

Minutes for AGM - 29/5/2026

Opening Meeting

1. Acknowledgement of Country

The Board President, Mandy Bamford (MB), acknowledged the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which BirdLife Australia's National Office operates, and extended that acknowledgment to the custodians of the lands of all the people joining remotely. She paid respect to Elders, past and present, and acknowledged the contributions they make to the work of BirdLife Australia around the country.

2. Apologies, proxies, housekeeping

Meeting held at Kensington Town Hall, 30-34 Bellair Street, Kensington, Vic 3031.

Present

33 voting members

Apologies

Jane Abbott, Alma de Rebeira, Brian Boyd, Georgia Garrard, Birgita Hansen, Wendy Hartman, Warren Jones, Olivia Mulligan, Lesley Richardson, Fiona Robertson, Celia Saw, John Saw and Pamela Sutton-Legaud.

Proxies Received

Valid proxies were received from 56 members.

A minimum of 40 voting members is required, either in person or by proxy, excluding directors. As this requirement was met, MB declared the meeting formally open.

3. AGM Minutes and the President's Address

The minutes of the 2025 Annual General Meeting held on 25 May 2025 were published on the BirdLife Australia website and available to members on request. The minutes of the BirdLife Australia Annual General Meeting held on 25 May 2025 were adopted as a true and correct record of that meeting.

President's Address

This AGM is of special importance as it is the 125th anniversary of BirdLife Australia (BLA). In 1901, a small band of bird enthusiasts came together to form the Australasian Ornithologists Union, and in 1905 the Bird Observers Club of Australia was established. BirdLife Australia carries their bird research and citizen science programs forward today as a national unified organisation.

MB spoke to the strength of community, and what wonderful things we can achieve when we work together. She acknowledged the important work of people from the branches, observatories, special interest groups, and dedicated volunteers who do so much to further conservation.

MB sincerely thanked everyone involved in BirdLife Australia's success in 2025 on behalf of the board, the

executive team, staff, volunteers, and members. MB also thanked BLA's generous donors, as they are all vital to BLA's work. She also acknowledged the Board members who departed in 2025 - Gary Nelson and Pamela Sutton-Legaud - and acknowledged their dedicated work over many years. MB encouraged members to get to know Kate Millar, BLA's CEO, and the staff of BLA. MB acknowledged the Board members and their work for the organisation, as they donate significant amounts of time to the organisation and we rely heavily on their expertise.

4. 2025 Annual Report

The 2025 Annual Report was provided to members on the website three weeks prior to the AGM and hard copies were available at the AGM.

Motion: That the 2025 Annual Report be adopted by the membership.

Carried

5. Financial Report

Hugh Possingham (HP) presented the Financial Report as the Acting Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee. He thanked Gary Nelson for his long tenure as the Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee, the Committee members for their detailed observations of the financial affairs of BLA, and David Thompson, the Chief Financial Officer, for his engagement with questions raised. The financial reports had also been audited by external auditors. The detailed Financial Statements were made available on the BLA website and the Profit and Loss Statement was available in the Annual Report at the meeting itself and on the website. HP presented highlights including:

- Revenue was up ~\$2.3 million.
- Donations remained strong.
- Income was comprised of approximately half from donations and bequests, approximately a third from projects and grants, and the rest from diverse sources.
- Expenditure was also up.
- The administrative margin was at approximately 16%. In general, both costs and incomes typically go up every year, but fortunately, expenditure had been raising more slowly than income.
- Operating deficit: the total deficit was \$1.9m. BLA is reducing the deficit every year with the aim of BLA returning to breakeven by 2027.
- Cash reserves remained strong.
- Statement of Financial Position: assets have decreased but remained strong at \$11.4m.
- According to the auditors and the Board, BLA's financial position remained sound.

Motion: That the financial accounts and the Auditor's Report be adopted.

Carried

6. Election of Directors

Voting closed at 6:30pm and results were provided to the Chair. Hugh Possingham, Jarrod Pittson, Penny McMullin and Tuanh Nguyen were duly re-elected to the Board of BirdLife Australia for another three-year term each, commencing from the closure of this Annual General Meeting.

7. CEO presents 2025 Achievements

The BirdLife Australia CEO, Kate Millar (KM), presented the achievements of the organisation over 2025, including:

- 153,000 Aussie Bird Count surveys were completed, reinforcing the importance of citizen science work. Birddata remained the portal through which wonderful bird information and knowledge travels to government decision makers, project developers, and on-ground conservation work.
- 2.5 million hits were recorded on the website by more than 1 million active website users.
- Birds in Schools was rebooted, giving access to primary school teachers to nurture the next generation of bird lovers.
- BirdLife Australia experts, in collaboration with Deakin University and Wildlife Health Australia, developed the AviFlu Map. This map identifies the threat pathways in terms of locations of highest risk of entry points of H5 bird flu into Australia and then the likely onward spread. AviFlu Map is powered by Birddata and is vitally important to our preparedness for this wildlife pandemic.
- The first new Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) in over a decade was created. It is a Marine area with a strong population of Shy Albatross.
- The BirdLife Indigenous Grant for bird research and conservation was awarded to the Arafura Swamp Rangers, who will use the money to enhance their and our ability to monitor populations of shorebirds and waterbirds. Their swamp and catchment is located in a hotspot for entry points of H5 bird flu, so this partnership is vitally important.
- The Environment Protection Reform Bill was passed in the Federal Parliament, which created better definitions of unacceptable impacts in critical habitat, but weakened legislation in other areas: for instance, less requirement for threatened species recovery planning and a significant increase in ministerial discretion.
- AVISTEP, a tool for planners and developers to use when considering suitable locations for renewable energy developments, was developed by BirdLife International and offers guidance on the risks to birds in different locations and avian sensitivity to developments. BLA wants to ensure that developers, regulators and communities have the information they need for a nature-safe renewable rollout.

KM thanked MB for her role as President of the Board for the last three years.

If we all work together, we can achieve real tangible outcomes for our precious birds.

8. Election of Fellowship of BirdLife Australia

The Fellowship of BirdLife Australia is a prestigious constitutional award, and only 20 Fellows can be elected at one time. It recognises a member's distinguished contribution to ornithology, either directly

through ornithological research or in other related scientific disciplines. The Board approved the nomination of Professor Martine Maron as a Fellow:

- Professor Martine Maron has had a significant impact on ornithology and conservation biology in Australia, as well as internationally, by championing the importance of evidence-based decision making to ensure biodiversity is maintained in the face of increasing pressure for many different species.
- One of Australia's foremost ornithologists, Professor Maron has a broad range of environmental interests, including woodland birds, ecology, conservation biology, biodiversity offsets and conservation science.
- She was a valued member of the BLA Research and Conservation Committee between 2005 and 2015, including serving as its chair from 2009 until 2015.
- She was elected to BirdLife Australia's Board of Directors in 2011, became Vice President three years later, and served as President from 2020 to 2023.
- Professor Maron has published more than 200 peer-reviewed scientific papers, as well as 35 technical reports and popular articles.
- She is widely recognised as an outstanding mentor and an exemplary role model to many early career researchers.

The members voted to support Professor Maron's nomination. Professor Martine Maron was declared a Fellow of BirdLife Australia. She was unfortunately unable to attend the AGM, but had recorded a video to share. Unfortunately, due to technical difficulties, the video was unable to be shared in its entirety.

9. Announcement of BirdLife Australia Awards (no voting)

The Birdlife Distinguished Service Awards are a formal acknowledgment of the enormous contribution to BirdLife Australia made by BirdLife Australia members and volunteers. The awards are given for significant contributions to BirdLife Australia over a significant period of time. The recipients of the 2025 Distinguished Services Awards were:

- Neil Humphris
 - Neil Humphris was the driving force behind BirdLife Southern Queensland's successful photographic checklist book, *The Birds of South East Queensland*, now in its 88th edition, of which over 8,000 copies have been sold. He also produced *The Birds of South West Queensland*.
 - Funds raised from these books have been used to fund important conservation initiatives, including the Save Toondah Harbour campaign .
 - Neil Humphris is committed to educating students about the importance of birds and volunteers many hours to these activities, including judging an annual secondary school STEM bursary funded by BirdLife Southern Queensland.
- Warren Jones
 - Warren Jones' initial involvement with the organisation began during the IOU's first Atlas of Australian Birds.
 - In BirdLife Tasmania, he leads outings, presents workshops, volunteers for special events and surveys, and has advised on important issues.

- He has contributed to building bird data capacity across Tasmania, undertaking many thankless tasks such as vetting bird data records, compiling participation statistics, identifying population trends and unravelling the processes that contribute to them.
- Warren and his wife Sue have submitted over 3400 surveys of bird data, including systematic surveys from the Peter Millar Reserve.
- Analysis of their early data was published as Birds of the Peter Millar Reserves, a snapshot 2014 to 2017 in the Tasmania Bird Report 39.
- Warren Jones was unable to attend in person, but he wrote a few words to share:
 - “Thank you to Karen Blake, Mike Newman and Barry Baker for my nomination. I'm happy to be a small part of the BirdLife Tasmania team which is improving our knowledge of birds and their needs, advocating and engaging the community. Of course, the best reward is the pleasure we get from birds, however, it is nice to know that your efforts are appreciated by others.”
- John Shepherd:
 - John Shepherd conducted his first Birddata surveys in 2012 and was hooked.
 - He has many rural survey sites in Thurgoona in Southern New South Wales, some on farms which had undergone significant revegetation work. Many of his sites are incorporated into BirdLife Australia's Birds on Farms project.
 - He was president of the BirdLife Ovens Murray branch for six years.
 - He has submitted over 3000 bird data surveys, recording more than 360 species.

Every year, the J N. Hobbs Memorial Medal is awarded to an amateur ornithologist who has made a significant contribution to the knowledge or conservation of birds in Australia. This year's recipient was Dr Helen Raftery:

- Dr Helen Raftery has submitted more than 4,000 Birddata surveys, recording 507 species, with a particular emphasis on the birds of her property, which adjoins the Warrumbungle National Park in New South Wales.
- Dr Raftery conducted detailed studies of the behavioural ecology of Willie Wagtails, Superb Fairywrens and Grey Shrike-thrushes, tracking their breeding over a decade. By following the fate of their nests, she painstakingly accumulated a detailed data set on the effect of climatic variation on their breeding success, calculating that for each yearly increase of 140 millimetres of rain, a pair of Shrike-thrushes could successfully fledge an extra chick.
- Her dedicated study built a high-resolution picture of how bush birds respond to large scale disturbances, noting the influence of drought and bushfire.
- Dr Raftery has inspired many with her patience and dedication, her keen eye for pattern, her enduring connection with Woodland Birds and their untold secrets.

Dr Helen Raftery spoke to her work:

- She was very pleased and honoured to receive the award.
- She has completed 27 years of surveys in the Warrumbungles and 22 years in the nearby National Park. From all those years of observations, she has been able to draw conclusions about the effects on birds of drought and a terrible, devastating bushfire in 2013.
- She acknowledged the work of bird watching groups who have supported her work.

- She said all her bird work has been an absolute pleasure, especially getting the results out and then publishing the work.

The D.L. Serventy Medal honours members who have made an outstanding contribution to scientific publications in the field of ornithology in the Australasian Region. The medal recognises excellence in publishing, editing, reviewing, promoting and assisting publication, and acknowledges the lasting contribution made through published scientific work on birds in our region.

The 2025 recipient of the D. L. Serventy Medal was Prof Kate Buchanan:

- Professor Buchanan's impressive body of work spans a remarkable breadth of avian communication, developmental biology, behavioural ecology and physiological ecology, substantially advancing our understanding of how birds' early life experiences shape their behaviour, physiology and signalling systems.
- She has published more than 150 peer review papers, being cited over 7,000 times.
- Professor Buchanan was also Editor-in-Chief of EMU Australia Anthology from 2008 to 2025, the second longest term in this demanding role. Reflecting her editorial style, EMU is now widely recognised in the academic sector, with its visibility and impact increasing greatly during her editorship.

Professor Buchanan spoke to her work:

- She was incredibly honoured to receive the award.
- She joined EMU to get to the know the Australian Birding community, one of the smartest moves she's ever made
- She inherited Richard Zann's collection of Zebra Finches, and he was a previous recipient of the award.

MB encouraged all members to submit nominations for awards in order to value and recognise people when they make outstanding contributions. The award criteria and the information on how to make submissions is available on the BirdLife Australia website.

10. Q&A, Other Business

MB thanked all members who submitted questions, as the Q&A process is an important part of the AGM. All the questions were provided beforehand, as outlined by the Constitution. MB, HP and KM read out questions and provided answers on topics including: Birds on Farms, the financial future of BLA, the investment portfolio, bird recovery projects, public awareness of bird conservation, the Eyre Bird Observatory. Written answers to questions discussed at the AGM will be provided on the BirdLife Australia website, following the meeting.

MB closed the AGM at 7:33pm.