



# National Parks Act Annual Report 2020–21



## Traditional Owner Acknowledgement

Victoria's network of parks and reserves form the core of Aboriginal cultural landscapes, which have been modified over many thousands of years of occupation. They are reflections of how Aboriginal people engaged with their world and experienced their surroundings and are the product of thousands of generations of economic activity, material culture and settlement patterns. The landscapes we see today are influenced by the skills, knowledge and activities of Aboriginal land managers. Parks Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of these cultural landscapes, recognising their continuing connection to Victoria's parks and reserves and their ongoing role in caring for Country.

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## Notes

- During the year the responsible Minister for the Act was the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.
- In this report:
  - the Act means the *National Parks Act 1975*
  - DELWP means the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
  - the Minister means the Minister responsible for administering the Act
  - the Regulations means the National Parks Regulations 2013

## Cover Image

Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park, which was created under the Act in 2020–21

# Foreword

This report on the working of the *National Parks Act 1975* (the Act) for the 2020–21 financial year is presented to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP, under section 35 of the Act.

The Act establishes a network of national parks and other protected areas that are representative of Victoria's diverse natural environments and sets out the legal framework for their protection, enjoyment and management. The objects of the Act set out the key objectives for park managers to deliver for the Victorian public.

Parks Victoria manages a system of more than 100 parks and other areas under the Act totalling approximately 3.47 million hectares on behalf of the Victorian Government and works in close partnership with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) in their management.

The year was impacted by the COVID pandemic, and several parks were closed at various times and access to facilities and assets in other parks was restricted. Despite this, visitation to parks remained high overall. At the same time, there were many achievements in park management due to the ongoing commitment of Parks Victoria staff, Traditional Owners and partner agencies and the contributions of volunteers.

Recovery from the devastating bushfires in 2019–20 continued, with significant progress made in reopening affected parks in Gippsland to the public. Our physical assets are being steadily reinstated and our efforts to help restore conservation and biodiversity values in these areas is also progressing.

Significant weed and pest programs were delivered to create better habitats for native species. The benefits of this are already proven, with our monitoring showing increased breeding of native animals and more native plants in areas where weeds and pests have been removed.



**John Pandazopoulos**  
Chair  
Parks Victoria

Parks Victoria continued to work closely and collaboratively with Traditional Owners across a wide range of parks under the Act and is committed to strengthening those relationships in the coming years.

Other highlights of the year include:

- the creation and establishment of the Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park and the work with the community on future access and infrastructure
- the creation of Yellingbo Landscape Conservation Area incorporating several separate areas in the Yarra Valley – the first of its type under the Act
- engagement with the community on the Greater Gariwerd Landscape Draft Management Plan, in partnership with Traditional Owners
- finalisation of the Nature Conservation Strategy, which provides clear direction and key actions for Parks Victoria to conserve and protect nature on Victoria's park estate over the next decade
- the completion of feasibility assessments for 'safe havens' at Wilsons Promontory and French Island national parks, with the aim of securing resilient populations of threatened species including Eastern Bristlebird, Long-nosed Potoroo, Eastern Barred Bandicoot and King Quail
- the publication of two new Conservation Action Plans for the parks and reserves of the 'Great Otways', and 'Gippsland Plains and Strzelecki Ranges' landscapes.

Parks Victoria will continue to work closely and collaboratively with Traditional Owners and partner agencies to achieve the objects of the *National Parks Act 1975*. We look forward to building on the achievements of 2020–21 in 2021–22 and welcoming visitors back to enjoy the diverse range of parks across the State.



**Matthew Jackson**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Parks Victoria

# Content

<b>A representative parks system</b>	<b>3</b>
Areas managed under the Act	3
Changes to areas managed under the Act	3
Management planning	4
<b>Natural and cultural values</b>	<b>5</b>
Managing natural values	5
Monitoring natural values	12
Researching natural values	14
Managing cultural values	14
<b>Fire and other emergencies</b>	<b>16</b>
COVID	16
Fire	16
Recovery from bushfires and other emergencies	19
<b>Encouraging visitors, tourism and community involvement</b>	<b>20</b>
Enhancing visitor enjoyment and tourism	20
Visits to parks	21
Supporting visitors with disabilities	22
Learning for Nature	22
Parks for health and wellbeing - benefits for all	24
Volunteering in parks	25
<b>Partnering with Traditional Owners</b>	<b>26</b>
Joint management	26
Co-operative management	27
Other Traditional Owner partnerships	28
<b>Supporting park management</b>	<b>29</b>
Management arrangements	29
Legislation	29
Authorities under the Act	30
Interstate cooperation	30
Advisory bodies	30
Enforcement	31
<b>Appendix 1 - Areas managed under the National Parks Act</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Appendix 2 - Location of parks and other areas</b>	<b>42</b>

# A representative parks system

## Areas managed under the Act

As at 30 June 2021 there were 139 areas with a total area of approximately 3.47 million hectares (ha) managed under various provisions of the Act. Appendix 1 lists the areas and Appendix 2 shows their location.

The 139 areas comprised:

- 124 areas listed on various schedules to the Act
  - 45 national parks (Schedule Two)
  - 3 wilderness parks (Schedule Two A)
  - 26 state parks (Schedule Two B)
  - 5 coastal parks, 3 historic parks, 1 marine and coastal park, 1 nature conservation reserve (flora and fauna reserve) and 8 regional parks (Schedule Three)
  - 3 marine and coastal parks, 1 marine park, 1 marine reserve, 1 national heritage park and 1 nature conservation reserve (Schedule Four)
  - 13 marine national parks (Schedule Seven)
  - 11 marine sanctuaries (Schedule Eight)
  - 1 landscape conservation area (Schedule Nine).
- 15 non-scheduled areas to which particular provisions of the Act apply.

The Act also defines the following areas within particular national parks:

- 19 wilderness zones (Schedule Five) in 7 national parks (see Appendix 1)
- 22 remote and natural areas (Schedule Six) in 12 national parks (see Appendix 1)
- 4 designated water supply catchment areas in the Great Otway, Kinglake and Yarra Ranges national parks.

## Changes to areas managed under the Act

During the year Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park and Yellingbo Landscape Conservation Area were created and there were additions to two parks and excisions from two parks. In total, there was a net addition of nearly 6,600 hectares (ha) to the land managed under the Act.

The following changes occurred on 15 December 2020:

- Areas totalling 3,076 ha in and around the Kuark Forest were added to Errinundra National Park, and former freehold land (8 ha) and an unmade government road (0.9 ha) were added to Greater Bendigo National Park
- An area of 5.5 ha containing part of a refuse tip was excised from French Island National Park and a correction to the alignment of the park boundary along the Calder Highway resulted in an excision of 83 hectares from Hattah-Kulkyne National Park
- A minor correction was made to the plan of Dandenong Ranges National Park.

The following changes occurred on 1 May 2021:

- Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park (3,535 ha) was created under Schedule Three to the Act along the spectacular Bass Coast between San Remo and Inverloch, incorporating the existing Bunurong Marine Park (1,660 ha) (which was removed from Schedule Four), several Crown land reserves and other Crown land
- Yellingbo Landscape Conservation Area (1,790 ha) was created as the first landscape conservation area under the Act. It comprises seven separate areas across a fragmented natural landscape in the Yarra Valley between Healesville and Cockatoo: most of the existing Haining Farm together with Beenak, Hoddles Creek, Sheep Station Creek, Warramate Hills and Yellingbo nature conservation areas and Wright Forest Bushland Area.
- Haining Farm (66 ha), which was donated to the State by the late Sir John Reid in 1974 and brought under the Act in 1978, was removed from Schedule Three to the Act and most of it (59 ha) included in the Yellingbo Landscape Conservation Area. Two smaller areas were reserved under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 as the Don Valley Education Reserve and the Sherwood Reserve, and a small residential block in Don Valley became unreserved Crown land.

## Management planning

As at 30 June 2021 there were approved management plans for all or parts of 45 national parks, 3 wilderness parks, 26 state parks, 20 other parks and reserves, 13 marine national parks and 11 marine sanctuaries. This is consistent with the number of plans in place in 2019–20.

Parks Victoria continued the renewal of the management planning for the Grampians landscape, which includes the Grampians National Park and Black Range State Park as well as several other reserves not under the Act. This management planning is being undertaken in partnership with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation. A draft amended landscape management plan was released for community feedback in 2020–21. Over 2,000 submissions and surveys responses were received. The final management plan is scheduled to be released in 2021.

To complement the creation of Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park, Parks Victoria has continued to plan for changes to access and infrastructure in the new park. A draft 'access and infrastructure plan' was released in 2020–21 and the final plan is scheduled to be released in 2021.

Other key planning matters included:

- continuation of the planning for the Yellingbo area, including most of Haining Farm, to give effect to the outcomes of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's *Yellingbo Investigation Final Report* (2013)
- commencement of the planning for the changes to visitor movement and a predator proof fence associated with the Wilsons Prom Revitalisation project
- site planning for bushfire recovery projects at Cape Conran Coastal Park and COVID economic stimulus initiatives, such as initial investment in the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing in the Alpine National Park.

Parks Victoria has been developing the inaugural 'Land Management Strategy' for the land it manages, including parks under the Act. This long-term strategy is aimed at guiding the adaptation of the parks estate in a time of challenges from climate change, shaping the cultural landscape with Traditional Owners, protecting values, a growing Victoria and supporting local communities. Early engagement has occurred with partners, the community and many stakeholders on the principles, with the draft Land Management Strategy scheduled to be released for feedback in 2021.

## Natural and cultural values

National and other parks under the Act protect the critical backbone of Victoria’s natural values including a diverse array of animal and plant species, habitats, ecosystems, landscapes and seascapes. Programs focus on direct action to protect threatened species and communities and habitat; addressing threats from invasive species, changed bushfire and water regimes, and overabundant native species; and the delivery of research, monitoring and planning for natural values. The programs are led by Parks Victoria in collaboration with key partners including Traditional Owners, DELWP, catchment management authorities and the community. Many programs are ongoing and achievements for 2020–21 are provided in the following sections.

### Managing natural values

#### Conservation Action Plan (CAP) progress

The Conservation Actions Plans (CAPs) deliver a best-practice approach to conservation planning for managing the extensive parks estate across Victoria. The methodology identifies the strategies that will achieve the greatest improvement in the overall health of ecosystems and enables a framework for monitoring and evaluation. The CAPs will cover eighteen parks landscapes when completed and will include all parks under the Act. In 2020–21, a further two CAPs were published for the parks and reserves of the ‘Great Otways’, and ‘Gippsland Plains and Strzelecki Ranges’, bringing the total number of published plans to nine

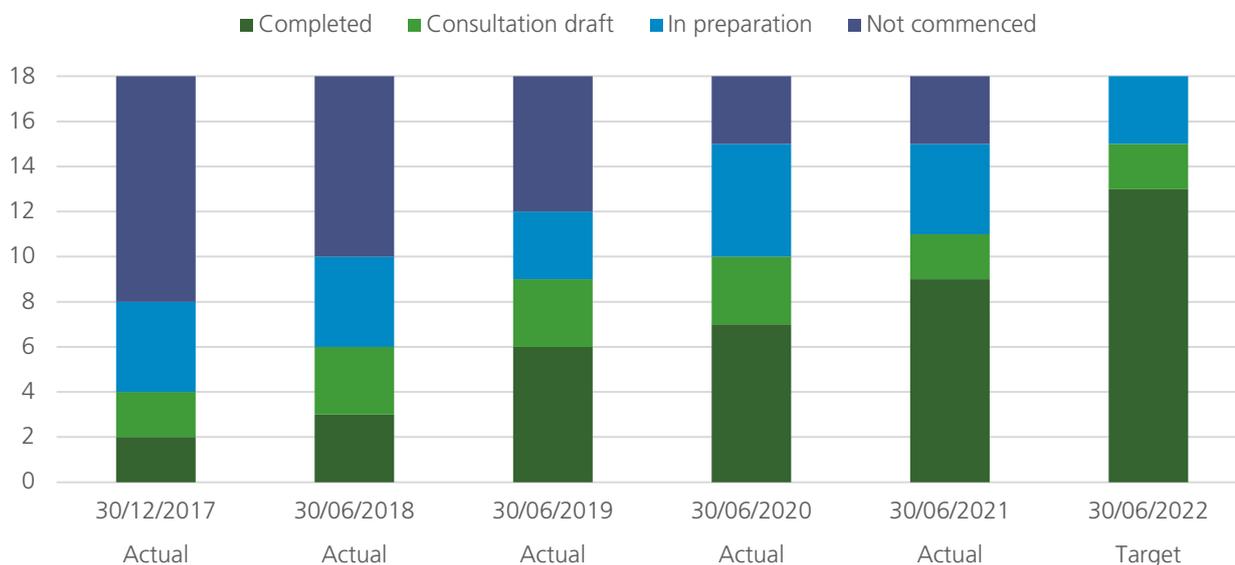
out of the 18 landscapes. These latest CAPs are aimed at protecting old-growth forests, cool temperate rainforests and wet forest, biodiverse heathlands, extensive areas of rugged and sandy coastal habitats, important marine ecosystems, as well as internationally recognised wetlands.

Managing predation is a strategy for both these landscapes. In a partnership with the Australian Government and the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (Wild Otways Initiative), surveys were conducted in March, April, May and June 2021 in post-burn habitats in the Eastern Otways between Gherang and Anglesea and in coastal dunes and heathland habitat between Anglesea and Aireys Inlet. Threatened species such as Long-nosed Potoroos and Swamp Antechinus were recorded as part of these surveys looking at critical habitat refuges for threatened small mammal species in the Otway Ranges.

In the Gippsland Plains and Strzelecki Ranges landscape, partnerships with Phillip Island Nature Park and Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne offer potential improvements in targeting fox dens using trained detection dogs, and bandicoot monitoring.

Conservation action planning is underway for the East Gippsland, Northern Plains and Box-Ironbark, Basalt and Bellarine and Central Highlands landscapes. Frameworks for monitoring, evaluation, reporting and costing of CAP implementation are also in development.

### Conservation Action Plan progress



## Finalisation of the Nature Conservation Strategy

In April 2021, the Parks Victoria Board endorsed the Nature Conservation Strategy, which provides clear direction and key actions for Parks Victoria to conserve and protect nature on Victoria's park estate over the next decade (2021–2031). The Nature Conservation Strategy reiterates the importance of national parks in the protection and conservation of the best of Victoria's nature. Parks Victoria will now focus its efforts on commencing implementation, securing funding, and establish monitoring and evaluation programs to ensure the effectiveness of nature conservation efforts.

## Threatened species and communities

Parks Victoria and DELWP continued to work with the community and key partner agencies to manage threatened species and communities. This work included programs delivered as part protecting and enhancing habitats (including management of invasive species). Examples of activities during the year are detailed below.

## Planning for resilient safe havens

With funding from DELWP and support from multiple partners, feasibility assessments were completed for 'safe havens' at Wilsons Promontory and French Island national parks. 'Safe havens' at these locations would seek to reduce the impact of threatening processes and secure resilient populations of threatened species including Long-nosed Potoroo, Southern Brown Bandicoot, New Holland Mouse, Swamp Antechinus, Eastern Barred Bandicoot, Eastern Curlew and King Quail. Support has been provided to the DELWP-led project to establish a Victorian insurance population for the endangered Eastern Bristlebird at Wilsons Promontory National Park.

## Protection of native grasslands and the Plains-wanderer

Careful monitoring and application of ecological grazing has maintained 58 per cent of all monitored sites at Terrick Terrick National Park in ideal habitat condition for the critically endangered Plains-wanderer. Parks Victoria has supported Zoos Victoria in the trial release of captive-bred Plains-wanderers back into the park.



Image: Plains-wanderers being released in Terrick Terrick National Park - Mark Antos, Parks Victoria.



Image: Growling Grass Frog.

### **Post fire survey for threatened frog species**

Surveys were conducted for six threatened frog species between October and December 2020 at 36 sites affected by the Black Summer fires. Sites included East Gippsland parks such as Croajingolong and Coopracambra national parks and Cape Conran Coastal Park. All species were located post fire, including large and previously unknown populations of Growling Grass Frog (*pictured above*), but at reduced numbers and at fewer sites overall. Important information on the use of post fire habitat was obtained and highlighted the importance of streamside vegetation as a refuge. Recommendations were made for improved land management to enable these species to recover following the fires.

### **Eastern Barred Bandicoot protection at Woodlands Historic Park**

Since the successful removal of kangaroos from the Woodlands Historic Park bandicoot sanctuary in 2019, the habitat for the endangered Eastern Barred Bandicoot has recovered remarkably, with the native grasses essential for their survival re-establishing across the site. Restoration works conducted with

Conservation Volunteers Australia in 2020–21 have included treatment of Serrated Tussock and Thistle, destruction of rabbits, planting of 9,000 herbaceous wildflower species into the grassy woodlands and planning for the replacement of an ageing predator proof fence. Monitoring of the Eastern Barred Bandicoot population during 2020–21 has shown widespread evidence of the bandicoots digging in the soft earth for the vertebrates they feed on.

### **Mountain Pygmy Possum**

Parks Victoria has continued to monitor and control introduced predators in the Alpine National Park to support Mountain Pygmy Possum populations (fox baiting across the extent of their habitat funded through the Regional Landcare Program; cat control mainly using trapping, funded from the Biodiversity Response Planning initiative). Parks Victoria has also undertaken weed control (for example, willow control) to improve habitat quality. Parks Victoria has also continued to provide on-ground logistical support for Mountain Pygmy Possum population monitoring and supplementary feeding trials being led by Zoos Victoria and DELWP.

## Invasive species

Major programs to continue the protection of habitats and species in parks under the Act recovering from the extensive impacts of the 2019–20 bushfire season were a core delivery focus for Parks Victoria. Large scale control programs targeting feral goats, deer, pigs and foxes were successfully implemented in partnership with DELWP in environments affected by fire. These programs will continue into 2021–22.

Investment in biodiversity protection programs and personnel continues to increase. This growth enabled Parks Victoria to resource and deliver threat management programs to address invasive species impacts in high priority parks and reserves.

### Control programs

Control programs are targeted to maximise investment and effectiveness by focusing on the protection of specific environmental assets at site or landscape scale. Landscape-scale conservation programs, often cross tenure and involving several partner agencies, are the cornerstones of invasive species management in parks.

The Weeds and Pests on Public Land Program includes several long-running landscape scale programs targeting weeds (Eden projects) and introduced predators (Ark projects).

The Eden programs aim to control high-threat invasive plants and include several parks:

- Central Highlands Eden (Baw Baw and Yarra Ranges national parks and Bunyip and Moondarra state parks)
- Glenelg Eden (Cobboboonee, Lower Glenelg and Mount Richmond national parks, Cape Nelson State Park and Discovery Bay Coastal Park)
- Otway Eden (Great Otway and Port Campbell national parks).

The Ark programs involve fox control for small mammal protection and include several parks within their scope:

- Barry Mountains fox control project (Alpine National Park)
- Glenelg Ark (Cobboboonee, Lower Glenelg and Mount Richmond national parks and Discovery Bay Coastal Park)
- Grampians Ark (Grampians National Park)
- Otway Ark (Great Otway National Park)
- Southern Ark (Alfred, Alpine, Coopracambra, Croajingolong, Errinundra, Lind and Snowy River national parks, Lake Tyers State Park and Cape Conran Coastal Park).

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## Understanding the impact of invasive species control on biodiversity

Otway Eden is tackling new and emerging pest plants while protecting key biodiversity areas across the Otway Landscape. Parks Victoria delivers the project in partnership with DELWP, VicRoads, local government agencies and other land managers. The project focuses on protection from weeds that have the potential to transform the habitat. The 2020–21 weed monitoring data was uploaded to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas from surveys undertaken on 400 sites. To assess the environmental effectiveness of the Otway Eden program, weed monitoring was undertaken for 86 quadrats ranging in size from a half to one hectare in the Cape Otway asset area. This monitoring replicates monitoring undertaken in 2010–11 and has been completed for the five asset areas. Comparison of the two sets of data for the five asset areas has commenced, to understand change over time (10 years).

Within the Grampians Ark, the small mammal trapping across 36 monitoring sites has been running since 2008, in response to the impacts of the 2006 Mount Lubra fire and to support small mammal recovery. Currently this covers 100,000 trap nights of survey effort, making it one of the largest small mammal monitoring programs in Australia. While 2021 trapping is still underway, the team has captured a Southern Brown Bandicoot, the first one since 2013. A separate camera trapping program supported by a Deakin University research team recently detected a Long-nose Potoroo, the first in many years.

In addition:

- The Good Neighbour Program continued to invest in controlling invasive species on the public-private land interface.
- The Alps Intensive Management Program and the associated Hawkweed Eradication Program continued in the Alpine National Park.
- The Mallee 'Bounceback' Program delivered further landscape-scale rabbit control in parks in the Mallee.
- The peri-urban Weed Management Partnership continued to target areas for weed management in the Dandenong Ranges, Organ Pipes and Point Nepean national parks and Arthurs Seat and Warrandyte state parks. Threatened flora and orchard population counts were undertaken in Warrandyte State Park, with support from Friends of Warrandyte State Park.

More recent additional investments, such as the State Government's Biodiversity Response Planning initiative, enabled Parks Victoria to continue delivering landscape scale programs across the state.

These included projects in the following projects:

- fox, feral goat, rabbit and weed control (Hattah-Kulkyne, Murray-Sunset and Wyperfeld national parks)
- coastal weed control (Croajingolong National Park and Cape Conran Coastal Park)
- deer, feral pig and weed control (Alpine National Park)
- feral pig, and goat control (Barmah National Park)
- Sallow Wattle and deer, feral goat and rabbit control (Grampians National Park)
- weed control (Great Otway National Park)
- deer control (Kinglake National Park)
- fox control (Little Desert National Park)
- deer and feral pig control (Snowy River National Park)
- weed control (Terrick Terrick National Park)
- feral cat, fox and Sambar deer control (Wilson's Promontory National Park)
- feral goat control (Mount Napier State Park).

## Alpine Feral Horse Action Plan

Following consultation with independent veterinary and welfare experts, public consultation on feral horse management plans, and subsequent feral horse management experience, Parks Victoria released the draft *Protection of the Alpine National Park – Feral Horse Action Plan 2021* for public consultation. The draft plan proposed that the following methods are the most appropriate, humane and safe ways to reduce the severe damage caused by feral horses: trapping and rehoming (to the extent that appropriate recipients can be secured); ground shooting using professional shooters; aerial shooting (for exceptional circumstances or if other methods cannot meet objectives); and fenced exclusion (for small areas). The plan will be finalised and released in 2021.

## Deer and feral animal control

The 2019–20 bushfires had a devastating impact on native animals, plants and large areas of habitat in Victoria. Under these conditions, deer and feral animals are a significant threat to survival and recovery as they seriously damage native vegetation and important habitat areas through grazing, browsing, trampling and wallowing.

In response, Parks Victoria continued to expand the integrated program of ground and aerial shooting across key parks, supported by multiple funding programs including fire recovery and the Alps Intensive Management Program.

In 2020–21, 49 ground shooting operations were delivered over 28 weeks across several parks including: Mount Buffalo, Croajingolong (Cape Howe), Coopracambra (Genoa River corridor), Alpine, Errinundra, Snowy River and Burrowa-Pine Mountain national parks, Mount Lawson, Mount Granya and Lake Tyers state parks, and Cape Conran Coastal Park. Over the year, more than 1,500 animals were removed (Sambar, red and fallow deer, as well as foxes and cats). In collaboration with DELWP, Parks Victoria is designing a program to monitor the effectiveness of ground shooting. It will focus on monitoring vegetation changes and changes in deer abundance in rainforest sites of significance.

Aerial shooting was delivered safely, humanely and professionally over more than 490,000 ha across key parks including Errinundra, Coopracambra, Snowy River, Croajingolong, Mount Buffalo, Alpine, Burrowa-Pine Mountain and Budj Bim national parks and Avon and Wabba wilderness parks. The total number of animals treated was 4,677, comprising: 3,361 Sambar deer, 1,145 Fallow deer, 150 pigs, 19 fox and two Red deer.

Monitoring of horse and deer populations and rapid impact assessments (including soil condition) is being undertaken in the Alpine National Park (with a focus on threatened peatland communities). Deer populations and impact are also monitored in Bunyip State Park (focus on vegetation damage) and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park (focus on threatened Coastal Saltmarsh and Swamp Scrub communities).

## Native animals

Long-term programs to manage the impact of overabundant kangaroo and Koala populations continued in several parks. Excessive numbers threaten habitats and can result in animal welfare issues. The programs are underpinned by established species management plans developed with the support of key stakeholders, including technical advisory committees.

### Budj Bim Koala program

The long-term Koala contraception program is being undertaken at Budj Bim National Park to manage the health of the Manna Gum woodland, along with regular surveys of the Koala population and tree condition. Since the Black Summer bushfire that burnt approximately 60 per cent of the park, tree mortality has increased to the highest rate since 2004, with a further 18 per cent of surveyed trees dying since the previous survey in 2018. The current Koala population in Budj Bim National Park is estimated to be 3,200 Koalas, approximately one-third lower than the previous year. The recent decline is likely to have been caused by the bushfire.

Although the bushfire has killed Manna Gum trees and significantly reduced foliage cover throughout most of the park, it has promoted the germination of Manna Gum seedlings which will eventually improve the health and condition of the forest. Whilst the forest recovers from the impact of the bushfire, it will be necessary to maintain a low density of Koalas through continued fertility control to alleviate browsing pressure and assist in the recovery of the forest.

### Cape Otway Koala translocation program

Parks Victoria continued to support DELWP to deliver translocation and fertility control of overabundant Koalas from the Cape Otway area to suitable areas of the Great Otway National Park. In 2020–21 the program was delivered to reduce the damage overabundant Koalas were having on limited Manna Gum stands on private land adjacent to the park, and to reduce numbers of Koalas in those areas to more sustainable levels.

### Total grazing management

Red and Western Grey Kangaroos were subject to population management in Hattah-Kulkyne, Murray-Sunset and Wyperfeld national parks as part of managing the total grazing pressure on the parks from kangaroos, goats and rabbits to protect regenerating woodland habitats. Rabbit spotlight counts in Autumn 2021 over 800 kilometres across the project area revealed that 95 per cent of transects have an average of one or less rabbits per spotlight kilometre.

Reducing kangaroo densities and maintaining rabbit abundance at these low levels has helped protect revegetation and seen natural regeneration of understory and overstorey woodland vegetation communities.

## Environmental water

In 2020–21, Parks Victoria continued to work in partnership with catchment management authorities and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder to support the environmental watering program by contributing to the planning and approval of proposed activities in Barmah, Gunbower, Lower Goulburn and Murray-Sunset national parks. This included the following watering events in those parks.

### Barmah National Park

Natural inflows supplemented by environmental water resulted in inundation of all key wetlands of Barmah Forest, including Little Rushy Swamp. This encouraged the establishment of an Ibis rookery in Boals Lagoon which supported the successful fledging of chicks.

In higher parts of the forest, understorey wildflowers flourished, including hundreds of hectares of Golden Everlasting and New Holland Daisy carpeting the forest. There was also a notable increase in the occurrence of the significant plant species – Mueller's Daisy and Winged Peppergrass.

### **Gunbower National Park**

In 2020–21, there was no natural widespread flooding in Gunbower National Park. However, small peaks in Murray River flows in May 2020 and July 2020 resulted in some inflow through Yarran Creek, though this did not inundate the wetlands. A further short duration flow peak in August–September 2020 was prevented from entering the forest by closing the Shillinglaws Regulator located on Yarran Creek near the confluence with the Murray River. If the Murray River was not regulated, modelling of flows showed that there would have been an inundation of some parts of the Gunbower National Park for up to seven months of the year.

### **Hattah-Kulkyne National Park**

The average-above seasonal conditions provided short periods of rainfall that benefited understorey species but was insufficient to result in widespread flooding at Hattah-Kulkyne National Park. Aside from Lake Kramen, which still retained some water following the delivery of environmental water in 2019–20, all wetlands remained dry.

### **Lower Goulburn National Park**

Reedy Swamp filled naturally in April–May 2020 and dried by January 2021 but began to fill again after rain in February 2021.

### **Murray-Sunset National Park**

The average-above seasonal conditions resulted in some overbank flooding at the Murray-Sunset National Park in winter and spring of 2020, providing temporary flows in the Lindsay River and Potterwalkagee Creek, and additional flows into Websters Lagoon. Pumping of environmental water was used to maintain constant flow in the Mullaroo Creek throughout 2020–21 and was also delivered to other internal creek-lines in Wallpolla for a second year in a row to maintain important habitat for native fish including the Murray Cod.

## **Marine values**

The management of Victoria's unique and diverse marine protected area system is implemented by staff-led programs and effective partnerships with other government agencies and the community. Integrated partnerships and action continue to be required to address threats to park values that emanate outside park boundaries, such as challenges associated with marine invasive plants and animals, illegal fishing, poor water quality, visitor pressures, and climate change.

A significant achievement of 2020–21 was the delivery of a program undertaken with Traditional Owners to build capacity for involvement in marine monitoring and management programs both within parks, including Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park, and in other Traditional Owner managed areas of Sea Country. Utilising Parks Victoria's new marine science vessel Ecklonia in February 2021, experienced Parks Victoria diving and monitoring staff delivered a snorkel competency program in the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park for Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation rangers as a pilot program for future marine knowledge sharing opportunities.

Marine volunteers across Victoria continue to actively support Parks Victoria's marine programs and through the lockdown periods of 2020 many connected directly through a range of online programs, including more than 5,000 individual registrations for the Winter by the Sea program of speaker events, virtual field trips and online workshops, delivered in partnership with Coastcare Victoria. The biennial Sharing the Love marine volunteers forum planned for April 2020 was deferred twice due to COVID restrictions but eventually went ahead in Anglesea in early May 2021, with a focus on the Point Addis Marine National Park. The forum brought together marine focused volunteers and organisations from across the state to grow skills, share ideas and build networks, and was particularly welcome for many as a major opportunity to reconnect in person with each other after long periods of COVID restriction isolation in 2020.

## Overabundant native species

A continued focus for marine programs has been the management of overabundant native species, particularly sea urchins that have impacted significantly on seagrass and kelp forest communities. Warming sea surface temperatures have caused a major range expansion of kelp munching urchins over the past decade into eastern Victoria while in other areas drivers including poor water quality and loss of predators have been suggested as causes.

An overabundant urchin project undertaken in partnership with the University of Melbourne and Deakin University, and supported by DELWP's Biodiversity Response Planning initiative, has been shown to be effective in reducing grazing pressure of these voracious herbivores and allow recovery of kelp and seagrass habitats across Port Phillip Bay's three marine sanctuaries (Point Cooke, Jawbone, and Ricketts Point), as well as in South Gippsland's Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park, and across east Gippsland marine protected areas including Beware Reef Marine Sanctuary.

## Marine pests

The prevention of spread of marine pests from highly invaded locations like Port Phillip Bay to the rest of Victoria continued to be a strong focus. Direct responses to recently established incursions of Japanese Kelp at Pope's Eye (Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park), Northern Pacific Seastars in Tidal River, and Pacific Oysters in French Island Marine National Park also continue to be delivered. Supporting the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, which has biosecurity responsibilities, Parks Victoria staff were actively involved in surveys and the reporting of Asian Shore Crabs which arrived for the first time in Australia in Port Phillip Bay in 2020. The Asian Shore Crab has potential to become a major new marine pest.

## Monitoring natural values

Monitoring is vital for understanding the status of natural values and threats, and how these change over time. Monitoring by staff, contractors, researchers, students, community groups and volunteers is important for understanding the effectiveness of park management and helps inform decisions about how to better manage threats and protect biodiversity in the future.

## Terrestrial environments

Monitoring natural values in terrestrial environments during the year included:

- ongoing support for Australian National University's long-term monitoring of forest structure and fauna communities in the tall forests of Yarra Ranges National Park
- ongoing monitoring of ground dwelling mammals and introduced predators as part of the Ark predator control programs in parks including Lower Glenelg, Cobboboonee, Grampians, Great Otway, Snowy River, Croajingolong and Coopracambra national parks
- monitoring of vegetation condition and weed species at critical Eastern Bristlebird habitat in Croajingolong National Park
- assessing habitat condition and suitability of potential sites at Wilsons Promontory National Park for establishing an insurance population of Eastern Bristlebird
- establishing new citizen science monitoring of the threatened Victorian Temperate Woodland Bird Community at Warby-Ovens National Park to help support the Green List nomination process for that park
- ongoing long-term monitoring of faunal communities at Point Nepean, Mornington Peninsula and Wilsons Promontory national parks
- ongoing monitoring of re-introduced Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby populations in the Grampians National Park
- Citizen science monitoring of grassland fauna and habitat structure at Terrick Terrick National Park
- bird surveys in Kara Kara National Park
- Brush tail Rock Wallaby camera monitoring in Little River Gorge, Snowy River National Park
- monitoring New Holland Mouse, Southern Brown Bandicoot, Ground Parrot and orchid species at Wilsons Promontory National Park with partner agencies
- condition assessment of the Alpine Bog Community (listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*) in the Eastern Alps and Bogong High Plains areas of the Alpine National Park
- post-fire monitoring and evaluation of the nationally listed threatened community 'Littoral Rainforest and Coastal Vine-thickets of Eastern Australia' in Croajingolong National Park.

## Marine environments

While experiencing some significant challenges in the delivery of planned research and monitoring field work due to COVID restrictions, Parks Victoria's marine science programs continued to gather important data on the health of parks and key issues to inform marine park management.

Research Partner Projects completed or underway in 2020–21 included investigations into:

- baseline habitat mapping and improved monitoring of reef habitats in Victoria's marine national parks
- a State-wide assessment of Victorian Marine Protected Areas using existing data
- Indigenous knowledge of seaweeds
- seagrass and saltmarsh remote sensing and monitoring
- the impacts of wind powered vessels on seabirds and marine/coastal life
- Victorian community usage, awareness and perceptions of marine protected areas.

Work related to the monitoring of marine environments undertaken in partnership with Deakin University has included:

- finalising the report for the Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park updated monitoring program
- finalising the field monitoring program for Wilsons Promontory Marine National Park delayed due to COVID
- completing the field monitoring program for Cape Howe Marine National Park after initial delays due to COVID
- commencing planning for the delivery of a monitoring program for Discovery Bay Marine National Park in 2021–22.

Parks Victoria's Sea Search program involving citizen science monitoring within marine protected areas continues to provide important opportunities for volunteers to connect with the marine environment and contribute useful data to managers in Point Addis and Port Phillip Heads marine national parks, and at Barwon Bluff, Eagle Rock, Mushroom Reef, Point Cooke and Ricketts Point marine sanctuaries. Programs included:

- Corner Inlet Marine National Park – Seagrass monitoring
- Point Cooke Marine Sanctuary – citizen science health checks, Asian shore crab monitoring and management, Great Victorian Fish Count (coordinated by the Victorian National Parks Association) and urchin monitoring
- Jawbone Marine Sanctuary – mangrove monitoring, litter watch monitoring, VNPA Great Vic Fish Count, urchin monitoring, Asian Shore Crab monitoring and Sea slug census
- Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary – urchin, Asian Shore Crab and Sea search (rocky shore) monitoring
- Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park – Undaria monitoring, Rapid Health assessments, Sea search (rocky shore), saltmarsh and seagrass monitoring, Sea slug census and marine microplastics sampling.

## Researching natural values

### Research authorisations

DELWP and Parks Victoria provide authorisations for research activities to be undertaken on public land. In 2020–21 several areas of reform were identified to better facilitate research that will be implemented in 2021–22. Research permits were again issued or renewed during the year for a range of projects in parks across the State.

### Research programs

During the year, a wide range of research was facilitated and undertaken in areas managed under the Act. This research provides the scientific underpinning needed to enable evidence-based management and ensure our management decisions are based on sound information.

Parks Victoria's Research Partners Panel continued to support collaborative research on a broad range of issues with 30 new projects commenced during the year, including the following:

- fire ecology projects (Alpine, Budj Bim, Great Otway, Terrick Terrick and Wilsons Promontory national parks and Mount Napier State Park)
- understanding the distribution, abundance and condition of threatened species and communities (Alpine National Park)
- managing pest plants and animals (Alpine, Grampians, Little Desert and Terrick Terrick national parks).
- habitat management and restoration in terrestrial and marine environments (Wilsons Promontory National Park and Point Cooke Marine Sanctuary)
- changes in marine communities (Port Phillip Bay in Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park and Jawbone, Point Cooke, Jawbone and Ricketts Point marine sanctuaries)
- using new technology for wildlife surveys (Wilsons Promontory National Park).

A concerted effort is made each year to maintain and strengthen our relationships and collaboration with research partners and to establish and grow our links to access good science to support evidence-based management. It also provides important opportunities

for students and researchers to do applied research that meshes their skills, interests and expertise with our knowledge needs.

In addition to research supported by Parks Victoria's Research Partners Panel, an even larger body of scientific research in areas managed under the Act was undertaken under scientific research permits.

## Managing cultural values

### Aboriginal cultural heritage

With a high concentration of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage values, Victoria's national parks play a crucial role in telling the stories of the State's first peoples and connecting Traditional Owners with their ancestors.

#### Ancestral remains

*Ponnun Pulgi – Healing Country Together* is a collaboration between Parks Victoria, First People of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation and People and Parks Foundation to protect the ancient and fragile cultural landscapes of north-west Victoria. These areas are rich in Aboriginal values, including vast burial grounds that are succumbing to the impacts of both human activity and natural processes. Through the *Ponnun Pulgi* project Traditional Owners have an opportunity to identify and progressively stabilise their ancestors' burial places and create a space to have important discussions about how to scale up the protection efforts in dune systems along the Murray River.

In 2020–21, an innovative approach was applied to the restoration of First Dune in Murray-Sunset National Park, which included the creation of sand bridges to re-cover exposed burial sites and the use of jute matting, logs, revegetation and fencing to protect the sites.

Parks Victoria's ongoing commitment to Victoria's first cultural heritage protection specialist with expertise in protecting ancestral remains, along with the critical contribution of Strengthening Parks Victoria rangers, have been critical to the success of this program.

Traditional Owners have described the deep sense of relief they feel in knowing that their ancestors will be safely at rest.



Image: Parks Victoria Cultural Heritage Protection team on the *Ponnun Pulgi* project.

## Rock art

Parks Victoria's program to assess the condition of all registered rock art sites in the State is now 90 per cent complete. These assessments provide a platform for engaging with Traditional Owners about how to appropriately protect and manage those places into the future. With a particularly high concentration of rock art values, the Grampians National Park (Gariwerd) and Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park (Dyurrite) have been a particular focus for intensive archaeological assessment. These areas are also popular for recreational park users, and planning is continuing in partnership with Traditional Owners to identify how these parks can sustainably support the full range of park values.

## Historic heritage

In 2020–21, the management of historic heritage in parks included the following:

- Minor works and maintenance were completed in the Mount Buffalo Chalet (Mount Buffalo National Park).
- A project to improve park interpretation including stories of the goldfields commenced, funded under the Commonwealth National Heritage Grants (Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park).
- Several historic alpine huts were documented with innovative 3D scanning technology to enable virtual tours and condition assessment (Alpine National Park).

## Fire and other emergencies

### COVID

With the continuation of the State of Emergency in 2020–21, Parks Victoria continued to provide support to the Victorian Government’s COVID response. A Critical Incident Management Team was in place to ensure Chief Health Officer Directions (CHO Directions) were applied across parks under the Act. Essential services continued to be provided to ensure parks remained open, emergency response was maintained and critical works continued. Parks Victoria supported a consistent approach across all public land, working with DELWP and other agencies to implement the COVID Safe Summer Plan. There were periods throughout the year when park facilities and specific locations (for example 1000 Steps in Dandenong Ranges National Park) were closed to support CHO Directions. The majority of parks remained open as a key part of maintaining access for community exercise and wellbeing.

### Fire

#### Bushfires

The 2020–21 fire season was benign when compared to previous years, with only 6,124 hectares burnt versus 421,462 hectares in 2019–20. The number of bushfires attended remained above average for the year, while the area burnt by these fires was well below the 30-year average.

- Number of fires attended, which included parks under the Act – 643
- Area of land under the Act burnt by bushfires – 6,124 hectares

Of continuing concern is the number of fires resulting from visitors leaving their campsites without extinguishing a campfire effectively. Across areas under the Act this accounted for 405 fires attended that burnt an area of 32.8 hectares. Public information campaigns during the summer focussed on how to properly extinguish campfires, and this will need to continue into next year.

### Planned burning

The fuel and weather conditions across 2020–21 were favourable for delivery of planned burns in every month of the year. In addition, a quiet bushfire season meant that more firefighters were available to focus on burning earlier in the autumn period which, in combination with suitable weather and fuel conditions saw the peak Autumn program start in early February 2021 and continue through to early May 2021. The longer Autumn window meant that there were more opportunities to deliver challenging burns near high-risk communities and to maximise the number of burns delivered overall. Significant rainfall during early March 2021 brought fuels to a suitable condition to commence large landscape management burns in the bigger parcels of forest and parks across the state. A drier than average April and May 2021 gave opportunities for the program to continue through to June, particularly in the west of Victoria.

The residual risk metric is a tool to inform decision-making about the best strategies to reduce bushfire risk. The state-wide fuel management target is to keep residual risk at or below 70 per cent of Victoria’s potential maximum bushfire risk. Over the past year the treatment of 152,083 hectares of fuels, comprising 133,195 ha of planned burns and 18,888 ha of mechanical treatments, helped to keep residual risk to 64 per cent statewide.

There were 94 burns completed in areas under the Act, treating a total area of 29,100 hectares. These included burns in the Alpine (4,320 ha), Grampians (3,260 ha), Great Otway (5,103 ha), Little Desert (4,969 ha), Lower Glenelg (1,057 ha) and Murray-Sunset (2,849 ha) national parks and Big Desert Wilderness Park (2,526 ha).

Ecological burns in Terrick Terrick and Organ Pipes national parks and two ecological burns in the Alpine National Park contributed to managing the condition of grassland ecosystems in Victoria (see also *Planning, monitoring and research*).

## Melbourne Fire and Emergency Program

The Melbourne Fire and Emergency Program aims to improve bushfire preparedness in Melbourne's urban areas.

This year, major works were undertaken in Dandenong Ranges and Kinglake national parks and Bunyip and Lysterfield state parks.

Activities completed in areas under the Act included the slashing and maintenance of fuel breaks, significant road upgrades improving access for fire vehicles, preparing planned burn edges, mechanical modification of bushfire fuel, delivering pest plant control works post-burn, and mechanical works as part of an ongoing program to improve vegetation condition to offset native vegetation losses from previous fuel break works.

## Planning, monitoring and research

### Planning

There was considerable input from regional fire ecology staff into DELWP-led strategic bushfire management planning, which cover parks under the Act across Victoria.

Recently developed fire ecology strategies for French Island National Park and for the Western Plains grasslands and grassy woodlands (including Organ Pipes National Park) guided the implementation of several ecological burns.

Ecological burns were planned and undertaken in other grasslands, including high-elevation grasslands in the Alpine National Park and northern plains grasslands in Terrick Terrick National Park.

### Monitoring

There were several bushfire monitoring, evaluation and reporting projects in areas under the Act, including monitoring the effects of fire on fire-sensitive threatened fauna, such as the Greater Glider, in both the Dandenong Ranges and Yarra Ranges national parks. Large Forest Owl surveys were commenced in Bunyip State Park to assess the presence of Powerful Owl, Sooty Owl, Masked Owl and Barking Owl in the 2009 and 2019 bushfire-affected areas. The outputs from these projects continue to provide valuable information to inform land and fire management planning.

Other monitoring projects benefiting Alfred, Alpine, Coopracambra, Croajingolong, Lind and Snowy River national parks and Cape Conran Coastal Park included:

- continuing to support DELWP with the delivery of the Southern Ark fox control and native mammal monitoring program (see *Monitoring natural values*), which provided valuable baseline information prior to the fires and is providing valuable monitoring data on post-fire recovery
- modelling and monitoring of fire sensitive Alpine Ash forests, enabling informed mitigation actions, including the distribution of seed to help the recovery of Alpine Ash forests where frequent fires have killed mature seed-producing trees.

### Research

Parks Victoria continued to lead a 'Fire and biodiversity – impacts, recovery and future planning' research project, funded through the Victorian Government's Safer Together program. This involved sub-projects across seven parks under the Act (see *Table 1*). The research work has involved a variety of field surveys and computer modelling and, for the Northern Plains grasslands, a series of structured decision-making workshops featuring partners and stakeholders, including four Traditional Owner groups. The researchers have been largely drawn from Parks Victoria's Research Partners Panel. Research reports and modelling results have been received for sub-projects, and the science-based outputs have increased our understanding of the effects of bushfire and planned burning on ecosystem resilience and will be used to inform improved strategic bushfire management planning and bushfire recovery.

Additionally, four fire and biodiversity projects were supported through Parks Victoria's Applied Park Management Research Scholarships (APMRS).

**Table 1 – 'Fire and biodiversity – impacts, recovery and future planning' – research sub-projects**

<b>Park</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Outputs</b>
<b>Budj Bim National Park and Mount Napier State Park</b>	Refine the tolerable fire intervals for forested Stony Rises Woodland Ecological Vegetation Class and develop a preferred fire regime based on scientific evidence.	Following the 2019–20 bushfires, post-fire field surveys and modelling and subsequent reporting have further improved understanding of tolerable fire intervals and post-fire weed issues, and this is informing appropriate fire management in forested Stony Rises Woodland.
<b>Alpine National Park</b>	<p>Develop decision-support tools to guide management interventions to enhance the persistence of Alpine Ash forests subject to fire and climate change disturbance.</p> <p>Collect floristic fire response data from long-term alpine monitoring plots. This data will contribute to understanding threats to fire sensitive environments and inform future management actions required to conserve subalpine and montane forests.</p>	<p>'Supercomputer' modelling work enhanced our understanding of immaturity and fire risk in Alpine Ash forests, and the benefits of management interventions such as post-fire reseeded, including under future bushfire and climate change scenarios. This work informed the large-scale post-fire reseeded project.</p> <p>Following the 2019–20 bushfires, post-fire re-surveying of long-term alpine fire ecology monitoring plots has further contributed to our understanding of these fire sensitive environments. Such long-term (25 year) data sets are rare and extremely valuable for informing environmental change over time.</p>
<b>Terrick Terrick National Park</b>	Build on the existing Northern Plains grasslands knowledge base and Traditional Owner and stakeholder expertise to develop evidence-based objectives for the management and application of ecological fire.	Burning alongside Traditional Owners, together with pre- and post-fire ecological monitoring, and the analysis of flora and fauna datasets, have furthered our understanding of the role of ecological and cultural fire in these grasslands, and is informing future monitoring needs.
<b>Wilsons Promontory National Park</b>	In line with the Wilsons Promontory National Park Conservation Action Plan (CAP), develop a Fire Ecology strategy aiming to improve the health of Heathland, Coastal Grassy Woodland, Mixed Dry Forest and Woodland by ensuring that fire is applied in an ecologically appropriate manner.	<p><i>Stage 1:</i> An ecological based field assessment to determine the condition of Heathland, Coastal Grassy Woodland, Mixed Dry Forest and Woodland. Appropriate fire regime scenarios are being developed to test the application of ecological fire for improving the health of these communities.</p> <p><i>Stage 2:</i> An ecologically appropriate fire regime scenario modelling, that includes future climate change models, to determine optimum protection, restoration and maintenance of ecological condition and resilience these ecological communities. The outcomes will inform Parks Victoria and DELWP land and fire managers in planning and implementing burns and will deliver the key performance indicators detailed in the Wilsons Promontory National Park CAP.</p>

**Table 2 – Applied Park Management Research Scholarships (APMRS) – fire ecology research projects**

Park	Activity	Outputs
<b>Budj Bim National Park and Mount Great Otway National Park</b>	Assess the effects of time since fire and fire frequency on the diversity of fungi and vascular plants in a Heathy Woodland.	The outputs of the project are providing valuable insights into how fire regimes affect fungal diversity and will aid future management of the Anglesea Heath.
<b>Great Otway National Park</b>	Assess plant functional diversity under varying climatic and fire regimes in a heathy woodland, by evaluating overall species composition, composition of plant functional groups, and the abundance and growth-stage of key fire response species.	The outputs of the project are providing valuable insights into how heathy woodlands respond to altered fire regimes, and likely climatic conditions into the future, and will aid future management of the Anglesea Heath.
<b>Terrick Terrick National Park</b>	Two projects examining fire, weeds and invasion patterns and mechanisms to better understand the effect of planned burning on suppress or facilitating weed invasion and native vegetation recovery.	The outputs of this project will inform development of evidence-based objectives for the management and application of ecological fire in Terrick Terrick National Park.

## Recovery from bushfires and other emergencies

Recovery works related to the impacts of the 2019–20 Black Summer fires continued:

- The Banksia Bluff Campground at Cape Conran Coastal Park was reopened to visitors for the September School Holidays and operating at full capacity over the summer visitor season.
- Campgrounds at Cape Conran experienced record bookings over the summer visitor season.

### Recovery from events in 2020–21

The following event occurred during the reporting period:

- A flood event impacted Wilsons Promontory National Park.

# Encouraging visitors, tourism and community involvement

## Enhancing visitor enjoyment and tourism

Parks Victoria continued to be a lead driver of visitor and tourist access into and enjoyment of regional areas while maintaining park values and reducing risks. Works to enhance visitor enjoyment and increase nature-based tourism opportunities included:

### Grampians National Park

There was significant progress on Stage Two of the Grampians Peaks Trail (GPT), a world-class walking experience of 160 kilometres, which can be enjoyed in sections or one 13-day walk, with upgrades now 95 per cent completed. Works are nearing completion on the final hiker camps, with their opening planned for spring 2021.

Other projects now funded in the park include:

- Designs for additional GPT trail heads that will be critical to managing the visitor experiences of hikers, walkers and campers are currently being finalised.
- Design of the Mackenzie Falls precinct upgrade commenced and will provide quality open spaces for visitors to enjoy, recreate and connect with Country, showcasing the outstanding natural and cultural values of the Grampians Gariwerd Landscape.

### Mount Buffalo National Park

The \$3 million upgrade of the Mount Buffalo Chalet façade commenced, initially with site investigations and design works.

Access and facilities at visitor sites are being upgraded and several roofed accommodation units are in the process of being delivered across the park.

### Port Campbell National Park

Works were completed on the sewer and potable water pipelines and associated infrastructure that connect the Twelve Apostles Visitor Centre with the Port Campbell township sewer and water services.

A contract was executed for works to commence on construction of the Saddle Lookout at the Twelve Apostles.

### Wilson's Promontory National Park

Project planning commenced for the \$23 million Wilson's Prom Revitalisation Project. The project will invest in the park to create an internationally significant biodiversity sanctuary, build a new visitor centre and expand the accommodation offering within the park and on adjacent freehold land.

### Alpine National Park

Planning is in progress for the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing to expand and develop the existing 37-kilometre trail and connect the 57-kilometre crossing to some of Victoria's most outstanding landscapes.

The Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing will be a 5-day 4-night mid-distance hiking experience through the unique and captivating alpine environment, from Falls Creek to Mount Hotham. Falls to Hotham will create Australia's pre-eminent all year-round Alpine Crossing.

### Victoria's Great Outdoors

In early 2020 the Victorian Government announced Victoria's Great Outdoors, a program investing \$105.6 million to deliver better forests, parks, campgrounds, tracks and outdoor facilities across the State. The following works in parks under the Act are complete, with planning and design progressing on all other sites in the program:

- Cathedral Range State Park – Ned's Gully pedestrian suspension bridge
- French Island National Park – Fairhaven Campground
- Great Otway National Park – Big Hill, Allenvale and Hammonds campgrounds.

### East Gippsland Campgrounds

Victorian Government 2021 Budget Outcomes announced in November 2020 to support projects and jobs across Victoria as part of the State of Victoria's COVID economic recovery included the East Gippsland Campgrounds. Planning for improvements to the camping offer has commenced for Alpine, Snowy River, Mitchell River and Croajingolong national parks.

### Cape Conran Coastal Park

Planning is in progress for the provision of an upgraded accommodation offer at Cape Conran to compliment the rebuild of the campground after the 2020 Bushfires devastation of the site.

Potable water and reticulated sewerage connection between Cape Conran and Marlo are being designed by the East Gippsland Water Authority. This critical upgrade will allow the site to grow into the future and comply with the *Environment Protection Act 2017*.

The delivery of a shared path from Cape Conran, Marlo and Orbost, which will be a valuable addition to the already existing trail network across Victoria, is being planned.

## Croajingolong National Park

Improvements to the quality of the facilities adjacent to the park will progress following the rebuild of the Thurra River Bridge destroyed during the Black Summer fires devastation of the site.

Development of the Lakeview site adjoining Mallacoota Inlet is progressing with the upgrading of a loop walking track that will support an interpretive walk. Works also include replacement of six jetties to contemporary standard and development of a canoe-trail from site to site, allowing lightweight camping at selected sites.

## Visits to parks

The Visitor Number Monitor (VNM) was conducted in 2020–21. The VNM is a broad base telephone survey that aims to determine visitation estimates at the entire of estate level, to estimate annual visitation to Melbourne metropolitan parks, national and state parks, and bays, piers and jetties. There were an estimated 50 million annual visits to national and state parks in 2020–21. This was a minor increase on the 2018–19 monitor (despite the impacts of COVID) and was driven largely by regional Victorians. The travel restrictions reduced visitation by Melbournians to national and state parks in 2020. In 2021 there was an increase in visits by Melbournians and this brought the total number of visits by Melbourne residents in 2020–21 to national and state parks in line with visitation in the previous reporting period.

The COVID pandemic during 2020 and 2021 changed the pattern of visitation to the estate seen prior to COVID, with the closure of some parks for safety during periods of restrictions and limited or no international or interstate tourism. Several parks saw decreases in annual visitation in 2020–21 due to the impacts of COVID restrictions and related closures (*see graph below*) while others have seen increases in local and domestic visits.

Parks Victoria played a critical role in applying government directives by actively restricting visitation at sites identified as high risk during COVID restrictions. Alternative locations were promoted to spread visitation across the landscape and further support the implementation of physical distancing measures. Research conducted on the impact of COVID on park usage found that three in five Victorians who visited parks and protected areas during lockdown felt it had a positive impact to their mental and physical health (62 and 61 per cent respectively) and two in five felt it was positive for their social health (41 per cent). More than two in five Victorians believed Parks Victoria performed well during the pandemic (46 per cent) and less than one in twenty considered the response to have been poor (4%). Further, three in five Victorians agree that closing public spaces was the right response (63 per cent) fewer than one in ten perceive that this was the wrong decision (8 per cent).

## Estimated annual visits



## Supporting visitors with disabilities

Parks Victoria improved accessibility and inclusion for people with a disability through:

During the year Parks Victoria:

- creating 10 park videos promoting all abilities and wheelchair access at parks including Wilsons Promontory, Dandenong Ranges, Port Campbell and Grampians national parks
- developing 'social scripts' for children and families living with autism were completed at Point Nepean National Park
- implementing a universal design for new visitor infrastructure that included a new all abilities lookout at Mount Buffalo National Park
- completing accessibility audits for 10 parks including Organ Pipes, Wilsons Promontory and Point Nepean national parks and Arthurs Seat and Warrandyte state parks, that will be used to update park visitor information for the community
- running a Come n Try event at the Dandenong Ranges National Park for people with a disability to use the Parks Victoria all-terrain TrailRider Wheelchairs and TrailRider volunteers (*pictured*)

- in partnership with Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria, expanding the 'Walk in the Park Program' for people with low vision or who are blind to include Forest Therapy walks in the Yarra Ranges National Park and Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden
- Providing volunteer opportunities for people with disabilities in various park locations.

## Learning for Nature

Interpretation and education services relating to areas under the Act were provided to encourage learning in, about and for nature, by increasing knowledge and understanding of parks and biodiversity, developing a stronger connection with the nature and fostering pro-conservation behaviours.

Face-to-face interpretation and education activities were significantly impacted by COVID but, in its place, digital learning options were delivered for half of the year. When it was safe to resume in-person learning programs 7,879 adults and children participated at 38 parks under the Act. This represented approximately half of the level of participation in previous years.



Image: Enjoying a Come n Try event, Dandenong Ranges National Park.

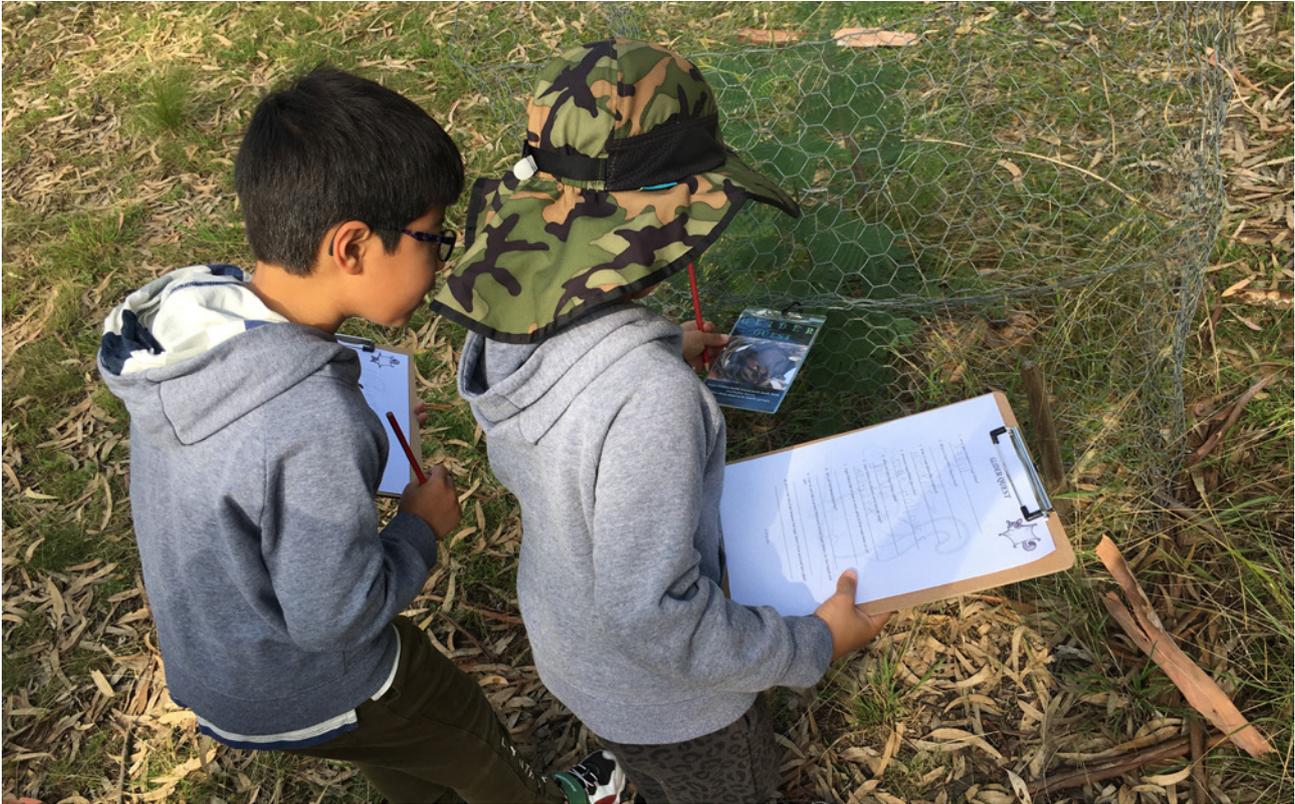


Image: Completing the Junior Ranger Sugar Glider quest in Organ Pipes National Park.

Engagement with the education community was also impacted by remote learning and suspension of excursions during the pandemic. Participation of this sector was also at approximately 50 per cent of usual rates. This included engagement with 3,563 school students (plus 538 teachers) across 12 parks.

### Digital nature education

In 2020–21, ten schools across the state were actively engaged in the Park Explorers program. While excursions to parks were limited in 2020 due to COVID and remote learning, digital learning options were strengthened. More than 5,957 students from 87 schools joined Park Explorer webinars, 50 schools requested teaching and learning resources through ParkConnect, and there were 2,169 visits to the program website.

Resources developed specific to parks under the Act include seven virtual tours of Victorian ecosystems and two short films based in Yarra Ranges National Park and Jawbone Marine Sanctuary. These were incorporated into a newly developed Park Explorers program webpage and Parks Victoria YouTube playlist for Learning in Nature.

### Junior Ranger program

The Junior Ranger program was greatly affected by COVID, with half of the holiday seasons delivered online and the second half, including Summer and Autumn, returning to in-park, ranger-led delivery. This impacted the overall total participation for the year.

Despite these challenges, the face-to-face program was delivered in the second half of the year to 3,737 participants (children and adults) at 36 parks under the Act. This is 2,092 fewer than in 2019–20 or 64 per cent of the participation rate of the previous year, which was also impacted by COVID and bushfires.

An online program replaced regular delivery in 2020 Winter and Spring holidays. A range of digital engagement events and resources were promoted to more than 8,000 subscribed Junior Ranger families. Of these, 5,249 nature-based activities were downloaded; 1,169 participants joined ranger-led Junior Ranger webinars; 1,506 viewers watched Junior Ranger mini videos and 1,250 visitors explored a refreshed Junior Ranger blog site. The digital engagement was designed to encourage families to continue to explore and connect with nature while access to protected areas was limited.

## Licensed tour operators

Tour operators are licensed to run organised tours and recreational activities for profit on Victorian public land.

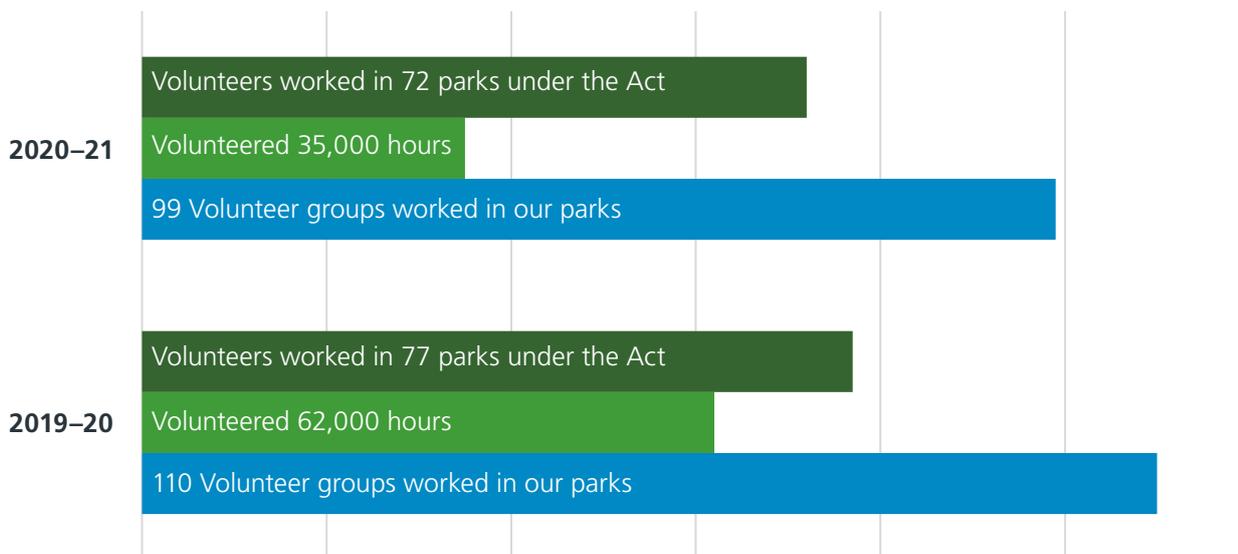
As at 30 June 2021 there were 560 operators licensed to operate in areas under the Act (up from 436 in 2019–20). This figure includes several businesses who closed as a result of COVID impacts. The true impact of these closures will become clear in the next financial year as part of the licensing renewal process. Interestingly, a significant number of new licensed tour operators came online which is likely reflective of revaluations of life priorities seen across the population during COVID restrictions.

## Parks for health and wellbeing - benefits for all

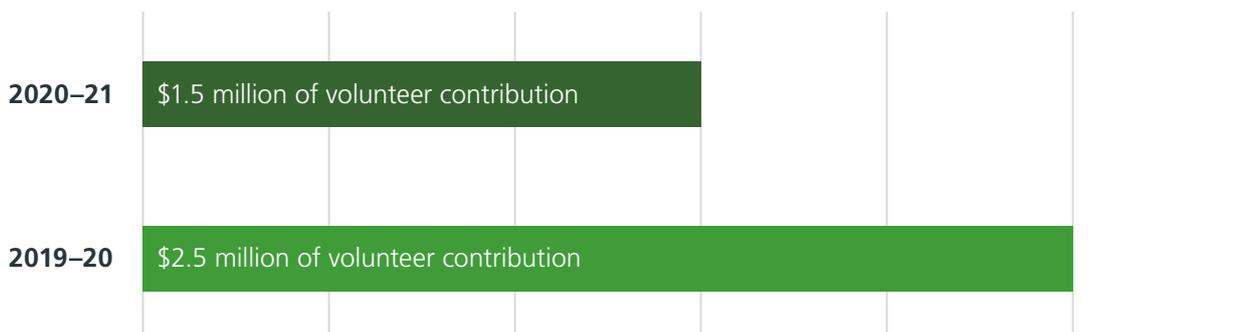
The volunteer guided ParkWalks Program continued, including walks at Lysterfield Park and Dandenong Ranges and Kinglake national parks.

Parks Victoria partnered with AMES Australia to encourage multicultural communities to experience parks for health and wellbeing. Shared events included a celebration of multicultural volunteers at Lysterfield Park for women from multicultural backgrounds as part of International Women's Day 2021.

## Volunteers



## \$million in inkind support



## Volunteering in parks

Parks Victoria engaged more than 99 different volunteer groups in a diversity of volunteer activities to enhance and protect areas under the Act during the year, contributing 34,509 volunteer hours across 72 parks. This outstanding volunteer contribution is valued at just under \$1.5 million of in kind support.

A wide variety of activities was undertaken, with track maintenance, habitat restoration, environmental monitoring, survey and research the most common.

Although practical volunteering was significantly impacted by COVID restrictions through the year, volunteers were invited to participate in virtual learning webinars hosted by experts to explore topics that would enhance knowledge and protection of protected areas. Parks Victoria delivered nine Insights into Nature webinars with 3,210 registrations, 902 attendees and 2,146 YouTube views. With a focus on marine national parks, Parks Victoria worked in partnership with other marine agencies and community groups to deliver nine Winter by the Sea webinars with 3,516 registrations, 594 attendees and 1,642 YouTube views.

Parks Victoria released The Volunteering Innovation Fund (VIF) in September 2020, a new initiative delivered as a component of the Victoria's Great Outdoors Volunteer Program. The fund will award \$2 million in competitive funding over three years to support existing volunteer groups and engage new and diverse audiences in environmental volunteering across public land, including areas under the Act. They will be new and different ideas that create change, inspire volunteering for all Victorians to get involved and leave a legacy. Round one application opened on 23 September 2020 and closed on 18 November 2020, with funding up to \$20,000 available per project.

From the 20 successful applications in round one, at least six will have direct benefit to parks under the Act including Arthurs Seat State Park, Mornington Peninsula, Alpine and Baw Baw national parks and other coastal parks under the Act. Bushwalking Victoria paved the way and were the first recipients to undertake their project under the fund in a national park. Bushwalking Victoria worked with Friends of Baw Baw National Park to manage and promote a 3-day volunteer track clearing event from 8–11 April 2021 on the Australian Alps Walking Track in the Baw Baw National Park.

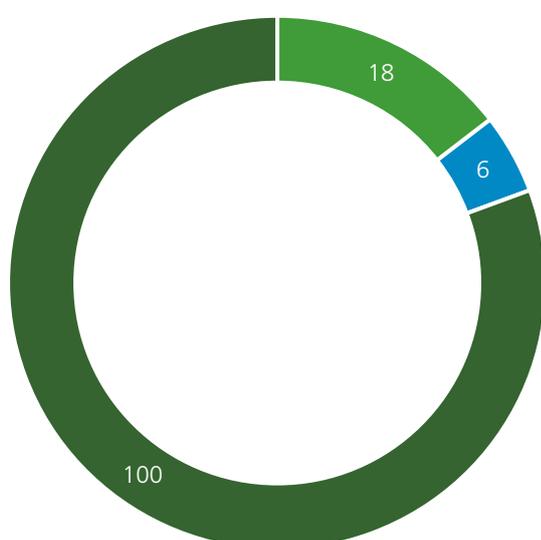
The event was a success, with 40 volunteers registering and clearing more than 7,000 metres of track, plus an additional 2,000 metres to make a path identifiable.

The first ever Great Gariwerd Bird Survey was completed in Autumn 2021 within the Grampians National Park in partnership with Nature Glenelg Trust. The project consisted of 10 weeks of bird ecology training resulting in 171 surveys being undertaken, more than 40 bird species surveyed, 40 volunteers engaged and a volunteer contribution of 2,128 hours.

## Partnering with Traditional Owners

Parks Victoria and DELWP continued to collaborate with Traditional Owner Corporations across Victoria to implement joint and co-operative management arrangements and to support the involvement of Traditional Owners in park management.

- No. of parks under Joint Management
- No. of parks under Co-operative Management
- No. of parks under Parks Victoria management



### Joint management

#### Dja Dja Wurrung

Four parks under the Act in north central Victoria are – or will be – subject to Aboriginal title and are jointly managed by Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DDWCAC) and Parks Victoria with oversight from the Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board:

- Greater Bendigo National Park (Aboriginal title to be granted)
- Kara Kara National Park (most of the park)
- Kooyoora State Park
- Paddys Ranges State Park.

Djandak delivered several on-ground actions in jointly managed parks, including walking track, signage and gate upgrades, and bollard installation to direct visitation, within Greater Bendigo National Park, and pest herbivore control works and rabbit control programs in Kara Kara National Park. Ongoing activity also includes the commencement of an Interpretive Trail Design project, which will include upgrading the

vehicle track and walking trail network in the Mount Kooyoora (Melville Caves) area of Kooyoora State Park, and roading works at Paddys Ranges State Park.

Djandak has also been leading 'Recreation, Cultural Practices and Customs' planning at Kara Kara and Kooyoora parks which will inform the next stage of planning beyond the Joint Management Plan.

DDWCAC is also leading the planning and community engagement for a Victorian Great Outdoors project to develop a Dja Dja Wurrung themed campground in Greater Bendigo National Park.

#### Gunaikurnai

Six parks under the Act in Gippsland are subject to Aboriginal title and jointly managed by the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) and Parks Victoria, with oversight by the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board:

- Mitchell River National Park
- New Guinea Cave within Snowy River National Park
- Tarra Bulga National Park
- The Lakes National Park
- Lake Tyers State Park
- Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park.

The Lake Tyers Camping and Access Strategy was finalised in April 2021. Collaboratively developed by GLaWAC and Parks Victoria, it outlines how the park's cultural and environmental values will be protected while improving facilities and opportunities for the Gunaikurnai community and park visitors.

A landscape design plan and cultural heritage management plan have been developed for the Angusvale campground, and funding has been secured to improve facilities and ensure protection of values in this jointly managed park.

Extensive cultural mapping and archaeological surveys have been undertaken in Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park to inform the protection of cultural values in the park. An oral history project has been commenced, providing Gunaikurnai Traditional Owners to record and share their stories and knowledge.

A signage manual was finalised, which will see progressive changes to signage across the Gunaikurnai parks, to better celebrate and share the cultural values and perspectives of the Gunaikurnai people.

## Taungurung

The Taungurung Recognition and Settlement Agreement formally commenced on 11 August 2020 and commits to granting Aboriginal title over seven parks under the Act, which will be jointly managed by the Taungurung Land and Waters Council Aboriginal Corporation and Parks Victoria:

- Alpine National Park (part)
- Heathcote-Graytown National Park
- Kinglake National Park (part)
- Lake Eildon National Park
- Mount Buffalo National Park
- Cathedral Range State Park
- Mount Samaria State Park.

Six Joint Management Rangers have been employed by Taungurung Land and Waters Council and seconded to Parks Victoria at work centres across Taungurung Country. Processes for establishing the Taungurung Traditional Owner Land Management Board are underway.

Key activities undertaken in the jointly managed parks include the completion of a goat control program funded by the Biodiversity Response Planning initiative through the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, including on-ground shooting and trapping of more than 100 goats in Heathcote-Graytown National Park.

## Yorta Yorta

Barmah National Park is jointly managed by Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Parks Victoria. The Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner Land Management Board, which oversees the implementation of the joint management plan, is now comprised only of Traditional Owners.

The partnership with Parks Victoria continues to:

- support the employment and development of Joint Management Rangers to deliver on key strategies within the *Strategic Action Plan: Protection of floodplain marshes in Barmah National Park and Barmah Forest Ramsar site (2019–2023)* including fox, deer, goat and pig control programs using both recurrent and initiative funding
- identify priority actions and deliver on key strategies and actions identified within the Barmah National Park Joint Management Plan.

The \$400K Barmah Master Plan was funded in 2017–18 as a State budget commitment. The original objective of the masterplan was to support Yorta Yorta activation and commercial opportunities around Barmah National Park, which have been achieved to some degree.

The \$5.74 million economic stimulus project is also progressing, with \$2.9 million of these funds going towards refurbishment of Dharnya Stage 1. This funding also supports employment of the Rangers through to June 2022 and a new Project Officer for the next 12 months.

## Co-operative management

### Gunditjmarra

Budj Bim National Park is co-operatively managed by Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Parks Victoria. As part of the broader Budj Bim Cultural Landscape UNESCO listed World Heritage site, the park has been recognised as having outstanding cultural significance.

Recovery efforts following the 2019–20 fire that affected the area have been the focus of management efforts over the past year. The shared recovery program has seen a strengthening of the relationship between the Gunditjmarra Traditional Owners and land management agencies.

Key recovery efforts have included an aerial shooting program led by DELWP to help control feral deer and pigs that are negatively impacting fire-affected parts of the Budj Bim cultural landscape through grazing, tree-rubbing, trampling and the formation of wallows in drainage lines. The program provided Gunditj Mirring Corporation personnel an opportunity to gain experience in landscape-scale pest management techniques and was successful in reducing the pressure on environmental and cultural values.

Gunditj Mirring and DELWP also collaborated on a program of LiDAR surveys to identify cultural heritage values exposed by the bushfires. Through a thorough consideration of Traditional Owner rights, intellectual property arrangements for the survey program ensured that data remained owned by Gunditj Mirring, with a licence agreement for government to use the information to inform land management.

## **Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk**

Four parks under the Act are co-operatively managed by Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Parks Victoria, with DELWP support:

- Little Desert National Park
- Wyperfeld National Park
- Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park
- Lake Albacutya Park.

Co-management projects have focused on the protection of Mallee Fowl, and rabbit, fox and weed control. Cultural heritage assessments across Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park have been progressing and will provide invaluable information to inform management planning. Several grant funding opportunities are being pursued, including Aboriginal Community Caring for Country grants and renewable energy grants.

## **Yorta Yorta**

The Lower Goulburn National Park is co-operatively managed by Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Parks Victoria. Key activities that have occurred in the park include:

- the development of a Road Rationalisation Plan, in consultation with key stakeholders, that aims to reduce the impact of vehicle damage on environmental and cultural values in the park
- the successful delivery of Environmental Water to Reedy Swamp
- on ground delivery of the Biodiversity Response Planning initiative with the Woka Walla Team, which has achieved excellent results
- the delivery of educational activities to volunteer and school groups the number of which has doubled this year
- the successful removal of old infrastructure such as fencing for livestock, and installation of new fencing to protect cultural sites by local staff with support from the Working for Victoria team.

## **Other Traditional Owner partnerships**

In July 2020, Parks Victoria commenced management of Brambuk: The National Park and Cultural Centre associated with the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park, with a commitment that management of the precinct will transition to Traditional Owner control in three years. Parks Victoria is working closely with the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Barengi Gadjin Land Council and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation on transition arrangements.

Planning for an upgrade of Brambuk has begun and will involve extensive engagement with Gariwerd Traditional Owners and stakeholders. The Victorian Government announced funding in the 2020–21 budget of \$5.8 million to implement improvements to the site and its operations which will enhance visitor experiences and services and facilities for Traditional Owners. Funding has been secured by Parks Victoria and Traditional Owner partners to host the second National Rock Art Forum in Gariwerd later in 2021.

Strong engagement and recognition of Traditional Owner rights has been embedded in a range of large-scale initiatives underway in parks across the State, including the Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project, collaborating with First People of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation in Murray-Sunset National Park and Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation in Barmah National Park.

Economic recovery projects in places such as Wilsons Promontory, Mount Buffalo, Grampians, Alpine and Croajingolong national parks are also presenting new opportunities for Traditional Owners to be engaged in priority developments on the parks estate.

# Supporting park management

## Management arrangements

Parks Victoria is responsible under the Act for ensuring that the parks and other areas to which the Act applies are controlled and managed in accordance with the Act. DELWP and other organisations contribute to the parks program, and DELWP provides strategic policy advice to the Minister and the Secretary.

Parks Victoria's 2020–21 business plan sets out the management services and strategic priorities to be delivered for the year. Its annual report contains information on the organisation and its operations for the year.

## Legislation

### Amendments to the Act

#### **Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Act 2020**

On 1 December 2020 the *Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Act 2020* created the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority with certain responsibilities relating to a region encompassing the Great Ocean Road, including what is referred to as the Great Ocean Road coast and parks which stretches from near Breamlea to west of Warrnambool. The National Parks Act was amended to include several new related definitions and to impose certain obligations on Parks Victoria and the Secretary in relation to any approved Great Ocean Road strategic framework plan.

It is proposed that the Authority will ultimately assume statutory responsibility from Parks Victoria for several parks (or parts thereof) under the National Parks Act within the Great Ocean Road coast and parks. The status of any such parks will not change and they will continue to be managed under the Act. It is intended that Parks Victoria would continue to manage the parks on the ground on behalf of the Authority.

#### **Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Act 2020**

This amending Act received Royal Assent on 1 December 2020. It made the following main amendments to the Act (see *Representative System and Appendix 1* for more details):

On 15 December 2020:

- areas were added to Errinundra and Greater Bendigo national parks and excised from French Island and Hattah-Kulkyne national parks
- provision was made for future additions to Greater Bendigo and Great Otway national parks once the land is surrendered to the Crown
- several redundant or spent transitional provisions were repealed and other minor amendments were made to the Act.

On 1 May 2021:

- the Act was amended to incorporate a new category of park – landscape conservation area – along with a related object and specific management obligations, both for the park overall and the different categories of land which might comprise the park (nature conservation areas, bushland areas, community use areas – education areas). The overall object for landscape conservation areas is the protection, enhancement and management of those areas as part of a fragmented natural landscape for the purposes of nature conservation.
- Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park and Yellingbo Landscape Conservation Area were added to Schedule Three and Nine respectively, and the existing Bunurong Marine Park and Haining Farm removed from Schedules Four and Three respectively.

### Amendments to the Regulations

On 15 December 2020 the National Parks Amendment (Safety) Regulations 2020 amended the Regulations to enable the temporary closure of a park to prevent or mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID or any other infectious disease, to enable additional conditions to be imposed on activities or behaviour in areas where access in a park is prohibited or restricted, and to provide for enforcement of a temporary closure of a park to prevent or mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID or any other infectious disease.

On 29 June 2021 the National Parks (Tour Operator Licence Fees) Regulations 2021 commenced. These regulations prescribe the fees payable in respect of tour operator licences granted under the Act and provide for the reduction, waiver or refund of such fees.

## Authorities under the Act

### Leases, licences and other authorities

Parks Victoria manages approximately 300 public land authorisations (leases, licences, permits and consents) under the Act, as shown in the following table. These exclude tour operator licences (see *Licensed tour operators*).

Agreement Type	No. of Agreements	No. of National Parks
Consent	217	46
Lease	32	12
Licence	26	15
Permit	25	14

No leases and licenses were issued under the Act during 2020-21. Other authorities granted under the Act or the Regulations included:

- permits under section 21(1AA)
  - a trade permit for Alfies Fast Food mobile trading to operate in Baw Baw National Park
  - a trade permit for a bicycle hire service to operate within Point Nepean National Park
  - a trade permit to Woodland Folk to operate a mobile food and beverage van within Point Nepean National Park
  - a permit with Sorrento Croquet Club to conduct activities and tournaments within Point Nepean National Park.
- six authorisations under section 45A(4) to five individuals to permit particular commercial fishing vessels to transit Cape Howe Marine National Park.

### Consents to public authorities

Section 27 of the Act enables consents to be granted to public authorities (as defined in the Act) to carry out works in parks, subject to conditions.

On 10 June 2021 NSW Electricity Networks Operations Pty Limited (ACN 609 169 959), as trustee for NSW Electricity Networks Operations Trust (ABN 70 250 995 390) (sometimes referred to as TransGrid) was declared to be a public authority for the purposes of the Act.

One consent was granted during the year. This was to South East Water Ltd to provide a further 20-year term in relation to the installation and operation of water tanks near Sorrento back beach in Mornington Peninsula National Park.

### Consents to earth resource activities

On 15 and 17 September 2020 the Minister's consent under section 40 of the Act to LV Blue Metal Proprietary Limited conducting operations within Tyers Park to search for stone was tabled in the Parliament. The consent was not disallowed.

### Interstate cooperation

The *Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the Cooperative Management of the Australian Alps national parks* (MOU) was revised during the year and signed by the heads of the four relevant agencies, including the chief executive officer of Parks Victoria. The MOU aims to promote cooperative and best practice management of this highly significant conservation area. In Victoria, it covers the Alpine, Baw Baw, Mount Buffalo and Snowy River national parks, Avon Wilderness Park and the Lake Mountain unit of the Yarra Ranges National Park.

### Advisory bodies

#### National Parks Advisory Council

The National Parks Advisory Council is appointed under section 10 of the Act. Its main functions are to advise the Minister generally in relation to the administration of the Act and on particular matters in relation to which its advice is required under the Act or is sought by the Minister.

As at 30 June 2021 the members were:

- Associate Professor Ursula De Jong
- Ms Judith Dixon
- Mr Michael Fendley
- Ms Anna Foley (who acted as interim Convenor following the resignation of Mr Doug Humann AM during the year)
- Mr Adam McLean
- Dr Mary-Jane Rogers
- Mr Chris Rose.

The council's annual report for 2020–21 provides information on the council and its activities during the year.

Several non-statutory advisory groups also provided advice to Parks Victoria on the management of various parks.



Image: Enforcement officers in Hattah-Kulkyne National Park.

## Enforcement

There were 8 individuals successfully prosecuted during the year for committing offences against the Act (11) or the Regulations (2).<sup>1</sup> The most numerous offence was cutting or taking away fallen or felled trees (8).

There were 769 infringement notices issued for prescribed offences against the Act (168) or the Regulations (601).<sup>2</sup> The most numerous offences related to dogs (203), camping outside a designated area (area set aside or occupation site) (186), fishing in a marine national park or marine sanctuary (137), using a vehicle on a road or track where prohibited or restricted (46), lighting or maintaining a fire (45), illegal parking (43), cutting or taking away fallen or felled trees (21) and interfering with vegetation (21).

There were also 95 official warnings issued in relation to offences against the Act (56) or the Regulations (39).<sup>3</sup> The most numerous offences related to fishing in a marine national park or marine sanctuary (53), dogs (13) and camping outside a designated area (12).

Additional data received from the Victorian Fisheries Authority has led to a revision of the Enforcement section of the 2019–20 report (see below).<sup>4</sup>

1. The numbers of prosecutions refer to those for which successful results were obtained during the year regardless of when the offences occurred.
2. The numbers of infringement notices refer to those issued during the year regardless of when the offences occurred and include any that may subsequently be withdrawn following an internal review during this or the next financial year.
3. The numbers of official warnings refer to those issued during the year regardless of when the offences occurred and include any issued following an internal review of any infringement notices issued during this or the previous financial year.
4. Based on the above, in 2019–20:
  - There were 11 individuals successfully prosecuted for committing offences against the Act (16) or the Regulations (3). The most numerous offence was carrying, possessing or using a gun or other weapon (10).
  - There were 250 infringement notices issued for prescribed offences against the Act (102) or the Regulations (148). The most numerous offences related to fishing in a marine national park or marine sanctuary (78), dogs (54), lighting or maintaining a fire (28), camping outside a designated area (19), cutting or taking away fallen or felled trees (19) and using a vehicle on a road or track where prohibited or restricted (18).
  - There were 71 official warnings and 3 warnings issued in relation to offences against the Act (57) or the Regulations (17). The most numerous offence was fishing in a marine national park or marine sanctuary (54).

# Appendix 1

## Areas managed under the National Parks Act

### A National Parks (Schedule Two)

	National Park	Area (ha) 30 June 2020	Addition (ha)	Excision (ha)	Area (ha) 30 June 2021
1	Alfred	3 050			3 050
2	Alpine	661 777			661 777
3	Barmah	28 505			28 505
4	Baw Baw	13 530			13 530
5	Brisbane Ranges	8 885			8 885
6	Budj Bim	8 565			8 565
7	Burrowa-Pine Mountain	18 400			18 400
8	Chiltern-Mt Pilot	21 650			21 650
9	Churchill	271			271
10	Cobboboonee	18 510			18 510
11	Coopracambra	38 800			38 800
12	Croajingolong	*88 525			*88 525
13	Dandenong Ranges	3 535			3 535
14	Errinundra	39 870	3 076		^43 090
15	French Island	*11 160		5.5	*11 155
16	Grampians	168 235			168 235
17	Greater Bendigo	**17 577	9		17 586
18	Great Otway	*110 332			*110 332
19	Gunbower	9 330			9 330
20	Hattah-Kulkyne	49 975		83	49 890
21	Heathcote-Graytown	12 700			12 700
22	Kara Kara	13 990			13 990
23	Kinglake	23 210			23 210
24	Lake Eildon	27 750			27 750
25	Lind	1 370			1 370
26	Little Desert	132 647			132 647
27	Lower Glenelg	26 430			26 430
28	Lower Goulburn	9 320			9 320
29	Mitchell River	14 395			14 395
30	Mornington Peninsula	*2 680			*2 680
31	Morwell	565			565
32	Mount Buffalo	31 020			31 020
33	Mount Richmond	1 733			1 733

	<b>National Park</b>	<b>Area (ha) 30 June 2020</b>	<b>Addition (ha)</b>	<b>Excision (ha)</b>	<b>Area (ha) 30 June 2021</b>
34	Murray-Sunset	665 400			665 400
35	Organ Pipes	153			153
36	Point Nepean	*578			*578
37	Port Campbell	*1 830			*1 830
38	Snowy River	114 600			114 600
39	Tarra-Bulga	2 015			2 015
40	Terrick Terrick	6 390			6 390
41	The Lakes	2 390			2 390
42	Warby-Ovens	14 750			14 750
43	Wilson's Promontory	*49 049			*49 049
44	Wyperfeld	359 445			359 445
45	Yarra Ranges	77 185			77 185
<b>Total – National Parks</b>		<b>2 912 077</b>			<b>2 915 216</b>

\* Area includes the area of the national park located beneath a marine national park.

\*\* Parts of Greater Bendigo NP extend only to 100 metres below the land surface

^ Area of park adjusted by 144 ha as a result of a correction to the map base

## B Wilderness Parks (Schedule Two A)

	<b>Wilderness Park</b>	<b>Area (ha) 30 June 2021</b>
1	Avon	39 650
2	Big Desert	142 300
3	Wabba	20 100
<b>Total – Wilderness Parks</b>		<b>202 050</b>

10	Kooyoora	11 350
11	Lake Tyers	8 680
12	Langi Ghiran	3 040
13	Leaghur	2 050
14	Lerderderg	20 185
15	Moondarra	6 330
16	Mount Arapiles-Tooan	7 470
17	Mount Buangor	2 400
18	Mount Granya	6 140
19	Mount Lawson	13 150
20	Mount Napier	2 800
21	Mount Samaria	7 600
22	Mount Worth	1 040
23	Paddys Ranges	2 010
24	Reef Hills	2 020
25	Warrandyte	689
26	Werribee Gorge	575
<b>Total – State Parks</b>		<b>156 825</b>

## C State Parks (Schedule Two B)

	<b>State Park</b>	<b>Area (ha) 30 June 2021</b>
1	Arthurs Seat	565
2	Black Range	11 700
3	Broken-Boosey	1 010
4	Bunyip	16 655
5	Cape Nelson	210
6	Cathedral Range	3 616
7	Dergholm	10 400
8	Enfield	4 400
9	Holey Plains	10 740

## D Other Parks (Schedule Three)

Other Park	Area (ha) 30 June 2020	Addition (ha)	Excision (ha)	Area (ha) 30 June 2021
1 Bay of Islands CP	950			950
2 Beechworth HP	1 090			1 090
3 Cape Conran CP	11 700			11 700
4 Cape Liptrap CP	4 320			4 320
5 Discovery Bay CP	*10 460			*10 460
6 Gadsen Bend Park	1 620			1 620
7 Gippsland Lakes CP	17 688			17 688
8 Haining Farm	66		66	–
9 Kings Billabong Park	2 195			2 195
10 Lake Albacutya Park	8 300			8 300
11 Langwarrin FFR	214			214
12 Lysterfield Park	1 397			1 397
13 Murray-Kulkyne Park	4 555			4 555
14 Nyah-Vinifera Park	1 370			1 370
15 Steiglitz HP	430			430
16 Tara Range Park	7 620			7 620
17 Tyers Park	1 810			1 810
18 Woodlands HP	820			820
19 Yallock-Bulluk MCP	–	3 535		3 535
<b>Total – Other Parks</b>	<b>76 605</b>	<b>3 535</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>80 074</b>

CP Coastal Park

FFR Flora and Fauna Reserve

HP Historic Park

MCP Marine and Coastal Park

\* Area includes the area of the park located beneath a marine national park.

## E Other Parks and Reserves (Schedule Four)

Other Park or Reserve	Area (ha) 30 June 2020	Addition (ha)	Excision (ha)	Area (ha) 30 June 2021
- Bunurong MP	*1 660		1 660	-
1 Castlemaine Diggings NHP**	7 590			7 590
2 Corner Inlet MCP	*18 000			*18 000
3 Deep Lead NCR (No. 1)**	1 120			1 120
4 Nooramunga MCP	15 000			15 000
5 Shallow Inlet MCP	2 000			2 000
6 Wilsons Promontory MP				
7 Wilsons Promontory MR	*10 000			*10 000
<b>Total – Other Parks and Reserves</b>	<b>55 370</b>			<b>53 710</b>

MCP Marine and Coastal Park

NCR Nature Conservation Reserve

MP Marine Park

NHP National Heritage Park

MR Marine Reserve

\* Area includes the area of the park or reserve located beneath a marine national park.

\*\* Castlemaine Diggings NHP and Deep Lead NCR (No. 1) extend only to 100 metres below the land surface.

## F Wilderness Zones (Schedule Five)

Wilderness Zones are located within several national parks, as set out below. The areas of the Wilderness Zones are included in the areas of the relevant parks in Part A of this appendix.

	<b>National Park</b>	<b>Wilderness Zone</b>	<b>Area (ha) 30 June 2021</b>
1	Alpine	Mount Darling-Snowy Bluff	40 400
2	Alpine	Razor-Viking	15 700
3	Alpine	Indi	13 800
4	Alpine	Cobberas	10 000
5	Alpine	Buchan Headwaters	30 000
6	Alpine	Tingaringy	7 900
7	Coopracambra	Genoa	19 400
8	Croajingolong	Sandpatch	15 600
9	Croajingolong	Cape Howe	7 100
10	Murray-Sunset	Sunset	126 900
11	Murray-Sunset	Minook	38 700
12	Murray-Sunset	Galpunga	35 700
13	Murray-Sunset	Mount Cowra	23 500
14	Snowy River	Snowy River	27 000
15	Snowy River	Bowen	17 500
16	Wilson's Promontory	Wilson's Promontory	21 800
17	Wyperfeld	North Wyperfeld	97 900
18	Wyperfeld	South Wyperfeld	61 300
19	Wyperfeld	Chinaman Flat	29 800
<b>Total – Wilderness Zones</b>			<b>640 000</b>

## G Remote and Natural Areas (Schedule Six)

Remote and natural areas are located within several national parks, as set out below. The areas of the remote and natural areas are included in the areas of the relevant parks in Part A of this appendix.

	<b>National Park</b>	<b>Remote and Natural Area</b>	<b>Area (ha) 30 June 2021</b>
1	Alpine	The Governors	8 100
2	Alpine	Macalister	33 300
3	Alpine	Dandongadale	3 700
4	Alpine	Bundara-Cobungra	13 700
5	Alpine	Bogong	16 300
6	Alpine	Davies Plain	10 500
7	Alpine	Suggan Buggan	17 800
8	Alpine	Upper Snowy	11 800
9	Baw Baw	Baw Baw Plateau	6 500
10	Burrowa-Pine Mountain	Mount Burrowa	6 200
11	Coopracambra	Mount Kaye	8 100
12	Croajingolong	Rame Head	9 800
13	Errinundra	Brodribb	7 700
14	Grampians	Victoria Range	14 000
15	Grampians	Serra Range	11 200
16	Grampians	Major Mitchell Plateau	6 900
17	Little Desert	Little Desert	16 400
18	Mount Buffalo	North Buffalo	6 500
19	Murray-Sunset	South Sunset	24 000
20	Wilson's Promontory	Wilson's Promontory Islands (12)	469
21	Wilson's Promontory	Southern Wilson's Promontory	14 400
22	Wyperfeld	Hopping Mouse Hill	32 100
<b>Total – Remote and Natural Areas</b>			<b>279 469</b>

## H Marine National Parks (Schedule Seven)

Marine National Park*	Area (ha) 30 June 2021
1 Bunurong	2 100
2 Cape Howe	4 050
3 Churchill Island	670
4 Corner Inlet	1 550
5 Discovery Bay	2 770
6 French Island	2 800
7 Ninety Mile Beach	2 750
8 Point Addis	4 600
9 Point Hicks	4 000
10 Port Phillip Heads	3 580
11 Twelve Apostles	7 500
12 Wilsons Promontory	15 550
13 Yaringa	980
<b>Total – Marine National Parks</b>	<b>52 900</b>

## I Marine Sanctuaries (Schedule Eight)

Marine Sanctuary	Area (ha) 30 June 2021
1 Barwon Bluff	17
2 Beware Reef	220
3 Eagle Rock	17
4 Jawbone	30
5 Marengo Reefs	12
6 Merri	25
7 Mushroom Reef	80
8 Point Cooke	290
9 Point Danger	25
10 Ricketts Point	115
11 The Arches	45
<b>Total – Marine Sanctuaries</b>	<b>876</b>

\* Marine national parks extend only to 200 metres below the land surface. Some partly overlay parts of other parks under the Act.

## J Landscape Conservation Areas (Schedule Nine)

Landscape Conservation Areas	Area (ha) 30 June 2021
1 Yellingbo	1 790
– Beenak NCA	(125)
– Hoddles Creek NCA	(283)
– Sheep Station Creek NCA	(87)
– Warramate Hills NCA	(499)
– Yellingbo NCA	(605)
– Wright Forest BA	(129)
– Haining Farm	(59)
<b>Total – Landscape Conservation Areas</b>	<b>1 790</b>

BA Bushland Area

NCA Nature Conservation Area

## K Other Areas (non-scheduled)\*

Area	Section of Act	Area (ha) 30 June 2021
1 Bald Hills BR	19B	1
2 Collins Settlement Historic Site	19B	1
3 Flinders NCR	19B	1
4 Flinders Natural Interest Reserve	19B	4
5 Long Forest NCR	19B	283
6 Lower Glenelg PPR and SLR	19B	24
7 Main Ridge NCR	19B	64
8 Moreep BR	19B	10
9 Nyerimilang Park	19B	200
10 Wychitella NCR	19B	3 780
11 Mt St Gwinear access road	19C	35
12 Commonwealth land adjacent to Woodlands Historic Park	19D	31
13 Picnic area at McKenzie's Flat (Lerderderg State Park)	19E	0.1
14 Blackwood Ranges Track (Lerderderg State Park)	19E	0.1
15 Glenample Homestead	32AA	8
<b>Total – Other Areas</b>		<b>4 442</b>

BR Bushland Reserve

NCR Nature Conservation Reserve

\* Only specific sections of the Act apply to these areas

PPR Public Purposes Reserve

SLR Scenic Lookout Reserve

\*\* No changes during the year

## L Summary – Areas managed under the Act

Category	No. of Areas 30 June 2021	Area (ha) 30 June 2021
A National Parks (Schedule Two)	45	2 915 216
B Wilderness Parks (Schedule Two A)	3	202 050
C State Parks (Schedule Two B)	26	156 825
D Other Parks (Schedule Three)	18	80 074
E Other Parks and Reserves (Schedule Four)	7	53 710
H Marine National Parks (Schedule Seven)	13	52 900
I Marine Sanctuaries (Schedule Eight)	11	876
J Landscape Conservation Areas (Schedule Nine)	1	1 790
K Other areas (non-scheduled)	15	4 442
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>3 467 883</b>

## M Unproclaimed Additions

As at 30 June 2021 legislation provides for future additions to the parks system as follows.

Park	Act	Provision of Act	Area (ha)
1 <i>Greater Bendigo National Park</i>	National Parks Act 1975	Schedule One clause 12	31
2 <i>Great Otway National Park (2 areas)</i>	National Parks Act 1975	Section 79	*219
3 <i>Moondarra State Park</i>	National Parks (Amendment) Act 1989	Section 29(3)	178
<b>Total – Unproclaimed areas</b>			<b>428</b>

\* Area will become part of the park when the rights over the land are surrendered to the Crown.

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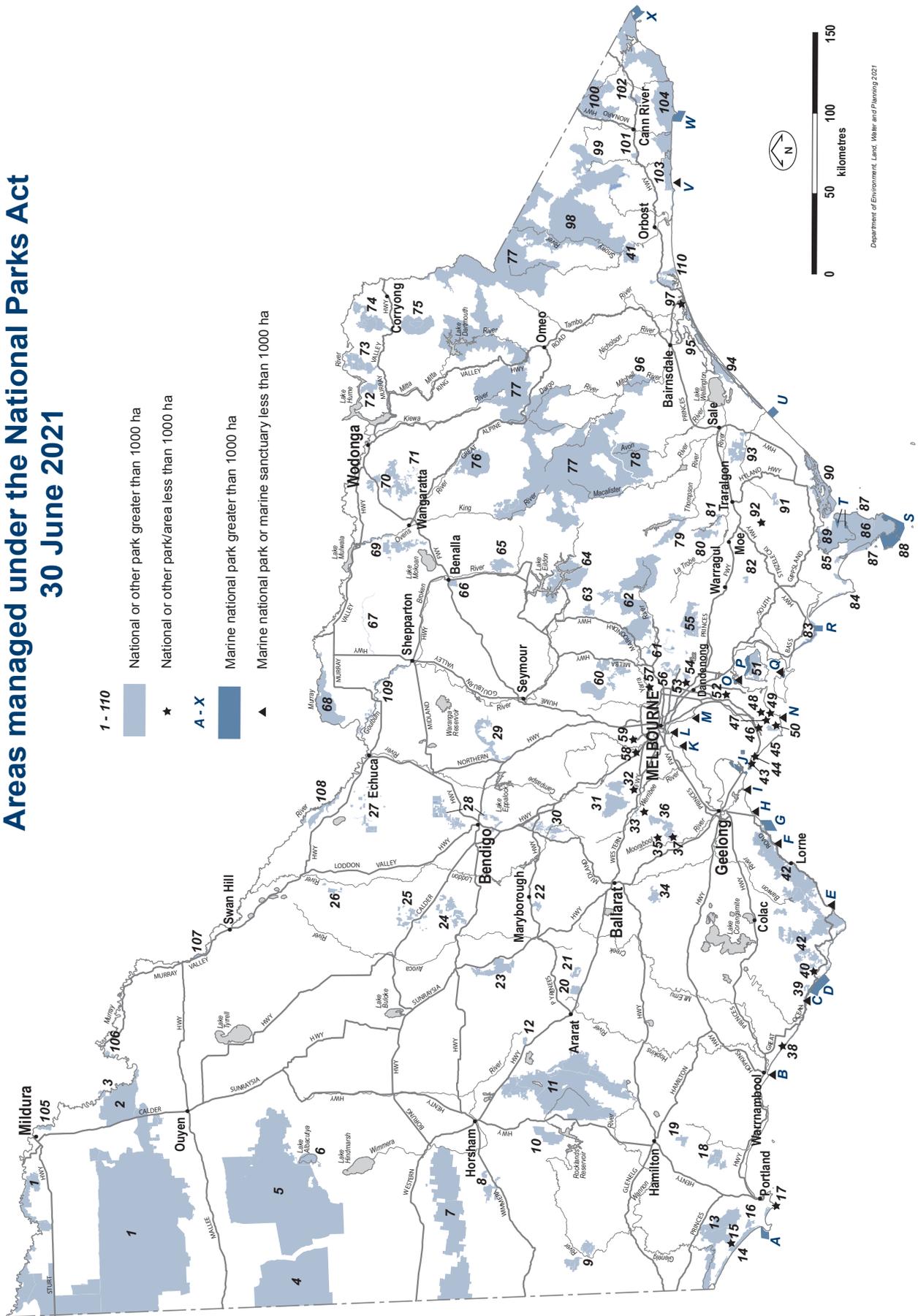
## Appendix 2

### Location of parks and other areas

<b>National and other parks and areas</b>	<b>Map ref</b>				
Alfred NP	102	Hattah-Kulkyne NP	2	Snowy River NP	98
Alpine NP	77	Heathcote-Graytown NP	29	Steiglitz HP	37
Arthurs Seat SP	46	Holey Plains SP	93	Tara Range Park	41
Avon WP	78	Kara Kara NP	23	Tarra-Bulga NP	91
Bald Hills BR	48	Kinglake NP	60	Terrick Terrick NP	27
Barmah NP	68	Kings Billabong Park	105	The Lakes NP	95
Baw Baw NP and Mt St Gwinear access road		Kooyoora SP	24	Tyers Park	81
Bay of Islands CP	79	Lake Albacutya Park	6	Wabba WP	75
Beechworth HP	38	Lake Eildon NP	64	Warby-Ovens NP	69
Big Desert WP	4	Lake Tyers SP	110	Warrandyte SP	57
Black Range SP	10	Langi Ghiran SP	20	Werribee Gorge SP	33
Brisbane Ranges NP	36	Langwarrin FFR	52	Wilson's Promontory MP	87
Broken-Boosey SP	67	Leaghur SP	26	Wilson's Promontory MR	88
Budj Bim NP	18	Lerderderg SP		Wilson's Promontory NP	86
Bunurong MP	83	and associated leased areas	31	Woodlands HP and adjacent	
Bunyip SP	55	Lind NP	101	Commonwealth land	59
Burrowa-Pine Mountain NP	74	Little Desert NP	7	Wychitella NCR	25
Cape Conran CP	103	Long Forest NCR	32	Wyperfeld NP	5
Cape Liptrap CP	84	Lower Glenelg NP		Yallock-Bulluk MCP	83
Cape Nelson SP	17	and Cobboboonee NP	13	Yarra Ranges NP	62
Castlemaine Diggings NHP	30	Lower Glenelg PPR and SLR	15	Yellingbo LCA	61
Cathedral Range SP	63	Lower Goulburn NP	109		
Chiltern-Mt Pilot NP	70	Lysterfield Park	54	<b>Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries</b>	<b>Map ref</b>
Churchill NP	53	Main Ridge NCR	47	Barwon Bluff MS	I
Collins Settlement HS	44	Mitchell River NP	96	Beware Reef MS	V
Coopracambra NP	100	Moondarra SP	80	Bunurong MNP	R
Corner Inlet MCP	89	Moreep BR	35	Cape Howe MNP	X
Croajingolong NP	104	Mornington Peninsula NP	45	Churchill Island MNP	Q
Dandenong Ranges NP	56	Morwell NP	92	Corner Inlet MNP	T
Deep Lead NCR (No. 1)	12	Mount Arapiles-Tooan SP	8	Discovery Bay MNP	A
Dergholm SP	9	Mount Buangor SP	21	Eagle Rock MS	F
Discovery Bay CP	14	Mount Buffalo NP	76	French Island MNP	P
Enfield SP	34	Mount Granya SP	72	Jawbone MS	L
Errinundra NP	99	Mount Lawson SP	73	Marengo Reefs MS	E
Flinders NCR	49	Mount Napier SP	19	Merri MS	B
Flinders NIR	50	Mount Richmond NP	16	Mushroom Reef MS	N
French Island NP	51	Mount Samaria SP	65	Ninety Mile Beach MNP	U
Gadsen Bend Park	106	Mount Worth SP	82	Point Addis MNP	G
Gippsland Lakes CP	94	Murray-Kulkyne Park	3	Point Cooke MS	K
Glenample Homestead	40	Murray-Sunset NP	1	Point Danger MS	H
Grampians NP	11	Nooramunga MCP	90	Point Hicks MNP	W
Great Otway NP	42	Nyah-Vinifera Park	107	Port Phillip Heads MNP	J
Greater Bendigo NP	28	Nyerimilang Park	97	Ricketts Point MS	M
Gunbower NP	108	Organ Pipes NP	58	The Arches MS	C
Haining Farm	61	Paddys Ranges SP	22	Twelve Apostles MNP	D
		Point Nepean NP	43	Wilson's Promontory MNP	S
		Port Campbell NP	39	Yaringa MNP	O
		Reef Hills SP	66		
		Shallow Inlet MCP	85		

BR	Bushland Reserve	MNP	Marine National Park	NIR	Natural Interest Reserve
CP	Coastal Park	MP	Marine Park	NP	National Park
FFR	Flora and Fauna Reserve	MR	Marine Reserve	PPR	Public Purposes Reserve
HP	Historic Park	MS	Marine Sanctuary	SLR	Scenic Lookout Reserve
HS	Historic Site	NCR	Nature Conservation Reserve	SP	State Park
MCP	Marine and Coastal Park	NHP	National Heritage Park	WP	Wilderness Park

# Areas managed under the National Parks Act 30 June 2021



Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning 2021

