

COG's 2019 member survey responses: Other feedback to the Committee

The final question in the Survey read 'Is there any other feedback that you would like to give to COG's Committee of Management?' About half the responses were expressions of thanks to the organisation, and particularly to the Committee, for what it does and achieves. The next category, with far fewer responses than those of thanks, was suggestions for improving meetings. Smaller proportions of feedbacks covered field trips, the Committee, special populations, the survey itself, involving young people, bird data, the chatline, membership, and other matters.

Expressions of thanks

- You are doing a great job. Keep going!
- Yes, thank you so much for all your hard work and expertise
- Thanks for the hard and difficult work the group is doing!
- Thanks I am proud to have joined an organisation genuinely and professionally making a difference
- Thank you for all your hard work.
- Thank them for their efforts
- Some of you do a massive amount of work for us. I appreciate it!
- Only my thanks
- Many thanks to COG for a fantastic service to the birding community and for the conservation of our birds.
- Many thanks for all!!! I think the COG committee of management does a great job, always has. Thank you. Thank you for decades of excellence and voluntary contributions for birds and the region's nature. yes ...thank you . You do a great job.
- Keep up the good work
- Keep up the good work. COG is a good example to other special interest groups on how to cater for a cross section of interests.
- Keep up the good work - appreciated!
- Keep up good work
- Keep it up! You're doing a great job. Thanks.
- I've only been a birdwatcher and a member of COG for a short time but I appreciate what you do.
- I would like to say that all of those people who have an active role in COG are wonderful. Keep up the good work! They do a marvellous job...I really appreciate all the hard work and commitment. Thank you for all your work. Thank you to all the dedicated members who keep COG running including the website of course!?? Thanks - you seem to be doing a fine job.
- I think you do a great job and I am proud to be a member.
- COG is one of the most active, professional volunteer-based organisations that I have been involved with, which plays a strong role in nature conservation in the ACT. May it long continue. I think the Committee and all those members in active positions in COG do a marvellous job.
- COG is (and has long been) an excellent community organisation. The committee and other role players are to be congratulated for the efforts, and you have my sincere thanks.
- Am very happy about COG's contribution to the welfare of bird life in the ACT, as very few other places have a large active group like this. I very much appreciate the work of the Committee. I am already secretary on another Canberra Committee, otherwise I would join up.

- A wonderful organization which has achieved excellent results in our field of interest. I think COG has been and continues to be an excellent organisation.

Meetings

These and other comments about the meetings have been passed to Jack Holland for his review and responses to the Committee.

- It has been a great pleasure to listen to the painstaking work of scientists in this field.
- Use of films, DVD and research talks are excellent. May be more involvement of bureaucracy in terms of their views of birds in cities, i.e. talks of films; maybe more reference to the national/international scene of ornithology: what is happening on that level.
- Make sure everyone can see and hear the speaker and offer refreshment after
- Night meetings are full of us elderly mostly the microphones don't work because people walk around and turn their backs on them. This is very annoying. Topics need always to be accompanied by PICTURES OF BIRDS to capture peoples especially young peoples interest. Young people cannot safely attend night meetings in a place they don't know and where they know no-one.
- The meeting place is difficult to find in the dark there are no welcoming signs outside to guide new people. No-one is greeted at the doors and COG is very old and insular.
- People sit at the aisles and don't like people crossing over them. For a total newcomer the whole setup is very daunting new members are no longer even welcomed by the person out the front nor our visitors
- I only attend occasional meetings now. But I find them as interesting, balanced and well-run as they have ever been, and if not-- better. The standard of ornithology in main and subsidiary talks-- maintained in early years by CSIRO Wildlife Research--has been kept through ANU/Canberra University and high-level Emma to work. And the bird sightings section brings meetings to the general bird. Well done and keep going!

Field trips

- Re non-members joining cog trips - its important that visiting birders not be excluded
- Just a thought about COGs field trip program. I notice that other naturalist clubs we belong to put out field trip programs in smaller chunks eg 3-4 months in advance. COG develops a program for the entire year in the later months of the year and I know that it can be hard to get leaders. From a leaders point of view, sometimes it is hard to commit to leading something that far out. I wonder if developing the program for the next 4-6 months would be easier to get leaders? You would also be able to be more flexible and add trips to locations that are good this season, rather than taking a guess at where might be interesting 12 months in advance.
- Continue negotiation with ACTEW about viewing access to the sewage ponds at the wetlands

COG Committee

- Remember first and foremost COG is a member service organisation not some lobby group that is the personal property of the committee
- Being volunteer-based, it may be worth using some of COG's funds to support learning and 'professional development' of key Management Committee positions. Perhaps this may encourage members to consider positions on the committee, if they know they will receive an active program of committee skills development.
- I appreciate that effort that has gone into this survey, and the effort that I expect will go into analysing what to do with these results. I have found the COG committee fairly closed and inaccessible over the years so this is good to see. I would like to see encouragement of

ongoing feedback and a more transparent approach into what goes on behind the scenes in the committee going into the future.

Special populations

- Don't forget the disabled & elderly
- Aging of members, do we slowly disengage before dropping off the perch
- I complained about [a member's name] to the COG president and I didn't hear back from him about any action he may or may not have taken.

Other matters

- COG members (including 3 presidents) were prominent at the founding of CIMAG in 2006, and many COG members assisted Kate Grarock in surveys for her PhD on aspects of common myna distribution and behaviour, number counts.
- There is always more that can be done!
- Get more members to volunteer. Most work seems to fall to a small number of people.
- Thanks for doing this survey. It is a refreshing move in an environment where organisations' (including COG's) actions are becoming more autocratic, convenient for the few, and feedback from the rest is often discouraged & disregarded if it does not get through.
- Increasing membership.
- Approach school and college biology teachers after Sat. AM free guided bird walks to local areas accompanied by their teacher +/- family.
- Topics need always to be accompanied by PICTURES OF BIRDS to capture peoples especially young peoples interest. Young people cannot safely attend night meetings in a place they don't know and where they know no-one. Make friends at a Sat. meeting and when enough interest is shown offer to pick them up +/- parent and take them home again.
- Like to see a more sophisticated records system which is easier to manage and interrogate than the current ones.
- NB a useful function of the chat line is sharing of information when eg overseas visitor seeking whereabouts of particular species.
- Collection of birding observations, especially Incidental Records seems to have become a car wreck situation and in my view needs some work if COG is to maintain its reputation for having really good quality data as to what the state of play is with birds in the COG AoI
- I appreciate that effort that has gone into this survey, and the effort that I expect will go into analysing what to do with these results.
- Thanks for seeking members' views. Good survey!
- I think I have done a lot in the survey. How about this - In 2003 COG publicly promised / threatened to conduct "a professional review of the GBS". Sure, examine the results, but that was not the motive. At the time there was nothing to add beyond what was in The GBS Report. The motive to this threat, - from a club committee, towards a long-time intensely devoted and hard-working volunteer member who gave years of life and a huge amount of personally very limited resources to do a task for the exclusive and world wide benefit to the club, -although local, is high among the most despicable events in recent Australian ornithology. The threat was totally unnecessary, pure nastiness, was done as part of the process to destroy the highly regarded contribution of the publication. It was perceived as such by many members. No one has pushed for this alleged review because it was clearly recognised as pointless. No one was ever paid for doing this as far as anyone knows, so there was nothing professional about it. Nothing of any credible quality was ever released. It never happened. Clearly because they realised there was no valid basis for the suggestion. The quality of The GBS Report has never been disputed. The suggestion that "a professional review" would find any significant fault or create an improvement was always and remains ludicrous. We are still waiting either for a professional report as promised or an apology for

making that threat, purely to create hostility. Some honesty from COG on this would be appropriate. In terms of a professional review, well I will offer my advice for free here. The GBS Report should now be repeated and updated. It is COG's flagship project that sets us apart in a good way from most others similar clubs. It is something that COG should be proud of. Instead it has languished in uselessness since 2006. BOCG V2 was an insult.