

Volunteering Naturally

Understanding Victoria's Environmental Volunteers 2022



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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.



RIGHT MORNINGTON PENINSULA NATIONAL PARK HAS BEEN WELCOMING OUR VOLUNTEER TRACK RANGERS FOR OVER 5 YEARS NOW PROVIDING THE PERFECT BACKDROPS FOR PEOPLE TO VOLUNTEER OUTDOORS AND EXPERIENCE VICTORIA'S MAGNIFICENT COASTLINE ENVIRONMENTS

CREDIT: ALICIA PRIVITERA
SOURCE: PARKS VICTORIA



COVER INEKE AND ROSS FROM FOSER (FRIENDS OF SCENIC ESTATE RESERVE) CONTROLLING GORSE – SOUTH GIPPSLAND
CREDIT: PHILLIP ISLAND NATURE PARKS





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Images used in this report were sourced across a variety of dates and locations. All pictured groups/individuals were compliant with COVIDSafe settings at the time.



LAUGHING KOOKABURRA DURING BIRDLIFE YARRA VALLEYS
CORRANDERRK NATURE CONSERVATION RESERVE SURVEY

CREDIT: JAMES MATCOTT
SOURCE: BIRDLIFE AUSTRALIA

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



Sustain



Value



Expand



Understand

What is it?

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.

“I volunteer to connect with nature and improve my wellbeing”

Background

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

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 or a time that suits them.

More than a decade on, the volunteering landscape has changed. There is a need to consider alternatives in the ways we engage new environmental volunteers.

This fourth annual snapshot provides an evidence base to 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 categorized according to one primary activity type from the list below.



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.



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.



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.



Networks/other

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



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.



Sustainable living

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



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.

I had lots of fun with my friends planting the trees and I am going to go back to the same spot when I am older to see my tree

Student, St Paul's Anglican School

The Great Victorian Fish Count

Hundreds of volunteers mark 20 years of The Great Victorian Fish Count

Every November since 2002, hundreds of Victorian snorkelers, divers and inter-generational marine enthusiasts have headed to the coast for an important cause.

Run by the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) and its ReefWatch program, The Great Victorian Fish Count is today the state's biggest marine citizen science event of the year.

Over each weekend in November, around 600 volunteers amass at different dive sites across the state to survey local fish species along Victoria's part of the iconic Great Southern Reef.

Dive pairs armed with a slate and a photo list of 25 species of fish and 10 species of sharks and rays then spend an hour in the water, surveying and recording the fish they see.

The VNPA collects this data and uploads it to the Atlas of Living Australia – the official national biodiversity database. The data can then be used to track changes within the biodiversity of Victoria's coast and can be used by researchers and educators worldwide.

ReefWatch Coordinator Kade Mills said thanks to its longevity, The Great Victorian Fish Count had now attracted an inter-generational following – including among the 600 volunteers in 2021.

"We had a dive group of three generations, a grandmother, her daughter and her granddaughter all out there doing the Fish Count," Kade said.

"We have everyone from 8-year-olds to 80-year-olds volunteering, and it's this accessibility that is part of what makes the event really special."

Jack Breedon, 27, from Williamstown volunteered for his first Fish Count in 2009, and has been involved in nearly every count since. His love of the ocean has seen him now move to Townsville, where he studied marine biology before establishing his own production studio – focusing on underwater films.

Jack said volunteering with the Fish Count had been instrumental in developing his career today.

"It was back in the 2015 Fish Count when I spotted a Whitebarred boxfish at Eagle Rock Marine Sanctuary near Airey's Inlet," Jack said.

"I later found out none had ever been sighted that close to Port Phillip heads, so that was a definite highlight for me and something that made me keen to learn more."

Jack said participating in the Fish Count was a fantastic way for people without experience to get a taste of marine biology and Victoria's vibrant coastal volunteering community.

"It's a great way to meet your community and a really safe way to start exploring the ocean," he said.

<https://vnpa.org.au/programs/reefwatch/>

THE GREAT VICTORIAN
FISH COUNT SNORKELLERS
IN ACTION.
CREDIT: REEF WATCH



Junior Landcare

Junior Landcare inspires young Victorians to care for our environment

Starting small (literally) really can create big change when it comes to inspiring Victoria's next generation to care for the planet.

And that's what the Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grants are all about – setting up children with a lifetime of passion for protecting the environment, no matter how young they are.

In 2021, more than 11,150 children and students were supported by over 1,800 parents and other adult volunteers on Junior Landcare projects funded through the Victorian Government grants, which are changing the landscapes of Victorian schools, kindergartens and community spaces for the better.

Thanks to the participation of children, project coordinators, and volunteers, almost 21,000 indigenous plants went into the ground across the state to create and improve habitat for native fauna, while more than 120 insect hotels were created.

At Ormond Community Kindergarten in Melbourne's inner southeast, introducing young children to the power and beauty of backyard biodiversity is something the kindergarten's educators, team and parent volunteers are passionate about.

That is why the community kindergarten was thrilled when it received a \$4,000 2021 Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grant to create a butterfly garden in an under-used section of its yard.

Ormond Kinder Operations Manager Nicole Summers said the idea was for the garden to become a practical learning tool for children.

"Children at this age don't read and write, they learn from stories and play, from touch, sight and smell, and they love butterflies, so that's how this project all began," Nicole said.

"Butterflies are attracted to indigenous plants, and children absolutely love butterflies, so we started with that."

The kindergarten called out for parent volunteers to help bring the garden to life and connected with a local indigenous plant nursery to source the plants. It also approached Vermont Men's Shed volunteers who built some nesting boxes to attract local birds.

In 2022, a team of 10 parent volunteers headed to the kindergarten for a working bee to create the garden.

"We had parents who had never gardened before, to others with more experience, coming together with

a beautiful sense of community to bring this garden to life," Nicole said.

"We couldn't have done this without our amazing volunteers, but they told us they were so grateful to be involved, too.

"So many parents had felt isolated during COVID, and being able to come together to volunteer on the garden provides such a strong sense of community, which was something everyone really loved."

The children loved seeing their parents volunteering to create the garden, Nicole said.

[2021 Victorian Junior Landcare Grants | Junior Landcare.](#)

ORMOND COMMUNITY KINDERGARTEN
PARTNERED WITH VERMONT MEN'S
SHED AND LOCAL VOLUNTEERS TO
CREATE A BUTTERFLY GARDEN.
CREDIT: ORMOND KINDERGARTEN





Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

CLIFTON SPRINGS CURLEWIS COASTCARE ON AN EDUCATION WORKSHOP – BELLARINE AND SURF COAST

CREDIT: BELLARINE CATCHMENT NETWORK

“The most enjoyable things about the project were the community engagement and seeing children become interested in nature and the environment.”

Zoe, Winton Wetlands Turtleproject

About Volunteering Naturally 2022

Previously delivered in 2019, 2020 and 2021, Volunteering Naturally 2022 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/or volunteer hours contributed, sourced through 2021-22 financial year reporting data.

The stocktake is simple in approach with a narrow focus on the information that is sought. Data collection took place between June and August 2022.

Knowing whether a group is active, 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 more recent interest in living sustainably.

Data was collected via:

- collation of reported data across a wide number of environmental volunteering programs,
- a short survey forwarded to a large number of groups and organisations, and

- desktop research and cross-checking with program managers, groups, NGOs and others including local government.

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.

Data collection during 2022

Data used in this report reflects volunteer numbers during the 2021-22 financial year. At the time of publication, there was a 60 per cent response rate from known environmental volunteering groups.

We have not extrapolated data to 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 citizen science and wildlife rescue and rehabilitation volunteering efforts, was challenging. Therefore, there is a strong likelihood that the numbers in these areas are also under-represented.

During the COVID-19 safe settings continuing in the second half of 2021, especially in metropolitan Melbourne, there was greater opportunity for environmental volunteering and the data indicates that volunteering levels were closer to pre-pandemic contributions. The COVID-19 restrictions have made it difficult to capture trends or consistent themes within the sector, however it is heartening to see Victorians seeking opportunities to care for the environment when and where it is COVID-safe to do so.

Finally, this report also showcases environmental volunteering case studies with a variety of environmental volunteering projects and outcomes to demonstrate the breadth of activities undertaken within the community.

“We enjoy it, you get in the fresh air and see things you wouldn't normally see... it's good fun!”

Marvyn, Borough Coastcarers volunteer

REASONS PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERING

- ✓ Local
- ✓ Nature-based recreation
- ✓ Issue-driven
- ✓ Species-focused



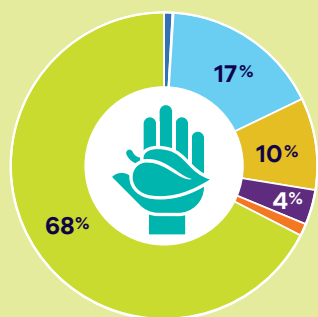
 PHIL MURDOCH – BIRDLIFE AUSTRALIA BIRDS ON FARMS VOLUNTEER
CREDIT: FIONA MURDOCH
SOURCE: MALLEE CONSERVATION



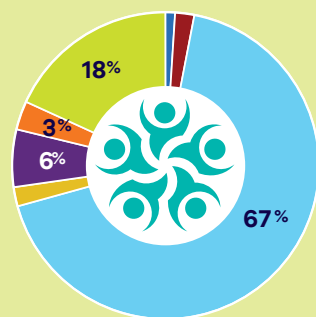
Volunteering Naturally 2022

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

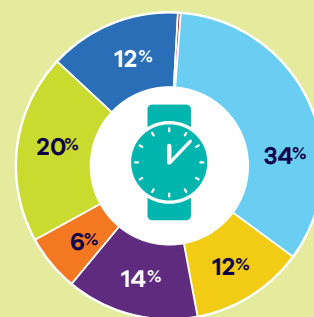
ANNUAL SNAPSHOT OF VICTORIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEER GROUPS



173,629
VOLUNTEERS



1,998
GROUPS



1,481,823*
HOURS REPORTED



\$62.99 million

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

Volunteer contribution has been assigned a monetary value of \$42.51/hour based on ABS 2017-2018 volunteer data and a 1.9 per cent 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.



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.



Sustainable living

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



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.



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.



Wildlife rescue and rehabilitation

Supporting positive welfare outcomes for native fauna.



Citizen science

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

*60 per cent of known active groups captured and reported their data.

Key observations

The 2022 ‘bounce back’ in environmental volunteering efforts to pre-pandemic levels is something to be celebrated with an increase of 14% in reported volunteer hours from last year. It also indicates strong commitment and interest in caring for nature among those already engaged in environmental volunteering.

COVID-19 has affected volunteering activities of all Victorians, albeit in different ways, influencing how or when people volunteer.

While the proportion of Australians engaging in volunteer work has fallen substantially over the past three years it is worth noting the long-term decline in formal volunteer engagement prior to the pandemic. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare using data from the General Social Survey, the number of people who volunteered in the previous 12 months declined from 34.1 per cent in 2006 to 28.8 per cent in 2019¹. While there are undoubtedly unique factors influencing volunteer numbers across industries this trend remains important context when exploring environmental volunteering rates.

Volunteering Naturally 2022 revealed that while individual volunteer numbers have increased significantly on the 2019 benchmark, hours volunteered were very similar. This could be explained by greater data contributions from programs supporting corporate volunteering, however the possibility that overall hours contributed per person is in decline cannot be ruled out.

Anecdotal evidence and reporting show many individuals were also engaged in event-based activities. This is consistent with 2020 research which found that there was reluctance to engage

in environmental volunteering on an ongoing basis amongst the wider Victorian population².

Group-based outdoor activity accounted for most volunteer efforts with the majority of groups engaging in caring for landscapes. This could reflect the particular appeal of spending time in nature.

‘Clean up’ efforts continue to be strong. While it’s great to see how much volunteerism exists on this issue it points to the importance of litter behaviour change initiatives within the wider community to reduce the need to be involved in these types of activities.

You look back at where you’ve been (weeding) and it’s extremely satisfying.”

Mel, Borough Coastcarers volunteer

Data collection

Data collection from volunteer groups continues to be a challenge despite additional support from regional staff.

In 2022:

- 60 per cent of groups reported their volunteer numbers (slightly down from 62 per cent in 2021), and
- 60 per cent reported volunteer hours data, up from 47 per cent in 2021.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, data confidence and collection appear strongest where there is a volunteer manager, statewide or localised coordination body. A funding obligation to report also appeared to be a major motivator. Looking forward, greater efforts to promote the benefits of contributing data may be required to encourage groups harder to engage. This is particularly true for larger advocacy groups and those outside of the Caring for Landscapes space.

Over the past 12 months there has been a statewide effort in ensuring that data provided by the sector is current and reflective of what’s happening on the ground. Particular attention was given to ensuring that the establishment of new groups and natural attrition of others was accurately recorded. This goes some way to explaining the decrease in the number of active groups. Anecdotal observations from program managers indicate that the formation and folding of groups was largely driven by volunteers responding to emerging needs or opportunities. An example of this Indian Myna groups combining with existing bird entities (e.g. Birdlife Australia).

¹ Volunteers – Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (aihw.gov.au)

² Environmental volunteering – 2020 Social Research: Department of Environment, Land Water & Planning in conjunction with Newgate Research

Opportunities for environmental volunteering

There is a strong awareness and recognition within the community on the potential impacts of climate change. The majority of participants in a recent Sustainability Victoria study reported sadness and frustration when they think about the issue.

The likelihood of this being experienced by young Victorians was significantly higher³.

In the face of the climate and biodiversity crisis volunteering for the environment can provide a tangible means by which ordinary citizens can act locally⁴.

Moreover, 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 outcomes⁵. This is particularly true when individuals undertake physical activity, such as planting or weeding.

Volunteering in green spaces has the added benefit of providing opportunities for social connection while being active in nature⁶.

The concept of looking after the environment having benefits for individual health and wellbeing is not new. For thousands of generations Victoria's First People

have embodied the traditional knowledge of care for Country and Country cares for you⁷.

When developing strategies to engage new volunteers, groups and program managers should emphasise the multiple benefits provided through participation in environmental volunteering.

“Taking action has a hundred per cent helped me with my climate anxiety. My message would be, get involved in something local and attack these issues head-on.”

Wesley Grey, Climate Adaptation Requires Youth Action

3 Linking Climate Change and Health Impacts: Sustainability Victoria February 2020.

4 A Multiple Needs Framework for Climate Change Anxiety Interventions: University of Melbourne William Bingley, Anh Tran, Candice Boyd, Kari Gibson, Elise Kalokerions, Peter Koval, Yoshihisa Kashima, Dianna MacDonald, Katharine Greenaway.

5 Beyond Blue to Green: The benefits of contact with nature for mental health and well-being: Deakin University Mardie Townsend, Rona Weerasuriya


6 Building resilience in local communities: The wellbeing benefits of participating in Landcare: KPMG Australia

7 Care for Country | Victorian Government (www.vic.gov.au)



MOUNT HOWLITT
CREDIT: BART SMITH




 EUROA ARBORETUM GRASSLAND
 RESTORATION PROJECT
 CREDIT: STEVE PROTHERO

What the 2019 – 2022 environmental volunteering numbers reveal

This report takes a cautious approach to determining the trends in environmental volunteering given the atypical nature of the past three years.

It's really good to see young people, older people all coming out and getting involved in what we envisage is a great thing for our community and a great thing for our environment.

Rob O'Sullivan, Narkabundah Nursery, Sandy Point.

Groups

- The number of environmental volunteering groups has remained fairly steady from 2019 to 2022. While some groups have become inactive, there have been new groups emerging. As volunteering rates more broadly decline, it is positive to see the number of groups overall continue to be stable since 2019 despite the pandemic.
- About 67 per cent of all groups carry out Caring for Landscapes and stewardship activities. This could be reflective of more Victorians being interested in preserving their local environments through on-ground action. It is worth noting that while the number of volunteer hours attributed to Caring for Landscapes is by far the highest, at 34 per cent, the overall percentage of volunteers in this category is only 17 per cent. This suggests that the volunteers undertaking stewardship activities of their local areas are more inclined to be contributing their efforts on a regular basis.
- The Sustainable Living category has seen an overall reduction of individual groups yet has the highest number of individual volunteers (68 per cent). These volunteers contributed 20 per cent of the overall hours volunteered and are primarily engaged through event-based opportunities, such as litter collection activities

Hours

- With the impacts of COVID-19 it is unsurprising that volunteer hours have fluctuated greatly since the start of Volunteering Naturally reporting. While 2021 saw a sharp decline in hours reported on the previous year, the past 12 months has seen an increase to almost 2019 pre-pandemic rates.
- This strong reengagement by Victorians with environmental volunteering is heartening, particularly with research indicating a widespread decline in the rates of volunteering across other sectors. The growth seen in the environmental volunteering space is likely, in part, a reflection of the individual benefit to those involved as well as to the state's natural environment. Nevertheless, the downwards trend in people volunteering nationally is important context for program managers and policy alike.
- The growth in economic contribution of environmental volunteer hours in 2022 reflects a 14 per cent increase in hours volunteered from 2021 and an increase in the value assigned to volunteer hours from \$41.72/hr to \$42.51/hr. This rise in hourly rate is based on the overall increase in wages of 1.9 per cent as reported by the ABS.

Individuals

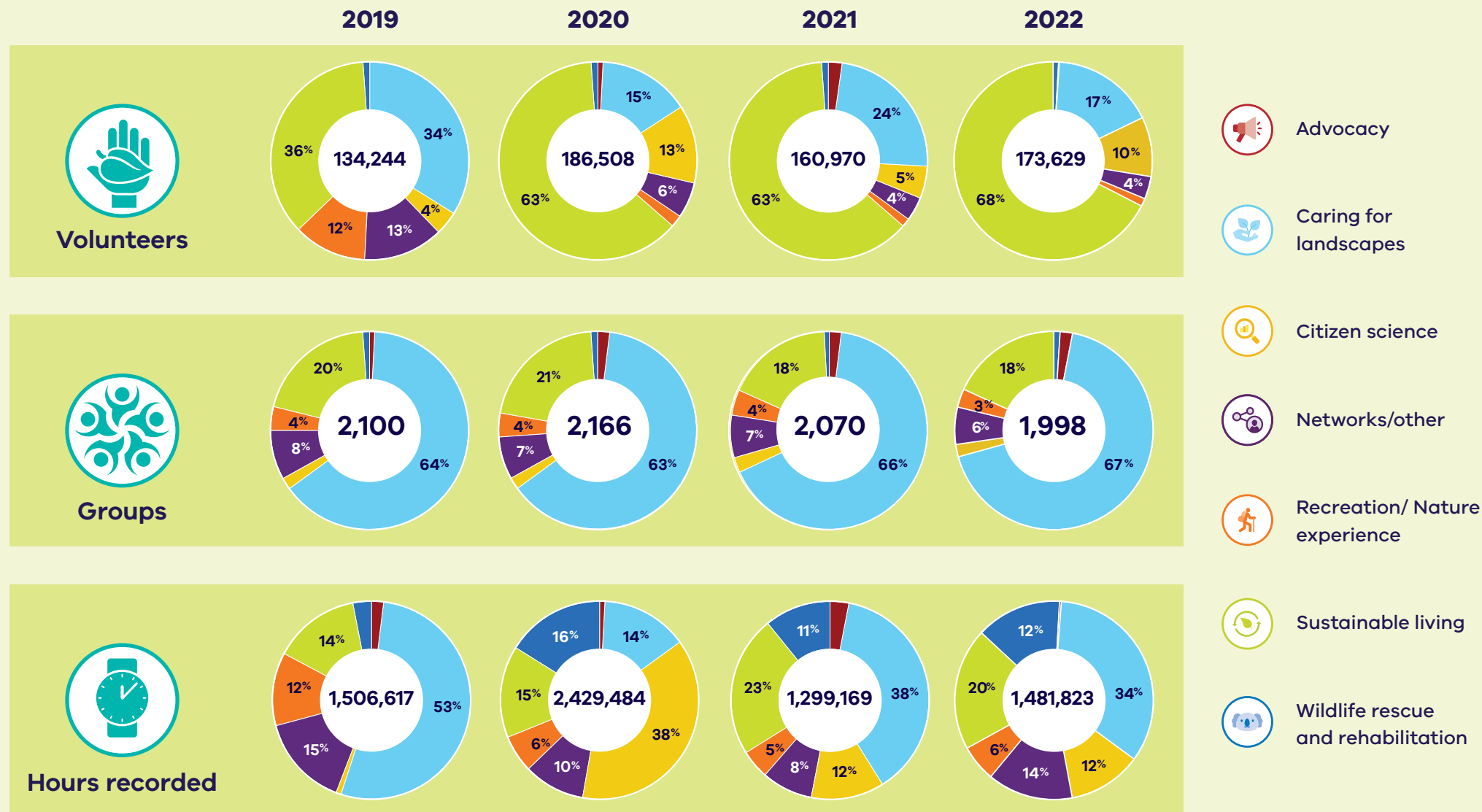
- Since commencing Volunteering Naturally in 2019 each year the number of people participating in different categories has fluctuated and is dependent on several factors, including environmental interests whether groups provide data. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to see that individual volunteer numbers are almost 30 per cent greater than the 2019 pre-pandemic figure.
- There continues to be evidence that one-off periodic activities like localised clean-up events such as Beach Patrol and Clean Up Australia Day attract more participants. This has been supported anecdotally through individual program observations.
- A decline was also seen in the Recreation/ Nature-based and Network categories during 2022, most likely related to COVID-19 restrictions on movement.



BAIRNSDALE URBAN LANDCARE GROUP AND BAIRNSDALE SCOUTS
PLANTING ON NATIONAL TREE DAY – EAST GIPPSLAND
CREDIT: BAIRNSDALE URBAN LANDCARE GROUP

Comparison of Volunteering Naturally data

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action



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

Ken Rendell

Still volunteering at 90 years young

Ken Rendell was just a teenager when he joined his siblings for a bike ride from their Northcote home all the way to Melbourne's Bayside area for the first time.

"It was a rather long ride, but you have to remember, there wasn't that much traffic back then!" Ken laughs.

Ken and his brother and sister found themselves at the seaside bluff of Half Moon Bay, and Ken was blown away by its beauty.

"I was just so impressed by all the bushland around the cliff, I really just loved it."

A few years passed, Ken trained as an architect and in the 1950s decided to buy a block of land to build a house. His mind immediately went to Half Moon Bay. Upon his first enquiry, he found out about an upcoming auction, and three days later had secured some land in the bush in nearby Beaumaris.

Ken and his wife built their dream home, when one day around 1978 he was flicking through the local newspaper and saw an ad.

"It was inviting local volunteers to come along to a new local nursery for indigenous plants, to help propagate the plants, and I thought that was a great idea so I went along," he said.

It was there that Ken met Bayside Community Nursery founder Don Neal, a former forestry lecturer with an interest in indigenous plants. Ken said Don had collected a range of seeds and cuttings and inspired local volunteers like Ken to join him. They started one of the first nurseries solely dedicated to indigenous plants, which enabled the volunteers to plant out the foreshore and inland reserves with local plant species.

Ken would help out on Saturdays, propagating the plants and helping customers learn more about the native species.

And now, 44 years on, not much has changed. The now 90-year-old can still be found volunteering every Saturday morning at the Bayside Community Nursery on Reserve Road.

"There are about 10 of us volunteers together there most Saturdays, which is great," Ken said.

"I don't do selling anymore, as my memory certainly isn't what it was, but I'm still helping out."

And still today, Ken doesn't constrain his environmental volunteering to the nursery.

"I'm still planting out and weeding in the bushland area and it's certainly better than just sitting around having a cup of tea!" he laughs.

For more information about the nursery and how to volunteer, visit <https://www.bayside.vic.gov.au/our-community/environment-and-sustainability/bayside-community-nursery>



KEN RENDELL HAS VOLUNTEERED WITH THE BAYSIDE COMMUNITY NURSERY FOR FOUR DECADES

CREDIT: BAYSIDE NURSERY



Teen volunteers

Teen volunteers drive local climate action in Warrnambool

A group of dedicated young people in Victoria's west are changing the way local teens get involved in climate action thanks to an innovative community program.

As volunteers with Warrnambool City Council's Green Futures Now! program, the group create and deliver youth-led grassroots climate action activities that the entire community can get behind.

Twelve local teens and young people have now participated in the program – six in 2021 and a further six in 2022, funded by a \$9,000 grant from the Victorian Government.

Warrnambool City Council Youth Engagement Officer Lauren Brown said Green Futures Now! provided local young people with in-depth environmental volunteering experience they otherwise may not get.

"It's a great opportunity for local young people to learn more about what's happening locally in climate action and environmental volunteering – that this isn't something that is happening far away, it's right here in our local community and businesses," Lauren said.

The four-month program begins with three intensive workshops, where young volunteers meet with local people making their mark on climate action in unexpected ways.

This includes meeting with a local hairdresser who donates hair to a not-for-profit organisation that creates mats to soak up oil spills.

After the intensive workshops, the volunteers spend 10 weeks working up their own projects, which, in 2022, included a weekend scavenger hunt through the regional city.

The scavenger hunt featured five stops, where participants scanned QR codes and watched short animations featuring practical tips that locals can do to support waste reduction, ocean conservation, habitat protection and carbon reduction.

Program participant and scavenger hunt co-creator Tyler Nicholls, 19, said the activity was a fun way fellow young people can learn more about the importance of local climate action.

"A lot of environmental things you see on the news and online is really big scale, and it's hard and unrealistic to see how you can help address that," Tyler said.

"But volunteering with this program has been so great in teaching us about the everyday things all of us can do at a local level to create change."

Tyler said the Green Futures Now! program provided him with a strong grounding to begin a lifetime of environmental volunteering.

"It's been a really good experience meeting so many people in the community who are doing really amazing things, which has definitely motivated me to get involved with something like this again in the future."



THE GREEN FUTURES NOW! PROGRAM HAS PROVIDED FERTILE GROUND FOR LIFELONG ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERING
CREDIT: BRUCE CAMPBELL, WARRNAMBOOL COASTCARE LANDCARE GROUP





PARKS VICTORIA VOLUNTEER 'PARK WALK' LEADER
GUIDING A GROUP THROUGH THE YOU YANGS
REGIONAL PARK.

CREDIT: PARKS VICTORIA

What's next?

Stand up and be counted

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

We look forward to communicating the results of Volunteering Naturally each year and appreciate all those groups that have contributed data. To achieve this and improve our ability to monitor trends over time, reporting will continue to focus on:

- numbers of unique active volunteers
- number of volunteer hours contributed
- primary focus activities of groups and individuals, and
- location of environmental volunteering opportunities

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

“It has opened a whole new area of learning for me – a way to celebrate plants and observe them, to restore and regenerate an area of neglected weed infested bushland close to town, and to help the community better understand their local native species and natural environment.”

Beechworth Urban Landcare & Sustainability volunteer working on creating the Beechworth Bush Botanic Garden.

 DANDENONG BURROWING CRAYFISH CITIZEN SCIENCE VOLUNTEER
CREDIT: ANDY GESCHKE

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The new Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) was established on 1 January 2023. This department includes the previous functions of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, excluding the Planning portfolio and those areas supporting it which are now part of the New Department of Transport and Planning.

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