

Formation & Role of Phillip Island Nature Parks

PHILLIP ISLAND
NATURE PARKS
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notes

Phillip Island is located in Western Port, approximately 120km from Melbourne. Phillip Island is approximately 100km² in area and supports a diversity of environments and activities. The island is part of the traditional lands of the Boonwurrung/Bunurong people. Approximately 90% of the island's vegetation was cleared for farming and urban areas after European settlement. The remaining 10% of natural habitat, as well as 10% that has been re-established, is managed by Phillip Island Nature Parks and consists of woodlands, wetlands, saltmarsh, beaches and spectacular coastlines.



Creation & role of the Nature Parks

Phillip Island Nature Parks was created by the State Government of Victoria in 1996 and is the only Nature Parks on public land in Victoria. The formation of the Nature Parks provided integrated management of 1,805 hectares of land including conservation reserves which had been managed by both State and Local Government. These included the following larger parcels of land;

- The Penguin Reserve (Penguin Parade)
- Churchill Island & Fishers Wetland
- Seal Rocks Fauna Reserve
- Cape Woolamai State Faunal Reserve
- David Forrest Reserve (Koala Conservation Centre)
- Oswin Roberts Reserve
- Ventnor Koala Reserve
- Rhyll and Rowell Wetlands
- Summerland Estate (Summerland Peninsula)
- Newhaven Swamp.

Self funded, not-for profit

Phillip Island Nature Parks is self-funded not-for-profit organisation from which revenue is generated by the Penguin Parade, Koala Conservation Centre, Churchill Island Heritage Farm, the Nobbies Centre and Wild Oceans Eco-boat. These funds are used towards conservation outcomes like land management across all areas of the Nature Parks, wildlife rehabilitation, education, research and eco-tourism. Not surprisingly, the Nature Parks is one of Australia's most popular natural attractions with over one million visitors per year. The most popular reserve is the Penguin Parade, receiving over 700,000 visitors per year, over half of which are international visitors. Phillip Island Nature Parks is estimated at providing over \$450M for the Victorian economy annually .



The vision of Phillip Island Nature Parks is *“To be a world-recognised place of conservation excellence, providing outstanding and authentic experiences for all.”* The Nature Parks is managed under Section 4(1) of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 and its philosophy ensures that priority is given to the conservation of natural and cultural values and protection of wildlife.

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PO Box 97, Cowes, Victoria, 3922
T 5951 2800
E schoolbookings@penguins.org.au
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Board of Management

Phillip Island Nature Parks is managed by a Board of Management. Board members are appointed by the Minister for Environment and include local community members as well as representatives from the environment, education and business sectors. The Phillip Island Nature Parks Board of Management establishes policies and strategic directions for the Nature Parks. The Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 provides the framework for management of the Nature Parks.

Fauna protection

The habitat within the 1,805 hectares managed by the Nature Parks supports significant wildlife. Over 40 species within the Nature Parks are listed of conservation concern in Victoria. Such species include hooded plovers, Cape Barren geese and growling grass frogs. Phillip Island Nature Parks is an important breeding area for many bird species including little penguins and short-tailed shearwaters. The Summerland Peninsula supports a breeding population of over 32,000 little penguins, around 20% of the estimated total breeding population in Victoria. Mammals including possums, wallabies, Australian fur seals and ten species of bat also utilise the area.



Flora protection

Much of the many native vegetation types on Phillip Island grow within the Nature Parks and comprise of over 330 native species. Twenty two plant species within the Parks boundaries are classed as rare or threatened including spleenwort, cranesbill, crimson berry and coast ballart. Weed control and progressive revegetation is essential and is undertaken on a Park wide scale with the help of local stakeholders. Species such as African boxthorn, kikuyu grass and Chilean needle grass are a priority for removal.

Coastline & sand dune protection

Phillip Island Nature Parks incorporates approximately 60km of coastline. These areas are at risk of erosion due to increased storm damage from climate change. They provide important habitat for coastally dependent bird species like the hooded plover, so revegetation works for erosion protection in these areas are extremely important. The Nature Parks also manages dogs on its beaches to help protect these birds through regulations under State legislation. For further information please visit our website at penguins.org.au/conservation/ environment and download a copy of "Where can I walk my dog?"



Advanced ecotourism

Phillip Island Nature Parks has achieved Australia's highest ecotourism rating, Advance Ecotourism Accreditation, from Ecotourism Australia. Ecotourism Australia sets the global benchmark for excellence in ecotourism. Phillip Island Nature Parks has fourteen Advance Ecotourism Accredited products and is a major contributor to Victoria's and Australia's ecotourism industry.



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