

Submission
on
Bunurong Marine National Park
Bunurong Marine Park
Bunurong Coastal Reserve &
Kilcunda-Harmers Haven Coastal Reserve
Draft Management Plan

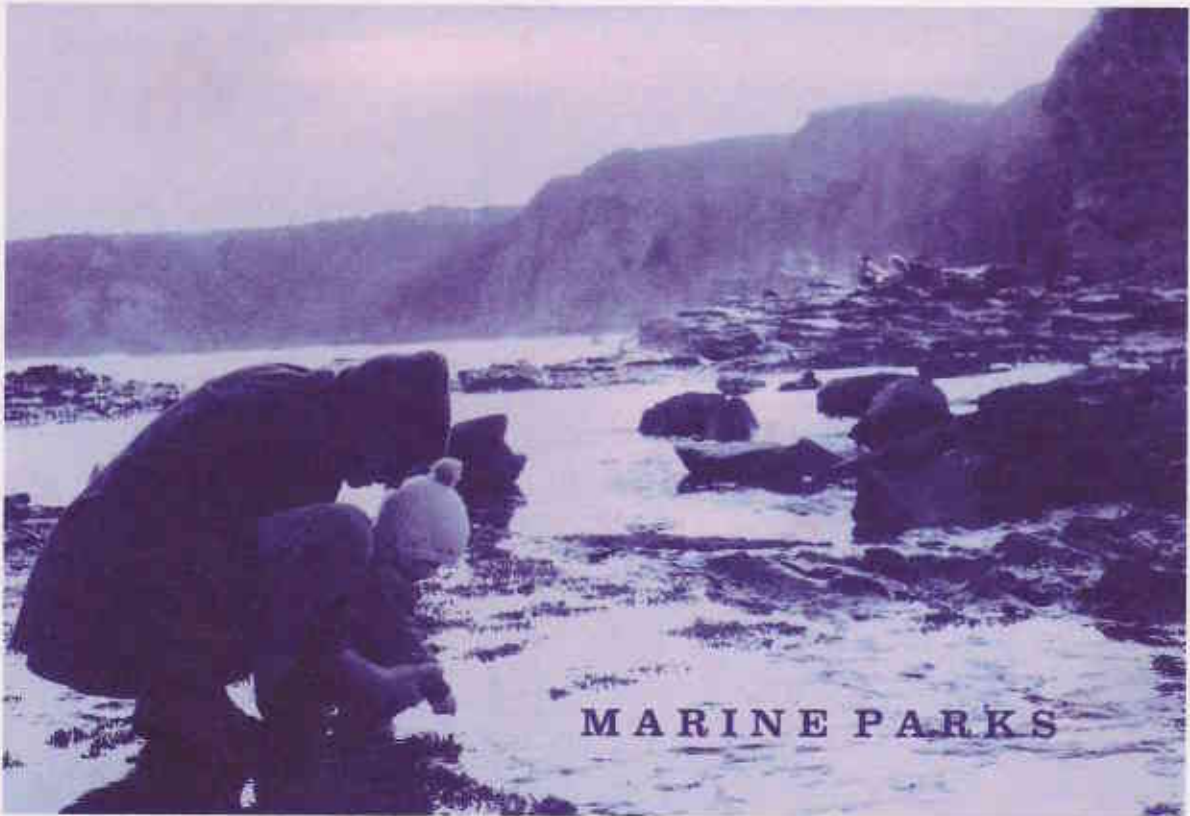


Photo by Marion Chapman 1982 for marine park information pamphlet

to
Parks Victoria



1. INTRODUCTION

This submission by Andrew and Marion Chapman provides comment on the proposed management plan based on our observations of the natural environment and the way in which the area is managed. We have approximately 30 years of experience observing and recording the natural environment along the Bunurong coast.



Some of Marion's marine interpretation pamphlet artwork

Marion has been walking along the coast observing and photographing terrestrial life, snorkeling and occasionally SCUBA diving along the inshore waters. She has participated in marine field surveys, mounted algae specimens and illustrated a variety of marine life for interpretation pamphlets and booklets. Marine flora, fauna and landscapes have provided inspiration for several series of paintings.

Andrew also spent time along the coast observing terrestrial life, snorkeling and SCUBA diving along the inshore and offshore areas and photographing marine life. He also lead numerous excursions and gave more than 35 public talks using his underwater photographs of the area to illustrate its rich diversity. With others participated in the survey by the National Museum and Fisheries and Wildlife collecting specimens for identification.



Some underwater photos taken along the Bunurong coast by Andrew Chapman

Andrew and Marion have, over the years, worked on field surveys with marine naturalists in the South Gippsland Marine Study Group and maintained communications with members of the Marine Research Group. The Marine Study Group arranged for speakers with expertise to give public talks about the marine environment and marine and coastal management with particular reference to the Bunurong.



Artwork by Marion Chapman for some of the many activities of the South Gippsland Marine Studies Group

More recently Marion observed a previously unseen sea star at Pt Norman and Andrew identified it as the Pacific Sea Star. People within the local community were then alerted and quick follow up action by Parks Victoria, DSE and volunteers averted a significant marine environment disaster.

This submission is not intended to be exhaustive but recommends an appropriate course of action for the future of the marine and coastal environment based on an informed view.

1.1 Management Plan for Bunurong Marine National Park and Bunurong Marine Park

The Bunurong Marine Park, although proclaimed as recently as 1992, is now one of the oldest and most successful Marine Parks in Victoria. The reason it is so successful is that it was developed over a long period of time by the Fisheries and Wildlife Division Fisheries personnel working with the community and stakeholders. An important component in the development of the Bunurong Marine Park is that, early in the process, there was a marine survey and investigation undertaken by the National Museum of Victoria along with the Fisheries and Wildlife Division which provided a scientific basis for subsequent work.

The new Marine National Parks throughout Victoria are relatively recent and much of the promotion to achieve public acceptance of these new parks was based on the success of the Bunurong Marine Park. In fact the Bunurong Marine Park was used in many of the Government promotions for the new marine parks.



1.2 Brief History of the Bunurong Marine Park

The Bunurong Marine Park was created following a series of investigations and assessments including the following:

- In 1980 the Fisheries and Wildlife Division announced that they considered the Eagles Nest/ Anderson Inlet area to contain an array of marine flora and fauna worthy of investigation with the view to assessing its suitability for a marine reserve.
- The Dec 1982 Fisheries and Wildlife Paper No 30, A Systematic Approach to the Establishment of Marine and Estuarine Protected Areas in Victorian Coastal Waters advised that the Cape Patterson/Inverloch area was included in proposals for marine protected areas.
- In 1982 The National Museum of Victoria, Melbourne and Fisheries and Wildlife Division undertook a marine flora and fauna survey of the Bunurong Coast. The marine flora and fauna survey was carried out in the marine area between Petrel Rock and Coal Point.
- The results of the National Museum and Fisheries and Wildlife Division marine survey were published in 1983 and identified a rich array of marine life on the rock platforms and adjacent marine area. Many new species were identified and new families were found.
- In October 1987 the Fisheries and Wildlife Division released the Proposal for the Establishment of the Bunurong Marine Reserve in waters near Inverloch. The proposal for a marine park, based on the marine survey work and public interest, proposed a park with boundaries from Coal Point to Petrel Rock and from mean high tide 1,000metres to sea. A preservation zone was proposed from the east point of the Eagles Nest bay to the west point of The Oaks bay.
- On 3 November 1987 the Hon Joan Kirner, Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, released the paper, Have Your Say on the Proposal for The Bunurong Marine Reserve. The proposal was for a marine park from Coal Point to Petrel Rock and across to Wreck Creek and 1,000 metres seaward.
- During the public consultation period there was significant discussion throughout the media as this proposal had been debated since 1980 and the local community and interested people from Melbourne and other places had developed a clear understanding of the Bunurong Marine Park.
- The Regulatory Impact Statement for the Bunurong Marine Park was prepared and issued in November 1990. This gave the need and reasons for the establishment of the Bunurong Marine Park.
- In May 1992 a Proposed Management Plan Bunurong and Marine Coastal Park was released by the Department of Conservation and Environment. The management plan reflected the earlier work on boundaries. Some of the allowed activities deviated from previous marine conservation objectives and public discussions in this subservient document.
- April 1997 saw the Marine and Coastal Special Investigation Proposed Recommendations. This document comprised desk top study without the benefit of any marine research.
- It was not until early 2004 that there was an outcome to the process and as a consequence a Marine National Park was proposed for the existing Bunurong Park Sanctuary Zone with the extension seaward.

The development of the Bunurong Marine Park included a number of field surveys by marine naturalists, a comprehensive assessment of the marine environment and public opinion. The extent of this work, the time over which it took place and the intended plan should remain relevant in the creation of any management plan.



1.3 General

The draft management plan collates a lot of valuable information and makes many worthwhile suggestions about the management of the area in question. There are a number of details that will however need to be addressed over time and Parks Victoria has the local expertise to attend to these.

The draft management plan clearly highlights to us that the marine protected areas are not given an appropriate level of protection commensurate with the identified marine values along the Bunurong coast. Also adjoining land areas are afforded a higher conservation status than the Bunurong Marine Park providing a major inconsistency in the management plan rationale.

The Fisheries and Wildlife Division Proposal for the Establishment of the Bunurong Marine Reserve in waters near Inverloch October 1987, based on marine research and investigations concluded " *the Bunurong coastal marine environment has high conservation, recreational, educational and scientific value such as to warrant its consideration for proclamation as a marine reserve.*" This statement was for the marine environment from Wreck Creek to Coal Point.

This submission outlines the need to provide the Bunurong Marine Park with the required conservation status to protect the recreational, educational and scientific values.



2. BUNURONG AND KILCUNDA-HARMERS HAVEN COASTAL RESERVES

2.1 Bunurong

The foreshore reserve along and adjoining the Bunurong Marine Park is important for a range of terrestrial species and avifauna. The beaches, and intertidal areas, are used by waders for roosting and feeding and the vegetated foreshore is used by a range of species including a number that are migratory. The foreshore has improved over the last 30 years because grazing of foreshore vegetation and other destructive practices have been stopped. In addition rehabilitation work has been very successful.

Subdivision of rural land to create residential allotments and tourist developments that rely on access via the coast road located on crown land have created negative impacts on the foreshore natural environment.

There are a number of activities and inappropriate uses that occur along the coastal and marine environments and these are well known by the managing Parks Victoria staff. Methods to limit the impact of many of these have been provided within the management plan, however more needs to be done to improve habitat and reduce threats to the flora and fauna.

Our sightings of Swamp antechinus along the coast road have reduced significantly over the past 15 years even though vegetation has improved and our opportunities to make observations increased. Feral animals, cats and foxes, are prevalent and this could be the reason for this species apparent demise.

There are opportunities to provide replacement habitat in a targeted way. For example planting *Eucalyptus globulus*, *ovata* and *viminalis* in the gullies on the landward side of the road at The Caves and Shack Bay would provide important food trees for migrating Swift Parrots, a nationally threatened species.

2.2 Kilcunda-Harmers Haven

The coastal reserve in this section contains a range of valuable habitat and all habitat is valuable in South Gippsland. The most outstanding area of public land in this section of coast is the Wonthaggi Heathlands which should have been included in this management unit. Its inclusion would have added to the overall biological diversity within the one planning unit to make a truly exceptional Park.

3. BUNURONG MARINE PARK INCLUDING BUNURONG MARINE NATIONAL PARK



The Bunurong Marine Park is recognised as being highly successful and it was after achieving this success that its Sanctuary Zone was expanded and converted to the Bunurong Marine National Park section of the Bunurong Marine Park. The Bunurong Marine Park contains a range of habitats that do not exist within the Marine National Park and as such remains an important marine park within Australia. This was the principal reason why the Bunurong marine area was listed on the National Estate.

3.1 Important Marine Areas

The Bunurong Marine Park has a number of important and different marine areas such as:

- **Flat Rocks** with its wide rock platform with sheltered reefs at the edge of the platform and accessible marine life, sea grass beds, 'Merino Rocks', beach washed seaweed/diatom cycle,
- **Petrel Rock** with its offshore rock stack reef and nearby 'hump' providing another different habitat,
- **The Caves** with large rock pools, offshore ledges and reefs supporting a diverse marine life,
- **Eagles Nest** with its interesting geological features that extend subtidally and create interesting underwater rock stack habitats,
- **Offshore Reef** with its caves and spectacular underwater scenery and habitats,
- **Twin Reefs** with its rich intertidal marine life and deep troughs,
- **The Oaks** with its rock pools at the points and inshore reefs with corals,
- **Cape Patterson** with rock pools and offshore reefs,
- **Harmers Haven** on the western side of Cape Patterson being a high energy coast provides a contrast with the eastern, more sheltered, side,
- The substrate in the intertidal and subtidal areas is faulted and broken and providing numerous walls, shelves, ledges and caves that form micro-habitats along the length of the coast. Diving along the length of the coast reveals that the marine life varies from one microhabitat to the next.

This is merely a list of features however each of these features is surrounded by a rich array of habitats which in many cases are different from one another. The features and surrounding habitats were intentionally included in the Bunurong Marine Park. Many of the arguments put forward in support of the Bunurong Marine National Park rely on values contained within the Bunurong Marine Park that do not occur within the Marine National Park area. The richness of the marine life identified through field surveys by naturalist and research was encompassed within the boundaries of the Bunurong Marine Park.

It is not correct to claim that many of significant features of the Bunurong Marine Park can be found in only one part. The Bunurong Marine Park embodies a single representative marine ecosystem that contains a wide variety of microhabitats - it is a rich biodiverse unit. Therefore too much emphasis should not be placed on the Marine National Park, at the expense the Bunurong Marine Park.

3.2 Recognition of the Value of the Marine Environment

The Fisheries and Wildlife Division Proposal for the Establishment of the Bunurong Marine Reserve in waters near Inverloch October 1987, based on marine research and investigations had this to say.

“REASONS FOR ESTABLISHING THE BUNURONG MARINE RESERVE

The marine environmental features of greatest interest and significance along the Bunurong Coast are the extensive intertidal rock platforms supporting diverse and specialized communities of flora and fauna, and the subtidal reef areas with localized spectacular geological formations and abundant macrophyte growth with associated invertebrate and fish fauna. It is proposed, therefore, that these environments be protected by the establishment of a marine reserve, to be known as the Bunurong Marine Reserve.

The intertidal rock platforms of the Bunurong Coast have been identified as being of high conservation, educational recreational and scientific value for the following reasons:-

- (a) The intertidal rock platforms in this area, particularly at Twin Reefs, Eagles Nest, Cape Paterson, The Oaks, Coal Point, Harmers Haven and Flat Rocks are amongst the best examples of extensive rocky intertidal habitat anywhere along the Victorian Coastline, and these are characterized by high biotic diversity, and provide readily visible examples of the succession of communities occurring in different parts of the intertidal zone;*
- (b) The rock platforms and eroding cliff bases have value as fossil deposits; the area around Eagles Nest has produced lungfish and dinosaur fossils of national and international significance.*

.....
The subtidal reef environment of the Bunurong coast also has conservation, educational recreational value for the following reasons:-

- (a) Although the flat, broken, sedimentary reef and associated biota of the Bunurong is a habitat type commonly found along the Victorian coast, the Bunurong subtidal reef is an excellent example of this habitat type. In addition, subtidal fauna influence the community structure of the intertidal environment. The subtidal reef area in the proposed Bunurong Marine Reserve is therefore worthy of protection;*
- (b) The varied topography of the subtidal reef and the abundant growth of macrophytes, and the diversity of associated fauna, makes the Bunurong subtidal environment valuable as a venue for snorkeling and diving activities. Divers can readily walk across beaches and rock platforms to diving sites, and boat access is facilitated by launching ramps at Inverloch*

It is concluded from the above consideration that the Bunurong coastal marine environment has high conservation, recreational, educational and scientific value such as to warrant its consideration for proclamation as a marine reserve.”

It is worth restating the values outlined above that were based on field surveys, research and investigations.

The intertidal area at (a)

“The intertidal rock platforms in this area, particularly at Twin Reefs, Eagles Nest, Cape Paterson, The Oaks, Coal Point, Harmers Haven and Flat Rocks are amongst the best examples of extensive rocky intertidal habitat anywhere along the Victorian Coastline, and these are characterized by high biotic diversity, and provide readily visible examples of the succession of communities occurring in different parts of the intertidal zone;”

Because this clearly articulates the value and a need to create a marine protected area to protect the intertidal area from Wreck Creek to Coal Point.

The subtidal area at (a)

“Although the flat, broken, sedimentary reef and associated biota of the Bunurong is a habitat type commonly found along the Victorian coast, the Bunurong subtidal reef is an excellent example of this habitat type. In addition, subtidal fauna influence the community structure of the intertidal environment. The subtidal reef area in the proposed Bunurong Marine Reserve is therefore worthy of protection;”

The importance of this statement is that the intertidal area, recognized as being of exceptionally high value needs to have its adjacent subtidal area protected. The reasoning applies to the coastal length and not one isolated location.

This statement goes on to conclude.

“It is concluded from the above consideration that the Bunurong coastal marine environment has high conservation, recreational, educational and scientific value such as to warrant its consideration for proclamation as a marine reserve.”

This statement is being made for the length of the coast and is the grounds for the highest level of conservation protection for the whole marine area. It does not refer to one small section alone.

3.3 Intended Protection - Level and Extent

The document ‘Have Your Say on the Proposal for The Bunurong Marine Reserve’ was released on 3 November 1987 by The Hon Joan Kirner, Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands.

Consistent with the proposal put forward by Fisheries the marine reserve was from Coal Point to Wreck Creek and 1,000 metres seaward. Following the public exhibition period during which organizations and the public were invited to make submissions in November 1990 a Regulatory Impact Statement for the Bunurong Marine Reserve was prepared. Relevant sections are as follows:

“THE NEED FOR MARINE PARKS AND MARINE RESERVES”

.....
“Like for our other Marine Parks and Marine Reserves, the area proposed for the Bunurong Marine Park is one highly worthy of protection. The Bunurong coast, named after an aboriginal tribe that once inhabited the area, is special because of the intertidal rock platform.

The Bunurong intertidal rock platform extends up to 500 metres out to sea, is covered by but exposed by low tides. As such, a great diversity of plants and animals that normally can only be seen by diving, can be viewed in pools and crevices on the rock platform when it is exposed by low tides.

The subtidal area, that area always covered by the sea, is also one of interest and contains plants and animals that interact with those of the intertidal rock platform.

Victoria and other Australian States, in line with the recommendations of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), proclaims Marine Parks and Marine Reserves for the purpose of conservation, and where consistent with the conservation objectives, for the purpose of recreation, education and scientific research.

Consequently, the regulations governing commercial, recreational, educational, scientific research and other activities in Marine Parks are drafted to allow the achievement of the conservation objectives defined for the Marine Park.

The Victorian State Conservation Strategy (1987) has an objective: “to preserve natural areas and ecosystems for the non-material needs of society”. If we achieve this objective as regards the area proposed for the Bunurong Marine Park, we will be preserving a special marine ecosystem and part of our natural heritage for our appreciation, and that of our children, and future generations.”

“SECTION 1: RECOMMENDED REGULATIONS.

1. Definition of objectives of recommended regulations.

(a) Prime objectives:

1.1 To protect and conserve the diversity and abundance of marine flora and fauna of the extensive intertidal habitat;

1.2 To protect and conserve the subtidal area as an excellent example of flat, broken sedimentary reef habitat and associated biota, which interact with biota of the intertidal area;

1.3 *In particular, the objectives of the recommended recreational fishing and collecting regulations are to protect and conserve reef fish species, rock lobster, abalone and intertidal fauna.*

(b) *Subsidiary objectives:*

1.4 *To improve the experience afforded to recreational non-fishing divers by enhancing populations of reef fauna, and that of those who view the rock platform with a natural intertidal community;*

1.5 *To restore depleted stocks of rock lobster and abalone.”*

Clearly it was understood that the Bunurong was a valuable marine environment and the intention for the Bunurong Marine Park was one of conservation. The identified values covered the entire rock platform and the adjoining subtidal area without differentiation between the particular sections of the coastline. This was done with widespread support from within the local and wider community.

The Bunurong Marine Park is recognised as being highly successful and it was after achieving this success that its Sanctuary Zone was expanded and converted to the Bunurong Marine National Park section of the Bunurong Marine Park. The Bunurong Marine Park contains a range of habitats that do not exist within the Marine National Park and as such it remains an important marine park within the marine park system of Australia.

The trend for conservation reserves and parks is to improve protection, as in the Alpine National Park. As utilization pressures increase so to does the need to upgrade the level of protection of the Bunurong Marine Park.

The management plan at “**4.5 Marine habitats and communities**” completes its discussion by stating “*Whole-of-habitat management may also result in the protection of species not yet identified, due to their rarity, cryptic nature, or lack of research effort.*” This is the very reason the diverse range of habitats in the Bunurong Marine Park need to be protected.

The Bunurong Marine Park should be managed primarily for conservation and assigned an appropriate IUCN category in recognition of its important conservation value and to be consistent with adjoining areas.

4.0 A TYPICAL EXAMPLE WHERE GREATER PROTECTION IS REQUIRED

The lower conservation status applied to the Bunurong Marine Park covers a number of important marine habitats that were, for good reason, included in the Marine Park. We have selected the Flat Rocks area as one example to highlight the deficiency in proposed protection.

4.1 Flat Rocks - Features and Habitats

It is apparent that many of the judgments about the marine environment qualities have been influenced by the appearance of the adjoining terrestrial landscape. Consequently places like Flat Rocks, which have a diverse variety of marine habitats, have not attracted the attention they deserve.

The Flat Rocks area has many features that are worth mentioning including the following:

- the widest expanse of rock platform within the Bunurong coast,
- the flattest rock platform section along the section of coast from Wreck Creek to Coal Point,
- extensive shallow reefs at and off the edge of the rock platform,
- Petrel Rock, the only island reef, just offshore,
- The Hump reef further offshore,

- a protected inshore area,
- extensive sea grass beds,
- protected sandy/silty beaches and
- a concentrated seaweed/diatom cycle

to name a few. These areas, that do not exist elsewhere either individually or collectively along the coast, contain a diversity of marine life.

This area is protected from surge and as such is frequently used for snorkeling by experienced people and beginners. It is also a reliable location to take people snorkeling for marine education and interpretation. The offshore area around Flat Rocks to the Caves is popular with SCUBA divers.

It is important to reserve all areas of the Bunurong coast and ensure that they are all properly protected. Not all values are fully recorded and changes occur over time. Only relatively recently waders, or shorebirds, started feeding on the beaches and rock platform at Flat Rocks.

4.2 Flat Rocks - Intertidal - Migratory Waders

The value of Flat Rocks needs to be protected in accordance with statutory requirements to protect International migratory shorebirds. Red-necked Stints, and other waders, over summer use the Flat Rocks beach and intertidal area.



Photo of Red-necked Stints at Flat Rocks

These birds are listed under treaties with China (CAMBA) and Japan (JAMBA) and the Commonwealth EPBC Act. CAMBA documents the following responsibilities of its partners.

“Article III

- 1.
2.
3. *Each Contracting Party shall encourage the conservation of migratory birds, especially those in danger of extinction.*

Article IV

- Each Contracting Party shall endeavour, in accordance with its laws and regulations in force, to:*
- (a) establish sanctuaries and other facilities for the management and protection of migratory birds and also of their environment: and*
 - (b) take appropriate measures to preserve and enhance the environment of migratory birds. In particular*
 - (i) seek means to prevent damage to migratory birds and their environment, and*
 - (ii)*

Similarly relevant sections of JAMBA are as follows:

“Article III

1. *Each Government shall take special protective measures, as appropriate, for the preservation of species or subspecies of birds which are in danger of extinction.*
2.
3.

Article IV

1.
2.
3. *Each Government shall encourage the conservation of migratory birds and birds in danger of extinction.*

Article V

Each Government shall endeavour to establish sanctuaries and other facilities for the management and protection of migratory birds and birds in danger of extinction and also of their environment.

Article VI

Each Government shall endeavour to take appropriate measures to preserve and enhance the environment of birds protected under the provisions of this Agreement. In particular, it shall:

- (a) seek means to prevent damage to such birds and their environment;*
- (b)*
- (c) ”.*



Red-necked Stints at Flat Rocks

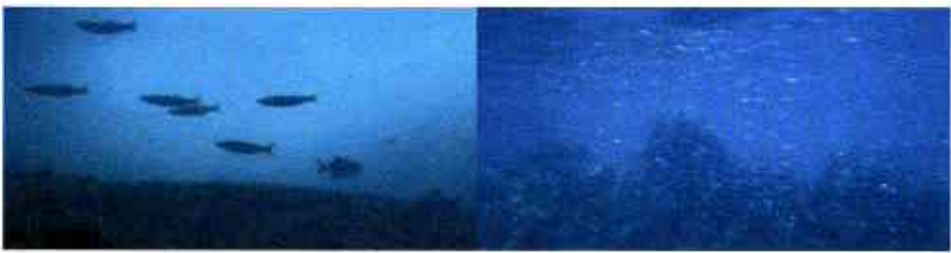
Clearly there is an obligation to take action to protect the areas used by waders within the Bunurong Marine Park. This means that habitats at Flat Rocks should be protected from disturbance and the best way to achieve this is with a higher level of protection than proposed.

4.3 Flat Rocks - Subtidal Area

The subtidal area, like many locations along the Bunurong, is easily accessed by SCUBA divers and/or snorkelers and is popular because its shallow well lit water is rich in algae and fish. It is particularly valuable because it can be used over a wide range of weather conditions.

Due to the regulatory neglect the Bunurong Marine Park has suffered a number of inappropriate uses. An example, just off Flat Rocks, is the netting of fish within the Marine Park for live export. This recent activity, occurring where beginners make their first contact with fish in an underwater setting, is contrary to the objectives of a marine protected area.





Fish schools off Flat Rocks

The comments above deal with Flat Rocks, however it would be equally possible to describe in some detail the distinctly different marine environments of The Caves, Cape Paterson and Harmers Haven.

5. FRAMEWORK FOR MARINE PARKS

5.1 What the Management Plan Says

The draft management, under 2 BASIS, makes a lot of the framework for establishing parks, however the intention of this framework is not to diminish areas already identified for conservation and set aside as parks but to guide ongoing work. It is also not appropriate to suggest that the identified widespread values, contained within the Bunurong Marine Park, be used to support the application of this framework which then inturn is applied to a select portion the Bunurong Marine National Park.

The following part of the draft management plan is relevant.

“2.2 Park Significance and Values

Bunurong Marine National Park, Bunurong Marine Park, Bunurong Coastal Reserve and Kilcunda-Harmers Haven Coastal Reserve make a valuable contribution to Victoria’s park and reserve system, which aims to protect viable, representative samples of the State’s natural marine and terrestrial environments. These areas also provide opportunities for visitors to enjoy and appreciate natural and cultural values, and many make important contributions to tourism.

[see comment a) below]

Bunurong Marine National Park is assigned the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Category II (National Park) of the United Nation’s List of National Parks and Protected Areas. Category II areas are managed primarily for ecosystem protection and recreation. Bunurong Marine National Park is assigned the IUCN Category VI. Category VI areas are managed primarily for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems. Bunurong Coastal Reserve and Kilcunda-Harmers Haven Coastal Reserve are assigned the IUCN Category III (national monument). Category III areas are managed primarily for conservation of specific natural features.

[see comment b) below]

In recognition of the area’s outstanding values and its heritage importance, sections of the Bunurong Marine National Park, Bunurong Marine Park and Bunurong Coastal Reserve between Cape Paterson and Inverloch have been listed on the register of the National Estate.”

[see comment c) below]

This section of the draft management plan then goes on to support its view by citing values of the marine environment that are contained specifically within the Bunurong Marine Park.

Comments

As this argument is apparently underpinning the structure and relationship between the various reserves included in the proposed management plan it warrants a considered response.

a) Economic Significance

The South Gippsland marine environment and coastline from Phillip Island to Wilsons Promontory is a unique area of great diversity. It is also an area where people visit in large numbers to view penguins, shearwaters, seals, whales and other marine life, terrestrial life and coastal landscapes to make it one of Australia's biggest natural attractions. The Bunurong Marine Park dovetails into this marine ecotourism sector by providing easily accessed safe coastal snorkelling and SCUBA diving areas.

These natural attractions generate huge incomes for the local, state and national economies and they must be managed so that the natural values are maintained into the future.

b) IUCN Classification

The stated assigned IUCN classification is not supported with any justification. The IUCN provides a discussion forum for many countries and through that forum it is clear that there are a great variety of ways in which parks have been and are put together. The ICUN classification referred to in the management plan is not binding on the Victorian Government but more conversely the ICUN is being used to support a particular view.

Given the clear and unambiguous marine values of the Bunurong marine environment it is clear that the Bunurong Marine Park deserves the protection status of Category II not Category VI. Within the Category II area the park could contain two specific zones.

c) National Estate Listing

The Bunurong Marine Park contains a range of habitats that do not exist within the Marine National Park and as such it remains an important marine protected area within Australia. This was the principal reason why the Bunurong marine area was nominated for listing on the National Estate. The Bunurong Marine Park was listed on the National Estate long before the Marine National Park was even thought of. It inherited that listing.



5.2. IUCN Protected Area Categories

The management plan does not detail the IUCN Categories which are as follows.

“Interpretation of the IUCN Protected Area Categories

A protected area is defined as[1]:

An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means.”

....“The new IUCN Protected Area Categories were proposed in February 1992 at the IVth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas in Caracas and agreed at IUCN's General Assembly in Buenos Aires in January 1994[3]. They are summarised below.

- ***Category Ia: Strict nature reserve/wilderness protection area managed mainly for science or wilderness protection*** - an area of land and/or sea possessing some outstanding or representative ecosystems, geological or physiological features and/or species, available primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring;
- ***Category Ib: Wilderness area: protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection*** - large area of unmodified or slightly modified land and/or sea, retaining its natural characteristics and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which is protected and managed to preserve its natural condition.
- ***Category II: National park: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation*** - natural area of land and/or sea designated to (a) protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations, (b) exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area and (c) provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible.
- ***Category III: Natural monument: protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features*** - area containing specific natural or natural/cultural feature(s) of outstanding or unique value because of their inherent rarity, representativeness or aesthetic qualities or cultural significance.
- ***Category IV: Habitat/Species Management Area: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention*** - area of land and/or sea subject to active intervention for management purposes so as to ensure the maintenance of habitats to meet the requirements of specific species;
- ***Category V: Protected Landscape/Seascape: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation or recreation*** - area of land, with coast or sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area.
- ***Category VI: Managed Resource Protected Area: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural resources*** - area containing predominantly unmodified natural systems, managed to ensure long-term protection and maintenance of biological diversity, while also providing a sustainable flow of natural products and services to meet community needs.”

It can be seen from this list of categories that the Bunurong Marine Park has been given the lowest possible classification in stark contrast to the available evidence.

6. SUMMARY

The management plan brings together the terrestrial and marine environments into one single unit, which is the only way proper land management in can be applied. The single coastal and marine park makes an identifiable park which is important for the growing ecotourism industry of this region. It is not unlike Phillip Island Nature Park's joined land and marine management approach. Parks Victoria is commended for joining the different adjoining areas into one management unit.

The Bunurong Marine Park was established to meet marine conservation objectives and the public at large accept that this is the case. They have not only been prepared to abide by restrictions but have taken on a community policing role that has helped meet the overall objective of maintaining an intact ecosystem. The Bunurong Marine National Park, because of the way it was created, unfortunately does not have that level of community support. To achieve support would require the creation of opportunities for public participation. Government representatives talking at people cannot be construed as public participation.

The recent Bunurong Marine National Park is a 'fish bowl' approach rather than a method of setting in train the protection of an identified valuable marine asset. The Bunurong Marine National Park does not have rational boundaries when compared to the Bunurong Marine Park and is not a good model for the conservation and management of the marine environment. The 'fish bowl' Bunurong Marine National Park is not worthy of National Park status

The Bunurong Marine Park needs to provide the opportunity to experience an in tact unique and diverse marine environment into the future. A "precautionary approach" should be adopted for the protection of the marine flora and fauna in the Bunurong Marine Park.

The Bunurong Marine Park should be managed primarily for conservation and assigned an appropriate category - IUCN Category II in recognition of its important conservation, recreational, educational and scientific value and to be consistent with categories nominated for adjoining areas.

7. CONCLUSION

The draft management plan contains a lot of valuable information, however it does not follow a logical path in assigning the IUCN Category VI for the Bunurong Marine Park. It is wrong to imply that all the important marine values along the rock platforms and subtidal area between Wreck Creek and Coal Point are contained within the Bunurong Marine National Park because they are not. The Bunurong Marine Park was created to protect an important marine area of Victoria because it included intertidal and subtidal environments of high biodiversity. For that reason it should be assigned a higher IUCN category than it has been given.

The Bunurong Marine Park has existed for some time now even though the required regulatory mechanisms for its proper management have not been put in place. Parks are receiving increased protection as pressures grow and Bunurong Marine Park is no exception.

We recommend that the Bunurong Marine Park be classified as an IUCN Category II reserve to ensure that the values of the area are protected for current and future generations. This will provide a significant land and marine park for the region consistent with its growing status as an ecotourist destination.



Supplementary Information

1. Introduction

Since preparing the 9 December 05 submission to Parks Victoria, we have been asked how the Bunurong Marine Park is being downgraded and what activities are now allowed that are inconsistent with its marine protected area status.

2. Proposal for the Bunurong Marine Reserve – November 1987

The proposed reserve nominated two zones and established zone boundaries. These resulted from consultation between Dr Don Axelrad (who acted for the Minister) and marine naturalists, fishermen and a range of other interested groups. The reserve's Conservation Zone, later to become the Marine Park Sanctuary Zone, prohibited exploitive activities. The reserves Recreation Zone, later to become the Marine Park Conservation Zone, provided prescriptions for protecting the marine environment. These were a compromise but nonetheless incompatible activities were eliminated.

The public submission process indicated across the board support for the high level of protection in the Conservation Zone. They also highlighted a number of incompatible uses and inconsistencies in the Recreation Zone such as prohibiting children from collecting shells whilst allowing spearfishing in an area where beginner adults and children are introduced to snorkelling and marine natural history.

Loaded spearguns are dangerous weapons and spearfishermen carrying them present an unacceptable level of risk to others in the water. It was also understood that where spearfishing occurs fish become diver shy and so spearfishing would also reduce the experience of others interested in viewing natural systems within the park. There was a widely held view that spearfishing should be prohibited in the eastern side of the proposed Conservation zone.

The prohibition of angling and spearfishing competitions was supported.

3. Regulatory Impact Statement – December 1990

Following the public consultation period, which gave a resounding level of support for the proposal, a Regulatory Impact Statement was prepared in December 1990. This Regulatory Impact Statement incorporated the results of public comments, an overall review of what was proposed and provided the reasoning for the required regulations. It was at this time the name Bunurong Marine Park was adopted and the zones were changed to Sanctuary and Conservation which in affect upgraded protection. The significant differences between the western and eastern Conservation Zones was recognised and different prescriptions were adopted to assist sensible management.

Importantly in the eastern Conservation Zone amateur spearfishing was prohibited in recognition of the higher level of conflict in that section between the use of spear guns and scientific, educational and interpretative uses. Of course angling and spearfishing competitions were prohibited in the eastern and western Conservation Zones

Commercial trolling was prohibited and commercial netting was restricted to the application of a permit for only those commercial fishers that could "demonstrate a record of such fishing from 1987-90." And that the "entitlement would not be transferable with the fishing license." This specifically applied to an agreed outcome for one commercial fisherman who used that area from time to time and would eventually relocate fishing activities outside that area thereby eliminating that form of commercial fishing from this zone.

In summary the eastern Conservation Zone had received a relatively high level of protection which was appropriate.

4. Bunurong Marine and Coastal Park, Proposed Management Plan May 1992

The management plan recognised the value of the Sanctuary Zone and provided the appropriate level of restrictions and in the eastern Conservation Zone, in accordance with the Regulatory Impact Statement, continued with the prohibition of spearfishing, fishing and spearfishing competitions and previously prohibited commercial fishing practices.

The Management Plan generally reflected previous objectives for the Bunurong marine environment.

5. Management of the Bunurong Marine Environment

A number of activities have occurred in the Bunurong Marine Park contrary to all of the previous public consultation and planning. These include commercial fishing for live export and spearfishing in the eastern Conservation Zone,

Parks Victoria issues pamphlets about the Bunurong marine environment entitled 'Bunurong Marine National Park' and 'Bunurong Marine and Coastal Park' that list allowed activities and prohibitions. They both allow all forms of fishing – line, spear, netting and traps and all commercial fishing other than aquaculture. This is in total contradiction of all the planning to establish appropriate levels of environment protection for the Bunurong Marine Park.

It is unacceptable to have people swimming with loaded spear guns amongst beginner adults and children learning to snorkel and appreciate the diversity of marine life within the park. Flat Rocks and the Caves are the main areas for introducing beginner adults and children to snorkelling and an appreciation of the marine natural history of the Bunurong. As it was the reason why spearfishing was originally prohibited in the eastern Conservation Zone it is hard to see why it is acceptable now with the increased level of use.

6. Draft Management Plan of September 2005

The Bunurong Marine National Park, Bunurong Marine Park, Bunurong Coastal Reserve and Kilcunda-Harmers Haven Coastal Reserve, Draft Management Plan September 2005 provides activities and prohibitions which are to be allowed. It permits both recreational and commercial fishing in the Bunurong Marine Park.

Even though angling competitions are prohibited and reasons are given, this management plan now suggests proposals would be considered and further suggests how organisers can go about getting approval for competitions.

The plan under 'Strategies for Community Awareness and Involvement' provides aims which are to "Increase community awareness and understanding of the values and management activities of the planning area." And to "Build a sense of shared ownership and custodianship for the planning area among community groups and individuals."

The "values" of the Bunurong marine environment were identified by many local marine naturalists who introduced visiting naturalists and others in the community to the rich and diverse marine environment. The Bunurong Marine Park was established as a result of public campaigns to protect the area and so the sense of "ownership and custodianship" has always been there. What is missing is the required level of commitment to establish a management plan that will provide protection and management guidelines for this outstanding marine environment.

7. Summary

As can be seen from the above references the Draft Management Plan further downgrades protection levels already established for the Bunurong Marine Park. This erosion of protection needs to be reversed to ensure the value of the Bunurong Marine environment survives.