

# Volunteering Naturally

Understanding Victoria's Environmental Volunteers 2023





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## Accessibility

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## Aboriginal acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.

## Dedication

This Volunteering Naturally report is dedicated to the hundreds of thousands of volunteers across Victoria who donate their time and skills to protecting our incredible natural environment. It is also dedicated to the volunteer managers and coordinators who provide critical, inspiring leadership and enable volunteer efforts to take place. Through capturing your contributions, we seek to continue spotlighting the invaluable work you're undertaking for generations to come.



RIGHT: TREE PLANTING IN SHEPPARTON, AUGUST 2023.  
PHOTO CREDIT: JILL CROOME



COVER: GARRY AND HANNAH. PROJECT HINDMARSH





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# Environmental volunteering

Victoria has a strong history of environmental volunteering, with volunteers contributing enormously to improving our environment, our local communities, and our economy.

Launched in 2018, Victorians Volunteering for Nature; the Victorian Environmental Volunteering Plan, provides the opportunity to strengthen environmental volunteering across the state. It sets a direction for the sector through an overarching, coordinated and revitalised approach, based on actions in four key focus areas – Sustain, Expand, Value and Understand.

We are focused on providing the means for Victorians who want to contribute to nature to get involved based on their diverse skill sets, passion for specific causes at a time that suits them.



**Sustain**



**Value**



**Expand**



**Understand**

## What is it?

Volunteering Australia defines volunteering as “time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain”. This captures both formal and informal volunteering.

Environmental volunteering encompasses a diverse range of environmental and sustainability activities carried out by individuals and community groups. Environmental volunteering is volunteering in and for our natural environment. It can focus on a geographic location, emerging issues such as pollution events, a species or nature-based recreation activities. Today, environmental volunteering expands beyond traditional activities such as planting, weeding and land management to advocacy on climate change, community renewable energy and sustainable living, and activities such as virtual volunteering and citizen science.

## Background to Volunteering Naturally

In 2005, the then Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment reviewed natural resource management volunteer programs. Titled Volunteering Naturally, the review concluded there were an estimated 100,000 Victorians volunteering their time to support natural resource management.

A key focus of the plan was to better understand the environmental volunteering sector. To support this, DEECA sought to collate about the active groups and organisations, people and hours contributed across Victoria into an annual snapshot – Volunteering Naturally.

Since 2019, Volunteering Naturally has provided an evidence base to understand the landscape and inform how environmental volunteering managers can better support the needs of environmental volunteers today and into the future. It also provides the opportunity to communicate and celebrate the collective effort of all Victorian environmental volunteers.

# About environmental volunteering groups

Although it is common for groups to undertake a breadth of activities, for the purpose of this snapshot each environmental volunteer group is categorised according to one primary activity type from the list below.



## Caring for landscapes

Stewardship, physical work and activities on the ground to protect and enhance the natural environment such as planting, weeding and landscape restoration. These activities can occur in parks, in coastal areas and on private and public land. Key groups working in this space include "Friends of" groups, Landcare, Coastcare, Parks Victoria volunteers, committees of management, community nurseries and environment groups.



## Sustainable living

Activities that promote environmental sustainability aligned with consumption including clean-ups, repairs, waste minimisation, climate change, community renewable energy and community gardens.



## Citizen science

Monitoring activities that collect data to build knowledge on a species or environmental condition. Key groups undertaking these activities include Waterwatch and Estuarywatch, Frog Census, Victorian Biodiversity Atlas users, bird and nest box monitoring and observer groups.



## Wildlife rescue and rehabilitation

Supporting positive welfare outcomes for native fauna. A small but incredibly active number of groups and individuals participate in wildlife rescue, contributing a high proportion of hours volunteered per individual volunteer.



## Recreation/Nature experience

Volunteers supporting connection with nature and education through groups including Field Naturalists, zoos and botanical gardens, four-wheel drive clubs, fishers and bike groups.



## Advocacy

Groups that advocate for improved environmental outcomes. A small group of larger organisations and a number of community-based environmental advocacy groups. Included are Australian Conservation Foundation, Environment Victoria and Environmental Justice Australia.



## Networks/other

Remaining groups and Networks with varied focus across activities, such as conservation management networks, Non-Government Organisations and Landcare networks.

**"I've met some really clever and passionate people and they are doing amazing things to restore our natural environment. Just being with them or hearing their stories makes me feel positive about the future."**



1500 PLANTS AND GUARDS IN THE GROUND  
IN VENTNOR, PHILLIP ISLAND  
PHOTO CREDIT: PHILLIP ISLAND LANDCARE

## About Volunteering Naturally 2023

Delivered annually since 2019, Volunteering Naturally is a collection and collation of data about active environmental volunteer groups and organisations in Victoria.

This includes their location and, where possible, the number of volunteers and volunteer hours contributed, sourced through financial year reporting data.

The stocktake is simple in approach with a narrow focus on the information that is sought. Knowing whether a group is active, the numbers of volunteers and hours contributed is at the centre of this snapshot. We adopted a conservative approach to estimating volunteer effort and active volunteerism rather than by membership only.

Volunteering Naturally recognises the variety of types and modes of environmental volunteering. This includes, but is not limited to, regular volunteering activity, large annual volunteering events, community placed-based models of volunteering in nature and sustainability/climate action activities.

An accurate estimate of individual volunteers and hours volunteered helps us to understand the economic benefits of environmental volunteering to Victoria and where that activity is occurring.

“We contributed to something larger than ourselves and I think that is part of the reason it was so rewarding for so many people”



## Data collection during 2023

Data used in this report reflects volunteer numbers during the 2022–23 financial year and was collected via;

- annual reporting from funded and supported programs
- annual grants group health survey data
- a short survey forwarded to a large number of groups and organisations, and
- cross-checking with program managers, groups, NGOs and others, including local government.

We have not assumed data for groups that did not respond. Therefore, it is very likely that information on volunteer numbers and hours provided are an underestimate. Although primarily focused on group or program activity, this snapshot also acknowledges that information about environmental volunteers is hard to find and not always up to date. It is also difficult to determine whether individuals contribute to more than one environmental group or activity.

Similar to previous years capturing individual contributions, especially through advocacy and wildlife rescue and rehabilitation volunteering efforts, was challenging. Therefore, there is a strong likelihood that the numbers in these areas are also significantly under-represented.

It is also important to acknowledge data collected through Volunteering Naturally is unlikely to represent the extensive contribution that First Nations people make to Country, specifically for the health of the environment. Volunteering is not a First Nations concept; however, when understood as cultural obligation and reciprocity, ‘community giving’ amongst First Nations people actively embodies the principles of formal volunteering as time willingly given for the common good<sup>2</sup>. For thousands of generations Victoria’s First Peoples have embodied the traditional knowledge of care for Country and Country cares for you<sup>3</sup>.

“Since I joined Love Our Street 3186 Elsternwick Park, I’m now so much more aware of the litter near my home and work. I pick up whatever I can and educate my students too.”

Liz Love Our Street 3186 EP

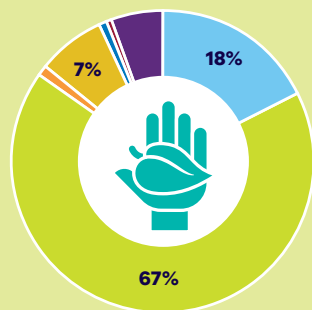
📷 LGBTIQ FRIENDS OF BABABI DJINANANG GRASSLANDS  
PHOTO CREDIT: DEECA



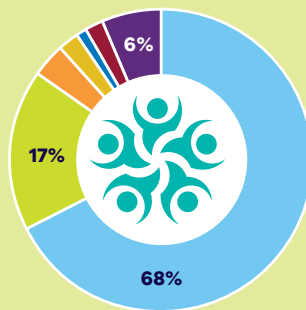
# Volunteering Naturally 2023

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

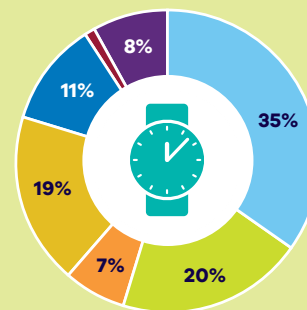
## ANNUAL SNAPSHOT OF VICTORIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEER GROUPS



**213,532**  
VOLUNTEERS



**1,955**  
GROUPS



**1,921,183\***  
HOURS REPORTED



**\$84.84 million**

### ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

Volunteer contribution was assigned a monetary value of \$44.16/hour based on ABS 2017–2018 volunteer data and a 3.9% wage increase. Volunteer hours contributed is based on data from the most recent financial year.

Environmental volunteering encompasses a broad range of environmental and sustainability activities. Put simply, it is volunteering in and for our natural environment. Environmental volunteering connects community to nature and to each other.



### Caring for landscapes

Stewardship and physical work on the ground including parks, coasts, private and public land through organisations such as "Friends of" groups, Landcare and Coastcare.



### Sustainable living

Promoting consumption reduction, pollution prevention and reduction with initiatives such as Boomerang Bags, clean-up activities and community energy projects.



### Recreation/Nature experience

Volunteers supporting education and connection to nature or appreciation of nature through groups including Field naturalists, zoos and botanical gardens, four-wheel drive clubs, fishers and bike groups.



### Citizen science

Monitoring and data collection activities in groups such as Waterwatch, frog census, bird and nest box data.



### Wildlife rescue and rehabilitation

Supporting positive welfare outcomes for native fauna.



### Advocacy

Groups that advocate for improved environmental outcomes. Such as ACF, Environment Victoria and Environmental Justice Victoria.



### Networks/other

Remaining groups and networks with divided focus across activities, such as Conservation Management Networks, NGOs and Landcare networks.

\*70% of known active groups captured and reported their data.



## Key observations

There has been a substantial increase in the number of Victorians volunteering for nature in 2023, particularly against a backdrop of unprecedented decline in biodiversity. With an increase of 23% in volunteer hours and 18% of active volunteers over the past twelve months, there is clear evidence of the commitment and interest by everyday Victorians stepping up to care for nature.

Nationally, volunteering rates have been in decline for many years and, as has been widely reported, fell dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic. While COVID-19 related restrictions have been lifted, volunteering rates across the wider sector are yet to return to pre-pandemic rates<sup>4</sup>.


The data shows environmental volunteering in Victoria continues to buck the downwards trajectory with the past two years experiencing an increase in volunteers and hours. This trend is supported by social research which found a significant latent interest amongst everyday Victorians in undertaking environmental volunteer activities<sup>5</sup>.

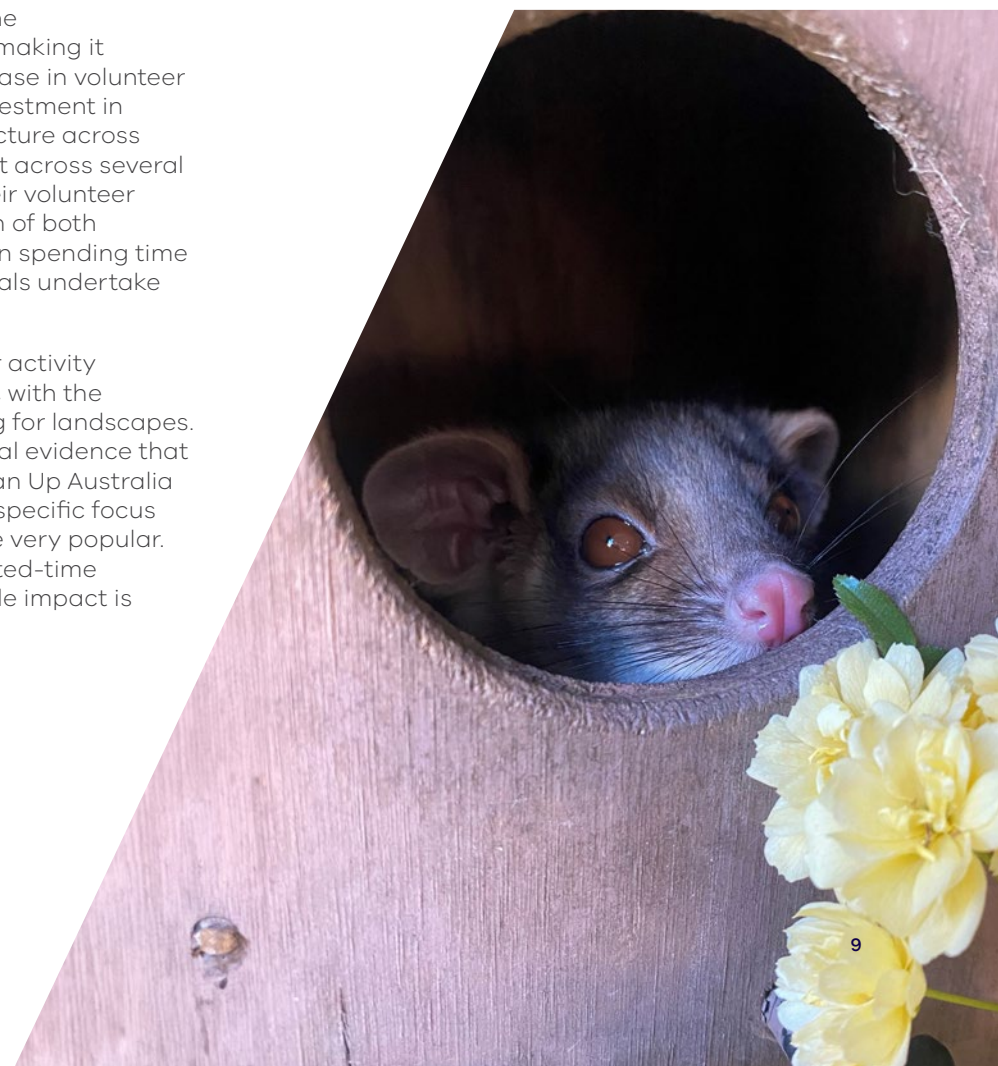
There are many factors influencing the environmental volunteer ecosystem, making it difficult to directly attribute the increase in volunteer rates. This includes the additional investment in environmental volunteering infrastructure across regional Victoria, the concerted effort across several environmental groups to diversify their volunteer offerings and the growing recognition of both physical and mental health benefits in spending time in nature - particularly when individuals undertake physical activities.

Similar to 2022, group-based outdoor activity accounted for most volunteer efforts, with the majority of groups engaging in caring for landscapes. Data captured supports the anecdotal evidence that litter collection activities such as Clean Up Australia Day and other one-off events with a specific focus e.g., National Tree Day, continue to be very popular. Having a singular purpose and a limited-time commitment with an immediate visible impact is appealing to Victorians.

**“I saw this as an opportunity to get involved and do something about the issues of rubbish in my local neighbourhood.”**

**Sacha, 3018 Altona Beach Patrol**

 RINGTAIL POSSUM WAS FOUND WITH A NECROTIC TAIL TIP INJURY, WHICH THE VETS HAD TO REMOVE. AFTER A 2 WEEK STAY TO ALLOW FOR HEALING, SHE WAS RELEASED BACK INTO MONBULK.  
CREDIT: AMAROO WILDLIFE SHELTER



## Data collection

In 2023 we received data from 70% of the known groups and organisations across the state, an increase from 2022 (60%).

The increase in data contributions is due to many factors. This includes incorporating data measures in annual reporting for grant recipients, aligning reporting dates across government programs to capture data by financial year, and concerted effort in engaging with smaller or less formal groups.

As Volunteering Naturally becomes more popular and the collective impact is shared and celebrated, it has become increasingly easier to demonstrate to groups how their data contributes to the statewide picture.

It can also be difficult to accurately get data for citizen science observations and also advocacy groups which may not identify the work they do as “environmental volunteering”. For others, volunteering is about the “doing” and having to do administration or reporting is not what is driving them to be involved.

The increase in volunteers and hours is not just due to a higher percentage of data collected – when we look at the individual data points for those that provided information both in 2022 and 2023, there is evidence of an overall increase in participation.

The Department will continue to work on increasing the percentage and consistency in data provided by groups to enable greater accuracy in trends and observations of and into the sector.



RIGHT: DISCOVERING WATER BUGS PHOTO CREDIT TAYA GERSTEL





## Opportunities for environmental volunteering

Victoria has a strong history of environmental volunteering, with volunteers contributing enormously to improving our environment and economy. While 2023 saw efforts increase, the proportion of Australians engaging in volunteer work has fallen substantially over the past three years<sup>6</sup>. Continued innovation from government is required to support the sector to continue to thrive. This includes understanding how changing demographics impacts on people's availability or willingness to volunteer, accepting that volunteering needs to be done differently and supporting groups to provide offerings that are simultaneously flexible and purposeful<sup>7</sup>.

It is well-documented that environmental volunteering has benefits beyond protecting and restoring Victoria's unique natural environment. Over the past decade there has been a growing body of evidence that spending time in nature has positive wellbeing outcomes. Volunteering in green spaces has the added benefit of providing opportunities for social connection while being physically active. A 2021 study conducted by KPMG estimated the Landcare movement saved the Australian public purse \$57 million in avoided healthcare costs nationally<sup>8</sup>. While a recent New South Wales study found environmental volunteering offers a range of benefits for individuals, including enhanced mental and social health and was an untapped resource for community-based health promotion and for achieving environmental goals<sup>9</sup>.

There is significant latent interest in the national population to volunteer for nature. A 2022 study by Volunteering Australia found that while only 6.6% of volunteers undertook environmental protection work 23% of non-volunteers surveyed would be interested in undertaking conservation activities when volunteering<sup>10</sup>. While further research is required to understand the disconnect between the types of volunteer activities people want to undertake and what people actually do, this study suggests the sector could be more proactive in promoting opportunities for acting for nature and addressing barriers to involvement.



TOP: COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING EVENT IN SHEPPARTON, AUGUST 2023.  
CREDIT: JILL CROOME

Victoria is among the fastest growing states in Australia and home to one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world. Almost half of all Victorians were either born overseas or have a parent born overseas. Anecdotally, we know that environmental volunteers do not reflect the cultural diversity that exists in the general population. While there is a shortage in research on volunteering within culturally or religiously diverse contexts the data that does exist suggests Australians born overseas are less likely to have engaged in formal volunteering – although they are equally likely to have undertaken informal volunteering<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, recent research found more than 75% of Victorians from culturally diverse backgrounds surveyed would like to get involved in environmental volunteering if the opportunity arose<sup>12</sup>.

All Victorians should have the opportunity to volunteer for nature and to do so while feeling culturally and psychologically safe. Barriers to participation were well-researched and documented. When developing strategies to engage new volunteers, groups and volunteer managers would do well to engage with local peak bodies to better understand how 'formal' volunteer offerings could be more appealing for diverse audiences. Practical tools, like the Bellarine Catchment Network's Inclusive Volunteering Guide, provide a good starting point for projects starting on this journey.

Victoria's vast environmental volunteering sector remains a vital resource in the state's approach to conserving and restoring our environment. The challenges of climate change, natural disasters and biodiversity loss continues to shine a light on the need for everyday Victorians to roll up their sleeves and act for nature. Against this complex and shifting environment it is essential that policy makers, private business, delivery partners and volunteer managers collaborate to create the fertile ground for strategic and impactful volunteering to occur.

**“Anyone can be a volunteer. All you have to do is find something that you're passionate about, an area in which you wish to enact change. And then I guarantee you, there's a group that is already working toward creating a difference in that area. And if there's not, you could always be the first.”**

**Alex Paporakis**



BELOW: OTWAY OCEAN CARE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP 2022-23. CREDIT COASTCARE





# Trudy Nelsson

One person's hard work brings the benefits of nature to many

Trudy Nelsson is the secretary of the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network and has volunteered with Landcare for more than 25 years. The 59-year-old has worked in rural finance, is a qualified teacher and completed a Bachelor of Applied Science in Environmental Management to follow her passion – to look after the environment and leave a positive environmental legacy for her children.



Trudy started volunteering with Sunday Creek Landcare near Broadford and lived through the Black Saturday bushfires. She's been volunteering with the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network since moving in 2013, spending at least one day a week on the projects the network manages. Her projects include protecting Spring Soaks; Malleefowl monitoring at Wychitella; monitoring nest boxes for sugar gliders and phascogales; a butterfly garden at the local kindergarten; and a partnership with Lively.

Lively is a disability service provider operating in the Loddon Mallee region. It has partnered with the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network for three years to deliver activity days in nature. Participants can take part in tree planting projects and learn about the local wildlife and ecosystems. Trudy also helps them explore the local area and take photos, which they enter in photo competitions. She's excited when the participants remember things they've learned from previous activities, such as the importance of habitat for the birds. The carers who accompany the participants also benefit through learning about nature and the local environment.

Community engagement and getting people into nature is a highlight for Trudy. She's an active volunteer with the Loddon Plains Landcare Network and Mt Korong Ecowatch, in addition to working with an organisation delivering environmental education programs to schools in Victoria. Trudy loves events, sharing knowledge and helping to educate young people, as they are the volunteers of the future.

"It might spark their imagination on something they find interesting and get them out there enjoying the landscape," she said. "If they don't know about it, how can they care about it?"

There are about 40 volunteers involved in the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network, each contributing to the projects in their own way. The network is also making plans for future projects and engaging new volunteers.

"It's important to try and engage with a different set of volunteers, such as other forest user groups and corporate organisations," she said. "It helps expand our volunteer base and brings different perspectives to our projects."

In 2023, in the Loddon Mallee region, more than 3,900 people volunteered for more than 104,000 hours.



LEFT: TRUDY NELSSON, WEDDERBURN CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT NETWORK. PHOTO CREDIT BELINDA PRITCHARD

BELOW: WEDDERBURN CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT NETWORK PHOTO CREDIT TRUDY NELSSON



# The Seedy Ladies

Knox locals see the social side of volunteering

A small group of Knoxfield locals, 'The Seedy Ladies', have been enjoying the social side of volunteering as they work to preserve native seeds for planting throughout their community.

Working in tandem with the Hunter and Gatherer team who go out and collect indigenous seeds from across Knox, The Seedy Ladies have been meeting every week to clean and sort native seeds. The seeds sometimes come covered in seed cases or pods or have some soil in the sample or leaves and twigs attached.

The seeds are planted locally, creating greener spaces for the Knoxfield community. Many of the seeds are from rare and endangered native plants, which are carefully planted in areas where they have been lost, revitalising the environment and ensuring native fauna continues to grow.

This less strenuous form of volunteering has been ideal for many of the communities' elderly members, who are still looking for opportunities to preserve their native environment and make some new friends along the way.

Seedy Lady Joy Matthews loves the social aspect of the group.

"Everyone has been so welcoming. It feels like we're doing something to help the environment, and we're learning. All the plants are indigenous. I saw the Seedy Ladies sitting around the sorting table and I thought I could do that."

"It has been so important over the last few years to have these social connections. Meeting like-minded people who we wouldn't normally have met. It's nice to go for walks in the local areas where I can see the impacts of our work. All the plants we have helped come to life have been planted around the place."



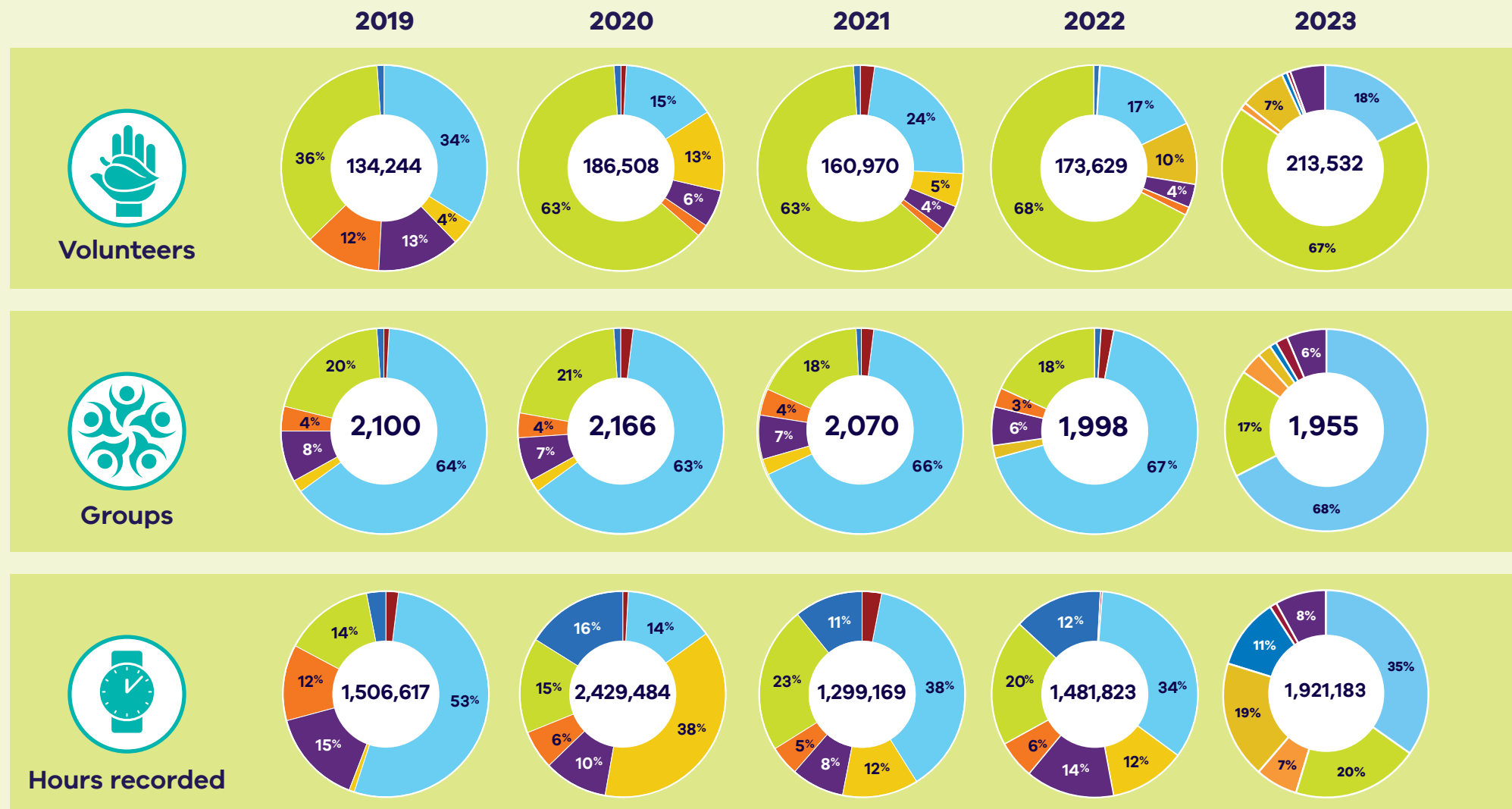
RIGHT: THE SEEDY LADIES





# Comparison of Volunteering Naturally data

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action



Advocacy



Caring for landscapes



Citizen science



Recreation/ Nature experience



Sustainable living



Wildlife rescue



Networks/other

For commentary on the above graphs, please refer to pages 13 – 14



## What the 2019 – 2023 environmental volunteering numbers reveal

This report takes a cautious approach to determining trends in environmental volunteering given the atypical nature of 2020 to 2022.

### Groups

- The overall number of environmental volunteering groups has decreased from 2019 to 2023. In some cases, groups that were inactive during COVID-19 were unable to reactivate while other groups which formed around an issue have sunsetted. An example of this is Boomerang Bags. Despite this, new groups have emerged across most activity areas.
- About 67% of all groups carry out Caring for Landscapes activities, a figure that has remained relatively consistent over the past five years. The number of volunteer hours attributed to Caring for Landscapes remains by far the highest, at 35%, and the overall number of volunteers in this category remains steadily at about 17%. This suggests the connection to local environments is a strong motivator for action and volunteers in this category are more inclined to contribute efforts on a regular basis.
- Consistent with previous years, the Sustainable Living category saw an overall reduction in the number of individual groups – yet has maintained the highest number of individual volunteers (68%). These volunteers contributed 20% of the overall hours volunteered and are primarily engaged through event-based opportunities, such as litter collection activities through Clean Up Australia Day.

### Individuals

- Between 2019 and 2023, the number of people participating in different categories has fluctuated and is dependent on several factors, including provision of data. Overall there was an increase of 80,000 more people involved in volunteering from 2019 to 2023. This is an increase of 37% over the duration of the Environmental Volunteering Plan.
- Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation is the most consistent in the number of individuals involved. This is likely due to the requirements to be registered as a wildlife carer and/or shelter operator – a significant commitment.
- There continues to be evidence that one-off periodic activities like Beach Patrol and Clean Up Australia Day attract more participants. This has been supported anecdotally through individual program observations.



## Hours

- With the impacts of COVID-19, it is unsurprising that volunteer hours have fluctuated greatly since the start of Volunteering Naturally reporting. The data has reflected an overall increase in the number of hours volunteered since 2022 figures (up by 23%) across all categories except for networks/others, which has experienced a small reduction.
- Caring for Landscapes activities continue to contribute the highest number of hours which has been consistent since 2019 – aside from the Citizen Science increase during COVID-19.
- The growth in economic contribution of environmental volunteer hours in 2023 reflects both the significant increase on hours volunteered from 2022 and increase in the value assigned to volunteer hours from \$42.51/hr to \$44.16/hr. This rise in hourly rate is based on the overall increase in wages of 3.9% as reported by the ABS<sup>18</sup>.

## REASONS PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERING

Local

Nature-based recreation

Issue-driven

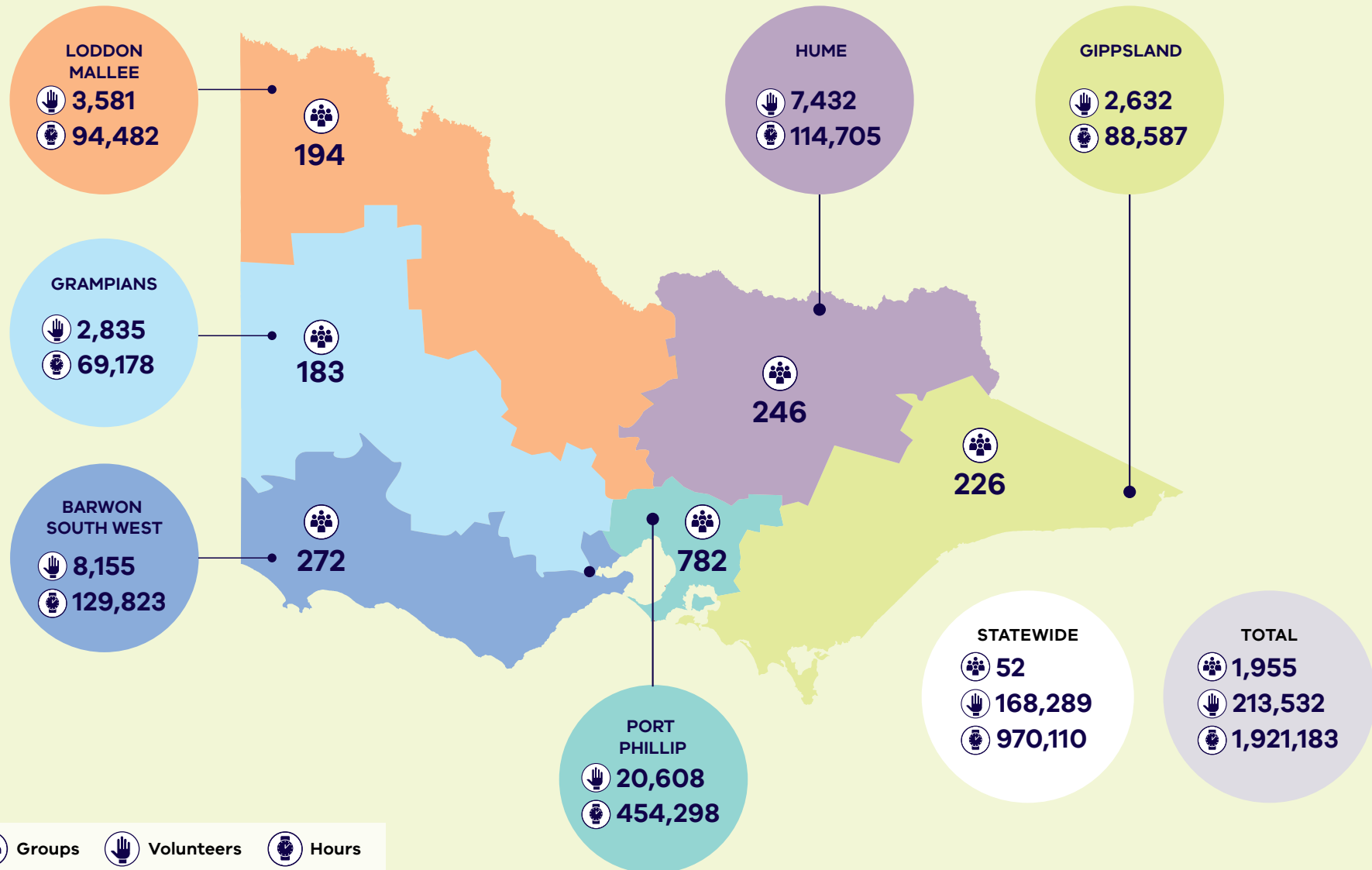
Species-focused



# Where Victorians volunteer

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

Volunteering for nature occurs across the whole state on both private and public land. It is unsurprising most volunteering occurs in the Port Phillip region, with four out of five people in Victoria living in the capital city area of Greater Melbourne<sup>14</sup>.





# Project Hindmarsh

Volunteers helping to save the golden-rayed blue butterfly

Ninety volunteers from all over Victoria converged on the little town of Rainbow for a weekend in July to increase habitat for the golden-rayed blue butterfly – a species found only in Victoria.

Project Hindmarsh is a long-term volunteer community project which aims to reconnect the Big Desert to Little Desert regions in western Victoria through revegetation and restoration of native vegetation on private and public land.

Many volunteers travel from across Victoria to participate in Project Hindmarsh every year motivated to act for nature, meet like-minded people and spend time in Victoria's beautiful Wimmera country. Here are some of their stories.

Gary and Hannah have a strong connection to the Wimmera even though they are based in Melbourne. They are a father/daughter team that's participated in Project Hindmarsh for more than 20 years. This event provides a unique opportunity for them to have a weekend away, while leaving a legacy that will benefit future generations.



Project Hindmarsh is marked in the calendar every year for this group of friends. They are often referred to as 'The Crack Team' as they are well-known for digging out and planting large areas over a weekend.



The team travel from across Victoria to catch up, have some fun, get their hands dirty and do something for the planet. Brett said a concern about deforestation and wanting to give something back to the land motivated him.

Luke said he loved to see people from all backgrounds getting involved in the weekend. The team also felt a connection to the area due to the longevity of the project. Even though this is a 'once a year' volunteering opportunity, the team also volunteer with a range of organisations.



ABOVE: BRETT, LUKE AND FRIENDS – THE CRACK TEAM

LEFT: GARY AND HANNAH

RIGHT: WILL GLEN

FAR RIGHT: GOLDEN-RAYED BLUE BUTTERFLY

CREDIT KATE PEARCE

Will Glen spent the weekend as an environmental volunteer at this year's Project Hindmarsh. He was concerned about the lack of habitat for the golden-rayed blue butterfly so was keen to get involved and volunteered with his mum and little brother.

Will learnt about the golden-rayed blue butterfly when he completed a science project for school at the local Yaaapeet P-12 College. His school ran its own volunteering day, where students planted Creeping Boobialla in the local area, and Will was keen to do

Hindmarsh Landcare Facilitator Jonathan Starks said it was a pleasure to work with so many dedicated volunteers planting wildflowers and bringing colour back to Rainbow.



# Friends of the Mitta

Acting to protect the Upper Mitta Mitta River corridor

The mighty Mitta Mitta River begins in the Alpine region of north-east Victoria. Friends of the Mitta is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit organisation that is acting to protect the Upper Mitta Mitta River corridor through advocacy, education and environmental projects.



Founder Jeffe Aronson recognised the Mitta was a hidden gem, although little information was available and few people knew about the incredible river system. Jeffe started the Friends of the Mitta website, which continues to be the largest resource of articles and citizen science information about the Mitta and the eastern Alpine National Park.

Friends of the Mitta has 250 members and more than 1,000 Facebook followers who get involved in weed removal, revegetation, clean ups and pest control activities. To date, about 40 improvement projects have been completed by Friends of the Mitta, in collaboration with school groups, universities, Parks Victoria and the North East Catchment Management Authority. Partnering with others has been a big part of their success, in addition to combining volunteer opportunities with fun activities like river rafting.

[www.friendsofthemitta.org/](http://www.friendsofthemitta.org/)

“A wild area is more likely to be protected for future generations when people know it and love it.”

Founder, Jeffe Aronson







 VOLUNTEERS AT A PLANTING DAY IN MERRICKS NORTH

## What's next?

### Thank you

We look forward to communicating the results of Volunteering Naturally each year and appreciate all those groups and organisations that have contributed data. We would particularly like to thank the environmental volunteer program managers, local council staff and the groups themselves for providing their information to show the collective impact of the work being done across the state. Your contributions are what made this project, and so many others, possible.

### Stand up and be counted

If you'd like to check we have your environmental volunteering included in the annual snapshot so you can showcase what you do and encourage others to join you, please contact our team.

### Want to find an environmental volunteering group?

It's as easy as Zoom, Select, Connect.

Go to our interactive map to see what environmental volunteering groups are in your area  
<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/volunteering>

### Stay up to date

If you're keen to keep across what's happening in the environmental volunteering landscape subscribe to our regular e-newsletter by getting in touch with the team, details below.

### Get in touch with our team

[environmental.volunteering@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:environmental.volunteering@delwp.vic.gov.au)

“All it takes is a single volunteer experience to change the way you see the environment and find a new appreciation for all it provides. By getting involved, you are helping work towards a cleaner, healthier Earth and hopefully you inspire others to join in and do the same.”

**23,000 trees for 2023: bringing the urban community together**

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/average-weekly-earnings-australia/latest-release>
- <sup>2</sup> [https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Community-Giving-in-First-NationsCommunities\\_Nov-2022.pdf](https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Community-Giving-in-First-NationsCommunities_Nov-2022.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> <https://www.vic.gov.au/care-country>
- <sup>4</sup> <https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Volunteering-in-Australia-2022-The-Volunteer-Perspective.pdf> pages 10 – 11
- <sup>5</sup> [https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0026/503288/DELW006-Project-V-Findings-Snapshot\\_v2.1.pdf](https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/503288/DELW006-Project-V-Findings-Snapshot_v2.1.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> Volunteers – Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (aihw.gov.au)
- <sup>7</sup> [https://volunteeringtas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The\\_Great\\_Reset\\_Paper\\_2022\\_FINAL\\_Web.pdf](https://volunteeringtas.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The_Great_Reset_Paper_2022_FINAL_Web.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/wellbeing-report>
- <sup>9</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33527602/>
- <sup>10</sup> [Volunteering-in-Australia-2022-The-Volunteer-Perspective.pdf](https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Strategy-for-Volunteering-2023-2033.pdf) (volunteeringstrategy.org.au)
- <sup>11</sup> <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Strategy-for-Volunteering-2023-2033.pdf>
- <sup>12</sup> [https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0026/503288/DELW006-Project-V-Findings-Snapshot\\_v2.1.pdf](https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/503288/DELW006-Project-V-Findings-Snapshot_v2.1.pdf)
- <sup>13</sup> Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, May 2023 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)
- <sup>14</sup> <https://www.vic.gov.au/discover-victorias-diverse-population>

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VOLUNTEER TRACK RANGER AT FRENCH ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

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