

2025 Annual General Meeting

Questions and Answers



Questions related to systems

Can you please introduce two-factor authentication for logging into <https://birdlife.org.au>?

CEO, Kate Millar:

BirdLife Australia is implementing ongoing improvements to our Information Technology and Communications systems, which include improving our cyber-security and data protection measures. Two-factor authentication and other measures have been rolled out for staff and these improvements are being implemented across our remaining systems. During 2025, systems used by members and supporters, such as login via birdlife.org.au, will be strengthened to better protect our systems from malicious actors and to protect users from identity theft.

Why do BirdLife Australia staff send out emails using their personal name as 'Sender', rather than using BirdLife and the specific program name or region?

CEO, Kate Millar:

Whilst we realise that supporters may receive a high volume of emails and general communications, especially when combined with the many other lines of communication that people can receive on any given day, emails that use a person's name are more likely to bypass spam filters, are more likely to be opened, more likely to be read, and therefore lead to better engagement with our wonderful supporters. For example, BirdLife's e-news goes to roughly 150,000 people. Evidence shows this approach to digital engagement leads to stronger support from increased trust and credibility, more informed supporters, more donations, and ultimately a better outcome for birds.

However, it is worth noting that many of the BirdLife emails you see from your end, are in fact all under the same address. If you need to search for BirdLife emails in your inbox, try searching for mail@birdlife.org.au, as well as a word/s from your specific interest – such as "Rainbow Lorikeets".

What is the 'Digital Engagement Project'?

President, Mandy Bamford:

The Digital Engagement project was undertaken by BirdLife from 2020 to 2023. The project aimed to improve our digital systems, increase donations, volunteer capacity and voice. This project included a website overhaul, a new CRM (Salesforce), upgrades to core systems like Microsoft Office 365 and NetSuite, a Bird Conservation Portal (including BirdData) and other technology initiatives, like Birds in Schools e-learning platform.

Whilst the Project has improved our digital capability, challenges during implementation have delayed delivery of some improvements. Work is continuing on website upgrades, e-Store updates and relaunch, a new volunteer portal, and much more.

Questions related to the Federal Election and Policy & Advocacy

What lobbying activities did BirdLife Australia undertake to the Federal Government and other parties prior to the May 3rd Federal Election?

Following the recent election, what are BirdLife's plans for working with a new government to get Australian birds and, wildlife more generally back on the agenda as a priority?

What impact does the board expect the outcome of the 2025 Federal Election will have on the organisation's mission and operations?

How can we make sure Australian Nature Laws are re-written and upheld by government to actually protect birds, their habitat and all native wildlife and flora?

CEO, Kate Millar:

BirdLife Australia developed and implemented an Election Strategy in the five months leading up to the Federal Election campaign. The strategy sought increased support and investment into our credible and proven conservation efforts, science and community programs such as Birds on Farms, H5N1 Bird Flu work and citizen science programs. The Strategy included a focus on 'bird friendly' renewables and a range of scalable solutions that deliver benefits for other portfolios such as Agriculture, Health and Tourism.

Community campaigning was supported by the BirdLife Australia team, and a number of branches engaged with local candidates to ensure they were aware of our national priorities as well as local concerns. A social media campaign was also deployed to integrate with political engagement and allowed us to identify particular themes and issues that resonate with our digital audience.

We had direct engagement with a significant number of Government and Opposition MPs as well as independents and the Greens. Feedback on the policy priorities was positive.

BirdLife Australia is now actively engaging with key members of the new Parliament, and a meeting has been secured with the Prime Minister's Office. Work is underway to secure a meeting with the Minister for the Environment & Water, Minister for Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries, Minister for Climate Change and Energy and the Minister for Trade and Tourism. We are staying closely engaged with the renewed focus on reforming nature laws and are continuing to work with a range of partners such as Invasive Species Council, Biodiversity Council, Australian Land Conservation Alliance and Australian Marine Conservation Society to more effectively influence the political agenda for the incoming Parliament.

Questions related to Conservation and Science

Common Myna birds are devastating native bird populations in Melbourne and other places. Has BirdLife Australia prioritised a reduction or elimination campaign?

President, Mandy Bamford:

BirdLife Australia is concerned about the decline of woodland birds in urban areas, so the Urban Birds Conservation Action Plan and several urban bird programs are in place. The issue of over abundant birds needs to be tackled on multiple fronts.

One key focus is the improvement of understory and structural habitat diversity, which supports smaller woodland bird species and reduces the impacts of Common Mynas and our native Australian bird, the Noisy Miner. Recent research in Melbourne specifically, found that a high abundance of Noisy Miners and their presence in open parklands led to reduced numbers of native woodland birds. In this case the Noisy Miners are responding to the simplification of habitat in urban areas.

Common Mynas are a symptom of the broader threats to our urban birds. They respond rapidly to open areas, however, when there have been efforts focused just on removal of the Common Myna we have found that this has simply facilitated another overabundant bird group filling that vacuum. This highlights the importance of our work to undertake integrated pest management and restoration work to improve the extent and quality of habitat for birds in urban areas on both public and private lands.

Why is BirdLife Australia prioritising conservation of variant forms of common species such as King Island Thornbill ahead of unique species such as Plains Wanderer?

President, Mandy Bamford:

Through a combination of advocacy, community engagement and targeted on-ground recovery action we are working to protect all of Australia's birds. We prioritise our efforts based on:

- threat and urgency (e.g. the risk of extinction and the degree to which others are already working on recovery actions),
- our ability to affect positive change (e.g. feasibility) and
- the degree to which we can leverage multi-species benefits from our actions.

The critically endangered King Island Brown Thornbill and King Island Scrubtit subspecies are ranked number one and three respectively on the list of 20 Australian birds most at risk of extinction over the next 20 years, based on research by the National Environmental Science Program's (NESP) Threatened Species Recovery Hub. Added to that, habitat critical to the survival of these birds, the King Island Scrub Complex, is now listed as a threatened ecological community under the EPBC Act. Consequently, the protection of this habitat and the threatened birds it supports is considered a priority by BirdLife.

The Plains-wanderer is also a priority bird for BirdLife, and we have long supported activities of the dedicated partners that work together on the Plains-wanderer recovery team. We participate in the recovery of Plains-wanderer and recently recruited a dedicated staff member to coordinate a community of practice to further support the implementation of actions to mitigate threats to its recovery.

Why doesn't BirdLife Australia support the hunting of feral animals? Most birds I saw as a kid have gone, yet we are obsessed only with Black-cockatoos.

President, Mandy Bamford:

BirdLife Australia is a strong and vocal advocate for the need to tackle invasive species. We have an active partnership with the Invasive Species Council, and it was this partnership that resulted in the federal government announcing a \$39m investment in preparedness for avian influenza to protect wildlife.

You do hear a lot about our threatened Black-cockatoos because we do see them as the 'canaries in the coal mine' when it comes to the health of our environment in metropolitan Perth and southwest

WA. We are happy to 'be obsessed' with our Black-cockatoos (which includes Western Australia's Carnaby's, Baudins and Forest Red Tailed Black-cockatoos) as we know that through these flagship species, we can build a community that care about the state of our birds and the habitat they rely upon.

BirdLife Australia is working with partners (including Local Governments, State Government and Natural Resource Management organisations and friends groups) to see a more coordinated approach to invasive species control. One example is pest bird management – last year we delivered a Pest Parrot project across southwest WA to track our pest parrot populations and enable land managers to share what they are doing to manage pest populations and what they are learning. That work continues, and BirdLife is committed to supporting ethical, evidence-based approaches to feral pest control that gives real benefits to our birds.

Questions related to other matters

There appears to be a steady decrease in the number of financial members of BirdLife Australia, from 10,534 at 31 December 2020 to 7,608 at 31 December 2024. What is the board's position on this and how does BirdLife Australia measure engagement with members? Does the board see membership as a key revenue stream in light of the annual \$3.1m losses incurred over the past two financial years?

President, Mandy Bamford:

There has continued to be a decline in membership numbers at BirdLife, and while some of that can be attributed towards cost-of-living pressures, we understand that our current model is not supporting acquisition of new members or retention of our existing members.

That is why the Board has requested that Management review the membership model and provide recommendations for refreshing our approach to membership. BirdLife Australia's constitution is based on a membership model, but more importantly, we want people to actively participate in BirdLife Australia's activities. The review is underway and begins with market research to explore the categories, pricing and benefits of similar organisations. We are keen to hear your views and encourage you to participate in a supporter survey currently being conducted (please contact network.liaison@birdlife.org.au to express your interest).

Will the online store be expanding its range? It seems quite limited and there is a lot of stock that is not available.

CEO, Kate Millar:

Yes – we are so excited by this. Very soon BirdLife Australia will be launching the new e-Store with new products and increased functionality. Over the last few months, we have refreshed the technology that supports this work and are so pleased to soon see the fruits of our labour. From t-shirts, bird guides, tote bags, calendars, badges and stickers, to being able to purchase your membership, the new e-Store will form a critical engagement tool for supporters – driving important revenue whilst giving the Australian public bird friendly gift ideas.

Why does BirdLife Australia include a "Welcome or Acknowledgement of Country" as Agenda Item 1?

CEO, Kate Millar & President, Mandy Bamford:

Kate Millar: BirdLife Australia recognises the ongoing connection to the land of First Nations people and we celebrate their cultural connection built over 65,000 years, to the places in which we all live and work. First Nations people of Australia hold unique knowledge of and rights to land throughout the country and we are proud of our existing partnerships with large groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations as we collectively work to achieve the conservation of Australia's birds.

Mandy Bamford: We also understand that there are diverse views on how best to reconcile our shared history. When there is discomfort with change, from my experience the best approach is to take the time to listen and engage in a respectful dialogue. We will continue to provide opportunities for BirdLife Australia members to discuss and understand why taking action like welcomes and acknowledgements and building partnerships with First Nations people are so important.

Matters from 2024 AGM that require an update

How will Management resolve the issue of privacy preventing branches from contacting members?

CEO, Kate Millar

Branch access to membership data remains a top priority for BirdLife Australia. Currently several branches are using Campaign Monitor to communicate and engage with members. In recent months there has been an increase in the number of branches using the platform because of improved communication, processes, and ongoing training and support.

Campaign Monitor was demonstrated during a monthly online Network Catch-up, and a recording was distributed shortly after. We offer bookable one-to-one introductory sessions to committee members interested in adopting the platform and offer ongoing training and support. The response from branches who use Campaign Monitor to contact members has been overwhelmingly positive, with many experiencing significant increases in engagement.

There are plans to deliver further training as part of the Participation & Engagement Department's 2025 training calendar.

Campaign Monitor currently solves the privacy issues that have prevented branches from contacting members; however, BirdLife Australia is putting significant efforts into exploring systems that will both solve these issues and enhance the experience of branches.

Measures are also being put in place regarding 'opt in' and data protection policies that will improve the ability of Branches to access member lists whilst ensuring compliance with both regulatory privacy requirements and member preferences.