists, inform our members and support our organisation.

Matt Ruchel, Executive Director

#### Campaigns

- Jordan Crook, Parks and Nature Campaigner
- Ben Gill, Nature Conservation Campaigner
- Shannon Hurley, Nature Conservation Campaigner
- Dr Adrian Marshall, Facilitator Grassy Plains Network
- Blake Nisbet, Nature Conservation Campaigner

#### Community Engagement

- Caitlin Griffith, Community Learning and Engagement Manager
- Dr Sera Blair, NatureWatch Coordinator
- Dr Nicole Mertens, Nature Stewards Coordinator
- Kade Mills, ReefWatch Coordinator
- Consuelo Quevedo, NextGen Nature Program Coordinator
- Dr Maddy Willcock, Nature Stewards Coordinator

#### Communications

- Jessie Borrelle, Digital Engagement and Communications Manager
- Paul Clifton, Publications Coordinator
- Jacob L'Huillier Lunt, Digital Campaign Producer
- Meghan Lindsay, Communications Advisor



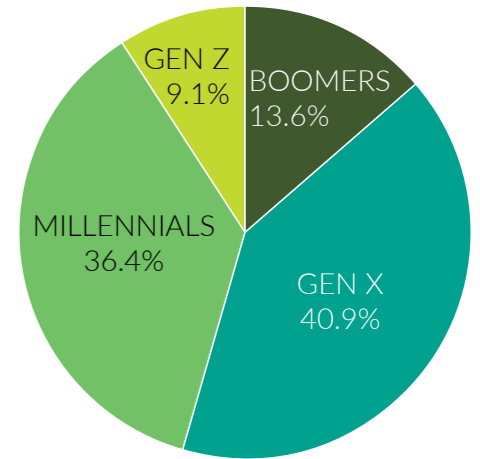
VNPA staff in The Gurdies Nature Conservation Reserve, Western Port Woodlands, Bunurong Country

#### Fundraising

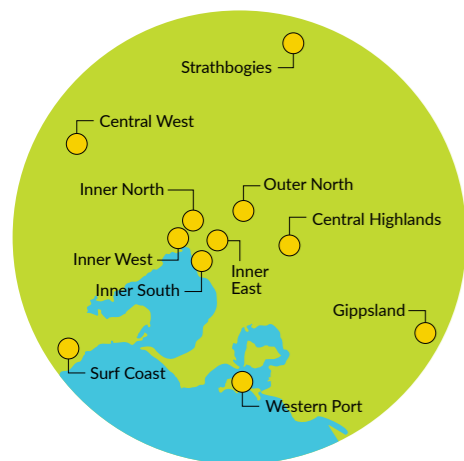
- Jane Crouch, Fundraising Manager
- Kristian Lang, Philanthropy Executive
- Matt Small, Fundraising Executive
- Amelia Easdale, Supporter Development (to August 2023)

#### Operations

- Brendan Kelly, Finance and Operations Manager
  - Heath Rickard, Finance and Operations Manager (to September 2023)
  - Michelle Klaric, Accountant
  - Lucy Permezal, Office Coordinator
- [vnpa.org.au/about/staff](http://vnpa.org.au/about/staff)



VNPA staff generational breakdown



Where VNPA Councillors and staff live



NextGen Nature Collective (left), David Nugent (top) and Marilynne Crestias (right) at the 2022-23 VNPA AGM



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

### Remembering 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 2023.

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

# Financial report

## Abridged Audited Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2024.

Statement by Members of the Council

The Committee of the Association declare that:

The financial statements and notes, as set out on pages 1 to 16, are in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and:

- a. Comply with Australian Accounting Standards Simplified Disclosure Standard; and
- b. Give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 30 June 2024 and of the performance for the year ended on that date of the Association.

In the Council's opinion, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Association will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee.

**David Nugent (President) & Askin Morrison (Treasurer) dated 19 September 2024.**

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024		
	2024	2023
	\$	\$
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Appeals and donations	1,558,679	1,255,709
Bequests	1,858,948	601,664
Grants and sponsorship	275,970	430,382
Membership Fees	78,034	79,280
Publication sales, events, outdoor activities	201,155	86,928
Interest and investment distributions	38,227	30,365
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>4,011,013</b>	<b>2,484,328</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Employment expenses	2,120,787	1,782,508
Campaigns, Projects, Activities and Education	430,360	217,158
Office and Administration	169,962	156,067
Printing/Publications/Web	136,443	124,747
Occupancy and Insurance	43,130	35,806
Depreciation and Amortisation expense	79,012	86,864
Other expenses	37,462	4,462
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>3,017,156</b>	<b>2,407,612</b>
<b>CURRENT YEAR SURPLUS FROM OPERATIONS</b>	<b>993,857</b>	<b>76,716</b>
Net gain on revaluation of other financial assets	24,003	62,499
Realised gain on disposal of other financial assets	0	0
<b>SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>1,017,860</b>	<b>139,215</b>

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2024		
	2024	2023
	\$	\$
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	2,686,525	1,735,647
Trade and other receivables	88,443	115,976
Other financial assets	485,728	454,253
Other assets	18,345	12,729
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>3,279,041</b>	<b>2,318,605</b>
<b>Non-Current</b>		
Other financial assets	0	0
Property, plant & equipment	34,684	43,495
Right-of-use-assets	279,062	81,080
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>	<b>313,746</b>	<b>124,575</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>3,592,787</b>	<b>2,443,180</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Current Liabilities	618,595	728,186
<b>Non-Current Liabilities</b>		
Non-Current Liabilities	295,171	53,833
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>913,766</b>	<b>782,019</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>2,679,021</b>	<b>1,661,161</b>
<b>Funded by:</b>		
Accumulated Surplus	1,258,626	416,269
Reserves*	1,420,395	1,244,892
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>2,679,021</b>	<b>1,661,161</b>

\*The Reserve Policy is designed to assist with future variability in income and act as a means to strengthen the long-term future of VNPA. Please contact the office to get more information.

The full Independent Auditor's Report will be tabled at the Annual General Meeting as part of the Audited Financial Statements and the full text of the Report will be available at vnpa.org.au.