Welcome from the Chief Operating Officer – Paul Sandells

Welcome to the Nature Parks’ first volunteer newsletter, keeping you informed and up to date about the difference you’re making, what is happening at the Nature Parks, new volunteer opportunities and any special events and training.

I would like to thank our volunteers for all your hard work in 2017. You have made an enormous contribution to the conservation work of the Nature Parks. It was an exciting step to launch the new Volunteer Program which aims to achieve a consistent approach across all our volunteer activities, as well as provide additional support and recognition. I am looking forward to the year ahead, with some exciting volunteer opportunities to be created.

Turn the Tide Program

Last year the Nature Parks started exciting and flexible volunteer opportunities in our Turn the Tide Program. In this program, volunteers help monitor our local beaches by collecting, analysing and recording marine debris. This plays an important role in keeping our beaches clean and understanding marine debris sources to protect our wildlife.

So far, we have collected over 12,000 pieces of plastic remnants plus many other materials including fishing line, glass, rubber, toys, and clothing! We used this debris to create a penguin model to encourage people to look at the debris used, and think about alternatives, such as re-usable bottles, metal straws and of course... bubbles not balloons. Located at the Penguin Parade we’re already seeing great images of our visitors with the penguin popping up on social media.
A big thank you to all the volunteers that participated in the program. We look forward to continuing this important program towards protecting our marine environment.

![The marine debris penguin at the front of the Parade (left) and volunteers and staff creating the penguin (right).]

**The silly season is over: go hoodies go!**

It’s been a roller-coaster start to the Hooded Plover breeding season with very few nests making it to hatching and even fewer chicks making it past the first few weeks of life. Although we are unsure of the exact causes for the loss of nests and chicks, likely impacts include: predation, human disturbance, off leash dogs and extreme high tides. Thanks to the ongoing dedication, passion and commitment of our Hooded Plover Watch volunteers three chicks have fledged and are now ready to fly!

This takes the 17/18 breeding season to 36 total nests, ten of which have hatched, with another eight nests still active. Additional to the three fledglings there are currently three active broods containing five chicks. With only a few months remaining in the breeding season we hope they fatten up quickly in time for another breeding attempt.

In recent months we have also had reports of a number of Phillip Islands’ fledglings from last year turning up at locations around the Victorian coastline. Many of the thirteen chicks fledged from Phillip Island last season have been spotted by Friends of the Hooded Plover volunteers at Collendina (Bellarine Peninsula), Point Nepean, Flinders, Balnarring (Mornington Peninsula), the Desal Beach (Bass Coast) and Snake Island (Corner Inlet).

We are looking for more volunteers to help out with the Hooded Plover Watch, if you’re interested please contact Rachael at volunteers@penguins.org.au
Guinness World Record – blowing bubbles

On Saturday 6th of January, a group of 12 volunteers went to the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) to attempt to beat the Guinness World Record for the most bubbles blown at the one time, in support of our Bubbles not Balloons campaign. The world record attempt was organised by Zoos Victoria and unfortunately they didn’t break the record, but we did have a lot of fun and connected with thousands of people with our conservation messaging.

In getting ready to head into the MCG, our volunteers attended a briefing.
Eastern Barred Bandicoot update

In October, we translocated the first group of the critically endangered Eastern Barred Bandicoots onto the Summerland Peninsula as part of the continuing efforts to save this unique marsupial from extinction in the wild. In total, 61 individuals were released onto the Summerland Peninsula, including 20 males and 20 females from Churchill Island. We have been monitoring the animals using transmitters and live trapping.

This is an amazing conservation story as the Summerland Peninsula is a reclaimed housing estate that’s been rehabilitated as habitat for penguins, shearwaters, wallabies, Cape Barren geese and now Eastern Barred Bandicoots. During the ongoing monitoring process, 22 bandicoots were caught, with the encouraging sign that of the twelve females captured, five had tiny pouch young. With overall good body condition and weight our research team are confident that the conditions of their new home will support a successful future for the bandicoots.

Thank you to all of the volunteers that were involved in the translocation and monitoring of the Eastern Barred Bandicoots over the last couple of years. Volunteer opportunities with this program are happening again in February/March. If you’re not already on the list and would like to be involved please let Rachael know at volunteers@penguins.org.au

Volunteers and staff heading out to release the Eastern Barred Bandicoots on the Summerland Peninsula.

Special Events and Training

Visitor Experience training

On Tuesday 23rd of January and Thursday 8th of March we are holding Visitor Experience training for our volunteers that interact with the public on a regular basis. Facilitated by John
Pastorelli, the training will give volunteers extra tools to engage with visitors to deliver key messages and create positive interactions.

If you’re interested in our Visitor Experience roles or interested in attending the training as part of your role please email Rachael at volunteers@penguins.org.au or call 0437 476 833.

**Volunteer Profile**

**Name:** Bob  
**Role:** Making and fixing bits and pieces around Churchill Island  
**How long have you been volunteering at the Nature Parks:** 9 years  
**Most memorable ‘volunteer’ moment:** Making horseshoes for the small kids when they come here! It is great to see the smiles of their faces and interest when they ask questions.  
**Motto in life:** Be happy!

**What’s happening at the Nature Parks?**

**Strategic Plan**

The Nature Parks has achieved a number of actions in the first Strategic Plan 2012 – 2017. Some of the achievements include:

- **Conservation** – largest little penguin colony in the world, an announcement of a fox-free Phillip Island, Eastern Barred Bandicoot release program and mapping of shearwater colonies
- **Visitor Experience** – established Eco Boat Tour, Antarctic Journey, Penguins Plus and Underground viewing experiences, Volunteer Coordinator and Program, and China market has grown over 200 per cent
- **Community** – engagement through Community Open Days and implemented our second Reconciliation Action Plan
- **Organisation/Governance** – we remain the largest employer on the Island, major player in Phillip Island and San Remo Tourism Strategy 2035 and invested $4.4 million
into the environment, research, community and education initiatives

We’re currently working towards our next Strategic Plan for 2018-2023 with key areas of conservation excellence, extraordinary visitor experiences, community leadership, sustainable future, and agile organisation & inspired people.

We’ve run a number of workshops with staff and the community to gather feedback for the development of the final plan which we hope to present to the Board of Management in early 2018. We will keep you posted on progress in this space.

Interpretation Plan

The Nature Parks is working with Creative Hat Consultants on the development of an Interpretation Plan. The Nature Parks wants to focus more on authentic experiences that are respectful of wildlife and contribute to the protection of natural ecosystems. The plan will therefore provide a framework for interpretation to ensure that every visit made, whether for tourism, recreation or education will increase the visitors’ knowledge about the conservation work that we do at Phillip Island.

Key focus areas in the plan are interpretation strategies for the four sites and our coastal reserves, interpretation aims, branding, and Indigenous engagement. A draft plan will be presented to the Board of Management in February 2018.

Staff Profile

Name: Sam Coleman  
Role: Revegetation Officer  
How long have you been working at the Nature Parks: 7 years, I started as a Parade Ranger and then a Summerlands Revegetation Officer.  
Most memorable ‘volunteer’ moment: I really enjoy the RACV Corporate Days. We get a lot planted and see significant change, and a lot of family fun!  
Motto in life: Be the change you want in the world!

Volunteer Opportunities
Visitor Experience Roles at Churchill Island and the Nobbies – ongoing

We are currently recruiting for volunteers in Visitor Experience Roles at Churchill Island and the Nobbies. These roles play an important part in ensuring visitors have an interesting and memorable visit, which hopefully makes people want to contribute to conservation.

If you’re passionate about conservation, want to be part of a fun and dynamic team, and love talking to people then this role is perfect for you. Contact Rachael at volunteers@penguins.org.au or 0437 476 833 for more information.

Community Open Day – Sunday 4 March 2018

The Community Open Day is fast approaching and we’re looking for volunteers to help out on the day. We are looking for volunteers to help with photography, visitor surveys, signing people up to our ‘Bubbles not Balloons’ campaign, providing visitor information, and assisting with activities. If you would like to be part of this great event you can sign up by logging into Better Impact at https://app.betterimpact.com/Login/Volunteer

Click on opportunities then Community Open Day and sign up for the activities you’re interested in being a part of at this fun community event.

Wildlife Monitoring Internship and Data Entry Internship – February to May

We are about to advertise two volunteer internships from February to May. These internships are ideal for people studying that are interested in ecology and conservation who want to gain work experience in this field. If you’re interested in any of these opportunities contact Rachael at volunteers@penguins.org.au or call 0437 476 833.