



ANGAIR Inc.

R/N A0002974W
Ph: (03) 5263 1085
admin@angair.org.au



**The Friends of Eastern Otways
(Great Otway National Park) Inc.**

A0030273B
Ph: 0404 357 011
friendsofeasternotways@gmail.com

Expert Advisory Panel's Review of the Victorian *Wildlife Act 1975*

Submission by Anglesea and Aireys Inlet Society for the Protection of Flora and Fauna (ANGAIR) and Friends of Eastern Otways (Great Otway National Park) (FEO)

ANGAIR and FEO have similar conservation-focused objectives and work together on many initiatives. The combined memberships of both organisations is well over 500 and we represent many hundreds more voices.

ANGAIR was founded in 1969 when forward thinking volunteers set out to protect the highly significant and very diverse local flora and fauna of the Surf Coast. In the first 50 years, ANGAIR was instrumental in protecting many bush areas from development and undertook many environmental improvement programs. ANGAIR has also studied and documented local biodiversity and worked with public and private organisations such as Alcoa, DELWP, Parks Victoria, the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA) the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC) (now GORCAPA) and the Surf Coast Shire.

Our vision is that in the next 50 years, new generations of ANGAIR volunteers will be protecting the flora, fauna and fungi of the local environment to maintain and enhance the natural ecosystems that support us.

FEO is a smaller Parks Victoria-affiliated organisation, founded in 1991 (as the Friends of Angahook-Lorne State Park). FEO undertakes weeding, revegetation, environmental monitoring, and educational programs principally in the eastern area of the Great Otway National Park. FEO is a permit holder under the current Wildlife Act, to undertake remote camera monitoring in the Great Otway National Park.

The strong conservation focus of the organisations lead us to adopt an unashamed environment-centred view of the review of the Act. ANGAIR and FEO volunteers provide thousands of hours each year on caring for the national estate and so we consider we are in a strong position to comment on the review of the Act and we offer the following observations and suggestions.

Ref. 1.1

All native wildlife should be protected and their habitat conserved. FEO and ANGAIR have carried out extensive removal of environmental weeds, planting of indigenous flora species and removal of litter to protect natural habitat for wildlife in the area.

FEO fauna surveys using remote cameras continue to provide knowledge of the presence of wildlife, including threatened species, as well as threats from introduced species.

All wildlife, even if apparently abundant, require protection from the possibility of future threats, such as viruses, inappropriate development, excessive clearing of vegetation and bushfires which may cause decline or extinction of populations e.g., the apparent local extinction of the New Holland Mouse in the Anglesea district could possibly be linked to the 1983 bushfires.

Our expectations are that where threatened species are found, measures such as cat and fox control should be targeted. We are aware of the effects of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* on fauna habitats and would like to see stronger measures taken to prevent the spread of this pathogen. We presently use measures such as footbaths and Phytoclean disinfectant cleaner spray on shoes. but this needs to be more widespread.

Government actions that may affect threatened species (e.g., fire and fuel management, logging, issuing of mining licences) should be stopped until appropriate scientific research is undertaken.

Ref. 1.1.2

There are obvious conflicts. Many residents and visitors have expectations that they are entitled to use the bushland for recreational purposes without consideration for the impact they might have on the environment, and the wildlife that inhabit it. Examples are creation and illegal use of informal tracks by motor bikes, mountain bikes and 4WD vehicles and disregard for regulations on National Park tracks.

Horse riding through native bushland causes damage to native vegetation and dispersal of weeds.

These recreational uses require additional fauna habitat monitoring, and rehabilitation of national parks and public bushland affected by the activities. These additional management burdens are a cost to the land managers that take them away from their primary activities, protection. Introduction of user pays fees could be used to share the cost burden with the recreational users, in the same way that camping fees are used in National Parks.

Ref. 1.1.3

Wider community education about the special values of the natural environment and the detrimental effects of habitat destruction may also encourage compliance with the Act.

Public use needs to be strictly planned and managed to minimise vegetation damage and maximise biodiversity outcomes.

There is a need for additional surveillance by ranger patrols and use of remote cameras to monitor illegal activities.

Ref. 1.2.1

The Act should be primarily concerned with protecting and conserving indigenous wildlife not protecting and managing feral animals such as deer. To protect indigenous wildlife, we need to protect and conserve indigenous vegetation.

Ref. 1.2.2

We believe that tensions could be better resolved through clear communication between the agencies involved and the recreational users, so users understand the reasons for protecting native habitat and not to use or create illegal tracks or use tracks illegally.

Clear signage is essential and policing and enforcement is required to stop inappropriate and illegal activities. Illegal wood harvesting is an example of this type of use.

Ref. 1.3.1

We appreciate that the rights and interests of traditional owners should be respected.

The Act should allow for a role for traditional owners and Aboriginal Victorians to be key partners in conserving wildlife.

Ref 1.3.2

Each reserve could recognise and describe the importance of the area to the traditional owners and involve them in management actions and decision making.

1.3.3 and 1.3.4

Rewilding may be an opportunity to involve traditional owners in reserve activities/management.

1.3.5

Traditional owners could be involved in commercial use where excess numbers require control. Any control of indigenous wildlife should require Authority to Control Wildlife (ATCW) permits.

1.4

Duty of Care applies to private land managers under the Catchment and Land Protection (CALP) Act so the Secretary of DELWP should have a Duty of Care to protect indigenous wildlife and vegetation. Under the current Act wildlife can be

'unprotected' meaning they can be controlled without an ATCW. This conflicts with duty of care considerations.

Ref. 1.5.1

All key items used in the Act should be clear and not confusing.

Ref. 1.5.2

We believe that all native wildlife should be considered protected. We support the introduction of legislation to outlaw recreational duck shooting in Victoria. We would like non-indigenous species to be removed from protection. For example, several deer species are now major pest animals over a large part of Victoria impacting on indigenous vegetation values and displacing wildlife. As are horses in the Alps and Barmah Forest.

Protection should be given to Hooded Plover and other beach-nesting and migratory birds which are vulnerable to off-leash dogs, foxes, cats and horses, during the breeding season. This protection requires additional financial and human resources. Foreshore managers should have the authority to close sections of beach to afford adequate protection to nesting birds.

Enforced domestic animal curfews would help protect birds and small mammal species.

Ref. 2.1.3

Game animals could be covered under the CALP Act (pest animals) assuming no indigenous animals are included.

Ref. 2.3.3

The current voluntary conservation incentives to protect and improve biodiversity values on private land are realistic as it would be very difficult to enforce compulsory wildlife conservation.

Ref. 2.4.1

Wildlife should be 'owned' by the State.

Ref. 2.4.2

Private landowners should have no greater rights than non-landowners.

Ref. 2.4.4

Traditional owners should be actively involved in wildlife management issues.

Ref. 3.1.1

We agree that principles should guide regulators under The Act, e.g. conservation and protection should be the first consideration in dealing with wildlife.

Ref. 3.2

Consultation is vital for community acceptance of actions. Appropriate land managers need to be consulted: rural residential versus broadacre farming requirements.

Ref. 3.2.2

We suggest consultation may be appropriate at a CMA or sub-catchment level in some instances or by Local Government Authorities in others.

Ref. 3.3

Management plans are essential but need to be properly resourced.

Ref. 3.4

Reporting outcomes of authorisations, especially ATCWs would help determine the effectiveness of the authorisation.

Ref.3.5.

Fees should not be based on full cost recovery where positive externalities are likely.

Ref. 3.6

The Act should have provisions for issuing mandatory codes of practice, standards and guidelines.

Ref. 4

The Act should have provision to establish expert advisory bodies to advise key decision makers on strategic matters relating to wildlife management. This would improve wildlife welfare outcomes.

Ref. Part 5.

Penalties for destroying wildlife and wildlife habitat appear inadequate. The relativity of penalties requires review.

Community impact statements have merit in determining community attitudes to offences committed.

Introducing infringement notices may improve the effectiveness of enforcing the Act.

We believe that the maximum penalties should be enforced for serious offences relating to death or injuries caused to wildlife by deliberate cruelty. Sufficient guidance should be given to judges in deciding sentencing.

Ref. 5.6

We believe that an Authorised Officer should be given the necessary powers to enforce penalties.

Impact of Eco-tourism on wildlife

Excessive tourism threatens to diminish the quality and quantity of natural habitats. There should be legislated limits on these activities. Tour guides should be employed who are knowledgeable about the area and who share their knowledge as they travel through sensitive areas.

We suggest the introduction of bus company permits and distribution of language-appropriate materials.

Old Growth Forests

Old growth forests are habitat to many hollow-nesting species, e.g., parrots, owls, bats and gliders. Hollows take many years to form. Consideration should be given to protecting large trees with hollows when carrying out fire protection and clearing works.

Rehabilitation of sick, injured or orphaned wildlife

A major concern in our area is the high numbers of injured wildlife on our roads particularly during holiday seasons.

There is an urgent need for a State-wide policy regarding wildlife welfare, carers and shelters. Appropriate signage with contact information and phone numbers, preferably one phone number statewide linked to local carers.

Adequate funding should be provided to wildlife carers and rescue personnel. We have concerns that our local rescuer is carrying financial cost and should be appropriately reimbursed for his time and efforts in caring for injured wildlife.