

# The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.

## Annual Report

Year Ending 31 December 2023



*Understanding Our Natural World*  
Est. 1880

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## President's Report

### Introduction

My ninth year in the role of President of the FNCV saw the Club return to normal meetings and excursions once again. It was good to be able to hold most meetings in the hall with a few Zoom and dual mode meetings as deemed necessary. Council is up for the challenges that 2024 may bring. As promised, a medical grade air purifier was purchased for the hall to support our ongoing Covid Safe practices for meetings.

The Club is doing well and we have maintained most of our community activities. As always, our operations require the involvement of many motivated and dedicated people, so it is not possible to cover all events or to thank everyone for the contributions they make. If I have not mentioned you or your activity in the following summary, let me assure you that your efforts are greatly appreciated by me, Council and your fellow Club members. I thank all of our members for their cooperation and active participation this past year. An overview of the year's news and highlights are set out below.



Adam Hosken conducting activities at the Juniors' Easter Camp at Mali Dunes. Photo, M Campbell



*Calosomaschayeri*, a carnivorous and highly predatory carab beetle at Mali Dunes.

Photo, Max Campbell

### Biodiversity Symposium

Unfortunately, it was not possible to organise a Symposium for 2023. We hope to return to the annual Biodiversity Symposium in late 2024.

### **The Australian Natural History Medallion**

The 2023 Australian Natural History Medallion has been awarded to Maureen Christie for her contribution to Conservation of Shorebirds.

### **Special Interest Groups (SIGs)**

The Special Interest Groups have all maintained their high standards in providing many interesting meetings, presenters and activities for the past year. We are indebted to the hardworking SIG leaders who keep the programs running. The Juniors Group continues to operate very effectively under the supervision of Adam Hosken and I thank him on behalf of the FNCV. His efforts in organising the Juniors' Easter Camp at Mali Dunes were exceptional. The camp on FNCV's new property was a great success. I would also like to thank Wendy Clark for her commitment to running, organising and increasing participation in the activities of the Terrestrial Invertebrates Group. The Fungi Group, Marine Research Group and Fauna Survey Group are contributing significantly to the Club's research profile.

### **FNCV Website**

Jurrie Hubregtse has continued to successfully run and maintain the FNCV Website which remains the principal portal for access to our Club and its activities.

### **Facebook**

While our subscription membership has remained stable, our Facebook participants have risen to over 40,000 interested followers, increasing our visibility and profile in the broader community. Thanks to George Paras, John Harris, Andrej Hohmann, Wendy Gare, Asha Billing and Claire Ferguson for their efforts with this online forum.

### **SEANA**

Thanks to Geoff Lay and Ken Griffiths as our SEANA representatives in 2023. Preparations for the SEANA Autumn gathering at Phillip Island are being expertly planned by Philippa Burgess, Joan Broadberry, Barbara Burns, Ken Griffiths and Maryse Hermence.

### **The Victorian Naturalist, FNN and Library**

I wish to thank Dr Gary Presland for his continuing contribution as Chief Editor of *The Victorian Naturalist* and for his ongoing work as FNCV Librarian. On behalf of the Club, I would also like to thank all the editors of Field Nats News and *The Victorian Naturalist* for their diligent work throughout the year. The workload and time commitment is enormous and both publications remain critical to our FNCV culture and activities. Dr Gary Presland, Dr Maria Gibson, Sue Forster and Virgil Hubregtse produced *The Victorian Naturalist* in 2023. Dr Michael McBain will join the team in 2024. The Victorian Naturalist has now been digitised to create a word-searchable digital archive of *The Victorian Naturalist*, volumes 1-137. A credit card-sized USB thumb-drive is available for purchase from the Bookshop.

The Field Nats News continues to be enjoyed by our members and other organisations. Joan Broadberry, with Wendy Gare, Sally Bewsher and Sheina Nicholls produced the monthly newsletter, always on time, for the year.

### **Council Members and Office-bearers**

Council, is responsible for all of the Club's activities and its corporate compliance and existence. The attendance at Council meetings over the past year was again very high. We held a successful Annual General Meeting in early May during 2023. I thank all of the Council members for their efforts during the year.

Barbara Burns, as Treasurer and Secretary, continues to efficiently manage the accounts, which show a small operating profit for the year.

### **Bookshop**

The bookshop remains popular. Once again I thank Kathy Himbeck, supported by John Harris and Maryse Hermence, for the work they put into this service, which continues to cater to the needs of the Club.

### **Administration Officer**

For over a decade we have been blessed by the presence of Wendy Gare as our exceptional Administration Officer. She has kept us all informed of events and continues to manage the FNCV Office with her efficiency and cheerfulness. We are all indebted to Wendy for her extraordinary and tireless efforts to support the Club's many activities. Her innovative ideas have increased efficiency and generated considerable cost savings over the years. Thank you, Wendy.

### **Community Participation.**

Thank you to all who volunteered their time and effort to sustain the profile of the Club as a leading Citizen Science organisation. It is important that we continue our delivery of presentations, seminars, symposia and attendance at public events, schools and other organisations to maintain our role as a significant and productive member of the community. Some of our members have worked effectively with the community via Zoom in addition to by face-to-face contact.

We are participating in the Gardiner's Creek (KooyongKoot) Regional Collaboration for the catchment. Judith Sise, Sue Bendel and myself have been involved with the project and the FNCV Council signed a collaboration Memorandum of Understanding in 2023 as partners. Judith was the principal contact during 2023 and will be the major contact for the Collaboration for 2024. It is anticipated that Nature Stewards courses will be run as part of the Collaboration.

### **Nature Stewards**

We continued with our commitment to the Nature Stewards Program which has proven to be a productive and collaborative community endeavour. Its role in educating the broader community on the importance of conserving, protecting and studying the biodiversity of Australia continues to develop and expand. In 2023 programs were run in Mornington Peninsula, Merri-bek/Moonee valley, Melbourne, Strathbogie (youth), Whittlesea, Ballarat, Horsham, Geelong and Upwey High School. For 2024 it is anticipated that at least ten programs will be running. Nature Stewards will continue to connect participants with nature, support our communities and encourage volunteering in our local areas. The delivery of community education is essential for improving environmental outcomes and the program is an

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ideal platform for achieving optimum results. It aligns perfectly with our Club's purposes and many of our members have contributed to the teaching program.



Whittlesea, Nature Stewards, Spring 2023 class.  
Photo, M. Willcock

Nature Stewards is now operating from the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) as host. Website <https://vnpa.org.au/programs/nature-stewards/>. Programs for 2024 start from March 16<sup>th</sup>.

### Mali Dunes

The purchase of Mali Dunes in 2022 has continued to be a valuable asset for the Club. It has provided us with a field site where we can practice conservation, education, citizen science and environmentally focused research activities in collaboration with other organisations. I thank everybody who has visited the site for both working parties and biological survey in 2023. We held the Juniors' Camp at Easter in 2023 and a Fauna Survey Group Camp in November. We intend to have more visits to Mali Dunes in 2024 including another Easter Camp for the Juniors and a Winter excursion for the Fungi Group. Plans for additional working parties are currently under consideration. Michael McBain has used drones to successfully map the property and provide valuable data for our continuing conservation and survey work. I thank him on behalf of the Club for his significant contribution. The site is regularly accessed by the Victorian Mallee Fowl Recovery Group and the Australian Mallee Fowl Recovery Group to further their research into Mallee Fowl biology.

I would like to thank Andrej Hohmann, Ray Gibson and Ray White for their contribution to the successful running of camps and field trips at Mali Dunes.

Once again, I thank you all for the privilege of being elected President of the FNCV for another year. I would like to especially thank all of the members of the Club who continue to provide support in so many ways in addition to their friendship throughout the year. We survive and prosper via the collective efforts of all of you. Our role as an effective citizen science organisation is, I believe, critical to FNCV's survival into a future where conservation of what remains of our endangered natural environment is a major concern of the Community.

**Maxwell Campbell, President**



## Bookshop

Across 2023 the FNCV Bookshop sold a total of 305 books that ranged across 154 different titles, covering a range of 9 broad genres. Throughout the year an extensive range of over 300 different titles was available for sale on display at the Blackburn Clubroom. The titles covered topics including aquatic, children, flora, fauna, fungi, geology, invertebrate, places, habitats in gardens and landscape restoration.

Twenty-eight new titles were added to the selection available for the year. The long awaited, book by Leon Costermans, "*Stories Beneath Our Feet*," was released late in 2022 and was the best seller for 2023 with 40 copies sold. It is still available for purchase, selling to members for \$65 and non-members for \$85.

The bookshop team extends a warm thanks to all those that supported us throughout the year by submitting book orders and purchasing books from the Clubrooms.

In the middle of 2023 a new volunteer was welcomed onto the team. Some of the roles Maryse Hermence has assisted with include screening the emails, attending to email orders and correspondence, and completing book sales from the Clubrooms. I would like to thank Maryse for all of the help she has provided, it has been greatly appreciated. The team would also like to thank, Wendy Gare and all those people that processed book sales from the Clubrooms before and after meetings etc.

The bookshop provides a 20% discount on the recommended retail price of most books, covering a range of topics associated with our natural environment. The running of the bookshop is a voluntary position and aims to provide a service to existing members but to also act as an incentive for non-members to join the Club. A fully revised and updated catalogue was released in November 2023.

The bookshop provides ongoing support to the library with the purchase of any new titles that are considered appropriate. This year it also provided the funds for the production of a USB, *The Victorian Naturalist* Digital Archive Vol 1 - 137, that was released for sale in May 2023. The USB is available for purchase at a price of \$70 for members and \$88 for non-members.

Orders for books continue to be encouraged as there is limited space available to stock the full range of titles in the display cabinets in the hall. The full selection, including titles not on display, can be viewed from the bookshop catalogue, with a printed copy attached to the display cabinets at Gardenia Street, and an electronic copy on the FNCV website.

**Kathy Himbeck Bookshop Manager**





## Administration

The office ran smoothly throughout 2023, with no particular problems. As usual, the interactions with our members brighten my work days and it's always a pleasure to chat to them when they phone or come in. We have so many interesting, knowledgeable and friendly members of the FNCV – they make it a great place to work!

### Membership

Membership as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 was 737, very slightly down from the same time last year. The largest membership categories were Ordinary (full paying) members 60% and Concession members 20%. The remaining categories are students, other naturalist clubs, Juniors and institutions, which are all relatively stable.

### Hall Hire.

Money received from hiring out our hall to other groups during the year was just over \$1,000. We have 2 groups who are regular hirers, and a number of others who hire once or twice a year.

### Promotion

Our main promotional tool is our Calendar of Events which is produced three times during the year. This is distributed to libraries, U3A groups and community houses. To keep expenses to a minimum, we are emailing the calendars to all of the libraries and as many of the others as possible.

We now send a regular weekly email to all members reminding them of the events of the following week, using our bulk email sender. The *Field Nats News* and the *Victorian Naturalist* go out now via a link included in the bulk emails. This was necessary due to the new spam controls which don't allow normal emails to be sent to more than 100 addresses. The system now seems to be working well after some teething problems. The emails should not look any different from those sent directly from the office.

### Advertising in FNCV Publications

Paid advertising in the *Field Nat News* during the year totaled \$1,000, which is a big help in defraying associated printing and postage costs to those very few members who are unable to receive the digital version of the News.

### Activities

In 2023 we took part in two festivals, "Music from the Wetlands," in Alphington, and the Whitehorse Spring Festival. We displayed many naturalist activities for children on our stalls. Thanks to all those who manned the display tables: Philippa Burgess, Maryse Hermence, Ken Griffiths, George Paras, Ellia McComb, Scott Brunton, Ray Gibson, June Anton, Su Dempsey, Karen Bennetts and Anne Warren. This group worked hard to represent our Club to the public.



Wendy  
Gare

### Thank you

to Gary Presland, Joan Broadberry, Sally Bewsher and Maryse Hermence for their camaraderie and good humour in the office through the year, and to Max Campbell for his help and guidance.

**Wendy Gare, Administration Officer.**



## Australian Natural History Medallion

The 2023 Australian Natural History Medallion was awarded to Maureen Christie for her contribution to the Conservation of Shorebirds.

A reception and buffet was held at the FNCV Hall prior to the presentation.

The Medallion was presented by Associate Professor Robert Day, nominee of the President of the Royal Society of Victoria. To round off the evening Maureen spoke to us about some of the work for which she received the award.



Graeme Lorimer conducting a botany class in the hall at Blackburn.  
Photo, Max Campbell



## Botany Group

A set of wide-ranging monthly lectures, plus three excursions, comprised the Botany Groups' programme in 2023. A thank you is due to our speakers. The committee was Ken Griffiths, Sue Bendel and Lisa Williams.

### February

Geoff Lay spoke to the title: 'A layman's guide to the flora of Victoria, with a focus on regions and their plants'. More than twenty bio-regions were illustrated with Geoff's own flora images, species identifications and comments. From the Gippsland Lakes to Kow Swamp (near the Murray River,) from Far East Gippsland, with the Erinunderra plateau, to Wilsons Promontory, to Portland/Cape Nelson, and to the alps in winter, Geoff engagingly displayed and explained local adaptations of flora in Victoria.

### March

Ruth Scharley told the story of a project to revegetate at Nettleton Park, an urban park in Glen Iris, which sits where Back Creek joins Gardiners Creek. Melbourne Water and local government were involved at a later stage, but it all started after the drought when five neighbours set out to make changes. Weedy trees, such as willows and elms, were removed and there were working bees to weed and plant. Indigenous nurseries, Ecological Vegetation Classes (55 and 641) and an on-site shed all contributed to a success story of co-operative effort for the park.

### April

In a combined meeting with the Geology Group, Fearghus McSweeney presented his remarkable recent research on early land plants of Victoria. While photosynthesis is very old, much later the algae gave rise to mosses and terrestrial plants such as liverworts. The very early vascular plants would give rise eventually to trees and forests. In the 1930s, plants such as *Baragwanathia* and *Zosterophyllum*, from the mid Silurian and lower Devonian periods, were found at sites such as Yea and Walhalla in Victoria. Dating depended on a Graptolite being on the same rock. Fearghus himself recently found surviving fossils. His descriptions and pictures of the steps to expose and assess 400 million year old fossil plants from rock were particularly interesting.

### June

David Cameron spoke on "Victorian Rainforests: identification and boundary delineation using differential species keys." He explained how, when Vic Forests had problems with compliance, in 1991 a method was devised to recognise forest type borders. In Victoria, logging is approved for specific coupes. Rainforest is not logged. David produced a handbook. An ecotone (transitional zone) is recognised as specified plants are seen. Though Myrtle Beech (*Nothofagus*) is absent from much rainforest, Black Oliveberry (*Elaeocarpus*) takes its place in East Gippsland. A closed canopy, ferns and

bryophytes, and a long recovery time from disturbance are among the markers of rainforests. For some, only 600 mm of rain is needed.

### July

Professor Eddie Pang described Wilsons Promontory: its original people, its early reserve status, its geology, animals and vascular plants. The Friends Group implemented revegetation, using local seed, in the former airstrip region. Eucalypts planted out, needing wire protection from native herbivores. Similarly in the north of South Australia, plants in fenced reserves were predated by bilby, bettong, pythons and even dingoes. At Squeaky Beach middens and burial sites are sprayed for weeds, to avoid disturbance. A Bush Bank project at the Promontory has been written up in the Sydney Morning Herald. Professor Pang commented that a problem is the park is over-visited by people.

### August

Brett Mifsud showed us images of numerous giant forest trees of Victoria and Tasmania. Unfortunately, some of the biggest were evidenced only by their stumps. Early black and white photographs survive as records. In Victoria. Greater than 85m in height, or 12.5m in circumference defined a forest giant for protection - but this standard was too high to save many big trees. Of course, big old Eucalypts develop hollows for wildlife. Some trees, less tall, nevertheless have enormous girth and therefore wood volume. Brett spoke about his work with various authorities to protect giant trees from fire.

### September

Adrian Moorrees detailed what a vegetation survey might entail. For Victoria, the whole State has been surveyed, with tools developed since the 1970s, such as Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs). Small scale surveys can of course also be carried out. Adrian stressed the importance of clarity of goals and methods, in order to attain scientific rigour. With plants, it is usually a sample not a census. Quadrant size is therefore a choice. Repeatability is a criterion. Adrian discussed three examples of Government work: A - Statewide, with the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas as an outcome; B - Forest monitoring and C - the Western Grasslands Reserve.

### October

A "members night" featured plant observations and lists from our, now regular, annual Brisbane Ranges excursion. In addition data supplied by VicFlora was discussed with respect to annual climate variation possibly affecting the flowering times of orchids. Also the presentation of images from field observations was popular as a quiz, i.e. what is that plant? As well we looked at Phillip Island woodland plants, salt-marsh and more, as ecological classes.

### November

A combined meeting with the Geology Group was held; refer to the Geology report on page 14.

**Ken Griffiths**



## Field Nats News

In 2023, 11 issues of Field Nats News (FNN) were published, running from number 337 to 347 inclusive. I would like to begin by expressing a huge thank you to all those who have played a part in producing this year's newsletter.

Max Campbell is a major contributor to FNN. Every month he prepares a leading article, *From the President*, with a wealth of detail and many photo sequences. His subjects have often been observed in his garden. Invertebrates, illustrated with superb macro-photography, are a constant theme, but Max has also written on spiders, moths, birds, orchids, wildflowers and fungi. In addition he has provided FNN with many images and fascinating observations from Mali Dunes.

Wendy Clark has provided articles in seven of the eleven 2023 issues of FNN, reporting on the Terrestrial Invertebrates Group (TIG) outings and meetings. Wendy also generously shares her always perceptive observations and professional images taken on her regular walks in the Blackburn Creeklands. Some issues contain more than one of her reports. For example, FNN 338 contained a report of the TIG outing to Cardinia Park and two reports from the Creeklands: *Native bees roosting in clusters* and *Native Slugs in Blackburn*. (See Photo 1)



Photo 1: Native bees roosting in clusters, Blackburn Creeklands. Photo, Wendy Clark

Much of the content of FNN originates from the work of the FNCV's office administrator, Wendy Gare. The Four Monthly Calendar of Events is the starting point of each month's calendar. The minutes of each Council Meeting provide short reports from SIG co-ordinators, welcome to new members and more. Wendy supplies notices for

events such as the FNCV AGM and Australian Natural History Medallion, helps with proofreading, solves computer problems, deals with advertisers and is a constant, highly valued support. Sheina Nicholls collates the printed copies of FNN ready for posting.

Ray Gibson contributed a number of reports on Fauna Survey Group (FSG) activities: *Yarrara* (FNN 339), *Christmas Island Fauna - Conservation challenges and Issues* (FNN 344), and *Chytrid Fungus and colour changes in endangered frogs* (FNN 345). In addition Ray has supplied short reports to Council, as mentioned above, reprinted in FNN, covering FSG activities for the year.

Andrej Hohmann (Fauna Survey Group) wrote two delightful articles, *Mali Dunes: the big wet* (FNN 339) and *Early Spring at Mali Dunes* (FNN 347).

Detailed reports of the Fungi Group's forays have been ably written by Hamish Beshara, for example, *Wander-sloire Sanctuary*. Other members of the group have also penned articles including Scott Brunton, *Greens Bush*, Tzaddi Degan, *Masons Falls* and Torbjorn von Strokirch, *Mortimer Picnic Ground*.

Ken Griffiths provided short reports to Council, reprinted in FNN, on the activities of the Geology and Botany Groups as did Adam Hosken for the Junior Group's program.

Barbara Burns contributes to FNN in a number of ways including the FNCV's association with Science Talent Search and the FNCV Environment Fund.

Kathy Himbeck provides occasional book reviews in her column *From the Bookshop* and Sue Bendel keeps us up-to-date with City Nature Challenge.

Philippa Burgess has reported on the work of the Microscopy Group in FNN 339 and FNN 343. In FNN 345 she wrote articles on both the Geology Group's talk from the Nunawading and District Lapidary Club and the Microscopy Group's meeting on the making of tools to use with microscopes.

FNCV members sometime contribute observations and reports from outside the FNCV program. Graham Ross and Glenys Grant allowed FNN to reprint *Launch of the Gardiners Creek (Kooyongkoot) Regional Collaboration* and John Eichler wrote on *Some Interesting East Gippsland Finds* (FNN 339).

Janet Pett and Carol Bathie sent a well researched article to FNN 342, *Stony Point Jetty Ascidiars*. (See photo 2) and Barbara Hall's interesting report, *Bitten with Relish by a Sea Louse*, appeared in FNN 342. Janet, Carol and Barbara all work with the Marine Research Group.

Sally Bewsher reported on the Fauna Survey Group's Rushworth nest box survey (FNN 342). She has also taken on the task of proofreading FNN for many years,





Photo 2: Stony Point Jetty Ascidians.  
Photos, Janet Pett and Carol Bathie

at times saving me from major embarrassment. Her support and encouragement are invaluable.

As editor I had a large input to each FNN. In 2023 I summarised eight Day Group presentations, wrote a book review, two obituaries, reported on the Marine Research Group's members' night, the Club working bee, the Christmas party and the Whitehorse festival. I also contributed an article to FNN 346, *An encounter with Scorpion-flies*. In addition there is always a variety of reminders, notices and snippets that are passed on to the editor to compose.

Gary Presland provides occasional library news, helps with obituaries and awards and is always willing to act as guest editor if I am not available. I really appreciate having Gary as a backup.

**Joan Broadberry,**  
**Editor Field Nats News**

## FNCV Environment Fund

The FNCV Environment Fund is a tax-deductible fund that was set up in 2003 to aid not-for-profit- community groups and individuals who are involved in environmental research and education. Its purposes are:

- To support and finance environmental research, in particular research into the biodiversity of Victoria.
- To support and finance dissemination of information on the natural environment by any legitimate means, including public lectures, seminars, field trips, courses and publications.
- To support and finance practical projects aimed at preserving and enhancing the biodiversity of Victoria.

The Fund is administered by a committee consisting of John Harris (Chair), Barbara Burns (Secretary and Treasurer), Cathy Willis, Ian Moodie, Ian Temby, Bruce McGregor and Philippa Burgess. Each year the Fund contacts the regional field naturalist clubs in Victoria and advertises in the FNCV Newsletter and on the Web for grant applications. The committee meets in April to process the submissions and decide on the successful applicants. This year there was a second round of grants in October. Donations of \$17,955 were received in 2023. Special thanks for large donations go to the Burston Family Perpetual Foundation, \$5,000, Ernest Hobdell, \$1,000, Sarah Patterson, \$2,000 and Wildlife Experiences, \$1,500.

Eight projects in total were supported in 2023, including the following:

- **Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater.** Reptile survey for two endangered skink species, \$735.
- **Friends of Warrandyte State Park.** Battery pack for line trimmer; \$418.
- **FNCV Juniors.** Emergency locator beacon, \$304.
- **K. Kularatne,** Student Latrobe University. Wildlife Endocrinology Lab, hormone analysis of Jacky Dragons, \$800.
- **Friends of the Forest, Kinglake,** Song Meter Acoustic record to record yellow-bellied gliders vocalisations, \$929.

Thank you to everyone who donated. Your generosity will enable the Fund to continue providing grants for worthy applicants in the future.

**Barbara Burns, Secretary**







## Marine Research Group

The Marine Research Group held two meetings and undertook ten field trips in 2023. These were attended by small, but enthusiastic, groups.

**The two meetings for the year were:**

*May:* Our annual field trip roundup. We looked at the locations we visited and the animals we saw. Members were encouraged to bring in images and exhibits from the field work to show to others.

*December:* Our annual members night. The meeting was held jointly online and at the FNCV hall. Members brought along images, stories and research to share with the group.

**Field Work**

Field work is an important activity for The Marine Research Group, providing members with the opportunity to observe animals in their natural habitat. The data and specimens collected contribute to our on-going research. MRG members are actively researching Opisthobranchia (sea slugs and related animals), micro-Gastropoda (very small snails), Holothuroidea (sea cucumbers), Amphipoda and Isopoda (small crustaceans), Ascidians, Stauromedusae (stalked jellyfish), and Nemertea (ribbon worms), as well as conducting a general study of marine invertebrates to increase their own knowledge and that of others.

Our field work produces records of the species of marine invertebrates found along the Victorian coast and discovers new, undescribed species. We also identify and monitor pest species. Beyond this we collaborate with Australian and overseas institutions and individual researchers. All fieldwork is performed under government issued collecting permits.

**Field Work Locations for 2023 were:**

Sat 25 to Tues 28 Feb.	Phillip Island area
Sun 26 to Wed 29 March	Warrnambool area
Wed 12 April	Mushroom Reef Flinders
Sat 22 April	Rosebud Jetty

The existing committee remains in place, with President Michael Lyons, Secretary Leon Altoff, Fieldtrip coordinator Audrey Falconer and Committee member Platon Vafiadis.

I would like to thank all our members for their participation and contributions. I would also like to thank Audrey Falconer for coordinating our field trips.

**Leon Altoff, Secretary**

**Thanks to Max Campbell for Proof-reading the Annual Report.**



The sea slug *Polycerajan-jukia*, found during the survey of Rogers Rocks in Armstrong Bay near Warrnambool.

Photo, Leon Altoff



## Library and Archives

**Library**

In terms of Library use, the past year has been a relatively quiet one. Nine books and 30 periodical issues were borrowed during 2023.

A total of 20 monographs were added to the FNCV Library holdings during 2023. The great majority of these were acquired as donations, principally from two sources. Firstly, the Library has benefitted from the estate of former members of the Club; secondly, the Library received copies of a few books that had been offered for review in *The Victorian Naturalist*. My thanks are extended to these people, who contributed directly to the holdings of the Library. In this regard, I thank Kathy Himbeck, Books Sales Officer, who facilitated the purchase of a number of recently published volumes.

Through the year Graham Patterson has provided invaluable support in keeping the library's collection of periodicals up to date. He has ably filled in for the Librarian, during the latter's wanderings to distant parts of the world. I thank him for these things and for his ready assistance and cheery company. I also wish to thank Kathy Himbeck for her service of acquiring books for the library from bookshop funds.

**Archives**

Archival enquiries in 2023 continued to be based largely on research external to the Club, but which took in issues relating to FNCV members or Club activities. The archival holdings of the Club are not insubstantial and once again have proved to be of great assistance to researchers in their documentation of early naturalists and their field studies in Victoria.

Donations of manuscript material, in the form of correspondence and field survey notes, have been made to the FNCV archives during the year. FNCV Admin Officer Wendy Gare has been of great assistance in this regard, in providing current correspondence records from the office, as well as copies of the FNCV Calendar of Events for archiving. I am pleased to thank her for this input.

**Dr Gary Presland, Honorary Librarian and Archivist**



## Juniors' Group

A number of fun and informative excursions were held by the Juniors in 2023, as well as meetings and presentations in the FNCV Hall in Blackburn. As usual, the highlight was the Easter Camp at Mali Dunes, conducted again with the Fauna Survey Group.

Adam Hosken continued as the leader of the group following on from 2022. During the year we tried to vary the outings to cover the wide variety of interest areas of the group. The Juniors' Newsletter was again produced by the Burton/Wilton family with terrific contributions from some of our young members.

A Landcare grant, awarded to the Juniors, assisted with costs for some of the activities, notably snorkelling at Queenscliff, an excursion to Mount Rothwell, a visit to the Dingo Sanctuary at Toolern Vale with the Australian Dingo Foundation, and tree planting at Yellingbo. Thank you to Sue Bendel for helping to arrange the Landcare Grant and a number of the activities.

### Meeting at the FNCV Hall in Blackburn 2023

#### **Owls in Canada - February**

Andrej Hohmann from the Fauna Survey Group presented about his owl surveys in Canada. His talk gave an interesting view of nature on another continent, as well as providing the group with ideas about study and career paths as naturalists.

#### **Animals of the Little Desert - August**

The August meeting was a fascinating presentation on animals of the Little Desert and post-fire management with Jaclyn Harris, PhD Student from Monash University, working in the Evolutionary Ecology of Environmental Change Lab. Jaclyn's work showcased her research, as well as giving an insight into study paths and future learning opportunities for the Juniors. Thank you to Jaclyn.

The meeting also doubled-up as the Juniors' annual birthday celebration. Party food and learning about the Little Desert, some may even say Desert meets Desert!

### Excursions 2023

#### **Snorkelling at Queenscliff - February**

The Juniors went on an excursion at the end of February to Queenscliff and the Marine and Freshwater Discovery Centre. As part of a Landcare grant, they were also able to go snorkelling in Port Phillip Bay, learning about the bay and its unique marine environment. Interactive touch ponds and other aquarium exhibits were a chance for the Juniors to get up close with marine wildlife. <https://vfa.vic.gov.au/education/marine-and-freshwater-discovery-centre>



Observing Fauna Survey with Andrej Hohmann.  
Animals are handled under appropriate permits and ethics guidelines.

#### **Platypus at Warrandyte - March**

The Juniors went on an excursion in late March to Warrandyte River Reserve to look for platypus in the Yarra River. Unfortunately the platypus eluded us that day, although a number of floating logs were miss-IDd. Hopefully no false sightings were made on the Atlas of Living Australia, or hopeful posts to Facebook groups asking for identification!

#### **Mali Dunes - April**

The Easter Camp at Mali Dunes proved to be a success once again. Held in conjunction with the Fauna Survey Group, the Juniors were able to view fauna survey methods, including seeing how pitfall and Elliot traps are employed. The conditions were such that limited wildlife was observed during the surveys, but a number of the group proved to be excellent at producing baits out of oats and golden syrup.

A walk on the property looking at Mallee Fowl nests was led by Mirinda Thorpe and Iestyn Hosking. The Juniors were able to see active mounds, and a couple of Mallee Fowl were spotted on the walk. A big thanks to Mirinda and Iestyn.

Other camp activities included including an animal, A to Z, competition where the Juniors exhibited their knowledge of Australian native animals, and of course, an Easter-egg hunt.

#### **Mount Rothwell - April**

A 'Scats and Tracks' tour informed the Juniors about the environment of Western Melbourne and the grasslands of the Western Volcanic Plains. This was followed by dinner, before the group headed out for a nighttime walk in the predator proof sanctuary at Mount Rothwell.

The guided nighttime walk was a hit, and the budding naturalists were able to see brush-tailed rock wallabies and other small native mammals. A big thank you to Landcare for their funding for this activity, and the Odonata Foundation for managing the property at Mount Rothwell and being such excellent hosts yet again.



**Tree Planting - June**

The Juniors once again assisted with tree planting with Sue Bendel at Yellingbo. Their efforts helped to create more habitat for the Helmeted Honey Eater and Lead-beater's Possum, and at the same time they learnt about different plant species. Thank you to Sue for her ongoing enthusiasm for Yellingbo, the Juniors, and all things possum.

**Braeside Park - Kirsty Costa - July**

July was off to Braeside park for; birdwatching, a walk, and talk guided by Kirsty Costa. Kirsty is a Teacher, Science Communicator, and Conservationist, who also hosts the Weekend Birder podcast <https://www.weekendbirder.com/> Thank you to Kirsty for your passion and engagement with the Juniors.

**Dingo Sanctuary at Toolern Vale Australian Dingo Foundation - September**

Dingo pups at the Australian Dingo Foundation, Toolern Vale.

If you haven't ever been able to see or interact with a dingo puppy, then you don't know what you are missing out on. The Juniors were able to participate in a Land-care funded activity at the Australian Dingo Foundation at Toolern Vale <https://dingofoundation.org/> It was a bucket list experience, and highly recommended to naturalists young and old. The Juniors learnt about dingos, their extreme physical flexibility, and their role as an apex predator in the Australian environment. They also heard about the misconceptions of dingos and their lack of protection by current environmental regulations in Australia.

**Frogs at Tooradin Dalmore - October**

The year rounded out with a visit to Harwood House in Tooradin / Koo Wee Rup.

<https://harewood-house.com/about-2/>

The Juniors and families started with a BBQ, followed by a tour of the historic house and property, before the FNCV's own David De Angelis led the search for growling grass frogs. The spring conditions were against us, with no recent rain at the time, however, a growler was spotted! Well done to all the Juniors for taking turns to view the wildlife and keeping quiet when needed.



Easter Camp - night time nature walk with David De Angelis.



Braeside Park bird-watching and nature walk with Kirsty Costa.

**Adam Hosken, Co-ordinator FNCV Juniors**





Marine and Freshwater Discovery Centre - Juniors and their parents enjoying learning about Port Phillip Bay and its unique marine environment.



Old Mallee Fowl egg discovered as part of a Mallee Fowl walk at the Easter Camp.

**All photos displayed on pages 10-14 were taken by Adam Hosken.**





Inspecting findings from the trap lines at the Easter camp in the little desert area. Animals were handled under appropriate permits and ethics guidelines.



Night walk to listen for spring calling frogs at Harewood, an historic homestead property in Tooradin. One Growling Grass Frog was spotted.



Braeside Park bird-watching and nature walk with Kirsty Costa, teacher, science communicator and conservationist. Kirsty hosts the Weekend Birder podcast.



Listening to a talk about dingos at the Australian Dingo Foundation, Toolern Vale.



Learning about animals of the Little Desert and post-fire management with Jaclyn Harris - PhD Student from Monash University.



## Geology Group

Although we only had seven meetings in 2023, our guest lecturers brought us the highest range and depth of geology topics to stimulate our interest and prompt development of our understanding. Your team of Ken Griffiths and Philippa Burgess organised the program.

### March

Graham Patterson chose the oldest local rocks to introduce his presentation on the landforms of the coast from Point Lonsdale to South Australia. Exposed both west and east of Cape Otway, the Eumeralla Formation is about 106 million years old, deposited in a rift valley as Australia was splitting off from Antarctica. Dinosaur footprints were found there in 2019. In contrast, at Anglesea, rocks are from 34 Ma. Near Portland, limestone is from 8 to 16 Ma. When the sea level was lower, such as during the recent ice age, sand was blown onshore and formed rock strata. Graham showed photos of many spectacular rock features of this coast, and explained their causes.

### April

Dr Susan White spoke on the roles of exploration and documentation in the management and conservation of caves and karsts in Australia. Among other case studies, she mentioned, more than 200,000 square kilometres of the Nullarbor, between the road and the rail has been systematically searched and mapped, over many years by enthusiasts. Acidic fresh water, but not sea water, can form caves in limestone. Extinct on the mainland for 2,000 years, Thylacine-like skeletons were found in some Western Australian caves.

### May

Professor John Webb spoke on "Unquiet Victoria: tectonic activity in the last five million years". The relatively flat top of the Bogong High Plains is due to a long process of erosion to a peneplain, which was then uplifted, as was the Kosciuszko region, 4 - 8 million years ago. The basalt outcrops in the Bogong region date from 40 million years ago. Near Melbourne, where the Rowsley fault borders the Brisbane Ranges, about 350m of uplift of marine sediments occurred in the last five million years. Cape Liptrap, and also the New Volcanic basalt plains west of Melbourne are all less than 6 million years old. Asked the cause, John said that is outside the scope of geomorphology, but geophysicists have mapped tectonic plate forces in the lithosphere both S to N, and ESE to WNW.

### July

Leon Costermans spoke about the Howitt Province, a region east of the Melbourne Zone, and north east of Bairnsdale. We were shown how to read the relevant geological map - see p.504 of Costermans & Vandenberg, 2022. Powers Lookout is on Mt Kent conglomerate. The paradox that stones from ancient river valleys end up on ridge tops was explored. Another rock in this complex is ignimbrite - originally from explosive volcanism. Where, when and why were these volcanoes? Many will know the King River, the Avon Wilderness or the Upper Mitchell River. Leon recounted, anecdotally,

how, years ago as a student, he did some university field work in this region.

### August

Mike Quinn of the Nunawading and District Lapidary Club provided many samples on the tables to illustrate multiple aspects of the work of club members. One activity is shaping gemstones, such as sapphire, for sparkle, or emerald for colour. Another activity is to polish stones to produce agates. Impurity can give colour. Mike demonstrated a wide range of minerals. Those which fluoresce under light stimulus particularly caught our attention.

### September

Bruno Zielke addressed "The Life of Stars" in a wide ranging and in-depth manner. Indeed, he gave a short history of the universe, while explaining the different sizes and life stages of particular stars. Points he made were; a star's colour tells its surface temperature; its apparent brightness will depend on its distance from the observer; a proto-star, from a cloud of particles, needs ten million degrees to initiate nuclear fusion and shine as a star; a star has a life cycle that we comprehend by observing various stars each at different stages of their lives, this way we travel in time. Then there are collapsed stars: super dense. Bruno also explained the modern understanding of protons and neutrons, using the whiteboard and how black holes were discovered. There are many in our Milky Way Galaxy which has a very large black hole at its centre.

### November

We met jointly with the Botany Group for: "Cretaceous floras of Gondwana: Past climates", presented by Anne-Marie Tosolini and Vera Korasidis, Melbourne University.

Anne-Marie made several points. Although Australia, 132 million years ago, was closer to the South Pole, there was no polar ice-cap. Land bridges remained in Gondwana. Deposition occurred in a rift valley, resulting in the Eumeralla and Wonthaggi Formations in Victoria, (uplifted only later). The cretaceous flora of sites in the Otways and Gippsland have been studied, at Koonwarra, for example. Here the palaeo flora has been reconstructed from the forest floor to the mid-storey and canopy: Lycopod spores are the size of a sand grain. Trees were Araucariaceae or Podocarpaceae, (found today in Tasmania or New Zealand). Just when and which flowering plant arrived first in Australia is still undetermined. Today Angiosperms are 70% of all plants. They would have developed in dark billabongs, perhaps looking like a Magnolia. Long term in the Phanerozoic period at least four icehouse/greenhouse cycles have occurred on Earth.

Vera described field work in Wyoming, USA. Pollen, including spores from monocots, can be incorporated into rocks. A wind pollinated plant produces much more than say a Proteaceae species. A 4 - 8° temperature rise taking place over 5000 years, 56 million years ago, led to some species migrations: temperate - tropical - temperate. This resilience may not always apply! Think of the global warming trend of today for possible parallels.

### Ken Griffiths

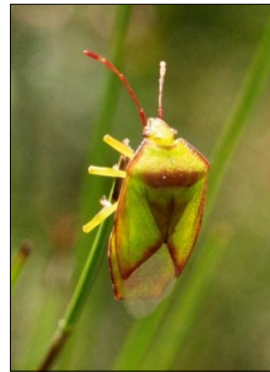




## Terrestrial Invertebrates Group

We started the year with a wonderful trip to Cardinia Reservoir, which always rewards us with a good variety of invertebrates. This was followed by trips to Birdland in Belgrave, Cranbourne Botanic Gardens and the Bushland Reserve next to it, then Starlings Gap to finish off the invertebrate season. Starlings Gap also gave us a treat with the variety of Fungi that had emerged for the beginning of the fungi season.

The Trips restarted again in September as the indications were that the insects would be responding to the warmer weather after a lot of rain. The previous years had few invertebrates even as late as October and we presumed that it was the cooler weather at that time. In September this year, we went to Buttongrass Walk in Bunyip State Park and were rewarded with a good range of invertebrates, followed by Baluk Willam Reserve then Braeside Park. The December Trip had to be cancelled.



Emperor Gum Caterpillar <i>Opodiphthera eucalypti</i>	Cone Moth Caterpillar <i>Conoecaguildingi</i>	Green and Burgundy Stink Bug	Adas Planarian (Flatworm) <i>Lenkunyaadae</i>
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The first meeting of the year was in the FNCV hall in March, and we were all happy to finally be back to meet and talk to one another again. The topic was “True Flies”, given by Max Campbell. Other talks at the meetings were “Fascinating Lifecycles and other Curiosities of Insects”, by Wendy Clark, “Victorian Peacock Spiders”, also by Wendy Clark, and “Small Invertebrate Predators”, by Max Campbell. There was much discussion and sharing of images and/or sightings of invertebrates both during members nights and at meetings with speakers.

It was decided to have an informal Zoom meeting every second month to cater for this desire to share our sightings and information, especially in the peak of the season. Also, waiting for two months between meetings to discuss findings was too long especially if one was interested in following up a sighting. It will also benefit those who are finding it difficult to come to night meetings. These Zoom meetings are scheduled on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday every other month, starting in 2024.



Peacock Spider <i>Maratus splendens</i> Photo, Jurgen Otto	Female (flightless) and Male Bagworm Moth <i>Cebysaleucotelus</i>
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\* All photos by Wendy Clark unless otherwise stated

**Wendy Clark Co-ordinator TIG.**



## Fauna Survey Group

### Field Work

The Fauna Survey Group conducted 9 surveys trips to 4 survey project sites in 2023; Warby Ranges, Bael Bael NCR, Rushworth Forest and Mali Dunes.

The Warby Ranges trip was held in February with the aim of obtaining further records of reptiles. Four species of reptiles and 4 species of mammals were seen, including Tree Goanna, Ragged Snake-eyed Lizard, and Squirrel Glider.

The March survey at Bael Bael Grasslands NCR was the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive annual survey at this site. This research is run in partnership with Parks Victoria, with the scientific staff from Parks helping in the planning and conducting of the survey activities. Heavy rain the previous winter and spring resulted in Yassom Swamp in the northern section containing many water birds in addition to the usual resident woodland species. On the grasslands rare and endangered species recorded included Plains Wanderer, Curl Snake and Fat-tailed Dunnart. The previous wet conditions and grass growth favoured Stubble Quail which were seen in very high numbers.

Our first trapping survey at Mali Dunes was during April, over the Easter period. We were able to demonstrate trapping techniques, pitfall and Elliott traps, to FNCV Juniors who attended the camp. Cameras were also deployed and were collected 8 weeks later. Both survey methods recorded a range of fauna. Numerous Mallee Spadefoot toads and Pobblebonk Frogs were found in the pitlines and native animals were recorded by the cameras, including Mitchells Hopping Mouse, Western Pygmy Possum, Common Dunnart, and Stumpy-tailed Lizard.

The second trip to Mali dunes was in November and



Western Pygmy Possum, Photo Ray Gibson

and observed Gould's Wattled Bat and Western Pygmy Possums. The cameras were deployed and retrieved 3 weeks later and further records of valuable species, were identified, some not recorded by other survey methods.

The trip to Rushworth in May was to check nest boxes for Brush-tailed Phascogales and Sugar Gliders (Kreff's Glider). Twelve Painted Quail were seen during the checking of the boxes, an unusual observation for this locality. This long-term survey has fulfilled its original aim, which was to establish the continuing presence of Brush-tailed Phascogales at the site, so will now be wound down. Nest boxes not being used by animals may be removed and deployed in different areas. Many are now in a weathered state and, after many years of service, can no longer be maintained.

### Summary of Surveys for 2023

Warby Ovens NP, Killawarra.	February 24-26
Bael Bael NCR	March 10-14
Mali Dunes	April 7-10
Rushworth Forest	May 20-21
Mali Dunes (camera collect)	June 10-11
Rushworth Forest	June 28
Mali Dunes (reconnoitre)	September 22-24
Mali Dunes	November 3-8
Mali Dunes (camera collect)	November 28

### Meetings

**February.** Members night.

**March.** Dr. Matthew Le Feuve, Senior Aquatic Ecologist at Jacobs presented on 'Triple Jeopardy in the Tropics. Assessing the extinction risk in Australia's freshwater biodiversity hotspot.' This topic covered the dangers and extinction threats to some of the freshwater fish species in the Kimberleys.

**April.** Andrew O'brien, zookeeper at the Melbourne Zoo, gave us a talk entitled 'Smiling at Crocodiles, the origins and diversity of species of crocodiles.'

**May.** Robert Bender, spoke on the 'Bats of Wilson Reserve, Ivanhoe East, Victoria.' Monitoring the 5



Tree Goanna, Photo Ray Gibson

this time we concentrated on the southern sections of the property. More reptiles were recorded during this survey including Mitchell's Short-tailed Snake and Sand Goanna. There are a few nest boxes which we checked



species of bats living in the bat boxes has yielded much useful information about their lifestyle.

**June.** Ken Hoppen, Penny Richards, and Dr. John Weiss gave a presentation on the 'Fauna of Christmas Island: from marine life to birds and threatened reptiles.' This was a three speaker spectacular event covering the diversity of fauna (Ken), Blue-tailed Skink Recovery program (Penny) and Threatening Processes on Christmas Island (John).

**July.** Sandi Czarka, State-wide Program Leader for Deer Control, Parks Victoria, presented on 'Implementing the Victorian Deer Strategy - Protecting high value biodiversity from predation by deer.'

**August.** Danielle Wallace, PhD student, Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences, University of Melbourne. Her talk was titled 'Chytrid Fungus and colour changes in endangered frogs.' Danielle filled us in on Alpine Tree Frogs infected with Chytrid Fungus and its impact on breeding, and colour changes.

**September.** Jaclyn Harris, PhD student, Monash University, gave a presentation on 'Fire Ecology and Reptiles in the Little Desert: an understanding of indirect consequences of fire and fire management.' Observations were made of lizards under different fire regimes.

**October.** Bruce Wehner. Environment, Land and Water Manager, Parks Victoria. His presentation was titled 'Song and dance for Barmah's Australasian Bitterns'. His research was centred on surveys to determine the population of bitterns in the wetlands of the Barmah Forest.

**November.** Andrej Hohmann summarised some of the results of the FSG/Parks Victoria's long running Bael Bael Survey. His presentation was titled 'Plain-speaking: Seven years of surveying Bael Bael grasslands for Plains Wanderers and other rare critters'.

**December.** Members night.

At the eleven meetings conducted for the year there was an average of 17 attendees.

## Raymond Gibson



## Fungi Group

Our group is dedicated to enhancing knowledge of fungi in our environment. Our inquisitive volunteers, working together, hope to foster a community of passionate individuals to help further our understanding of this fascinating area.

### Activities/Forays

Our forays extended throughout Victoria from areas such as the Gippsland plains, to the Victorian Volcanic plains, Otway plains and everything in-between! It was a great year to visit ecosystems and learn how fungi wrangle themselves into them.

Our field excursions were met with enthusiasm, with a

diverse group of volunteers joining us, from seasoned members to newcomers eager to learn. We encountered a multitude of fungal species. A notable highlight was the bubble-gumentoloma, *Entoloma aromaticum*. Despite its depiction as little brown mushroom it was quite an olfactory experience. See photo below.



Bubble-gumentoloma, *Entoloma aromaticum*  
iNaturalist photo, Reiner Richter

### Meetings/Speakers

We hosted a series of engaging meetings, generally using a hybrid of in-person and virtual modes, to accommodate our groups' needs. The hybrid format allowed for broader participation, with members joining us from across the country to engage with our speakers and fellow enthusiasts.

Our line-up included experts from various fields, offering insights into the intricate world of fungi. We were taught fungi from academia, researchers and non-profit organizations. Our speakers, who were mostly long standing volunteers, left us enriched in our understanding of fungi's role in the natural world.

In 2023 we had some joint meetings with the FNCV's microscopy group where members who brought in samples were able to view them under microscopes. This opened our eyes to aspects of fungi we had not seen before and greatly improved our ability to differentiate species by spore identification.

We invite all fungi enthusiasts, old and new, to join us as we continue to uncover the mysteries of the fungal kingdom.

Thank you to all our volunteers, speakers, and members for your dedication and passion.

**Melvin Xu,**  
Fungi Special Interest Group Representative





## Microscopy Group

Prior to meetings, three general areas are set up. We have a section for slide preparation and making, with slides, cover slips, tools, equipment and stains. We also have an area for dissecting or zoom microscopes alongside a huge array of specimens, all suited to the lower powers of 10x to 80x. The third area is composed of our compound microscope collection. These microscopes are used to view the slides that participants have prepared. The best, clearest magnification found was 400x.

During **April and May**, the Microscope Group combined with the Fungi Group. In April fresh gills, stems and spores from shop purchased mushrooms were prepared by fungi members as temporary slides for viewing under the compound microscope. We used Congo Red which is well suited for fungi staining. The staining highlights filaments of the gills and different sections of stems.

In **May**, we had over a dozen wild fungi available for slide preparation. It was a fabulous array of many different and unusual fungi identified by Geoff Lay. Attendees were very interested in seeing the differences between the spore shapes and cross sections and slices of the fungi body and stems. Following short instructional demonstrations, members were keen to prepare their own slides using the stains and equipment provided.

We also concentrated on freshwater organisms. Fresh water samples were collected from several locations in the Boroondara area which are rich in a diverse range of micro organisms. Temporary slides are prepared and viewed using compound microscopes. Regular attendees have become extremely adept in the aspects of slide preparation. Help with ID is always available.

Of great interest are Max Campbell's amazing videos of the life cycles and survival activities of scores of unique freshwater life. It is interesting for attendees to watch



Combined Microscopy, Fungi Meeting. Melvin Xu, Max Campbell, Nikky Zanen, Hamish Beshara and Tobi May. Photo, Philippa Burgess

what they have found under the microscope, live and on the big screen! Attendees are becoming familiar with identifying the variety of organisms we view.

Also popular have been are our microscope tool-making meetings. Members are instructed on the methods and steps required to make several different microscopy tools. Working with an array of materials, pre-cut handles and the necessary equipment, spatulas, and straight and angled probes were made which were then used during following meetings.

Our practical microscope meetings are proving popular with many regular attendees always showing great interest in our activities. We also regularly have members new to microscopy. We enjoy introducing these people to such a wonderful world. The surprise and awe experienced by new members is always rewarding.

**Philippa Burgess, Max Campbell**

## *The Victorian Naturalist*

Production of *The Victorian Naturalist* has continued without serious problems, for the 140th consecutive year. Six issues of the journal, comprising Volume 140 were published during 2023. Volume 140 comprised 6 issues of 32 pages each; this total includes the Index for Volume 139, which was published in the December issue. This spread resulted in the publication of 192 pages for the year. A total of 27 substantive papers were published in 2023, consisting of 5 Research Reports, 7 Contributions, and 15 Naturalist Notes. In addition, 8 books were reviewed. It was our sad duty to publish tributes to 2 former active members of the FNCV who passed away in 2023: Dr Barry Cooper and Bruce Fuhrer OAM.

It was the Editors' pleasure also to publish the citation for the 2022 recipient of the Australian Natural History Medallion, Genevieve Gates.

I am grateful, as ever, for the efforts throughout the year of all members of the editorial team: my co-editors Dr Maria Gibson and Sue Forster, and our assistant editor-Virgil Hubregtse. They all approached the roles with dedication, enthusiasm and attention to detail, and were a constant support. All this, plus their unfailing cheerfulness, has made it a pleasure to be part of the team of *The Victorian Naturalist*.

At the end of the year, Sue Forster stepped down as an editor, after 7 years.

During the year, Wendy Gare provided administrative support in the production of *The Victorian Naturalist* and I am pleased to thank her for that assistance.

**Dr Gary Presland,**  
**Executive Editor, *The Victorian Naturalist***

**THE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB OF VICTORIA INC**  
**REPORT BY COUNCIL. Year ended 31 December 2023.**

The members of Council hereby submit the Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and the Income Statement for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and report as follows:

1. The names of the Executive Council in office at the date of this report are:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position on Council</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Com- menced</i>
Maxwell Campbell	President	Retired	2013
Philippa Burgess	Vice President/Microscopy Councillor	Artist	2012
Barbara Burns	Treasurer/Secretary	Retired lecturer	2001
John Harris	Councillor	Wildlife consultant	2003
Andrej Hohmann	Councillor	Public servant	2022
Susan Bendel	Councillor	Retired	2006
Judith Sise	Councillor	Teacher	2017
Su Dempsey	Councillor	Retired teacher	2013
Maryse Hermence	Councillor	Retired	2022
	<i>Special Interest Group Councillors</i>		
Ken Griffiths	Botany Group Councillor	Retired teacher	2017
Joan Broadberry	Day Group Councillor	Retired teacher	2001
Michael Lyons	Marine Research Group Councillor	Scheduler	2020
Melvin Xu	Fungi Group Councillor	Student	2021
<i>Vacancy</i>	Geology Group Councillor		
Adam Hosken	Juniors' Group Councillor	Change Master	2022
Ray Gibson	Fauna Survey Group Councillor	Retired	2023
Wendy Clark	Terrestrial Invertebrates Group Councillor	Retired	2022

2. The principal activities and objects of the Club are to stimulate interest in natural history and to preserve and protect Australian fauna and flora. No significant changes in the nature of those activities occurred during 2023.
3. The net profit of the Club for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 was \$5,854 (2022 \$10,932)
4. A review of the operations of the Club is contained in the President's Report which is part of this Annual Report.
5. No matters or circumstance has arisen since the end of the financial year which has significantly affected or may significantly affect the operations or the state of affairs of the Club.
6. Other than set out in No 7, there are no significant developments likely to affect the financial results of the Club.
7. The profit figure of \$5,854 does not include the result of the Club bookshop as this information was not received in time to be included in the Annual Accounts. We are working to arrive at a figure and can report that we are confident the final bookshop result will be a profit.
8. During the financial year, no member of the Council has received or become entitled to receive any benefit by reason of a contract made by the Club with the councillor or with an entity of which the councillor is a member or in which the councillor has a substantial interest.

**THE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB OF VICTORIA INC. STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF COUNCIL**

In the opinion of the members of Council,

- (a) The accompanying Income Statement is drawn up so as to give a true and fair view of the financial results of the Club for the year ended 31 December 2023, apart from the omission referred to in item 7 above.
- (b) The accompanying Statement of Assets and Liabilities is drawn up so as to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Club as at 31 December 2023, apart from the omission referred to in item 7 above.
- (c) As at the date of this statement there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Club will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

SIGNED at Blackburn on this 29th day of April 2024 in accordance with a resolution of Council.



Maxwell Campbell – President



Barbara Burns - Treasurer



**The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc. Income Statement year ended 31/12/23**

		<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>	
		\$	\$	
<b>INCOME</b>	Membership	39,774	38,702	
	Bookshop Profit (Unavailable- see note 7, Page 19)		2,495	
	Hall Hire	1,005	575	
	Government Credit for GST	768	2,530	
	Grant Parks Victoria	727		
	Non-Member Levy and Sundry income	393	365	
	Copyright Royalties - Vic Naturalist.	4,682	5,201	
	Raffle, (Plus second hand book sale 2022)	128	1,510	
	Interest and Franking Credits from Investments	6,171	3,068	
	General Donations and Fungi e-book (\$50)	<u>8,603</u>	<u>4,291</u>	
<b>Total Income</b>		<b><u>\$62,251</u></b>	<b><u>\$58,737</u></b>	
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	Victorian Naturalist, Printing and Postage	6,039	6,903	
	<b>Publications</b>			
	Newsletter, Printing and Postage (less Advertising revenue \$1,000)	937	2,150	
	Calendar of Events, Printing and Postage	<u>1,340</u>	<u>1,360</u>	
	<b>Total Publications Expenses</b>	<b><u>\$8,316</u></b>	<b><u>\$10,413</u></b>	
<b>Other Expenses</b>	Annual Report Printing Cost	280	227	
	Advertising, Signage etc.	206		
	Bank Fees, Credit Card, Eftpos Machine	518	532	
	Depreciation Expense	1,875	2,132	
	Electricity	757	615	
	Hall Cleaning	1,359	1,452	
	Hall Alarm	534	509	
	Insurance	2,473	2,786	
	Internet Provider, Website Expenses and Phone	1,842	1,248	
	Kitchen & Bathroom Supplies and Xmas Expenses	110	284	
	Library Expenses and Subscriptions	256	977	
	Land Tax	879		
	Mali Dunes Expenses - Net (Insurance, Rates, etc. less Donations)	-249	945	
	FNCV Mugs Used	146		
	Non-Library Subscriptions	724	309	
	Office Postage	327	569	
	Office Stationery Supplies, etc	913	646	
	Repairs & Maintenance Office Equipment	278	216	
	Repairs & Maintenance - General	1,956	787	
	Rates (\$674) and Water (\$652) - Gardenia St	1,326	575	
	Rates Maryborough	304	282	
	Sundry Expenses		254	
	Software Purchase	160	87	
	Workers' Compensation Insurance	314	216	
	Wages, Salaries and Superannuation	<u>30,793</u>	<u>28,705</u>	
	<b>Total Other Expenses</b>		<b><u>\$48,081</u></b>	<b><u>\$44,353</u></b>
		<b>Total Publication and Other Expenses</b>	<b><u>\$56,397</u></b>	<b><u>\$54,766</u></b>
		<b>OPERATING PROFIT</b>	<b><u>\$5,854</u></b>	<b><u>\$3,971</u></b>
	<b>Sale of investments</b>	Add Profit from the Sale of 2900 AFI Shares	0	6,961
		<b>NET PROFIT FOR THE YEAR*</b>	<b><u>\$5,854</u></b>	<b><u>\$10,932</u></b>

\* The profit does not include the bookshop results. (See note 7, Page 19.)

**The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc. Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31/12/23**

<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b><u>Current Assets</u></b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
Cash at Bank - Note (3)	67,073	55,470
Bookshop Postage Owing to Office	260	
Petty Cash (FNCV \$50, Bookshop \$40)	90	90
Stock FNCV Mugs (\$439) Cloth Bags (\$619) carried forward	1,058	585
Sundry Debtors Bookshop (not updated from 1.1.23, see Note 7, Page 19)	4,778	4,778
Prepaid Cost of VicNat Searchable USB's (not updated from 1.1.23, see Note 7,Page 19)	6,094	5,100
Expenses Paid in advance for SEANA Camp - April 2024	1,250	
Inventories Bookshop - Note (4) (Not updated from 1.1.23 - see Note 7, Page 19)	<u>13,938</u>	<u>13,938</u>
<b><u>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</u></b>	<b><u>94,541</u></b>	<b><u>79,961</u></b>
<b><u>Non-Current Assets</u></b>		
Bendigo Bank Term Deposit	104,407	100,000
Shares Listed on the Stock Exchange - Note (5)	<u>20,220</u>	<u>20,220</u>
	<b><u>124,627</u></b>	<b><u>120,220</u></b>
<u>Library Holdings - Note (6)</u>	<b><u>50,321</u></b>	<b><u>50,321</u></b>
<u>Property, Plant and Equipment</u>		
Maryborough Property - Note (7)	13,400	13,400
Clubhouse at Valuation, 1 Gardenia St. Blackburn - Note (7)	1,412,000	769,000
Clubhouse Improvements - Note (7)	57,957	57,958
Equipment at Cost, Less Accumulated Depreciation - Note (7)	9,260	8,718
Mali Dunes, Millers Road, Yanac (at cost 6/4/22).	<u>308,223</u>	<u>308,223</u>
	<b><u>1,800,840</u></b>	<b><u>1,157,299</u></b>
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b><u>1,975,788</u></b>	<b><u>1,327,840</u></b>
<b><u>TOTAL ASSETS</u></b>	<b><u>\$2,070,329</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,407,801</u></b>
<b><u>Less LIABILITIES ( All Current)</u></b>		
Prepaid Bookshop Vouchers, Not Yet Spent – (not updated from 1.1.23. See Note 7, P 19)	1,900	1,900
Pay as You go Payable (\$715), Net GST (\$496)	1,211	
Accrued Expenses, Vic Nat Printing	600	
Mali Dunes Donations (for the Purchase of the Property)	103,765	103,765
Science Talent Search Fund	1,000	1,500
Landcare Australia Grant, FNCV Juniors	615	5,459
Australian Natural History Medallion - Loan Account	7,827	7,355
FNCV Environment Fund - Loan Account	<u>34,379</u>	<u>19,610</u>
<b><u>TOTAL LIABILITIES</u></b>	<b><u>151,297</u></b>	<b><u>139,589</u></b>
<b><u>NET ASSETS</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,919,032</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,268,212</u></b>
<b><u>FNCV ACCUMULATED FUNDS</u></b>		
Profit for the year	5,854	10,932
General Fund Brought Forward - Note (8 )	<u>600,107</u>	<u>605,961</u> <u>589,175</u>
Bequests, Dorothy Mahler (\$10,000), Fred Smith (\$10,000)	20,000	20,000
Marine Research Fund	24,857	24,857
Fauna Survey Equip Fund	9,407	9,407
FNCV Environment Fund	715	715
Asset Revaluation Reserve - Clubhouse, Gardenia St. Blackburn (9)	1,240,488	597,488
Asset Revaluation Reserve - General	15,093	15,093
FNCV Juniors Fund - Note (10)	<u>2,511</u>	<u>545</u>
<b><u>TOTAL FNCV ACCUMULATED FUNDS</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,919,032</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,268,212</u></b>



**NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

**1. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES**

This special purpose financial report has been prepared for distribution to the members to fulfil the Council's financial reporting requirements under The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Incorporated constitution. The accounting policies used in the preparation of this report, as described below, are consistent with the financial reporting requirements of the Club's constitution and with previous years, and are, in the opinion of the Council, appropriate to meet the needs of members.

- (a) The financial report has been prepared on a modified accrual basis of accounting including the historical cost convention and the going concern assumption.
- (b) The professional reporting requirements in Australia do not have mandatory applicability to The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Incorporated because its reports are only for members. The Council has, however, prepared the financial report in accordance with the applicable professional reporting requirements.
- (c) These accounts have been prepared on the basis of historical cost and do not take into account changing money values except for the revaluation of some fixed assets, all of which are noted in the accounts.
- (d) The accounting policies have been consistently applied unless otherwise specified.
- (e) *Investments* - are valued either at cost less amounts written off for permanent diminution in their value, or at Council valuation. Dividends and interest are brought to account when received.
- (f) *Fixed Assets* - Property is brought to account at cost, or where appropriate, at Council valuation. Plant, equipment, furniture and fittings are brought to account at cost less accumulated depreciation calculated on a straight line basis over the estimated life of the asset.
- (g) *Income tax* - The Club is not liable for income tax.
- (h) *Inventories* - are valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value.
- i) *Grants* received in relation to operating activities are shown in the income statement as income and offset by regular operating expenses. Grants related to the purchase of assets are deducted from the carrying amount of assets.

2. No Remuneration has been received by councillors for the year ended 31 December 2023

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>3. CASH</b>		
Bendigo Bank Operating Account	62,418	50,815
FNCV Environment Fund Account	716	
Bookshop Account, Westpac Croydon, (Not updated from 1.1.23 - see Note 7, Page 19)	3,282	3,282
Bookshop Interest A/c, Westpac Croydon, (Not updated from 1.1.23 - see Note 7, Page 19)	<u>657</u>	<u>657</u>
<b>TOTAL CASH</b>	<b><u>\$67,073</u></b>	<b><u>\$55,754</u></b>
4. STOCK OF BOOKS for sale, (Not updated from 1.1.23 - see Note 7, Page 19)	<u>13,938</u>	<u>13,938</u>
<b>5. SHARES LISTED ON THE STOCK EXCHANGE</b>		
5000 Shares in Australian Foundation, at cost	<u>20,220</u>	<u>20,220</u>
5(a) Market Value of listed shares in Australian Foundation at 31/12/23, 5000 x \$7.45	<u>37,250</u>	<u>37,300</u>
6. LIBRARY BOOKS AND JOURNALS - At Council Valuation 23/5/95	<u>50,321</u>	<u>50,321</u>
<b>7. FREEHOLD PROPERTIES and EQUIPMENT</b>		
Cossticks Reserve, Maryborough – at valuation	13,400	13,400
Mali Dunes Property at cost 2022	308,223	308,223
1 Gardenia St, Blackburn - at Council valuation, November 2023	1,412,000	769,000
Clubhouse Improvements - at cost	57,958	57,958
Plant and Equipment - at cost	\$78,542	
Less Accumulated Depreciation	<u>(69,282)</u>	<u>9,260</u>
	<b><u>\$1,800,840</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,157,299</u></b>
8. GENERAL FUND - Balance Brought Forward 1.1.2023	600,107	\$589,175
Add Net Profit for 2023 (Doesn't include bookshop profit - see Note 7 Page, 19)	<u>5,854</u>	<u>10,932</u>
<b>Balance at 31 December 2023</b>	<b><u>\$605,961</u></b>	<b><u>\$600,107</u></b>
9. Asset Revaluation Reserve - CLUBHOUSE, Balance 1.1.2023	597,488	597,488
FNCV Council Revaluation to Blackburn Rates Notice Valuation, 31/12/23	<u>643,000</u>	0
<b>Balance at 31 December 2023</b>	<b><u>\$1,240,488</u></b>	<b><u>\$597,488</u></b>
10. FNCV Junior's Balance 1 1 2023	545	545
Capital Donation Received	<u>1,966</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>- Balance at 31 December 2023</b>	<b><u>\$2,511</u></b>	<b><u>\$545</u></b>

**The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Inc.**

<b><u>Cash Flow Statement for the year ended 31 December 2023</u></b>	<b><u>Inflow +,</u></b>	<b><u>Outflow (-)</u></b>
	<b><u>2023</u></b>	<b><u>2022</u></b>
<b>CASH FLOWS OPERATING ACTIVITIES:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
Net inflow from Operations (Note 1.)	6,977	3,227
GST (net change)	496	-423
<b>Net Cash Inflow from Operations</b>	<b><u>\$7,473</u></b>	<b><u>\$2,804</u></b>
<b>CASH FLOWS INVESTING ACTIVITIES:</b>		
Equipment Purchased	-2,417	-4,006
Purchase of Mallee Property, Mali Dunes		-308,223
Increase in Fauna Survey Group Equipment Fund		269
Increase in Bendigo Bank Term Deposit not Received in Cash	-4,407	104,886
Proceeds from the Sale of Listed Shares		17,533
SEANA camp expenses paid in advance	-1,250	
Postage owing by bookshop to office	-260	
<b>Net Cash Outflow from Investing Activities</b>	<b><u>-8,334</u></b>	<b><u>-\$189,541</u></b>
<b>CASH FLOWS FINANCING ACTIVITIES:</b>		
Decrease in Science Talent Search Fund	-500	1,500
Increase in Donations contributed for Mali Dunes Purchase		18,115
Decrease in Landcare Grant, FNCV Juniors	-4,844	1,618
Increase in Loan from Australian Natural History Medallion	472	473
Increase in Expenses Owing	600	
Increase in Loan from Environment Fund	14,769	2,930
Change in FNCV Juniors' Fund	1,967	
<b>Net Cash Inflow from Financing Activities</b>	<b><u>12,464</u></b>	<b><u>\$24,636</u></b>
<b>Net Cash Inflow for the Year</b>	<b><u>\$11,603</u></b>	<b><u>-\$162,101</u></b>
<b>CHANGE In FNCV Operating A/C balance for year</b>	<b><u>\$11,603</u></b>	<b><u>\$-162,101</u></b>
Bendigo Bank Operating Account Balance Start of Year	50,815	201,005
Less Bendigo Bank Operating Account Balance End of Year	62,418	50,815
<b>Increase in Bendigo Bank Operating Account</b>	<b>\$11,603</b>	<b>-150,190</b>
Change in Westpac Bookshop (Inform. not supplied (See P.19 Note 7))	<u>0</u>	<u>-11,911</u>
<b>Total Reported Increase in Cash for year</b>	<b><u>\$11,603</u></b>	<b><u>\$-162,101</u></b>
<b>Note 1. Reconciliation of Net Profit with Cash Flow from Operations</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
Net Profit	5,854	10,932
Add Back Depreciation	1,875	2,132
Less Increase in Inventories Bookshop (Not provided by 31/12/23)		-2,942
Less Increase in Bookshop Debtors (Not provided by 31/12/23)		-1,364
Add Decrease in Stock of Mugs (\$146) Inc in Cloth Bags (-\$619)	-473	240
Less Decrease in Pay-as-You-Go Tax Owing	715	-571
Less Increase in Prepaid Cost of VicNat Searchable USB's	-994	-5,200
<b>Net Cash Inflow from Operations</b>	<b><u>\$6,977</u></b>	<b><u>\$3,227</u></b>



INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF  
THE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB OF VICTORIA INC

Scope

I have audited the attached special purpose financial report comprising the Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement and Notes to the Financial Statements, of The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Incorporated, for the year ended 31 December 2023. The Club's Council is responsible for the financial report and have determined that the accounting policies used are consistent with the financial reporting requirements of the Club's constitution and are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. I have conducted an independent audit of the financial report in order to express an opinion on it to the members of The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Incorporated. No opinion is expressed as to whether the accounting policies used are appropriate to the needs of the members.

The financial report has been prepared for distribution to members for the purpose of fulfilling the Council's financial reporting requirements under the Club's constitution. I disclaim any assumption of responsibility for any reliance on this report or on the financial report to which it relates to any person other than the members, or for any purpose other than that for which it was prepared.

The audit has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Professional Accounting requirements. The procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial report and the evaluation of significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion whether, in all material respects, the financial report is presented fairly in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements. (These policies do not require the application of all mandatory professional reporting requirements in Australia).

I have relied on the data for years prior to that ending 31 December 2023 as being correct. No effort has been made to value the Club's assets.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

Qualification

As is common for organisations of this type, it is not practical for The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Incorporated to maintain an effective system of internal control over donations, subscriptions and other fund-raising activities until their entry in the accounting records. Accordingly, the audit in relation to such receipts was limited to the amounts recorded.

As noted in item 7 of the report by Council, the attached special purpose financial report has been prepared without the update of financial results and asset holdings of the Club bookshop. At the time of audit some financial records as at 31 December 2023 were available, while not incorporated into the accounts. I have reviewed the available financial records and record-keeping processes of the Club bookshop and have submitted to the Council a number of areas for concern. The bookshop is not of sufficient materiality to prevent me providing an opinion of fair and correct Club financial records overall, however I expect these areas of concern to be addressed before the next audit of 2024 financial results.

Qualified Audit Opinion

In my opinion, except for the effects of such adjustments, if any, as might have been determined to be necessary had the limitation discussed in the qualification paragraph not existed, the financial report presents fairly, in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, the financial position of The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Incorporated, as at 31 December 2023 and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended.

Signed:



Susan J. Harkin, CPA  
Honorary Auditor

6 April 2024  
Blackburn