



National Parks Act Annual Report 2021–2022



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

Cover Image Australian Fur Seal. Credit: Tess Hoinville and Kraken Imagery

Foreword

This report on the working of the *National Parks Act 1975* (the Act) for the 2021–22 financial year is presented to the Minister for Environment and Climate Action, 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.

Victoria’s parks continue to experience the impacts of severe weather events with significant storm events occurring across the state and adding to the ongoing recovery efforts related to the 2019–20 bushfires. As a result, access to some assets and parks has been restricted until safe access is able to be reinstated.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic environment have created challenges for both commercial operators, visitors, Parks Victoria staff, Traditional Owners, partner agencies and volunteers. Despite this, visitation across the park’s estate remains strong, with record overnight visitation at key parks including Wilsons Promontory National Park, and the launch of the Grampians Peaks Trail Stage 2 with thousands of visitors already enjoying this world class experience.

In addition to the delivery of pest and weed management programs, a significant focus on planning for conservation outcomes has been evident in the finalisation of Parks Victoria’s Nature Conservation Strategy 2021-2031 and the development of the Land Management Strategy which was open for community consultation. These long-term strategies will continue to shape our approach and build on the great outcomes we are seeing in protecting threatened species and managing invasive pests.

Other highlights this year include:

- in partnership with Traditional Owners of Gariwerd, the release of the Greater Gariwerd Landscape Management Plan to protect the area’s rich natural and cultural values

- obtaining Green List accreditation for Warby-Ovens National Park, recognised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for the site’s effective conservation management
- publication of the Western Port and South-east Melbourne Conservation Action Plan to look after marine, coastal and heathland habitats, including in several national parks and marine national parks
- the completion of the 160km Grampians Peaks Trail Stage 2
- the first successful translocation of Eastern Bristlebirds to Wilsons Promontory National Park
- release of the Feral Horse Action Plan 2021 to manage the pest species in the most humane and safe ways within the Alpine National Park
- increased environmental water flows into northern Victorian parks to support the river and wetland environments
- the development of an Access and Infrastructure Plan to complement the newly created Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park.

Parks Victoria will continue to work closely and collaboratively with Traditional Owners and partner agencies to achieve the objects of the Act.

We look forward to building on our achievements in 2022–23 and welcoming back more visitors to enjoy our diverse natural and cultural landscapes.

John Pandazopoulos
Chair



Matthew Jackson
Chief Executive Officer



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A representative parks system

Areas managed under the Act

As at 30 June 2022 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.

There were no changes to the areas managed under the Act during the year.

Management planning

Parks Victoria completed a new landscape management plan for the Grampians landscape, which includes the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park and Black Range State Park as well as several other reserves not under the Act. This management plan was prepared in partnership with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation. The plan expresses the cultural landscape, its cultural renewal and the ongoing partnership of Traditional Owners in land management.

Parks Victoria has been developing the inaugural Land Management Strategy for the land it manages, including parks under the Act. Parks Victoria undertook consultation on the draft Land Management Strategy in September 2021. This long-term strategy is aimed at guiding the adaptation of the park's 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. There was high interest in the draft Land Management Strategy with 3,331 visitors to the Engage Victoria page, and over 1,600 downloads of the draft Strategy and 136 submissions from organisations and community.

Other key planning matters included:

- the release of the Yellingbo (Liwik Barring) Landscape Conservation Area Plan in December 2021 to give effect to the outcomes of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's Yellingbo Investigation Final Report (2013). The plan describes the current condition of the landscape conservation area and addresses the intent of future management. It articulates management directions for the Conservation Area over a 10-year time frame aimed at enhancing the scenic beauty, biodiversity, cultural heritage and community enjoyment of the conservation area.
- completion of an Access and Infrastructure Plan to complement the creation of Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park. The plan identifies priority initiatives for on-ground improvements to provide a range of facilities to support diverse visitor experiences and works to be implemented in stages. The planning and initial improvements in the park are elements of Victoria's Great Outdoors initiative.

Natural values

Managing natural 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 2021–22 are provided in the following sections.

Nature Conservation Strategy

Parks Victoria’s *Nature Conservation Strategy for parks and reserves managed by Parks Victoria 2021-2031* was published in October 2021 and recognises the natural riches and a dazzling array of animal and plant species, habitats, ecosystems, landscapes and seascapes occurring in Victoria’s parks. The Nature Conservation Strategy has the goal of conserving nature in Victoria’s parks in the face of unprecedented threats – through intensified action with partners, new techniques and increased community collaboration. An implementation schedule has been prepared, with the role of the Chief Scientist Conservation and Climate Action having an enhanced focus on climate change impacts and issues.

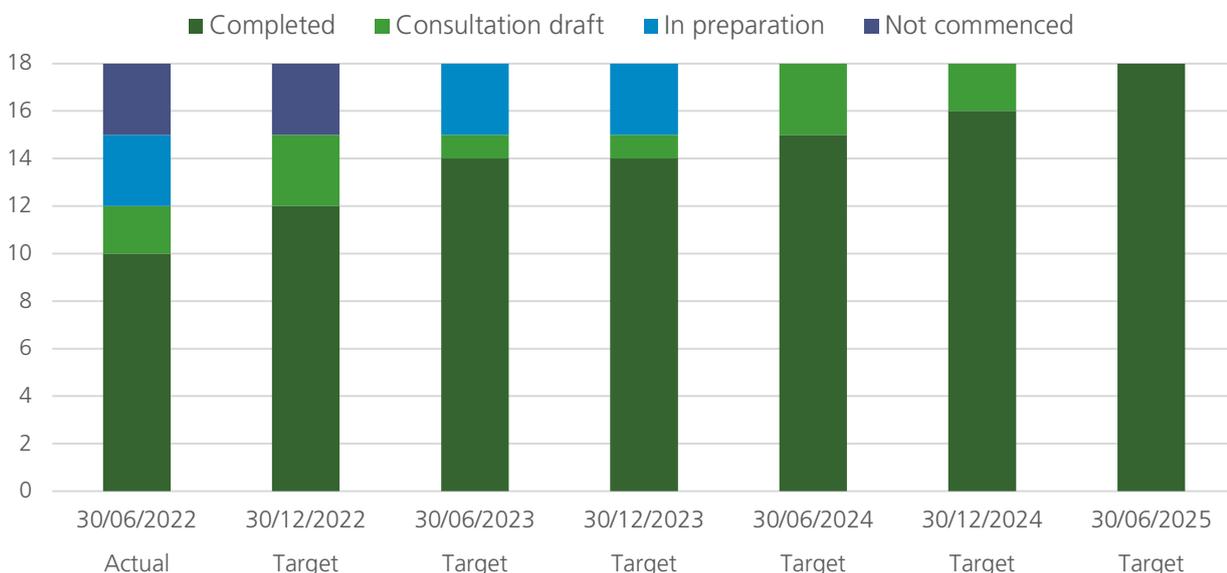
Conservation Action Plans

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 health of ecosystems and enables a framework for monitoring and evaluation. The CAPs will cover 18 park landscapes when completed and will include all parks under the Act. In 2021–22, an additional CAP was published for the parks and reserves of Western Port and south-eastern Melbourne, bringing the total number of published plans to 10 out of the 18 landscapes.

The Western Port and South-east Melbourne CAP includes the well-recognised coastal and heathland habitats of the Mornington Peninsula, Point Nepean and French Island national parks, and the marine protected areas of Westernport Bay. The persistence of beach-nesting birds, migratory shorebirds and remnant populations of mammals such as the long-nosed potoroo and long-nosed bandicoot are supported through the management of disturbance and predator control.

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

Conservation Action Plan progress targets



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 of protecting and enhancing habitats (including management of invasive species).

Translocation of eastern bristlebirds to Wilsons Promontory National Park

Following years of planning, the first steps in establishing an insurance population of the endangered eastern bristlebird took place during early April. Sixteen eastern bristlebirds were caught at Booderee National Park in New South Wales and safely transported and released into Wilsons Promontory National Park. The birds were fitted with radio trackers. Most birds remained within 1.5 km of their release sites until the batteries on their transmitters stopped working or transmitters were shed. Three birds appeared to move a greater distance from the release site and were not able to be relocated. No direct evidence of mortality or predation has been observed and the preliminary results indicate the translocation was successful.

Parks Victoria partnered with DELWP, Zoos Victoria, other state jurisdictions, Traditional Owners, universities and many other partners to help support this project. Translocations of further birds are planned for 2023 to supplement the new population.

This is only the second population of eastern bristlebirds in Victoria and the most south-westerly in the world. It offers an important insurance population (the other Victorian population, in Croajingolong National Park, was threatened by the 2019–20 fires) and increases the global prospects of survival for this unique species.

Eastern barred bandicoot protection at Woodlands Historic Park

The replacement of the predator-proof fence surrounding the Woodlands Historic Park bandicoot sanctuary is being planned with Conservation Volunteers Australia and the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, with a revised alignment that would include more optimal eastern barred bandicoot habitat, and less areas subject to predator invasion through creek lines. Weed control in the original part of the bandicoot sanctuary has been very successful and has been expanded to the section that will be newly enclosed by the realigned fence. Recent trapping has shown the population to be healthy and reproducing, with extensive scratching activity evident across the bandicoot sanctuary.



Image: Eastern barred bandicoot

Protection of native grasslands and the plains-wanderer

Careful habitat management and favourable climatic conditions have resulted in a major breeding event and population recovery of the plains-wanderer at Terrick Terrick National Park and surrounding reserves. Despite high rainfall, the application of ecological grazing has maintained the short and open grass structure required by plains-wanderers and other species. Over 50 per cent of all monitored sites in Terrick Terrick National Park were in ideal habitat condition. Heavy rainfall events in the past would have resulted in habitat becoming too dense. Improvements in habitat management and resources have prevented this from occurring.

Supporting new holland mouse conservation and breeding programs

Parks Victoria is a supporting partner of Zoos Victoria in surveys and establishment of a captive population of the endangered new holland mouse. Animals were sourced from Wilsons Promontory National Park, as well as other locations to establish a captive population at Melbourne Zoo. This is an important first step in providing opportunities for future releases to bolster existing populations and establish potential new populations.

Surveys for threatened flora species at Mount Arapiles State Park

In conjunction with cultural heritage assessments, surveys were conducted to record flora values at this state park. A range of threatened species were detected, including the threatened rusty bristlehood orchid. This was the first time this species had been recorded in the district. The information obtained will help with future management of vegetation and protection of natural values from the impacts of recreational activities.

Protecting rainforests from deer impacts in the Snowy River National Park

A monitoring program is assessing the effectiveness of the landscape-scale deer control program in supporting native vegetation recovery post-fire. This involves collection of data on deer density and vegetation condition in Warm Temperate rainforest within Rainforest Sites of Significance where deer have been controlled at different intensities.

Invasive species

Investment in biodiversity protection programs and personnel continues to be at historically high levels. This has enabled Parks Victoria to resource and deliver threat management programs to address invasive species impacts in high priority parks and reserves.



Image: New holland mouse, Wilsons Promontory National Park. David Paul. Museum Victoria

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 major programs for 2021–22 included:

Bushfire biodiversity response and recovery

Following the extensive impacts of the 2019–20 bushfire season, a large-scale control program has been implemented. The widespread program focused on environments affected by fire, primarily the Alpine National Park but also includes work in Budj Bim and Wilsons Promontory national parks. A wide range of control activities were implemented, particularly aerial and ground shooting of deer but also targeting feral goats, foxes, pigs and weed control. These programs were largely completed by the end of 2021–22.

Weeds and Pests on Public Land

Further investment has been provided to continue several long running landscape scale programs.

The Eden projects target high priority and emerging weeds in the Glenelg (Cobboboonee, Lower Glenelg and Mount Richmond national parks, Cape Nelson State Park and Discovery Bay Coastal Park) and Otway (Great Otway and Port Campbell national parks) regions.

The Ark programs involve fox control for small mammal protection and include the Barry Mountains fox control project (Alpine National Park) as well as 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) and Southern Ark (Alfred, Alpine, Coopracambra, Croajingolong, Errinundra, Lind and Snowy River national parks, Lake Tyers State Park and Cape Conran Coastal Park).

The Weeds and Pests on Public Land program also supports rabbit control to reduce grazing pressure as part of the grazing management plan to restore semi-arid woodland. This initiative is supported by a long-standing investment in herbivore control by Parks Victoria.

Keystone projects from Protecting Victoria's Environment program

Between 2018–19 and 2020–21, 22 projects were funded through Victoria's 20-year plan to protect our natural environment: *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037*. In late 2021, further funding was provided for 10 of these projects, identified as high-impact Biodiversity Response Planning projects (keystone projects) that are strongly aligned to delivering on the targets of *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037*. These have subsequently been consolidated into six projects providing \$6,823,300 between now and June 2025.

BushBank

Parks Victoria was successful in obtaining funding for 12 restoration sites with a total of \$1.989 million for works to be delivered across three of Parks Victoria's regions. For areas under the Act, one large revegetation project is focused on the Grampians National Park (110 hectares) with smaller projects at Mount Buffalo and Wilsons Promontory national parks and Lerderderg State Park.

Other pest plant and animal programs

The Alps Intensive Management Program continued into 2021–22 to support the Hawkweed Eradication Program and the ground shooting of deer in the Alpine National Park.

With the release of the *Alpine National Park – Feral Horse Action Plan 2021* and the *Strategic Action Plan: Protection of floodplain marshes in Barmah National Park and Barmah Forest Ramsar site 2020–2023*, Parks Victoria has plans for managing feral horses in these areas using methods considered to be the most appropriate, humane and safe ways to reduce the severe damage caused by feral horses. This includes trapping and rehoming (to the extent that appropriate recipients can be secured); ground shooting using professional shooters; and fenced exclusion (for small areas). Regular monitoring of feral horse populations is being undertaken in both parks to calculate the feral horse population and the range of threatened species and communities impacted by the invasive species.

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 fauna population counts were undertaken in Warrandyte State Park, with support from Friends of Warrandyte State Park.

The Good Neighbour Program continued to invest in controlling invasive species on the public-private land interface across Melbourne and Regional Victoria.

Wilson's Promontory Sanctuary Program

Increased investment in Wilson's Promontory National Park through the Wilson's Promontory Sanctuary program has delivered increased deer, weed and predator control and supported recovery and translocation programs for threatened species, including the eastern bristlebird.

Target species for weed control include weeds of national significance such as blackberry and ragwort, and declared noxious weeds including asparagus fern, bridal creeper and thistle (spear, slender, perennial). The program has delivered 3,000 hours of weed control.

Implementing effective control of Hog Deer was a major program in Wilson's Promontory National Park this year, focusing on reducing the impacts and population size of Hog Deer in the park. This work was concentrated on the Yanakie Isthmus as a cordon sanitaire in preparation for the establishment of a predator and grazer proof fence across the narrow isthmus as a component of the linked Wilson's Promontory Revitalisation Project. Targeted fox control was delivered across the park to protect vulnerable critical weight range mammals and shore dwelling birds.

Plans were developed to guide a large-scale aerial feral cat baiting program as the first of a series of new programs to reduce feral cats in the park.

With funding support from DELWP, dedicated teams were established in Parks Victoria to deliver on-ground works, strategic planning for introduced species control, habitat restoration, fire ecology and Traditional Owner engagement associated with delivery of a new program aimed at harnessing the Prom's potential as a climate change refuge for wildlife. A Technical Advisory Group was established to provide advice on conservation program design and adaptive management at the Prom, including the new Sanctuary program.

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.

The Victorian Government released a draft *Victorian Koala Management Strategy* in February 2022, the first major update since the current strategy was released in 2004. The final strategy is planned for release in July 2022. The government also announced two years of funding to continue population control of Koalas in Budj Bim and French Island national parks.

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 2022 over 757 kilometres across the project area revealed that 92 per cent of transects have an average of one or less rabbits per spotlight kilometre. An autumn survey of kangaroos showed the population density above targets to support restoration of the endangered semi-arid woodland. Ongoing annual vegetation quality assessments inform progress of habitat restoration.

Reducing kangaroo densities and maintaining rabbit abundance at these low levels in accordance with the Mallee grazing management plan has helped protect revegetation and seen natural regeneration of understorey and overstorey woodland vegetation communities. The actions and results of the previous five-year strategy is currently being evaluated as part of the preparation of a renewed strategy.

Budj Bim Koala program

The long-term koala contraception program has continued at Budj Bim National Park for almost 20 years to manage the health of the manna gum woodland, along with regular surveys of the koala population and tree condition. The 2019–20 bushfire burnt approximately 60 per cent of the park and canopy health has continued to decline since, further reducing habitat quality and exacerbating overpopulation issues.

The current koala population in Budj Bim National Park is estimated to be 4,392 koalas at a density of 0.73 animals per hectare. The density of koalas has declined over the time of the long-term control program as a result of fertility control as well as environmental factors and is now in the target range (0.5-1.0 koalas per hectare). The optimum population level is based on manna gum habitat health and vegetation quality assessments are undertaken annually to assess habitat condition. The 2022 assessment shows defoliation levels of more than 50 per cent, demonstrating the continuing poor health of the canopy as it recovers from bushfire impacts. Koala fertility control programs continued in spring and autumn, with 191 koalas assessed and treated if required. Veterinary assessments demonstrated the koala population is in good health.

Although the bushfire killed manna gum trees (18 per cent in burnt areas compared with 5 per cent in unburnt areas) 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. While 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.

Environmental water

In 2021–22, 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, Hattah-Kulkyne, Lower Goulburn, and Murray-Sunset national parks. This included the following watering events in those parks.

Murray-Sunset National Park

Increased flow in the Murray River from October to December 2021 filled some low-lying floodplain wetlands and increased flows through anabranch waterways on Lindsay, Mulcra and Wallpolla islands. On Lindsay Island, these flows filled some wetlands and billabongs, but pumping was necessary to deliver water to Lake Wallawalla and Crankhandle. Increased flows in the Potterwalkagee Creek spread water onto the Mulcra Island floodplain for the first time since 2017, arresting the decline in the health of river red gum, black box and lignum communities and water-

dependent understorey vegetation that has been observed in recent dry years. On Wallpolla Island, unimpeded flows through Wallpolla Horseshoe, Finnigans Creek and Wallpolla Creek allowed the dispersal of native fish that were stocked in Wallpolla Horseshoe in 2019.

Barmah National Park

Four relatively small flood peaks during winter and spring 2021 were important for the health of the forest and inundated about 45 per cent of the Barmah Forest floodplain. Water for the environment was delivered to fill in gaps between natural events, to maintain flows throughout spring and to manage recession flows back to below channel capacity in summer. Having a gradual flow recession during December 2021 was essential for native fish to move from the floodplain to the river channel without being stranded in forest anabranches.

Gunbower National Park

Although there was no overbank flooding in Gunbower Forest in 2021–22, some high-flow water from the Murray River did enter the forest via the lower-lying flood runners, for two weeks during October 2021. These inflows supplemented targeted deliveries of water for the environment to selected wetlands and surrounding low-lying floodplains and improved breeding and feeding habitat for waterbirds. Several species of waterbirds (including little pied cormorants, Australasian darters and threatened musk ducks) were reported breeding at Long Lagoon, Black Swamp and Reedy Lagoon in late spring and summer. Water for the environment was also used to top up lower landscape wetlands over summer for wetland vegetation that was triggered by winter and spring watering.

Hattah-Kulkyne National Park

Following a two-year drying period, the southern Hattah Lakes were partially filled with water from June 2021. Unregulated flows in the Murray River in October and November 2021 allowed an additional 46,000 megalitres of water for the environment to be pumped to inundate 17 lakes and low-lying parts of the surrounding floodplain. Water levels drew down over summer and autumn through a combination of active releases, seepage and evaporation, and about 15,000 megalitres of water for the environment drained from the Hattah Lakes back into the Murray River from December 2021 to March 2022, carrying carbon, nutrients and organisms that can support riverine food webs.

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

Marine values

Victoria's system of marine national parks and marine sanctuaries protect unique and diverse marine values. Management of these values involves Parks Victoria led programs and effective partnerships with other government agencies and the community to address threats that emanate from both inside and outside park boundaries, including marine invasive plants and animals, illegal fishing, poor water quality, visitor pressures, and climate change.

Key management focuses and outcomes for 2021–22 are included.

Addressing climate change challenges on Victoria's coast

A new Victoria's Resilient Coast Framework has now been completed by DELWP to co-ordinate a state-wide approach to coastal hazard risk management and adaptation. Parks Victoria was successful in obtaining a grant to apply the framework and assess climate related risks to marine and coastal natural assets, cultural values, visitor services and ability to respond to emergencies at Wilsons Promontory National Park.

Supporting CSIRO sea spurge biocontrol trials in coastal parks

Trials are being undertaken by CSIRO at five coastal sites in Victoria including Port Campbell and Wilsons Promontory national parks to assess the effectiveness of a biological agent to control the highly invasive coastal weed – Sea Spurge (*Euphorbia paralias*).

Overabundant native species

Programs in 2021–22 involved several major initiatives to improve management of overabundant urchin populations in marine protected areas in Port Phillip Bay, South Gippsland and East Gippsland and to assist the recovery and restoration of major habitat forming kelp and seagrass species.

This year the DELWP Biodiversity Response Plan funded project 'Optimal Management of Overabundant Sea Urchins in Victoria' was completed in partnership with Parks Victoria, the University of Melbourne, Deakin University and Canopy Economics and Policy. The project undertook scientific investigations and trial urchin reduction methods to support and guide management decisions with regards to overabundant sea urchins across Victoria. A draft report was submitted to DELWP describing a framework to guide future management decisions by Parks Victoria and other managers on where, when and how best to undertake urchin management activities. It also reports on a cost-benefit analysis that demonstrates that sea urchin culling and management programs can result in restoration of reef and seagrass ecosystems with a net ecological and economic benefit.

Urchin reduction activities and monitoring in partnership with local community marine care groups were undertaken at Jawbone, Point Cooke and Ricketts Point marine sanctuaries in Port Phillip Bay and Beware Reef Marine Sanctuary in East Gippsland. Commercial dive operators have also been engaged to undertake urchin reductions within these marine sanctuaries. As a result of these actions there has been a substantial reduction in urchin numbers within sections of these marine sanctuaries with some early signs of the re-establishment of algae in urchin barren areas in Jawbone Marine Sanctuary. Final surveys on urchin abundance and seagrass restoration were completed in Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park in August 2021.

Marine pests

Management of marine pests in Victoria's marine protected areas continued to be a major focus in 2021–22. Removal and monitoring of the invasive Japanese kelp (*Undaria pinnatifida*) was a key focus in Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park. Nine separate management events involving 25 scuba-dives were undertaken to remove newly established Japanese kelp and monitor long-term transects. Monitoring is indicating that long-term removal has been effective and has led to a substantial reduction at this important visitor site.

Following detection of invasive Northern Pacific seastars (*Asterias amurensis*) on the Bunurong coast, Parks Victoria staff undertook monitoring in nearby Shallow Inlet Marine and Coastal Park. The Northern Pacific seastar was not detected inside the park.

20th anniversary of Victorian marine national parks and marine sanctuaries

On 16 November 2022, Victoria's representative system of fully protected marine national parks and marine sanctuaries will reach a milestone of 20 years since their creation.

In 2021–22, extensive planning and development of communication and engagement materials were undertaken to promote the upcoming 20th anniversary. The anniversary provides an important opportunity to connect Victorians and visitors to marine protected areas, celebrate the significant achievements of the past 20 years, and reflect on emerging challenges. The official celebrations were launched in June 2022 and will continue into 2022–23. Key engagement initiatives in 2021–22 have included a social media campaign, uplift of marine pages on the Parks Victoria website, kick-off of a webinar series featuring Parks Victoria staff and partners, development of a series of video's profiling flagship parks including Bunurong, Port Phillip Heads, and Wilsons Promontory marine national parks and the development of education resources for Victorian schools.

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 2021–22 included:

- ongoing support for the Australian National University's long-term monitoring of forest structure and fauna communities in the tall forests of the Yarra Ranges National Park. This collaborative monitoring project is approaching 20 years in duration
- ongoing monitoring of ground dwelling mammals and introduced predators as part of the Ark predator control programs Coopracambra, Croajingolong, and Snowy River national parks (Southern Ark), Cobboboonee and Lower Glenelg national parks (Glenelg Ark), Grampians National Park (Grampians Ark) and Great Otway National Park (Otway Ark)

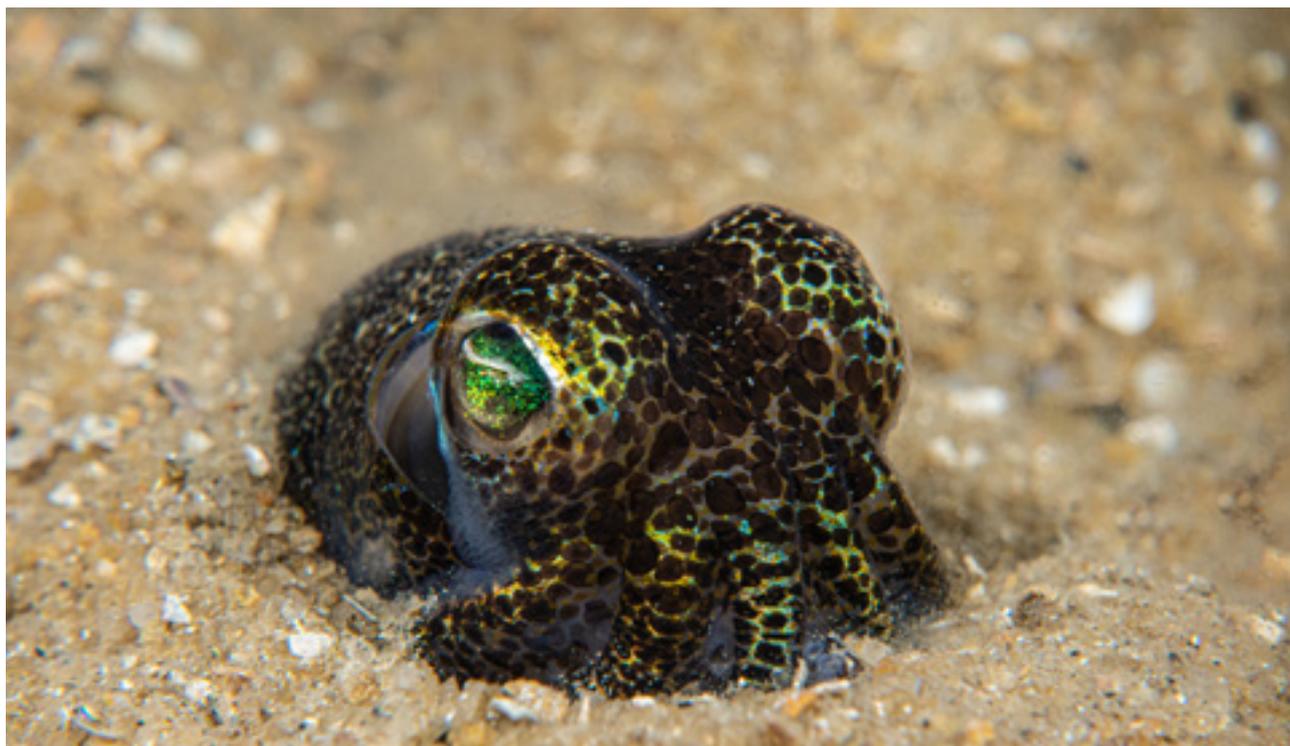


Image: Bobtail squid, Port Phillip Bay - Tess Hoinville

- assessing the condition of vegetation in Heathcote-Graytown National Park
- delivery of citizen science monitoring programs in Warby-Ovens National Park (a park included during the year on the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas) targeting the threatened Victorian temperate woodland bird community and endangered squirrel gliders. This work is being supported by rapid health check assessments to measure habitat quality and extent of threats
- delivery of reptile and mammal monitoring programs in Wyperfeld National Park to investigate the effects of fire history and help improve future fire management programs
- establishing monitoring sites and exclusion plots to examine the impacts of deer on rainforest communities recovering post fire and the effectiveness of aerial shooting operations in Snowy River National Park
- establishing long-term monitoring of treeless alpine vegetation condition to examine effectiveness of feral horse control in the Alpine National Park
- ongoing long-term monitoring of faunal communities at Mornington Peninsula, Point Nepean and Wilsons Promontory national parks
- citizen science monitoring of grassland fauna and habitat structure in Terrick Terrick National Park
- the continuation of one of Australia's longest-running citizen scientist-led programs to monitor Malleefowl breeding activity in areas including Hattah-Kulkynne, Little Desert, Murray-Sunset and Wyperfeld national parks and Mount Arapiles-Toon State Park
- citizen science monitoring of bird communities at Grampians National Park
- a state-wide eDNA program targeting platypus and other aquatic fauna in multiple national parks
- adapting helicopter-borne thermal and visual band image systems normally used for wildfire fighting to systemically monitor a variety of vertebrate animals (including feral species), with the ability to survey large areas efficiently at the Alpine, Barmah and Great Otway national parks.

Marine environments

The monitoring of marine natural values in 2021–22 included the completion and establishment of several key monitoring projects for Parks Victoria's Signs of Healthy Parks marine monitoring program. This included the publication and release of Parks Victoria's technical series reports for Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park (nla.gov.au/nla.obj-3058608715/view) and Wilsons Promontory and Bunurong marine national parks (nla.gov.au/nla.obj-3058613416/view); and a state-wide assessment of Victoria's marine national parks and marine sanctuaries (nla.gov.au/nla.obj-3058052925/view). Monitoring and analysis for Cape Howe Marine National Park were also completed with reporting currently underway almost finalised and ready for release. A first phase of monitoring also commenced for Discovery Bay Marine National Park and will be completed in the coming summer.

These projects have been run in partnership with Deakin University and the Integrated Marine Observing System (IMOS) and have used a combination of diver surveys, baited remote under water video (BRUV), habitat mapping and surveys of southern rock lobster populations to understand the long-term trends in the ecological health of key marine national parks.

In general, these programs have been finding that fish populations and most large mobile macro-invertebrates are in good condition and to have higher richness inside the marine national parks, indicative of the benefits of the 'no-take' protection provided by these parks. Signs of long-term decline were detected in some key ecological species, such as the blacklip abalone and large kelps, although there were signs of improvement for large kelp species. There were also some signs of impact to rock lobster populations in Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park, although populations appear healthy elsewhere. The habitat maps produced from this work have provided Parks Victoria with a much more detailed knowledge of the type and distribution of key habitats across these marine national parks.

The marine Rapid Health Assessment (RHA) program has also continued to deliver significant and more widespread monitoring of environmental condition across Victoria's marine protected areas. A total of 18 assessments involving 49 scuba dives were completed in South Gippsland and South Port Phillip using the drafted RHA methods. Overall, the assessments have been finding that marine protected areas are generally in good condition. They have also identified the presence of invasive species and overabundant native species in marine protected areas, confirming the absence of the abalone viral ganglioneuritis in Port Phillip Bay and identifying threats related to water quality in some sections of Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park.

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

Parks Victoria has led and partnered on citizen science monitoring days for the Victorian National Parks Association Sea Slug Census, Great Victorian Fish Count and Reefwatch programs. Through close collaboration with Marine Care Ricketts Point, Jawbone Marine Sanctuary Care Group and Marine Care Point Cooke citizen scientists have also been an integral component of monitoring the impacts of overabundant native urchins as well as the responses to urchin reductions led by Parks Victoria.

Researching natural values

Research activity access agreements

In 2021–22, research authorisations issued to external researchers were replaced with research activity access agreements. Parks Victoria provides access agreements for research activities to be undertaken on public land.

In 2021–22, there were 123 access agreements issued, with a total of 424 active access agreements in place.

A wide range of research was facilitated and undertaken in areas managed under the Act. Parks Victoria continued to support collaborative research on a broad range of issues with a variety of new projects commencing through the year, including the following:

- fire ecology projects including intensity, regeneration and impacts in Little Desert and Mount Buffalo national parks, and in parks in the East Gippsland and Loddon Mallee regions
- projects at the Twelve Apostles including a geological cliff survey and researching a marine record of climate and sea change
- management of pest plants and animals in the Great Otway National Park and parks in the Glenelg Region.

Research programs

Scientific research continues to be an integral part of managing areas protected under the Act. This research is vital for enabling good management. It allows critical knowledge gaps to be filled, reduces uncertainty and enables evidence-based decision-making underpinned by good science. Across the year, a diverse body of research activity was facilitated and undertaken to improve understanding of natural values in areas managed under the Act.

Research collaborations enabled and supported through Parks Victoria's Research Partners Panel made an important contribution to improving management of areas managed under the Act. This included the continuation of a range of projects established in previous years, as well as new projects that commenced during the year. New projects included:

- examining how different weed control methods affect soil chemistry in the Grampians National Park
- surveys of fish assemblages in Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park

- various projects investigating fire ecology and biodiversity conservation, including:
 - forest restoration and fire in Wilsons Promontory National Park
 - influence of fire on the soil seedbank in the Great Otway National Park
 - identifying important refuges for native fauna and how these are affected by fire in the Great Otway National Park
 - understanding how recent fire has affected habitat and how mammals use habitat in fire-prone landscapes in the Alpine National Park
 - examining the ecology of Long-nosed Potoroo and how fire affects its survival in the Grampians and Great Otway national parks.
- developing an approach for identifying and mapping coastal natural values in Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park
- understanding changes in the condition of endangered grassland over time in Terrick Terrick National Park
- examining how effective marine protected areas are for protecting fish populations from the effects of climate change and recreational fishing
- investigating how climate change is affecting alpine vegetation in the Alpine National Park
- understanding marine mammal use of all marine protected areas managed under the Act
- assessing the condition of alpine mossbeds in Baw Baw National Park.

In addition to these research collaborations, a wide range of research projects in areas managed under the Act was facilitated under research activity access agreements issued by Parks Victoria.



Image: Mount Buffalo Chalet

Cultural values

Aboriginal cultural heritage

Victoria's national and other parks can be seen as cultural landscapes, revealing the connections between individual cultural places and natural values. Biodiversity values and ecological systems are intrinsically linked with the cultural practices of Traditional Owners and their continuing connections with their ancestors, reaching back countless generations.

Rock art

Parks Victoria's program to assess the condition of all registered rock art sites was completed and a Rock Art Action Plan was finalised to guide the protection and management of these places into the future. Parks Victoria has committed to an ongoing role for a Rock Art Cultural Heritage Protection Specialist, the only one of its kind in Victoria.

Over the last 12 months, 16 rock art places were (re)discovered within the Grampians National Park and Mount Arapiles Toon State Park (known to the Traditional Owners as Dyurrite). All of these have been opportunistic (re)discoveries and it is likely many more places would be identified if resources were available to implement a planned surveying program.

A permit is in place to allow damage at 105 rock art shelters in the Grampians National Park to be redressed. This is an innovative approach to managing regulatory requirements and will allow rehabilitation works to be conducted without having to stop to obtain a permit at each stage of the rehabilitation program. Rehabilitation works at sites in the park commenced in May 2022, delivered in partnership with Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation.

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. The collaboration has focused on completing works in the Murray-Sunset National Park. In the first phase, an innovative approach was applied to the restoration of a 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.

Since then, seven priority sites in Murray-Sunset National Park have been remediated in the second phase of the collaboration. It is estimated that 361 Ancestors were reburied, 66,000 logs were laid and over 200,000 tonnes of sand were moved to cover the old people. The number of Ancestors reburied across each site is an estimate as fragmentation of some remains makes exact figures difficult to determine.

As with rock art, Parks Victoria has committed to an ongoing role for a Cultural Heritage Protection Specialist, again the only role of its kind, focusing on the care of Ancestors' burial places.

Historic heritage

In 2021–22 the management of historic heritage in parks included:

- detailed conservation planning and scoping of works as part of a \$3 million conservation project to upgrade the Mount Buffalo Chalet façade (funded by the Commonwealth)
- the implementation of interpretation and signage works in Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park
- the assessment of the impact on heritage values of storms across multiple parks under the Act
- the continuation of a larger project with the High Country Huts Association to scan huts in the Alpine National Park in three dimensions
- detailed planning for conservation of heritage values as part of major works projects in parks including the Alpine and Point Nepean national parks.

Fire and other emergencies

COVID-19 pandemic

With the continuation of the State of Emergency in 2021–22, Parks Victoria continued to provide support to the Victorian Government’s COVID-19 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.

Fire

Bushfires

The 2021–22 fire season was the second successive year where benign conditions were experienced compared to previous bushfire seasons.

The number of bushfires attended in parks under the Act was 385, and the area of land under the Act burnt

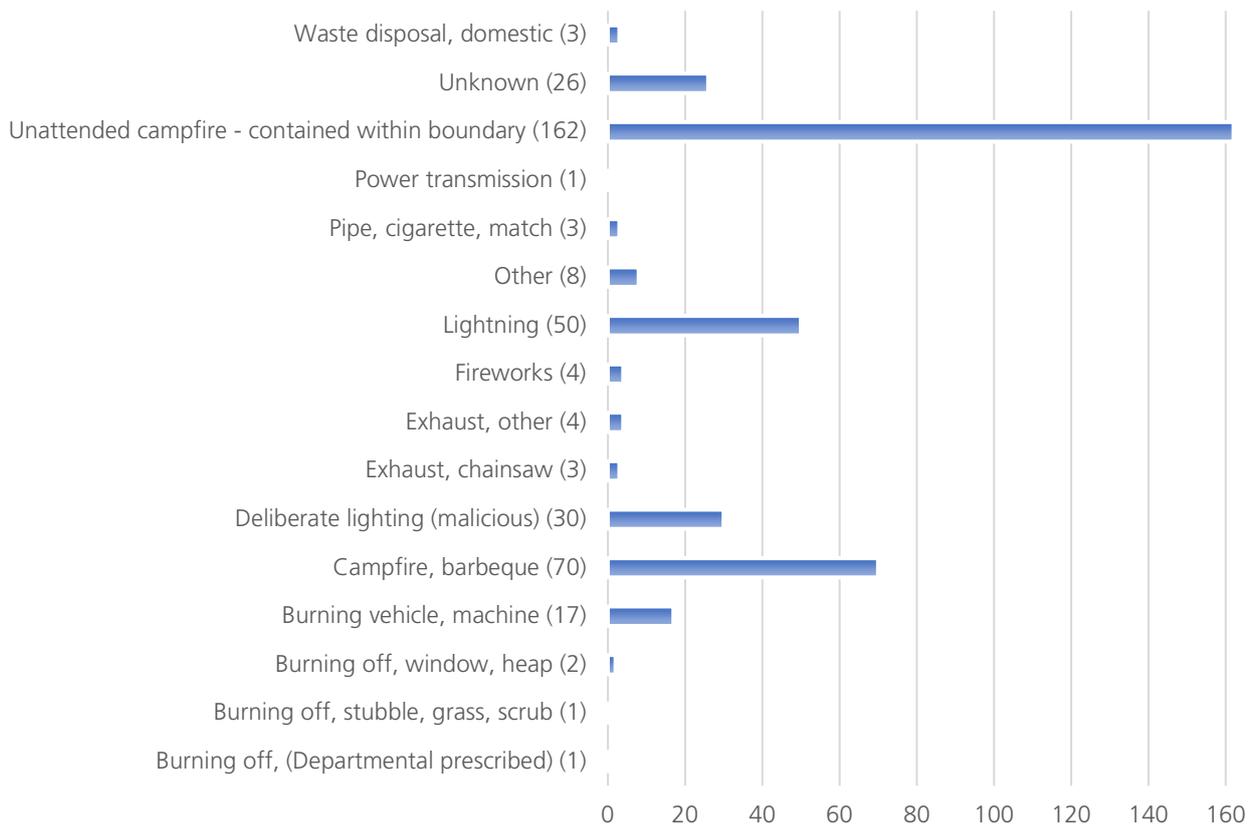
by bushfires was 1,945.8 hectares. There were 50 fires started by lightning that burnt an area of 1081.8 hectares.

The year saw a continued trend in the number of fires resulting from visitors leaving their campsites without extinguishing a campfire effectively (232) that burnt an area of 12.7 hectares. Public information campaigns focused on campfire safety and how to correctly extinguish a campfire.

Planned burning

In 2021–22 Victoria experienced a La Niña weather pattern during the bushfire season which persisted into autumn’s peak planned burning period. Higher than average rainfalls reduced the window of opportunity for the delivery of the planned burning program. Conditions in eastern Victoria were very wet providing limited opportunities for site preparation and burn delivery while easterly influenced weather patterns in the central and west of the state saw planned burning activities delayed due to dryness.

Number of fires in areas under the Act by cause



In some areas, La Niña's impact was seen in shorter burning weather windows between the passing unstable weather systems. In the more central parts of the state, these weather patterns created some extended burn opportunities. Significant storm damage in the Dandenong Ranges National Park also had a considerable impact on fuel management delivery, by increasing the complexity and delaying the commencement of burn preparation as crews focused on essential storm recovery works.

The residual risk metric measures the risk to life and property that remains after the effects of planned burning and bushfire have been incorporated. The statewide fuel management target is to keep the residual risk metric at or below 70 per cent of Victoria's potential maximum bushfire risk by prioritising areas where life and property could be best protected, rather than measuring success by the number of hectares treated.

Over the past year the treatment of 78,292 hectares of fuels on public land (including areas under the Act), comprising 62,625 hectares of planned burns and 15,666 hectares of mechanical treatments, helped to keep residual risk to an expected outcome of 62 per cent.

The official end of financial year residual risk figures and areas treated will be published in the Managing Victoria's bushfire risk: Fuel management report 2021–22, which is expected to be released later in 2022.

There were 88 burns completed in areas under the Act, treating a total area of 26,268 hectares. These included burns in the Great Otway (7,471 hectares), Little Desert (4,110 hectares), Grampians (3,525 hectares), Lake Eildon (1,872 hectares), Lower Glenelg (1,167 hectares) and Wilsons Promontory (1,086 hectares) national parks.

Ecological planned burns in Wilsons Promontory National Park (WPNP) contributed to managing the condition of heathland ecosystems in Victoria. The Wilsons Promontory Conservation Action Plan aims to maintain the health of heathland across the park and improve the distribution of growth-stages to maintain floristic diversity and richness and provide high-quality habitat for ground-dwelling mammals and heathland birds. Parks Victoria, in partnership with DELWP, delivered three ecological planned burns this year to reduce heavy shrub invasion by Coastal Tea Tree - identified as the highest ecological risk to heathlands in the park.

Melbourne Fire and Emergency Program

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

This year, major burn preparation works were undertaken in the Dandenong Ranges National Park, and there were fuel breaks improvements in Kinglake National Park and Bunyip State Park, and to strategic access road improvements in Lysterfield State Park.

Activities completed in areas under the Act included the slashing and maintenance of fuel breaks, significant road upgrades to improve access for fire vehicles, preparation of planned burn edges, mechanical modification of bushfire fuel, 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.



Image: Planned burn at Tongue Point - Quinton Pakan

Planning, monitoring and research

Planning

There continued to be considerable input from Parks Victoria regional fire ecology planners into DELWP-led strategic and operational bushfire management planning, which covers parks under the Act across Victoria.

Fire ecology strategies developed by Parks Victoria regional fire ecology staff informed the planning and implementation of numerous ecological burns, including for French Island National Park and the Western Plains Grasslands and Grassy Woodlands (including Organ Pipes National Park).

In the Grampians National Park previous research on small mammal refugia continues to guide burning ignition patterns in spring and autumn, and winter burning opportunities in heathland.

Funding was provided through the Wilsons Promontory Sanctuary and Safer Together programs to develop a fire management strategy that integrates the results of fire ecology research undertaken in 2020–21 with Safe Haven objectives of the Wilsons Promontory Sanctuary project and a landscape risk assessment. The strategy will guide operational delivery on the use of fire in key vegetation types for ecological objectives over the next five years, with a view to achieving a 20-year vision. It will also link actions to the objectives of the Wilsons Promontory Conservation Action Plan.

The Northern Plains Grasslands ecological and cultural burning and monitoring program continued to liaise with Traditional Owners to understand their cultural fire aspirations for the Northern Plains Grasslands, including those in Terrick Terrick National Park.

Monitoring

Pre- and post-fire flora surveys were undertaken in Dandenong Ranges National Park and Bunyip State Park comparing flora composition and abundance differences in the foothills forest Ecological Vegetation Class. A post-fire fauna monitoring project was implemented at French Island National Park, using cameras and acoustic monitors. Both of these projects were part of the DELWP Port Phillip Monitoring, Evaluation and Research program.

At Wilsons Promontory National Park monitoring is being undertaken, in partnership with Latrobe University, on the effectiveness of using different ecological fire treatments in limiting the invasion of Coastal Tea Tree into heathlands.

In the Northern Plains Grasslands pre and post ecological fire monitoring and the analysis of flora and fauna datasets furthered our understanding of the role of ecological fire in these grasslands and are informing broader program development and future monitoring needs.

Research

At Wilsons Promontory National Park, a trial has been funded through the DELWP Bushbank program to use ecological fire followed by reseedling to restore degraded and destocked patches of wet forest resulting from historical repeated high intensity fires. Planning has been undertaken to trial the restoration methodology in a 30-hectare patch near Roaring Meg at the southern end of the park.

Fire ecology research is continuing in the Budj Bim, Grampians and Great Otway national parks, including Deakin University's research on refuges for small mammals in the Grampians.

Storm recovery

An ongoing state-wide recovery program is operational following significant severe weather events in June, October and December 2021 and January and April 2022. There were 75 parks and other areas under the Act that were adversely impacted by these storm events.

A Treasurer's Advance from the Victorian Government invested \$6.6 million into recovery operations for the June and October 2021 events. This has facilitated the reopening of more than 50 visitor sites within national parks, as well as hundreds of kilometres of vehicle and walking tracks.

An additional \$380,000 Treasurer's Advance is being invested to assist with assessment and planning of recovery works for East Gippsland following the April 2022 severe weather event.

The following national parks were impacted by severe weather events in 2021–22: Alfred, Alpine, Baw Baw, Chiltern-Mount Pilot, Coopracambra, Croajingolong, Dandenong Ranges, Errinundra, Great Otway, Kinglake, Lind, Mitchell River, Mornington Peninsula, Morwell, Organ Pipes, Point Nepean, Snowy River, Tarra-Bulga, The Lakes, Wilsons Promontory and Yarra Ranges national parks. Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park was also impacted.

Recovery from the 2019–20 Black Summer fire also continues:

- In the Victorian State Budget 2021–22 the Victorian Government provided \$11.67 million for recovery operations in eastern Victoria. This initiative has funded a team of 30 operations staff delivering works to manage hazardous trees, repair roads, and restore access to visitor areas and assets.
- Many sites impacted by the April 2022 severe weather event are those that were repaired and reopened following the 2019–20 Black Summer bushfires.



Before and after images: Storm recovery in Dandenong Ranges 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 the following:

Grampians National Park

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, is now complete.

Other projects now funded in the park include:

- the delivery of some minor GPT trail heads and the commencement of designs for major GPT trail heads. These will be critical to managing the visitor experiences of hikers, walkers and campers and their designs are currently being finalised.
- the commencement of the Mackenzie Falls precinct upgrade, which 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.

Port Campbell National Park

Works commenced on the construction of the Saddle Lookout at the Twelve Apostles. These works are planned for completion in early 2023.

Mount Buffalo National Park

Site investigations and designs for the \$3 million upgrade of the Mount Buffalo Chalet façade were completed and works are planned to commence in late 2022.

Access and facilities at visitor sites are being upgraded and two roofed accommodation units are in the process of being constructed in the park.

Port Campbell National Park

Works commenced on the construction of the Saddle Lookout at the Twelve Apostles. These works are planned for completion in early 2023.

Wilson's Promontory National Park

The \$23 million Wilson's Promontory Revitalisation Project commenced. 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. Tenders for the design teams and roofed accommodation manufacture have commenced.



Image: Bugiga hike-in campground, Grampians National Park

Alpine National Park

Work progressed on the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing with the engagement of the design team and finalisation of the business case. The project will 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 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 visitor experiences in forests and parks through new or improved campgrounds, tracks and outdoor facilities across the state. Designs progressed on all sites in the program with works commencing mid 2022.

East Gippsland campgrounds

The 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-19 economic recovery included the East Gippsland Campgrounds. Designs for improvements to camping opportunities have progressed for the Alpine, Croajingolong, Mitchell River and Snowy River national parks.

Cape Conran Coastal Park

Works are in progress for the provision of an upgraded accommodation at Cape Conran to complement the rebuilding of the campground after the 2020 bushfires devastated the site.

Potable water and reticulated sewerage connections 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 between Cape Conran, Marlo and Orbost, which will be a valuable addition to the already existing trail network across Victoria, is being designed.

Croajingolong National Park

The Thurra River Bridge, destroyed during the Black Summer fires, is being rebuilt. This will enable access to the Thurra River campground to be restored as well as improvements to the quality of the facilities at the Point Hicks Lighthouse Reserve adjacent to the park to progress.

Works in the park also include replacing up to six jetties to contemporary standards and upgrading day visitor facilities around Mallacoota Inlet.

Licensed tour operators

Tour operators are licensed to run organised tours and recreational activities for profit on Victorian public land managed by Parks Victoria and DELWP.

For much of the first half of 2021–22, licensees were not permitted to operate due to COVID-19 restrictions. In recognition of this, and to assist operators through this challenging period, Parks Victoria provided fee relief for both annual licence and user fees.

Parks Victoria has also focused heavily on greater engagement with licensed tour operators which has seen a lift in positive feedback received from this group.

Visits to parks

Visitor numbers

The most recent Visitor Number Monitor (VNM) was conducted in 2020–21. The VNM is a broad-based telephone survey that aims to estimate annual visitation to national and state parks, Melbourne's metropolitan parks, and bays, piers and jetties. The survey will be repeated in 2022–23.

Site based visitor monitoring was conducted in 2021–22 in a number of national parks. The Twelve Apostles (Port Campbell National Park) has traditionally been the most visited site in Victoria. However, annual visitation has seen a significant decrease since the start of the pandemic, with an estimated 733,024 visits in 2021–22, compared to 1,673,606 in 2019–20. On the other hand, visitation at popular national parks such as Point Nepean and Wilsons Promontory national parks, has remained consistent across the financial years.

Visitor satisfaction

In 2021–22, the Visitor Satisfaction Monitor was conducted at 42 parks across the estate, including 15 national parks. Visitor satisfaction is measured on an index out of 100, with an overall satisfaction index across all parks of 86.3 (compared to 85.3 in 2019–20). An index out of 100 was also used for park management and was rated at 78.8 for 2021–22, a significant decrease from 83.2 for 2019–2020.

A total of 98 per cent of park visitors were satisfied with their overall experience while visiting parks. Using indexed scores for satisfaction, visitors were most satisfied with landscape, comfort/safety, peace/solitude, plant/animal life and a clean/litter free environment. Visitors were least satisfied with drinking water, shelters, information signage and toilets.

The Dandenong Ranges and Grampians national parks were two of the parks that saw significant increases in satisfaction when compared to the 2019–20 results. The next monitor will be conducted in 2023–24.

Supporting visitors with disabilities

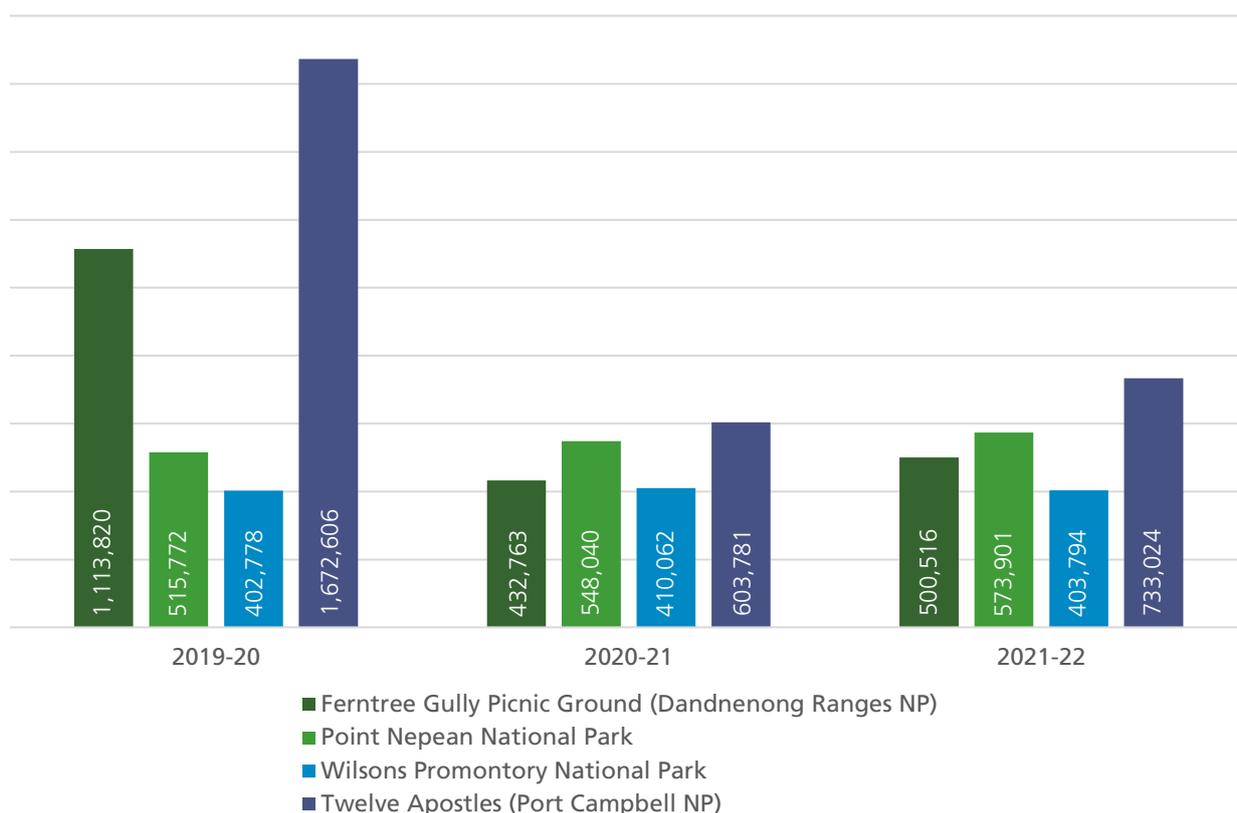
Parks Victoria improved accessibility and inclusion for people with a disability through:

- updating all abilities access park information on Parks Victoria’s website for parks including Mornington Peninsula and Mount Buffalo national parks, Arthurs Seat and Warrandyte state parks and Lysterfield Park
- improving accessibility of park facilities at Snowy River National Park, Holey Plains State Park and Cape Conran Coastal Park
- in partnership with Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria, implementing programs for people with low vision or who are blind including walks at Lysterfield Park.

Parks for health and wellbeing – benefits for all

The volunteer guided Parkwalks and Discovery Guides programs continued at parks including the Alpine, Churchill, Dandenong Ranges and Kinglake national parks.

Estimated annual visits



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 nature and fostering pro-conservation behaviours.

Face-to-face interpretation and education activities were again impacted by the pandemic for the first five months of 2021–22. When in-person learning experiences resumed, 688 ranger-facilitated sessions were delivered to 8,506 adults and children in 46 parks under the Act. This represents a slight increase from 2020–21 but is still approximately half of the level of pre-pandemic participation.

Engagement with the education community was impacted by remote learning and suspension of excursions during the pandemic. Participation of this sector was also at approximately 50 per cent of pre-pandemic rates. This included 215 ranger-led education sessions delivered to 4,101 teachers and students across 10 parks.

The new Tertiary Professional Placement program provided ranger-supervised conservation projects in 12 parks under the Act. There were 54 undergraduate students who participated in project-based learning experiences and skill development in conservation and land management and provided 4,320 volunteer hours.

Junior Ranger program

The Junior Ranger program continued to be impacted by COVID-19, with gathering limits, Melbourne region lockdowns affecting winter and spring 2021, and outbreaks affecting summer and autumn programs in 2022. This impacted overall total participation for the year.

Despite these challenges, 304 face-to-face sessions were delivered to 3,514 participants (children and adults) at 39 parks under the Act. This is 2,315 fewer than (or 60 per cent of) the pre-pandemic participation levels.

Volunteering in parks

Parks Victoria engaged with 102 volunteer groups across a wide range of activities, with volunteers contributing to 47,945 volunteer hours across 82 parks under the Act. This contribution is valued at \$2.1 million in-kind. Consistent with the whole volunteering sector, volunteering in parks under the Act was again affected significantly by COVID-19 and natural disasters including storms and floods and has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

A variety of activities were undertaken across parks under the Act, with habitat restoration and environmental monitoring, survey and research the most common.

Under the Victorian Government's Victoria's Great Outdoors initiative, funding was provided to volunteer groups through the Volunteering Innovation Fund to adopt innovative solutions to grow and diversify volunteering whilst undertaking conservation, health and park improvement. Parks that benefitted from these projects included the Alpine, Dandenong Ranges and Terrick Terrick national parks and Lysterfield Park. Friends of Terrick Terrick National Park received the first Minister's Recognition Award to capture the environmental and cultural history of the park using murals designed by a Traditional Elder and involving Indigenous children in the painting.

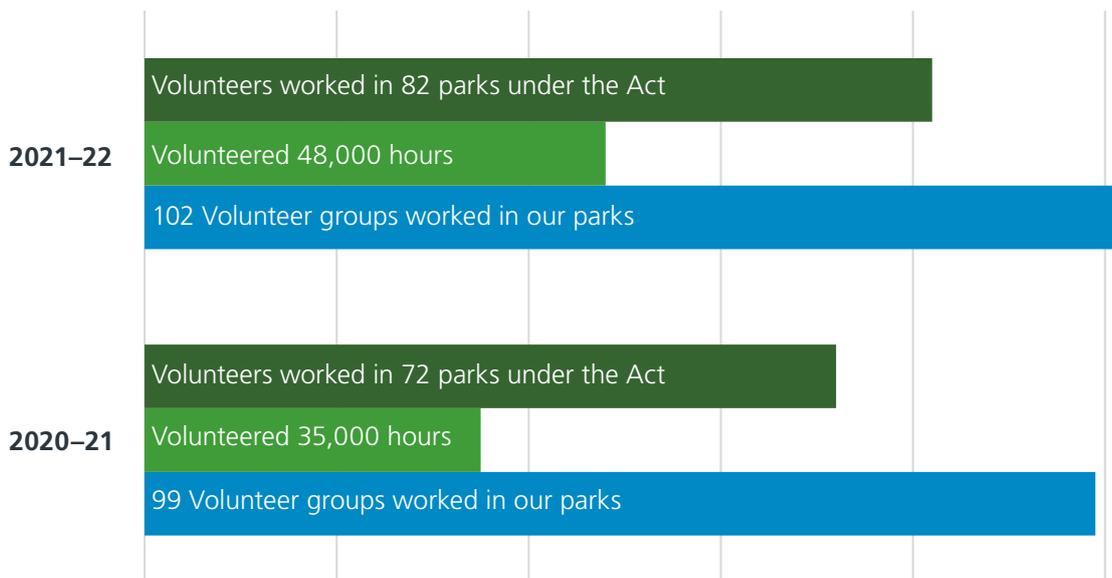
The highly successful Discovery Guides program returned to Wallace Hut in the Alpine National Park over Easter in April 2022 with volunteers delivering interpretive presentations to approximately 273 visitors. Some visitor's feedback included: *'The volunteers were amazing! They explained the highlights of the park beautifully. Their knowledge really brought to life the history of the area and a very clear and compelling explanation of the importance of preserving and restoring the alpine peatlands'*.

The Great Gariwerd Bird Survey, the Grampians National Park's largest Citizen Scientist led program supports the data collection of native avifauna within 36 remote sites across the landscape. The program undertook a successful survey season with 40 citizen scientists, who had previously undertaken a 10-week bird ecology course and collected invaluable data, contributing 1,608 volunteer hours.



Images: Volunteers in action

Volunteers



\$million in inkind support

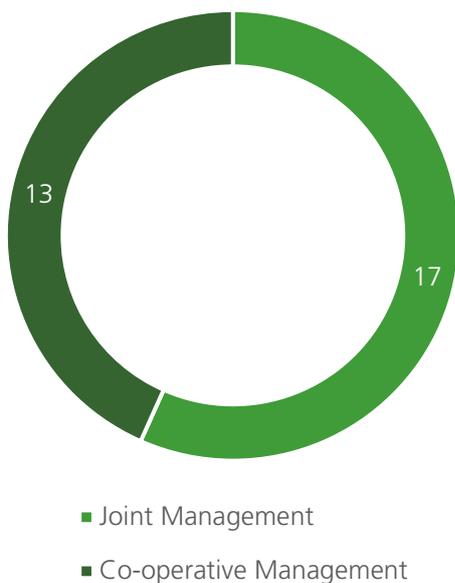


Partnering with Traditional Owners

The focus on implementing existing joint and co-operative management arrangements continued during 2021–22. Joint management relies on the finalisation of Recognition and Settlement Agreements (RSAs) under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* and co-management follows positive native title determinations under the *Native Title Act 1993*. There were no new RSAs or native title determinations in the last 12 months and delays continue with the implementation of joint management with the Taungurung due to legal complexities affecting the RSA and ancillary agreements.

Despite this, government reform processes are increasingly placing Traditional Owners at the centre of public land management. Traditional Owner ambitions and objectives have evolved significantly in recent years alongside the Victorian Government’s commitment to Treaty and the action included in the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework to support Traditional Owner-led management and control of land, water and other resources. Parks Victoria has continued to develop partnerships with Traditional Owners in alignment with this policy environment including considering how the roles and functions are delivered in the service of enabling self-determination.

Current management arrangements



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 (known as DJAARA) and Parks Victoria with oversight from the Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board (DDLMB):

- Greater Bendigo National Park (Aboriginal title pending)
- Kara Kara National Park (most of the park is included in joint management)
- Kooyoora State Park
- Paddys Ranges State Park.



Image: Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board tour of Kara Kara National Park, pictured with Djaara Rangers Andrew Travis, Daikota Nelson and Calen-Jack Nelson

Joint management and partnership governance has strengthened through a Parks Victoria-DJAARA Partnership Agreement and an annual Partnership Action plan to share and prioritise partnership activities. The Joint Management Plan Implementation team meets monthly, reporting on good news and challenges quarterly to the DDLMB.

Three Djaara rangers are employed by Parks Victoria, hosting an Aboriginal school based traineeship program to mentor and provide career pathways to Aboriginal youth. Working closely with local teams, they undertake regular patrols and training and deliver a range of projects in the parks such as junior ranger activities, cultural heritage assessments, visitor infrastructure maintenance and cultural events.

DJAARA's enterprise arm (Djandak) has been contracted through Parks Victoria's preferential procurement policy to undertake a range of on-ground works in the parks including bollarding, road maintenance, visitor facility upgrades, rubbish removal, risk mitigation at dangerous mine shafts, and pest plant and animal control. Where possible the Djandak crew work alongside local teams to deliver outcomes – for example, works to control Wheel Cactus in Kooyoora State Park.

DJAARA's strong presence and continuing connection to Country will see an enriched visitor experience through the implementation of a DJAARA signage style guide (in final approval stage) to be adopted for the jointly managed parks, and beyond these parks through active participation in an Australian Heritage grant project at Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park to deliver on-ground works to protect and conserve heritage values, and to share onsite and digital stories of the Djaara People.

Gunaikurnai

The projects below are implementing both strategic and individual park goals identified in the Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government Joint Management Plan.

All parks – General park maintenance work has occurred across all parks with both Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) and Parks Victoria Rangers working together to implement the annual works program.

Mitchell River National Park – GLaWAC in partnership with Monash University is currently completing a cultural mapping project. This is being delivered over two years and began in 2021. The project includes the following components:

- a desktop review of cultural heritage places within Mitchell River National Park
- a baseline field archaeological survey
- archaeological excavations – priorities for excavation will be identified through baseline surveys
- site distribution patterns and management recommendations – this is investigating patterns of site distribution across the park and plotting them using a geographic information system (GIS).

The desk top review has been completed, and baseline surveys have begun with the excavation of the Wangangarra 1 rock shelter.

In addition, GLaWAC Natural Resource Management (NRM) crews have been delivering a fox baiting project

in the park. The project aims to help protect critical weight range mammals within the park.

Tarra-Bulga National Park – GLaWAC Rangers and the NRM Landscaping Team completed a project at the Visitor Centre in the park. The project included the establishment of an indigenous native plant garden, paths leading through the garden and five cultural marker posts. The project was designed to ensure park visitors understand they are on Gunaikurnai country and that the park is jointly managed by GLaWAC and Parks Victoria.

GLaWAC in partnership with Monash University have also been undertaking cultural mapping within the park which includes:

- a desktop review of cultural heritage places
- a baseline field archaeological survey
- an investigation to study patterns of site distribution across the park using GIS.

Component 1 has been completed and the archaeological surveys will be finalised later in 2022.

Lake Tyers State Park – GLaWAC and Parks Victoria have been working with landscape architects to develop a landscape design plan for the Glasshouse Campground in the park (finalised in July 2022). This project is the beginning of the implementation of the Lake Tyers Camping and Access Strategy. The Glasshouse Campground is a significant site for the Gunaikurnai community, so this is a very important project to help protect the values of the place while also providing a good experience for park visitors.

Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park – GLaWAC and Parks Victoria have been working with landscape architects to develop the Shoreline Drive Landscape Plan. The plan has been in development for the last 12 months (and was completed in July 2022). The purpose of the plan is to ensure that the Shoreline Drive Area of the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park continues to be a place to access recreational opportunities, while significantly reducing the harmful impacts that guests are having on the cultural heritage, local ecology and visitor experiences.

The cultural mapping project previously completed throughout the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park has informed the Landscape Design Plan.

Taungurung

Establishment of the Taungurung Traditional Owner Land Management Board (TOLMB) has been delayed due to legal complexities affecting the operation of the RSA between Taungurung and the State of Victoria.

Until the establishment of the TOLMB and preparation of a Joint Management Plan over the Appointed Lands, Parks Victoria and Taungurung Land and Water Council (TLaWC) are prioritising the development of:

- the a Partnership Agreement – to outline partnership principles and pathways for strategic alignment and operational delivery across the Taungurung footprint
- a Taungurung Parks Ranger Program – to develop appropriate program strategic objectives and annual work plans and supports for the Taungurung Rangers.

Key activities undertaken included:

- procuring TLaWC's natural resource management service, Biik Environmental, to deliver a range of on-ground works in accordance with TLaWC's Cultural Land and Natural Resource Management principles of Reading Country, Healing Country and Caring for Country
- collaborating on the development and delivery of projects on Taungurung Country under the Victoria's Great Outdoors (VGO) and Public Land and Economic Stimulus programs
- developing appropriate strategies, systems and processes as part of a change management process to implement the rights and obligations under the RSA, primarily the Land Use Activity and Natural Resource agreements.

Yorta Yorta

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

The partnership with Parks Victoria continued to:

- support the employment and development of the Joint Management Rangers to deliver priority strategies from the Yorta Yorta TOLMB's Implementation Plan for the Barmah National Park Joint Management Plan 2022–30 including cultural heritage mapping and protection, delivery of pest plant and animal programs, delivery of educational programs, Top Island gathering place pest plant management and Traditional Owner planned burn, planning for the implementation of constructed fireplaces, installation of ESTA emergency markers and signage using both recurrent and stimulus funding

- incorporate Joint Management Rangers' knowledge and skills in cultural burning into fire management in the national park through the partnership between Yorta Yorta and fire management agencies
- participate in the development of the Implementation Plan for the Barmah National Park Joint Management Plan 2022–30 and attendance at the annual TOLMB workshop
- plan the priority strategies for 2022–23
- undertake patrols on weekends and peak visitor period
- undertake management and maintenance of the park, road closures and assets
- undertake fire management, planned burning, emergency response, protection of cultural heritage on fire line and pre and post fuel load treatment
- participate and deliver research programs including Australasian Bittern and Peppercross identification and seed collection.
- review the terms and conditions of research activity access agreements to ensure protection of cultural heritage and sharing of data
- undertake further research to identify nesting locations and determine populations of Bayadhera (Broad Shelled Turtle) and other turtle species
- protect turtle nesting habitat from disturbance and control foxes in and around nesting locations with a focus on Garradha Molwa
- establish decision-making and operational arrangements to ensure that the implementation of the Joint Management Plan is collaborative and widely supported
- engage Woka Walla (YYNAC's land management crew) to deliver pest plant and animal programs funded by Regional Land Protection and Biodiversity Response Planning funding.

Co-operative Management

Gunditjmarra

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

Significant efforts have been devoted to the implementation of priorities included in the Budj Bim Masterplan through construction of a visitor/ interpretation centre, interpretive signage and infrastructure funded through Victoria's Great Outdoors including improvements to water and waste systems, refurbishment of a toilet block and provision of new campground amenities and trails.

Efforts to control feral deer and pig numbers have continued largely through aerial shooting programs. A koala management program was completed in spring 2021. Plans are also being developed to manage and avoid the escape of high-threat weeds, such as St John's Wort and Japanese Honey-bush, into the national park from surrounding areas.

Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk

Four parks under the Act are co-operatively managed by Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BGLC) and Parks Victoria, with DELWP support. These are Little Desert and Wyperfeld national parks, Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park and Lake Albacutya Park. Co-management projects in 2021–22 included:

- the continued protection of Mallee Fowl, and rabbit, fox and weed control
- the completion of cultural heritage assessments, with the management plan now being updated
- BGLC's involvement in Victoria's Great Outdoors (two campgrounds in Little Desert National Park).

In partnership with BGLC, surveys were conducted across 152 places within Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park, known to the Traditional Owners as Dyurrite. The Gariwerd Wimmera Reconciliation Network Climber group also supported the surveys with information about access to enable assessment of values in areas which had not previously been accessed. (Re) discoveries included substantial quarries and associated production areas, a rock art place, scarred trees, shelters and rock wells. The assessments confirmed that the old people had quarried stone across the entire escarpment wherever suitable source material was available including in areas where access was extremely challenging. The information obtained through the survey work will be used in coming months to inform decision making about how and where existing use can continue without causing harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Yorta Yorta

The Lower Goulburn National Park is co-operatively managed by Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC) and Parks Victoria. Key activities that occurred in the park during 2021–22 include:

- the ongoing implementation of the Road Rationalisation Plan that is helping to protect sand hills and culturally sensitive areas within the park
- the delivery of environmental water to Reedy Swamp and successful breeding of endangered water bird species
- the collection of visitor data for the park, which indicates an increase in park visitation
- the on-ground delivery of the Regional Land Protection and Biodiversity Response Planning initiative, which has achieved excellent results in woody weed control and pest animal control
- the development of rehabilitation plans and implementation of these in fire damaged areas at Kotupna and Wyuna
- the collection of intelligence information on illegal activity and the delivery of compliance operations targeting illegal firewood removal to protect old growth habit
- the ongoing partnerships with Landcare, City of Greater Shepparton, Goulburn Broken Catchment Authority, DELWP and YYNAC to deliver volunteer activities such as clean up Australia Day, tree planting, weed and rubbish removal and educational activities
- planning and community engagement for the upcoming Murray River Adventure Trail
- implementation of the new asset management system throughout the park.

Other Traditional Owner partnerships

In 2021–22, Parks Victoria continued to work closely with the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Barengi Gadjin Land Council and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation on the management of Brambuk: The National Park and Cultural Centre (Brambuk) associated with the Grampians National Park (Gariwerd). Work is underway on the development of business and master plans, as well as a new Traditional Owner corporate entity that could operate Brambuk.

Across most parks and reserves, activities funded through Victoria's Great Outdoors and Public Land and Economic Stimulus programs are including engagement and, where possible, partnerships with Traditional Owners.

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 also contribute to the parks program, and DELWP provides strategic policy advice to the Minister and the Secretary.

Parks Victoria's 2021-22 Business Plan set 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

Suburban Rail Loop Act 2021

On 23 November 2021, the *Suburban Rail Loop Act 2021* amended the Act to exempt Suburban Rail Loop projects from certain obligations under the Act that apply to any land under the Act that is Yarra River land or a distinctive area and landscape.

Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Amendment Act 2021

The *Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Amendment Act 2021* was introduced and passed during the year. The amending Act will commence in 2022–23 and, amongst other things, will expand considerably the responsibilities of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (Authority) in relation to the areas managed under the *National Parks Act 1975* within the Great Ocean Road coast and parks.

In particular, the Authority will assume statutory responsibility from Parks Victoria for the following parks (or parts thereof) by 1 November 2025: Great Otway (part) and Port Campbell national parks, Bay of Islands Coastal Park, Point Addis and Twelve Apostles marine national parks and Eagle Rock, Marengo Reefs, Merri, Point Danger and The Arches marine sanctuaries.

The Authority will continue to manage those parks under the Act in accordance with the statutory obligations currently applying to Parks Victoria. It is intended that Parks Victoria will continue to manage the parks on the ground on behalf of the Authority.

The statutory responsibility for Glenample Homestead will also transfer from Parks Victoria to the Authority.

Amendments to regulations

There were no amendments to any of the regulations under the Act during the year.

Authorities under the Act

Leases, licences and other authorities

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

Authority Type	No. of Authorities	No. of Parks
Consent	239	46
Lease	22	14
Licence	21	16
Permit	18	12
Total	300	88

The number of agreements issued under the Act during 2021–22 is shown in the following table:

Authority Type	No. of Authorities
Consent	12
Lease	3
Licence	4
Permit	8
Total	27

Two leases were granted under section 19G of the Act:

- one lease for a seven-year term issued to Melbourne Grammar School for its existing school campsite at Breakfast Creek in the Alpine National Park.
- one lease for a two-year term issued for operation and management of a kiosk and visitor services in the Dandenong Ranges National Park.

A 21-year lease was granted under section 29A of the Act to the Australian Maritime and Safety Authority for certain land at Wilsons Promontory Lighthouse in Wilsons Promontory National Park.

An access agreement was also granted under section 30I to provide a reasonable right of access through Cape Liptrap Coastal Park to a landowner whose land adjoins the park. There were also six authorisations granted 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.

There were 12 consents issued during 2021–22:

- seven consents to Optus Mobile Pty Ltd for facilities in six national parks (Grampians, Greater Bendigo, Heathcote-Graytown, Mornington Peninsula and Yarra Ranges (2)), as well as Lerderderg State Park
- one consent to Transgrid for transmission infrastructure in Kings Billabong Park
- one consent to South East Water Ltd for a water tank in Mornington Peninsula National Park
- one consent to Transport of Victoria (VicRoads) for installation and maintenance of rock armour protection walls in Great Otway National Park
- one consent to NBN Co Limited for facilities in Croajingolong National Park
- one consent issued to North East Region Water Corporation for upgrade works at the North East Water pump station and for installation of a sewer pipe in Beechworth Historic Park.

Consents to earth resource activities

On 3 August 2021 the Minister's consent given under section 40 of the Act to Beach Energy Limited undertaking petroleum operations in Port Campbell National Park was tabled in Parliament. A subsequent motion in the Legislative Council to disallow the consent was defeated.

On 7 June 2022 the Minister's consent given under section 40 of the Act to Premium Limestone Victoria Pty Ltd conducting operations within Tyers Park to search for stone was tabled in Parliament.

Enforcement

There were 11 individuals successfully prosecuted during the year for committing offences against the Act (17) or the Regulations (7) ¹. The most numerous offences were obstructing or threatening an authorised officer (5) and cutting or taking away fallen or felled trees (5).

There were 389 infringement notices issued for

prescribed offences against the Act (60) or the Regulations (329) ². The most numerous offences related to dogs (158), camping outside a designated area (area set aside or occupation site) (72), using a vehicle on a road or track where prohibited or restricted (36), cutting or taking away fallen or felled trees (32), lighting or maintaining a fire (27), fishing in a marine national park or marine sanctuary (23), digging or removing gravel etc (11) and interfering with vegetation (10).

There were also 139 official warnings and 1 warning issued in relation to offences against the Act (49) or the Regulations (91) ³. The most numerous offences related to camping outside a designated area (46), fishing in a marine national park or marine sanctuary (43), dogs (18) and lighting or maintain a fire (14).

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 2022 the members were:

Convenor:	Ms Anna Foley
Members:	Associate Professor Ursula De Jong
	Ms Judith Dixon
	Mr Michael Fendley ⁴
	Mr Adam McLean
	Dr Mary-Jane Rogers
	Mr Chris Rose.

The council's annual report for 2021–22 provides information on the council and its activities during the year.

Other advisory groups

Several advisory groups provided advice to Parks Victoria on the management of various parks.

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. Mr Fendley submitted his resignation during the year and this will officially take effect when it is formally submitted to the Governor in Council in 2022–23.



Image: Discovery Bay Marine National Park - Peter Hill

Appendix 1: Areas managed under the National Parks Act

There were no changes to the areas managed under the Act during the year.

A National Parks (Schedule Two)

National Park		Area (ha) 30 June 2022
1	Alfred	3 050
2	Alpine	661 777
3	Barmah	28 505
4	Baw Baw	13 530
5	Brisbane Ranges	8 885
6	Budj Bim	8 565
7	Burrowa-Pine Mountain	18 400
8	Chiltern-Mt Pilot	21 650
9	Churchill	271
10	Cobboboonee	18 510
11	Coopracambra	38 800
12	Croajingolong	*88 525
13	Dandenong Ranges	3 535
14	Errinundra	^43 090
15	French Island	*11 155
16	Grampians	168 235
17	Greater Bendigo	17 586
18	Great Otway	*110 332
19	Gunbower	9 330
20	Hattah-Kulkyne	49 890
21	Heathcote-Graytown	12 700
22	Kara Kara	13 990
23	Kinglake	23 210
24	Lake Eildon	27 750
25	Lind	1 370
26	Little Desert	132 647
27	Lower Glenelg	26 430
28	Lower Goulburn	9 320
29	Mitchell River	14 395
30	Mornington Peninsula	*2 680
31	Morwell	565
32	Mount Buffalo	31 020
33	Mount Richmond	1 733
34	Murray-Sunset	665 400

National Park		Area (ha) 30 June 2022
35	Organ Pipes	153
36	Point Nepean	*578
37	Port Campbell	*1 830
38	Snowy River	114 600
39	Tarra-Bulga	2 015
40	Terrick Terrick	6 390
41	The Lakes	2 390
42	Warby-Ovens	14 750
43	Wilson's Promontory	*49 049
44	Wyperfeld	359 445
45	Yarra Ranges	77 185
Total – National Parks		2 915 216

* 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

B Wilderness Parks (Schedule Two A)

Wilderness Park	Area (ha) 30 June 2022
1 Avon	39 650
2 Big Desert	142 300
3 Wabba	20 100
Total – Wilderness Parks	202 050

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
Total – State Parks	156 825

C State Parks (Schedule Two B)

State Park	Area (ha) 30 June 2022
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 2022
1	Bay of Islands CP	950
2	Beechworth HP	1 090
3	Cape Conran CP	11 700
4	Cape Liptrap CP	4 320
5	Discovery Bay CP	*10 460
6	Gadsen Bend Park	1 620
7	Gippsland Lakes CP	17 688
8	Haining Farm	–
9	Kings Billabong Park	2 195
10	Lake Albacutya Park	8 300
11	Langwarrin FFR	214
12	Lysterfield Park	1 397
13	Murray-Kulkyne Park	4 555
14	Nyah-Vinifera Park	1 370
15	Steiglitz HP	430
16	Tara Range Park	7 620
17	Tyers Park	1 810
18	Woodlands HP	820
19	Yallock-Bulluk MCP	3 535
Total – Other Parks		80 074

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 2022
- Bunurong MP	-
1 Castlemaine Diggings NHP**	7 590
2 Corner Inlet MCP	*18 000
3 Deep Lead NCR (No. 1)**	1 120
4 Nooramunga MCP	15 000
5 Shallow Inlet MCP	2 000
6 Wilsons Promontory MP	*10 000
7 Wilsons Promontory MR	
Total – Other Parks and Reserves	53 710

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.

	National Park	Wilderness Zone	Area (ha) 30 June 2022
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
Total – Wilderness Zones			640 000

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.

	National Park	Remote and Natural Area	Area (ha) 30 June 2022
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
Total – Remote and Natural Areas			279 469

H Marine National Parks (Schedule Seven)

Marine National Park*	Area (ha) 30 June 2022
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
Total – Marine National Parks	52 900

I Marine Sanctuaries (Schedule Eight)

Marine Sanctuary	Area (ha) 30 June 2022
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
Total – Marine Sanctuaries	876

* 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 2022
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)
Total – Landscape Conservation Areas	1 790

BA Bushland Area

NCA Nature Conservation Area

K Other Areas (non-scheduled)*

Area	Section of Act	Area (ha) 30 June 2022
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
Total – Other Areas		4 442

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

L Summary – Areas managed under the Act

Category	No. of Areas 30 June 2022	Area (ha) 30 June 2022
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
Total	139	3 467 883

M Unproclaimed Additions

As at 30 June 2022 legislation provides for future additions to the parks system as follows:

Park	Act	Provision of Act	Area (ha)
1 Dandenong Ranges National Park	National Parks Act 1975	Schedule One clause 10	**<1
2 Greater Bendigo National Park	National Parks Act 1975	Schedule One clause 12	**31
3 Great Otway National Park (2 areas)	National Parks Act 1975	Section 79	**219
4 Moondarra State Park	National Parks (Amendment) Act 1989	Section 29(3)	178
5 Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park	National Parks Act 1975	Schedule One clause 3	**<1
Total – Unproclaimed areas			428

* Items 1 and 5 inadvertently omitted from the previous annual report.

** 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

National and other parks and areas	Map ref				
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	Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries	Map ref
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

Parks Victoria

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