



The ACT Government Citizen Science Award - \$500

Nominee Details

Is your nominee an individual, group, network, or organisation?	group/network/organisation
Do they know they have been nominated?	Yes
Title	
First name	Neil
Surname	Hermes
Position	President
Group/Organisation	Canberra Ornithologists Group
Group/Organisation contact	Steve Read
Postal Address	COG PO Box 301
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State	ACT
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Primary Phone	0408170915
Secondary Phone	

Nominator

Title	Mr
First name	Benjamin
Surname	Huttner-Koros
Position	Project Officer
Group/Organisation	ACT Natural Resource Management
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Suburb	Canberra
State	ACT
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Secondary Phone

Referee 1

First name	Laura
Surname	Rayner
Group/Organisation	ACT Government
Relationship to Nominee	Project partner
Primary Phone	0262077614
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Referee 2

First name	Brett
Surname	Howland
Group/Organisation	ACT Government
Relationship to Nominee	Project partner
Primary Phone	62059129
Secondary Phone	0402182038
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Nomination Details

1. Recruited and encouraged others to be involved in Landcare, e.g. by speaking about Landcare to schools, media, landholders, groups etc or having a volunteer recruitment system.

Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) is a citizen-based organisation that began over 50 years ago. Its objectives are to encourage interest in Canberra region native birds; coordinate their study; and promote their conservation. COG regards collecting scientific data as a core activity that supports research, environmental management and community engagement.

COG prioritises systematic bird surveys (regular surveys at defined locations) that provide long-term data for analysis of trends in species abundance, human impacts and conservation outcomes. Analyses of long-term datasets have informed ACT land development and management, Strategies and Action Plans for threatened birds and ACT State of the Environment Reporting.

Data is collected by volunteer members for all of COG's many data collection programs (citizen science). Some of these include

- Woodland Bird Monitoring at 142 sites in the ACT. Surveys started in 1995 and are undertaken four times a year. Data have informed the ACT Woodland Strategy, Action Plans for threatened species; threatened species nominations; and reserve and land management.
- The COG Garden Bird Survey, now in its 39th year has led to 2 editions of Birds of Canberra Gardens, a successful book.
- Surveys for the threatened Superb Parrot that have informed ACT Government assessment of urban land development.
- Annual Bird Blitz, that involves the COG membership on one weekend surveying birds across as much of the ACT as possible.
- Bi-annual surveys on private properties as part of a landscape-scale habitat connectivity project, and providing data on Greening Australia's revegetation work.
- Bird surveys at Jerrabomberra Wetlands and Fyshwick Sewage Ponds over many years that inform wetland management.
- Latham's Snipe surveys coordinated by the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust that are part of a national and international migratory bird monitoring program.
- Annual survey of Superb Lyrebird at Tidbinbilla Reserve, tracking population recovery following fire.

2. Demonstrated leadership and encouragement of Landcare/Park Care groups to develop and deliver initiatives in their community.

COG has a membership of around 450, and many of its members participate as volunteers in one or more of the above projects through the calendar year. Most of the costs of data collection (such as time, travel to sites, clothing, and equipment) are covered by members.

COG provides around \$3500 a year from its operating funds (derived in turn from membership fees) to support the long-term woodland bird surveys. These funds cover the costs of data checking and entry, and a proportion of the expenses of survey coordinators.

In addition, much of the compilation and analysis of data, and write-up of reports (including Birds of Canberra Gardens, and the Canberra Annual Bird Report) is also undertaken by volunteers from the COG membership.

3. Demonstrated personal commitment to Landcare initiatives, either by supporting, implementing or developing Landcare projects.

COG has an exceptionally competent membership drawn from a variety of professions, with many members having a very high level of expertise in bird identification (by sight and calls).

COG also has a wealth of experience in developing and managing robust, science-based bird survey programs. Further, COG has always sought professional and expert input to survey design, methods and protocols. COG also has access through its membership and their professional contacts to a range of local but world-class expertise and experience, such as in researchers at CSIRO and Australian National University, as well as expert ecologists and ecological consultants.

The COG woodland bird dataset is regarded as highly robust and world-class. Data from these surveys have formed the basis of a number of peer-reviewed publications.

4. Provide examples of either personal or community Landcare projects (or both) preferably with evidence such as photographs, media clippings, posters etc.

COG has had a Memorandum of Understanding with the ACT Government for two decades and provides data to the ACT Government to develop strategies for threatened ecological communities and bird species.

Recently, 20 years of woodland bird data have been analysed collaboratively by COG and the ACT Parks and Conservation Service. Results will be published in peer-reviewed publications and used as input to land management projects. Results were presented to a range of ACT rangers, NRM staff and Parkcare volunteers.

COG woodland bird monitoring survey methods have been adopted by other monitoring projects, e.g. Molonglo Valley environmental offsets managed by the ACT Government.

COG has supported landcare projects through undertaking bird surveys at revegetation sites in adjacent areas of NSW over several decades. Examples include Taylor's Creek Landcare, Greening Australia's Birdwatch, and K2C revegetation projects.

COG data were an important part of the community campaign to save Mulligans Flat from urban development. Mulligans Flat became a nature reserve, and the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary now hosts an internationally recognized experimental project on woodlands restoration. The sanctuary is a centre for community engagement in conservation.

COG has contributed over 1 million bird records to the Canberra Nature Map, a web-based public information tool. COG also contributed records to the Atlas of Living Australia, a publicly accessible resource managed by CSIRO.

Recently, COG provided ten years of bird survey data for a research project about evidence-based management of threatened birds. This project is managed by the Threatened Species Recovery Hub funded by the Commonwealth's National Environmental Science Program, and is a collaboration between CSIRO, NSW Saving our Species Program, Bush Heritage Australia and Birdlife Australia. This project aims to determine cost-effective conservation actions, and will inform habitat restoration and land stewardship programs.

1. Describe the citizen science program or project undertaken by the group or individual.

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- Latham's Snipe surveys coordinated by the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust that are part of a national and international migratory bird monitoring program.
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2. Describe the level of citizen/community/volunteer involvement in the development and delivery of the citizen science program or project.

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3. Describe the degree to which the program or project results are reliable, accurate and useful and inspire confidence in end users.

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COG also has a wealth of experience in developing and managing robust, science-based bird survey programs. Further, COG has always sought professional and expert input to survey design, methods and protocols. COG also has access through its membership and their professional contacts to a range of local but world-class expertise and experience, such as in researchers at CSIRO and Australian National University, as well as expert ecologists and ecological consultants.

The COG woodland bird dataset is regarded as highly robust and world-class. Data from these surveys have formed the basis of a number of peer-reviewed publications.

4. Describe the extent to which the results from the citizen science has been communicated to and adopted by potential end users, such as Landcare groups, farmers, or natural resource managers.

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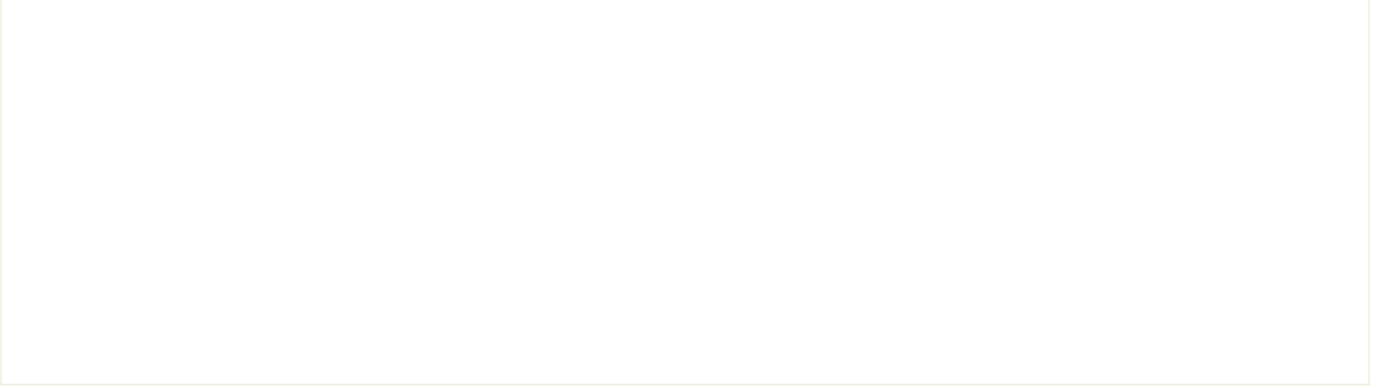
5. Describe the challenges that the group or individual has overcome in developing and implementing the citizen science project or program.

While the skills, experience and professional background of COG members has led directly over time to the quality of the COG bird survey data and its analysis, quality citizen science does not come without additional direct costs, which can be problematic for non-profit community groups to meet in full. This is not always recognized in the community grants programs of government agencies, which rarely include provision of on-costs associated with volunteer time, or costs for external professional services such as statistical input. Applications for these grant programs can take a considerable amount of time, and if successful significant volunteer time is also required to administer and acquit the grant funds. Thus, while COG has been successful in obtaining some government grants for various projects, most current competitive grants programs for the community sector do not adequately support citizen science projects.

There are also challenges of keeping up with modern information technology, including web-based apps for online data entry, and - most importantly - database systems. In addition to the use of volunteers, there is often a need to employ professional services in information technology to design, manage and update the critical databases in which bird data are stored and from which bird data are retrieved for analysis or to fulfil requests for data from external parties. COG is currently looking to re develop its databases, which will require the engagement and funding of professional services. A final challenge is funding for additional professional statistical services for data analysis, to obtain meaningful, accurate long-term trends for bird species over time, and perform specialist habitat-related analyses.

6. In 25 words (2-3 sentences), please summarise your nomination, highlighting the key messages that best describe why this individual, group or organisation should be recognised for outstanding achievements to landcare.

Canberra Ornithologists Group's citizen science projects have provided reliable scientific data on ACT region birds to landcare groups, non-governmental organisations and government for decades.



Support Documents

Filename	403_attach_4_1569194497.jpg
Description	The woodland survey volunteer team on the occasion of the 100th survey at Mulligans Flat (ACT). Photographer Jenny Bounds



Filename	403_attach_5_1569194497.jpg
Description	T



Filename	403_attach_6_1569194915.jpg
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Confirmation

By submitting this nomination to the 2019 State and Territory Landcare Awards I confirm the following:

The information in this nomination is true and correct to the best of my knowledge as at the date submitted.	Yes
I agree to all the entry rules and conditions.	Yes
I have informed my referees of this nomination and that they may be contacted.	Yes
The nomination I have submitted meets all the entry guidelines .	Yes
I have attached two high-res photographs that adhere to the photo guidelines.	Yes
I have addressed ALL criteria for the nominated category within the word limit.	Yes
I have provided details for two referees that may be contacted by the judging panel.	Yes