

# Victorian Coastal Awards 2018



Victorian Coastal Council



# Acknowledgements

The Coastal Awards 2018 are being held on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people and the Victorian Coastal Council wish to acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners. We pay respect to their Elders, past and present, and the Elders from other communities.

The Victorian Coastal Council would like to thank those who invested time and effort nominating for the Victorian Coastal Awards 2018. Congratulations to the finalists and winners for their inspiring work, passion and contribution to Victoria's coastal and marine environments.

The Council acknowledges the contribution of the Technical Assessment Panel for their support and expertise in evaluation the nominations, and to the Steering Group in coordinating the awards ceremony.

Thank you to guest speakers:

- The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP  
Minister for Energy, Environment and  
Climate Change
- Rob Gell AM, Master of Ceremonies

***Visit the Victorian Coastal Council website  
for highlights from the awards ceremony  
[vcc.vic.gov.au](http://vcc.vic.gov.au)***

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## Minister's Foreword

I am delighted to present the 2018 Victorian Coastal Awards. These awards recognise and celebrate the people and organisations that make such a difference to managing and protecting our spectacular coastal and marine environments.

The coast is close to the hearts of many Victorians. It is a place where we visit, work, holiday and live. It supports our communities, the economy and jobs. This strong connection shows itself in the ways so many Victorians give their time to improve the health and wellbeing of coastal and marine areas. I am very proud of that enthusiastic involvement and the great contributions of volunteers and coastal communities.

Unlike many parts of Australia and the world, 96 per cent of our coast is public land, and Victoria has a proud history of being a leader in managing this precious asset. The new Marine and Coastal Act will build on this strong foundation. These changes will see the end of the Victorian Coastal Council and the Western, Central and Gippsland Regional Coastal Boards and the establishment of a new Marine and Coastal Council to advise about strategic issues. At this time of change, I would like to thank the chairs and members of the current and past Councils and Boards. Your knowledge, networks and efforts have been a major part of the development of Victoria's strong coastal management.



The Victorian Coastal Awards are a celebration. These Awards are a recognition of the people and organisations in our coastal communities. They are about the commitment and contributions of individuals and organisations that strengthen our coastal management. For this seventeenth Awards, I'd like to remember all the finalists and winners since 2000 for their outstanding efforts.

Most importantly, congratulations to the 2018 finalists and winners. It is wonderful to know that Victoria is served by such exceptional people.

**The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP**  
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change



## From the Coastal Council

Stewardship of our coast goes back a very long way. The Victorian Coastal Council recognises, and pays respect to, the Traditional Owners and acknowledges their 60,000+ years of custodianship, protecting and managing Victoria's marine areas, coast and catchments.

The Victorian Coastal Awards are deeply important to the Council. They show the depth, enthusiasm and determination of so many people involved in looking after our marine and coastal environments – something to truly recognise and celebrate. The Victorian Coastal Awards began in 2000, and since then have celebrated more than 140 winners!

As in past years, it was not an easy task choosing the finalists and winners. From East Gippsland to Portland, we received 55 excellent nominations covering research, planning, education, management, climate adaptation and more. Congratulations to the 2018 finalists and award winners, and thank you to the many unsung heroes, the volunteers and caretakers along the entire Victorian coastline, whose passion and dedication is greatly appreciated and often undervalued.

The 2018 Coastal Awards will be the last event hosted by the Victorian Coastal Council, as we wind up operations after 23 years. Introduction of the new Marine and Coastal Act brings significant opportunity for our coastal and marine environment. Central to the Act is acknowledging and involving Traditional Owners, embedding consideration of the impacts of climate change, and a greater focus on the marine environments



as a core part of managing Victoria's great assets. What continues, and is explicit in the new Act, is the importance and value of community stewardship, and evidence-based decision making.

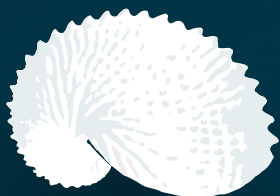
I would like to highlight and thank past and present members of the Science Panel of the Victorian Coastal Council for their considered and wise counsel, guiding evidence-based decision-making for a generation of Governments

Finally, thank you to the current and former Victorian Coastal Council members for their dedication and service to protecting and managing Victoria's marvelous coastline, and stunning marine environments.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Boxshall'.

**Dr Anthony Boxshall**  
Chair  
Victorian Coastal Council





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# Improving the Physical Environment

Awarded for outstanding contribution to conserving and protecting physical coastal and marine environments. Demonstrated excellence in sustainable design, building and infrastructure that respects and compliments the Victorian coastal landscape and incorporates ecological sustainable design and construction principles.



## WINNER

### Kingston City Council

#### *Mordialloc Life Saving Club and Aboriginal Gathering Place*

Mordialloc Life Saving Club has a long history in the City of Kingston, with the original Club forming in 1919. Facilities were aging and could no longer adequately serve the growing Club and broader community.

A new state of the art facility was developed, replacing the existing facility, and providing multiple benefits to the local community and visitors. The new Mordialloc Life Saving Club and Aboriginal Gathering Place features:

- A Life Saving Club – providing important aquatic safety, training and education programs.
- A recreational space – supporting the Life Saving Club's engagement with the wider community, and delivery of a broader range of programs.
- An Aboriginal Gathering Place – a permanent base for the Kingston Koorie Mob, an indigenous youth group, who have not previously had a meeting place.

The new Gathering Place offers the Kingston Koorie Mob a sense of belonging and community. It is designed to be a place of welcome for Aboriginal community members where they can connect, build skills, learn from Aboriginal Elders and Traditional Owners, share cultural heritage and hear about local cultural history.

The facility is also a resource for the broader Kingston community to learn about Aboriginal culture, promote Aboriginal cultural heritage and strengthen community connections and connections to Traditional Owners.



## SPECIAL COMMENDATION

### **Tambo Bluff CoastCare Group**

#### *Tambo Bluff Restoration*

The Tambo Bluff Landcare / Coastcare group began in 1993, formed by residents of a new township, Tambo Bluff Estate. The estate is situated on the headland above Lake King in the Gippsland Lakes. The geology and geomorphology of the cliffs and foreshore of Tambo Bluff are recognised as regionally significant, as are the areas of remnant vegetation, littoral rainforest and two wetlands (one of which is freshwater).

The Group has championed a major program of environmental protection and rehabilitation, targeting the natural areas and coastal wetlands.

Their effective community engagement and passion for their local environment has resulted in:

- 5 hectares of public land revegetated.
- Riparian zones around the wetland improved to allow normal functions to resume.
- Feeder gullies and riparian zones protected and rehabilitated.
- Over 30,000 native plants established.
- A network of walking paths and interpretive information introduced.
- Support from by Federal Government, Landcare, East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority Coastcare, East Gippsland Shire and the Green Army.





## FINALIST

### Parks Victoria

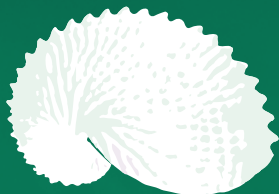
#### *Portarlington Safe Harbour*

The coastal town of Portarlington needed a new Safe Harbour, to meet the growth in recreational boating, population and tourism, and to better support the aquaculture industry on the Bellarine Peninsula. The last Safe Harbour in the region was built in the 1950s.

The Portarlington Safe Harbour project engaged commercial and recreational users, local community and government bodies to deliver an aspirational outcome. The project demonstrates integrated coastal zone management and supports the sustainable development of the Bellarine peninsula, including:

- Protection of 700 metres of foreshore from coastal erosion through construction of breakwaters.
- 70,000 cubic metres of sand dredged from behind the old breakwater used to widen the beach, protecting the Portarlington Holiday Camping Park and boat ramp from coastal inundation and erosion.
- Diversified local marine ecology colonising on the new breakwaters, piers and jetties.
- Increased tourism (e.g. Winery tours associated with the ferry).
- A new public transport link to Melbourne which operates between Portarlington and Docklands daily.
- Increased aquaculture and land based recreational fishing opportunities.

The Portarlington Safe Harbour meets contemporary standards and showcases the ability of communities to reinvigorate the economy both locally and regionally by working together. Commercial aquaculture in Port is now serviced from the secure modern harbour, enabling the industry to flourish. Portarlington can now act as a transport link to Melbourne with commencement of a daily ferry service allowing local community to access Melbourne and tourists the opportunity to explore Portarlington and the wider Bellarine Peninsula. The Safe Harbour has even hosted cruise ships, demonstrating that great infrastructure supports strong growth in the visitor economy.



# Biodiversity Conservation

Awarded for outstanding contribution to  
enhancing, conserving and protecting  
coastal and marine ecosystems and species.



## WINNER

### Gippsland Ports

#### *Gippsland Lakes Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration*

The Gippsland Lakes are home to hundreds of species of migratory and resident waterbirds, seabirds and shorebirds. The area is listed under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, and many of the feathered visitors are protected by international migratory bird agreements. Annually, more than 20 species of migratory waders visit the Gippsland Lakes to feed, rest and breed. Crescent Island, Pelican Island and nearby sand spits provide critical habitat and refuge for hundreds of bird species, including Victoria's largest active Pelican rookery.

Over the past decade, erosion, destabilisation and flooding have diminished these habitats considerably, impacting breeding activity and survival. The nearby channels to Crescent Island and Pelican Island were also due for dredging works as part of Gippsland Ports' commitment to safe and navigable channels for recreational boating.

This led to a unique collaboration between natural resource managers, waterway managers and community volunteers.

Gippsland Ports needed to shift a great deal of sand and the birds needed sand!

Critical habitat was created, and safer, more accessible waterways were provided for boaters, resulting in:

- 116 Fairy Terns and 79 Little Terns fledglings recorded over the past three breeding seasons.
- For the first time ever recorded, Fairy Terns arrived on Pelican Island producing 51 fledglings, and 47 fledglings a year later.
- New habitat for threatened Hooded Plovers, with 12 fledglings recorded.
- 10 species of Northern Hemisphere waders recorded feeding, foraging and roosting on the newly created island habitat, along with large numbers of swans, pelicans and shorebirds sighted on the islands.
- 5,000 seedlings planted, protecting shore birds and mitigating erosion.



## FINALIST

### The Nature Conservancy

#### *Restoring the Lost Shellfish Reefs of Port Phillip Bay*

Native shellfish reef ecosystems once flourished in Victoria's bays and estuaries, covering thousands of hectares of seafloor in Port Phillip Bay, Corner Inlet and Western Port Bay. In high densities, these 'ecosystem engineers' form distinct reefs, providing habitat for fish such as snapper and bream, and invertebrates like shrimps and crabs. Shellfish reefs are highly productive ecosystems, filtering considerable volumes of water, stabilising sediments, enhancing denitrification and transferring nutrients from the water column to the surrounding reef community.

Shellfish reefs are considered Victoria's most threatened marine ecosystem, undergoing near total loss from overfishing and environmental decline.

In 2014, the Nature Conservancy, in partnership with the Victorian State Government and Albert Park Yachting and Angling Club established the first shellfish reef restoration project in Australia. Their aim was to re-establish shellfish reef ecosystems (mussel beds and oyster reefs) in Port Phillip Bay, raising awareness of their value in

enhancing biodiversity, fisheries and water quality. To date, the project has:

- Re-constructed 1.08 hectares of native shellfish reef ecosystem at two sites in Port Phillip Bay.
- Seeded reefs with 1.9 million hatchery reared oysters, that are surviving and growing at a healthy rate.
- Increased fish and invertebrate life and enhanced species richness.
- Engaged 80 individual volunteers and 25 industry groups including recreational fishers, marine-care groups, divers and corporate partners.
- Diverted 450 cubic metres of shells from landfill, recycled through the 'Shuck Don't Chuck' shell recycling program. 'Shuck Don't Chuck' closes the loop on seafood waste and provides a practical way for restaurants and their customers to contribute to protecting shellfish reefs, as well as building community awareness about native shellfish ecosystems.





## FINALIST

### **BirdLife Australia - Friends of the Hooded Plover Far West Victoria**

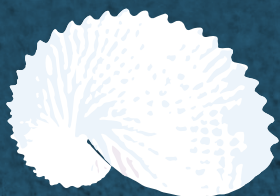
#### *Restoring the Balance for Hooded Plovers in the West*

The plight of the Hooded Plover is becoming well known. This charismatic, resident shorebird nests on beaches and dunes in spring and summer, where they struggle to raise young amidst beach users, coastal weeds and predators. These birds have mastered camouflage and developed behavioural strategies to cope with native predators, but these are ineffective when it comes to avoiding people, horses, dogs and sometimes vehicles. Coastal volunteers are helping 'hoodies' by providing beach users with the cues they need to avoid crushing nests, and providing the birds with sections of undisturbed beach where they can raise their chicks.

BirdLife Australia's Friends of the Hooded Plover Far West Victoria (Portland to Warrnambool) has a core group of 28 volunteers, who spend the eight-month-long

breeding season frequently visiting the beach to detect nesting, amounting to over 36,000 hours of effort. If there is a vulnerable nest, they carry heavy equipment along the beach to set up protective areas. Tirelessly they monitor each nesting attempt and collect data fundamental to informing much-needed policy change.

The Friends of the Hooded Plover Far West Victoria works closely with land managers to integrate the needs of threatened wildlife into coastal planning and policy. They have become the foundation within their community, building awareness of beaches as habitats, attending the Warrnambool Summer Night Markets, local schools and hosting 'dog's breakfasts'. The Far West Victoria region has successfully fledged 153 chicks in ten seasons due to these amazing volunteers!



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# Planning and Management

Awarded for programs or initiatives that turn planning into demonstrably better protection, improvement and sustainable use or development of Victoria's coastal and marine environments. Demonstrated local and regional outcomes involving processes that bring people together to address major obstacles.



## WINNER

### **Project Banjo Action Group, Victorian Fisheries Authority, FutureFish, Boating Industry Association Victoria, Fishcare**

#### *Safeguarding Stingrays*

Large rays are iconic residents and local identities at many piers and jetties in Port Phillip Bay. These animals are much loved and highly regarded by locals, tourists, divers, snorkelers and many fishers.

In recent years, these marine creatures along with many harmless, smaller fiddler rays ('Banjos') have been found injured or dead beneath the piers. Of concern was the common but illegal practice of injuring and discarding the rays beneath the piers, often with their wings removed.

Project Banjo Action Group swung into action, lobbying for changes to legislation, education, enforcement and signage.

Through careful, collaborative engagement the Group partnered with the Victorian Fisheries Authority, FutureFish, the Boating Industry Association Victoria and Fishcare to consult with recreational fishers, environment stakeholders and the community across the Victoria.

Project Banjo Action Group initiated a high-profile community conversation via social and print media, radio and an online petition that attracted 33,000 signatures. Social media was the primary avenue for information sharing and engagement, enabling messages to spread quickly and widely, from local residents, divers and anglers through to national and international individuals and interest groups. The Victorian Fisheries Authority's public consultation on proposed new ray fishing rules received 1,200 submissions from across Victoria, interstate and some internationally, the vast majority supporting increased protection.

As a result, the new rules were introduced, providing increased protection for rays across Victoria's marine waters especially around the piers, jetties and breakwaters Victoria's stingrays, with practical education and enforcement solutions in place.





## FINALIST

### Bass Coast Shire Council

#### *Inverloch Surf Beach Erosion Response*

Inverloch Surf Beach is one of the most visited beaches along the Bass Coast. Primary beach access is via a pathway from the carpark and Surf Life Saving Club, providing access to the Observation Tower, and for lifesaving and marine emergency service vehicles. The Tower is an important asset for the Life Saving Club, providing an elevated facility to observe vast sections of the coast between the flags and beyond.

Inverloch Surf Beach is subject to extreme wave erosion, causing dune instability and vegetation loss, and compromising the structural integrity of the Observation Tower. In 2016, a storm event resulted in closure of the main beach access pathway and Tower, which was in danger of collapse.

Bass Coast Shire Council worked in partnership with the Inverloch Surf Life Saving Club, community and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to improve access to the coast, protect public safety, conserve the natural environment and adapt to the dynamic coastal processes.

The results:

- A new pedestrian and vehicle pathway using the natural contours of the land, avoiding the need for hard engineering solutions.
- Relocation and redesign of the Observation Tower on metal skids, allowing for easy relocation should the dune system continue to move.
- Improved pedestrian access to the beach for people with limited mobility enabling the 2017 and 2018 Disabled Surfers Association of Australia events to be held at Inverloch Surf Beach.
- Impacts of erosion on Life Saving Club building and public car park minimised.
- Natural dune profile reformed.
- Indigenous revegetation and natural recolonisation of plant species.





## FINALIST

### Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

#### *Sorrento Seawall*

The Sorrento Seawall project is an innovative example of coastal public space design and adaption that encourages multi-purpose use without loss of functionality.

The Sorrento Seawall was designed to replace the existing 50-year-old vertical timber seawall, which had sinkholes appearing in the promenade behind it. Vertical seawalls are no longer considered appropriate for coastal environments due to their reflective effect on waves and scour of adjacent seabeds, with sloping rock revetments the favoured engineering solution.

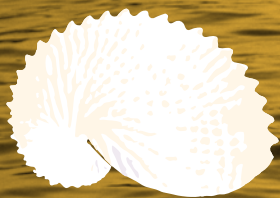
However, community consultation indicated a preference for a more innovative stepped design, that would:

- Protect the foreshore from present and future coastal erosion.
- Provide a safe public asset.
- Enhance and encourage use of the foreshore reserve.

- Bring a modern aesthetic to the foreshore, without detracting from the significant history of the township.
- Dissipate wave energy and storm surge, minimising scouring effect.
- Have a low impact on the intertidal seagrass beds (home to snapper and whiting nurseries).

At the community's request, locally sourced materials were used, with the texture and pigment of the blocks manufactured to closely match the sand on the adjacent beach, and blend with the historic sandstone buildings. A selection of the timber bollards from the old seawall (considered of heritage value by the community) were restored and reinstated on top of the new seawall.

*Project team: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and Maw Civil, AW Maritime and Cardno.*



# Education

Awarded for the development or delivery of an education program/initiative that raises awareness and improves understanding of both natural and cultural assets in Victorian coastal and marine environments.



## WINNER

### Great Ocean Road Coast Committee

*Great Ocean Road Coastal Education – next generation of coastal protectors*

The Great Ocean Road coastal environment is threatened by erosion, rubbish, weeds, lack of biodiversity, and increasing population pressures. The Great Ocean Road Coast Committee believe that education is the key to sustaining this iconic coastline, and since 2010 have been conducting free activities to engage people from all over Victoria in hands-on coastal natural resource management and conservation.

This successful, highly regarded education program promotes lifelong stewardship of the coast, fostering a culture of environmental advocacy and action through partnerships with local and visiting schools, agencies, campers and broader community.

As a self-financing, not-for-profit organisation, these education programs are funded by the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee's commercial operations, which include caravan parks at Anglesea, Torquay and Lorne. In 2016-17, Great Ocean Road Coast invested \$275,000 in its free environment and education programs, with no shortage of schools wanting to become involved.

The Program has grown significantly, delivering sessions for a range of ages, topics, curriculum outcomes and audiences. In 2017, this included:

- 2,000 students investing 650 hours of conservation work.
- 10,000 campers and the general public were part of the Anglesea, Torquay and Lorne Caravan Parks 2017-18 summer season activity program.

The program developed strong partnerships with Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Surf Coast Shire, Parks Victoria and volunteer groups across the Surf Coast (such as Jan Juc Coast Action, LorneCare, ANGAIR and Torquay Coast Action), while also working with the Australian National Surfing Museum (Torquay), Quiksilver, Barwon Water, Zoos Victoria, the Marine and Freshwater Discovery Centre through our Coast Guardians Program.





## FINALIST

### Melbourne Down Under

The Melbourne Down Under campaign raises awareness of the marine values of Port Phillip Bay, providing education resources which include:

- 200-page coffee table book showcasing the diversity of habitats and marine life in Port Phillip Bay. The book received extensive media coverage including several double page spreads in the Herald Sun, cover stories in RACV magazine, Club Marine, local, state and international media.
- Travelling outdoor exhibition displayed at several outdoor events around Port Phillip Bay.
- Documentary and DVD screened twice on Network Ten and 40 free community events totalling an audience over 6,000. These included Mornington Cinema, Summer by the Sea programs, Geelong Environmental Film Festival, Melbourne International Boat Show, Barwon Festival of the Sea, Queenscliff Maritime Festival and Reef Check Australia.
- School education kit trialled with 180 high school students from Melbourne

Girls College, St Monica's College, Mackillop College, Point Cook College, Elwood College, St Bede's College and Cheltenham College.

- Online community library of underwater photography and cinematography.

Partners were secured across the project stages, and included State Government, Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation, EPA Victoria, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Tourism Geelong and the Greater Bellarine, local councils (Geelong, Wyndham, Hobsons Bay, Port Phillip, Queenscliff), Murray Thompson MP, Maw Civil, Victorian Regional Channels Authority, Documentary Australia Foundation, Parks Victoria, Club Marine, Unico, Melbourne Aquarium, Port Phillip EcoCentre, Oceanic and Finsbury Green.

The Melbourne Down Under program has raised awareness of the marine values of Port Phillip Bay and actions to protect it. It has encouraged exploration of the Bay and participation in local marine community groups.





## FINALIST

### Bellarine Catchment Network

#### *Caring for Our Bays*

The Geelong and Bellarine region is renowned for its beautiful beaches, wineries, gourmet food and tourist hotspots. The other hotspots are litter – that threaten the fragile marine environments of the region.

The Caring for Our Bays program aims to raise awareness of the impacts of litter on the marine environment, engaging the local community and tourists in collaborative litter prevention at its source.

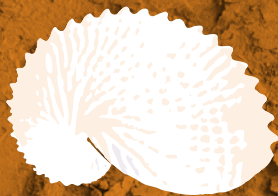
Twelve litter hotspots were selected around Geelong and the Bellarine Peninsula. These hotspots are monitored and audited by a network of volunteers, including local community groups, Department of Justice, Conservation Volunteers Australia, and Coastcare and school groups. Volunteers receive litter education training, and materials (posters and bin stickers etc.) through the Caring for our Bays program.

Supported by the Victorian Government's Port Phillip Bay Fund, Litter Hotspots Program and multiple partner organisations, the Caring for Our Bays program has:

- Improved infrastructure and signage.

- Engaged community, local industry and businesses, building stewardship and capacity.
- Delivered litter education and clean-up events – 7,600 items collected, including 80 kilograms of litter from beneath St. Leonards Pier collected by 15 keen winter divers.
- Developed educational material such as "Be a Local Hero", involving five local species featured on posters, bin stickers and collectible cards. Each resource included facts about the species (Burruran Dolphin, Australian Fur Seal, Weedy Sea Dragon, Australasian Gannet and Growling Grass Frog) and the litter that affects them the most.
- Developed strong partnerships with land-managers and community groups.
- Recorded 80% litter reduction at the hotspots.

The Program's next goal is to connect with the local business sector, engaging the community and businesses alike in sustainable behaviour for healthier bays and marine ecosystems.



# Community Engagement

Awarded for outstanding contribution to improving understanding and connection with coastal and marine environments through engagement with the wider community.





## WINNER

### EstuaryWatch Victoria

EstuaryWatch Victoria is a citizen science program supporting community monitoring of estuary health. It is fast becoming a global leader in collecting, storing and communicating long term data sets in estuary condition.

Victoria's 18 EstuaryWatch groups undertake monitoring, gathering estuary condition data and information to inform waterway managers and the community. 6731 observations have been submitted to the EstuaryWatch Victoria data portal ([www.estuarywatch.org.au](http://www.estuarywatch.org.au)).

The data portal provides information on the latest water quality results, if an estuary is open or closed to the sea. It includes a photographic library of the estuary mouth status, and records of significant estuarine events such as fish deaths, storm surges, algae blooms and floods. EstuaryWatch data has been used by scientists and estuary managers to inform decision making and scientific research.

In 2016/17 the 134 EstuaryWatch volunteers accomplished:

- 341 people participating in EstuaryWatch training events.

- 170 people attending an EstuaryWatch presentation.
- 360 people attending EstuaryWatch field day.
- 'Estuaries Unmasked' night seminars and field days.
- EstuaryWatch Education Kit and Teachers Guide.

EstuaryWatch Victoria has earned a reputation amongst government agencies, researchers and coastal communities as a trusted source of information on the condition of Victoria's estuaries and its volunteers are knowledgeable advocates for local estuaries.

In 2017 EstuaryWatch celebrated its 10th birthday. Ten volunteers were recognised for their 10 years of service: Alain Purnell, Ulric Orr, Carol Fulford, Judy Spafford, Phil Lawson, Ros Gibson, Jenny Cerins, Carole Webley, David Webley and Graeme McLean.

Each EstuaryWatch group is supported by Coordinators based at Melbourne Water and the Glenelg Hopkins, Corangamite and West Gippsland Catchment Management Authorities.



## FINALIST

### BeachPatrol Australia

#### *Beach Cleanup*

Melbourne is renowned for its beautiful beaches. Unfortunately, many beaches are often littered such as rubbish from plastic bags, bottles, straws and cigarette butts. Beach Patrol helps clean the beaches of Melbourne, harnessing the power of local resident members and community spirit.

This community organisation is a network of volunteers, represented by 24 different BeachPatrol groups. Each group is defined by their suburb, post code and t-shirt colour (worn during beach cleans).

Starting in 2009 with 3206 Beach Patrol (Middle Park), it quickly became evident that many residents cared greatly about the condition of their local beaches and were willing to donate one hour of their time each month to help keep the beaches cleaner and safer for the greater enjoyment of all.

BeachPatrol groups now operate around Port Phillip Bay, undertaking monthly beach clean-ups, removing litter (primarily plastic) from the beaches and recording the data on the BeachPatrol website. This highly visible action, has engaged over 2700 volunteers, making BeachPatrol the largest volunteer group collecting litter in Victoria.

BeachPatrol activities include:

- Litter removal - reducing the negative impact of litter on the marine environment and providing a safer environment for beach and foreshore users, engaging residents, school and corporate groups.
- Community engagement – film nights and community events such as local fetes, street festivals and exhibitions (eg. Melbourne Zoo).
- Advocacy – using Beach Patrol data to lobby for change, reducing the potential for litter to reach the marine environment.

In 2018, BeachPatrol aims to launch new groups within and beyond Port Phillip Bay and continue their advocacy for changes to plastic usage and advisory role to the State Government on marine litter.

*BeachPatrol Groups: Albert Park, Elwood, Brighton, Sandringham, Ricketts Point, Parkdale, Chelsea, Rye, Frankston, Mordialloc, Tootgarook, Mt Eliza, Carrum, Port Melbourne, St Kilda, South Melbourne, Mentone, Hampton, Spendale, Williamstown, Seaford, Werribee, Altona, Dromana, Rosebud / McCrae and Mornington.*





## FINALIST

### Barwon Estuary Project

The Barwon River estuary is part of the Lake Connewarre Ramsar site. It is important habitat for migratory birds and home to the most diverse saltmarsh and mangrove vegetation in south-eastern Australia.

Barwon Estuary Project was established to increase community and visitor knowledge and appreciation of the biodiversity and fragility of the estuary. Drawing on the creative interests of local people and groups, the project team has implemented a citizen science / citizen artist approach, empowering collaborative action through:

- 15 workshops led by local experts – 113 participants explored the estuary learning new skills in photography, art, creative writing or scientific recording.
- Art and photography exhibition – showcasing fauna and flora of the estuary.
- School program – 72 Barwon Heads Primary School students creatively and persuasively observed and conserved the estuary using photography, art and creative writing, underpinned by scientific understanding.

- 4 nature explorations – 78 participants attended estuary and mudflat walks.
- Barwon Estuary Project Nature Watching Diary – supporting residents and visitors to record estuary observations.
- Free forums – ‘The Effects of Climate Change on the Barwon Estuary’.
- Newsletter – 240 subscribers, promoting events and strategies to support conservation of the estuary.
- Monthly litter counts.

In 2018, the Project will extend its schools program, host a community art and photography exhibition, produce a walking map and work closely with Traditional Owner Groups to protect and manage Aboriginal cultural heritage along the estuary.

*Project partners: Estuary Watch, Barwon Coast Committee of Management Inc., Barwon Heads Community Arts Garden, Bellarine Catchment Network, Ocean Grove Coast Care, Friends of the Bluff, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Barwon Heads Primary School, City of Greater Geelong and Parks Victoria.*



## FINALIST

### Middle Island Project Working Group

*Conserving Little Penguins on an island using guardian dogs*

Middle Island is a small rocky island in the Thunder Point Coastal Reserve at Warrnambool. A wildlife sanctuary, the island home to Little Penguins and Short-Tailed Shearwaters. In 1999 over 800 Little Penguins occupied Middle Island during the breeding season. Over time, research found that 33% of chicks and 16% of eggs were trampled by people visiting the island, and with intense fox predation penguin numbers reduced to less than ten.

The community driven Middle Island Project Working Group was established, promoting conservation awareness of the Sanctuary and overseeing a trial of Maremma guardian dogs to protect the penguin colony from fox predation.

The project's achievements include:

- Continuation of the trial into an ongoing conservation, monitoring and community engagement program.
- Maremma Experience Tours for community and visitors to learn about penguins, conservation and the island, with 2200 participants in 2017-18.
- Warrnambool Coastcare and Landcare Network trained to conduct the regular penguin monitoring and biological data gathering activities (handling techniques; microchipping, weighing and measuring).
- Community participation in penguin arrival counts (wading across to Middle Island at dusk counting penguins as they arrive up one of the six entry pathways).
- Growth of penguin numbers and no loss through predation while Maremmas have been on the island.
- A movie "Oddball" and TV documentaries produced, based on the project.
- Application of the "Warrnambool Method of wildlife conservation" applied to other threatened species recovery programs.

*Middle Island Project Working Group: Warrnambool Coastcare and Landcare Network, Warrnambool Field Naturalists Club, Deakin University, Warrnambool City Council, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Parks Victoria, vets and a Maremma guardian dog expert.*



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# Partnerships in Research and Monitoring

Awarded for outstanding partnerships in research and / or monitoring supporting or involving citizen science; student science; or the interface between Traditional Owner knowledge and science. Research and monitoring that demonstrates a major contribution to the understanding and long-term management and protection of coastal and/or marine environments.





## WINNER

### Deakin University, Parks Victoria, The University of Melbourne

#### *Victorian Marine Park Habitat Mapping and Monitoring*

Marine national parks are crucial environments and management tools for the protection of biodiversity, endangered and commercially valuable species. They also underpin coastal tourism.

The Victorian Marine Park Habitat Mapping and Monitoring Program is a state-of-the-art collaboration between Parks Victoria, Deakin and Melbourne Universities. It was established in response to the lack of fundamental baseline information, inhibiting the ability to sustainably manage marine national parks.

The team used unmanned aerial vehicles, high resolution multibeam sonar and new methods of subtidal reef surveys with towed video and stereo baited cameras. The team also secured Victoria's first deployment of an autonomous underwater vehicle as part of the Integrated Marine Observation System National monitoring program.

The data provides an unparalleled understanding of Victoria's open-coast marine park habitats. It includes 6000 square kilometres of seafloor mapping that has been exemplary in filling major knowledge gaps in marine national parks at Wilsons Promontory, Bunurong and

Port Phillip Heads, informing biodiversity monitoring and fisheries assessment.

The project team has made many scientific advances of global impact, placing Victoria at the forefront of marine habitat science. These include:

- Discovery of the Drowned Apostles reaching a global audience of >15 million within 2 weeks of announcement and leading all major news bulletins throughout Australia.
- Baseline identification and connectivity data for sustainable management of lobster and abalone.
- High resolution imaging of intertidal reefs to act as a baseline using detailed mapping captured by drones.

The project has provided Victoria with a completely new understanding of its marine parks, habitat links and the process dynamics of these critical marine environments.

The award recognises the wealth of research training opportunities provided by the partnership, which includes training of 7 PhD, 1 Masters and 4 Honours students.





## WINNER

### Victorian Wader Study Group

*Victoria's Migratory Waders and Terns – Four decades of research*

For 40 years the Victorian Wader Study Group has conducted high quality, long-term scientific research on international migration routes, annual breeding success, population monitoring and the ecology of many migratory waders and key resident species like oystercatchers and crested terns.

Results are published in the annual Victorian Wader Study Group Bulletin. The data has been used to guide management planning for coastal areas and formed the basis of hundreds of scientific papers.

Through an extensive program of capture, banding, electronic tracking, flagging and release, volunteers have contributed an astonishing 14,000+ hours annually across coastal wetlands of Victoria, South Australia and King Island. Victorian catch sites extend from Port Fairy to the Gippsland Lakes, with regular catches around Port Phillip and Western Port bays, Andersons and Corner inlets.

The Group's long-term dedication to research and publication, its co-operative working relationships with land managers and international peers, represent citizen science at its best.

Initially, the driver was to understand where the birds migrated to and what routes they took. Now there is a critical need to better understand and define the link between wader populations and changes in flyway habitat, from Victoria's coast to their breeding grounds in the Arctic. The principal aim of the Victorian Wader Study Group is to gather, through extensive planned fieldwork programs. Our role, as users of the coast, is to ensure there is no deterioration of the sites that are essential for the birds during their austral summer visits.



## FINALIST

### **Dr Sarah McSweeney – School of Geography, The University of Melbourne**

*Artificial estuary openings along the Victorian coast: better understanding leading to better management*

Victoria has 111 estuaries, of which 103 regularly close. This special group of estuaries are called intermittently open/closed estuaries. When they close, they can cause flooding and water quality problems, resulting in estuary managers opening these estuaries with excavators and machinery. These openings often fail, filling with sediment and closing within a few days, wasting many hundreds of thousands of dollars each year, and continuing the problems caused by the closed estuaries.

Despite the widespread attention intermittently open/closed estuaries gain state-wide and nationally, both from an ecological and management perspective, very little is known about the physical processes controlling entrance condition.

This key knowledge gap has been the focus of a PhD project by Dr Sarah McSweeney at the University of Melbourne. Sarah

investigated the basic sediment transport processes that control the opening and closing of estuaries. She also developed a decision support system to improve the effectiveness of estuary opening, in collaboration with the Victorian government, Catchment Management Authorities and local EstuaryWatch groups. For the first time in Victoria, this solid science provides a foundation for practical management of intermittently open/closed estuaries.

Sarah's work has been published in four high-impact international journals. She is currently working with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and Corangamite Catchment Management Authority using her knowledge from the PhD project to develop a best-practice Geomorphic Prediction Tool for intermittently open/closed estuaries in Victoria.



## FINALIST

### Melbourne Water

*Understanding the Western Port environment to protect its internationally significant natural values.*

Western Port is a unique embayment on Victoria's coast and part of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The area is recognised for its significant natural values and biodiversity, and protected through three marine national parks and international Ramsar agreements.

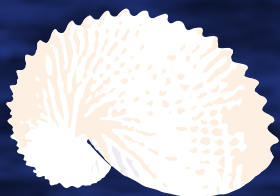
The Western Port Environment Research Program is a collaborative approach to understanding and managing the major threats to these values, including urban growth, climate change, harvesting, sediment inputs and toxicants.

Prior to this program commencing in 2010, little coordinated or large-scale research had been conducted in Western Port since the 1970s. This lack of knowledge significantly constrained the ability of the community and management agencies to identify meaningful actions to protect the bay.

Through its strategic research program and partnerships, Melbourne Water has invested over \$2 million to guide the strategic management of Western Port, focused on:

- Identifying the sources and volumes of sediment contributing to poor water quality, and suitable management options.
- Identifying of toxicants, their sources and potential impacts on habitats including seagrass and mangroves.
- Developing techniques for mangrove restoration and coastal bank stabilisation.
- Understanding the relationship between recreational fish species and habitats, and how fish populations have changed through time.
- Recognising the invaluable role of citizen science towards conservation and management of birds in Western Port.

The Program has significantly expanded understanding of the Western Port ecosystem processes, habitats, fauna and threats. Information is shared amongst stakeholders and the community, and strategic management opportunities identified, protecting this internationally significant environment into the future.



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# Outstanding Individual Achievement

Awarded to an individual in recognition of their significant and long-term contribution to the protection and improvement of Victoria's coastal and marine environment.





## WINNER

### Marg O'Toole

Marg O'Toole has been a key contributor to coastal and marine research, planning, management and environmental education in Victoria for over 25 years. Marg has produced marine reference books, lectured on marine science and contributed widely to marine research. She has worked as a marine ranger and runs her own environmental interpretation and education business, all while working part time as a registered nurse specialising in paediatric care.

Marg O'Toole is an outstanding community leader, and active member of many coastal and marine boards, groups and community organisations such as:

- Western Coastal Board 2000-2002.
- Shipwreck Coast Marine National Parks Management Plan Advisory Group.
- Sanctuary Management Plan Advisory Group.
- Surf Coast Marine Protected Areas Management Plan Advisory Group 2005-2007.
- Port Campbell Environment Group.

- Marine Education Society of Australia.
- Aquatic Naturalists Club of Victoria.

A motivator, Marg gets environmental education programs up and running. She has been involved in Coastcare and Summer by the Sea in Victoria since inception, organising and running environmental activities, workshops and forums.

Marg has inspired and empowered people of all ages and walks of life to take an interest in their coastal and marine environment. She has devoted many hours of her spare time educating thousands of students (university, school, pre-school) and adults (volunteers, parents, teachers, land managers, divers), teaching, inspiring and empowering them to care about their coastal and marine environment. Every session she has led over the years has been of an exceptional standard with nothing but rave reviews.

Marg has a lifetime of marine and coastal experience, drawing on her extensive diving experience across eastern Australia and the south Pacific, and aquatic science studies through Deakin University:

- Summer interpretation Ranger, National Parks and Wildlife Service (1980s).
- Co-authored "Down Under at the Prom", a resource guide to marine life and dive sites at Wilsons Promontory (1990).
- Coordinated and delivered hundreds of coastal and marine educational activities for Coastcare, including Summer by the Sea in south west Victoria and south Gippsland.
- Organised and ran a two-day Reef Watch Marine Seminar in Warrnambool (2014) with the Victorian National Parks Association.
- Filmed underwater footage for the short film 'A Day in the Life of Port Campbell'.
- Worked as a Marine Ranger with Parks Victoria at Port Campbell.
- Lectured in Marine Science at Deakin University.
- Involved in intertidal projects, marine park campaigning & national park interpreting.
- Contributed to Reefwatch, SeaSearch and EstuaryWatch monitoring programs, Great Victorian Fish Count, Sea Urchin eradication program.
- Involvement in Citizen Science programs through Parks Victoria including seagrass monitoring in Western Port Bay, Corner Inlet and Port Phillip Bay on board the Pelican II catamaran.
- Contributes a monthly column to 'The Beacon'-Port Campbell community newsletter educating locals about interesting and important marine facts (2017).
- Organised marine focussed films at Port Campbell Film Society event (2018).
- Blue Whale research, Portland (2010).
- Marine Bioscan Project scuba diver at the Twelve Apostles Marine National Park and The Arches Marine Sanctuary.

Marg is a go-to for marine educators state-wide, generous with her ideas, information and encouragement. Feedback from any event where she is a speaker, presenter or participant is that not only is she a gifted communicator, but her passion for the marine environment is contagious.

Marg continues to share her extraordinary passion and knowledge, delivering significant lasting outcomes for the Victorian coast and its communities.







