

## Volunteer Role Description: Great Gariwerd Bird Survey

### Introduction

Parks Victoria delivers a long term, first of its kind bird monitoring survey in Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park with the assistance of ornithologists, twitchers, and bird watching volunteers. You are invited to apply to participate.

The Great Gariwerd Bird Survey (GGBS) is a Citizen Science volunteer opportunity that is delivered over two days in Autumn and Spring annually. Twenty volunteers will be given the opportunity to be trained and educated in a FREE 10-week (40-hour) bird identification, monitoring and ecology course by behavioural ecologist Dr Greg Kerr from Nature Glenelg Trust to build the skills necessary to join the already trained citizen scientists.

This course will take place in Halls Gap, starting in mid-March and finishing in late-May 2026. The course will be delivered one night a week for 4 hours where volunteers learn about correct bird monitoring techniques at various surveying locations around Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park with approximately 75% classroom learning, 25% field-based learning. Trained volunteers will then use the skills they have developed to take part in bird monitoring surveys over two days in Autumn and Spring at 36 sites across Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park.

The GGBS provides volunteers with the opportunity to access remote areas of the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park, the prospect of monitoring up to 200 native and introduced bird species and the chance to meet and work with bird specialists. The data that volunteers collect will contribute to the Victorian Government Conservation Action Plan and Birdlife Australia's Birddata system. Volunteers will be given the opportunity to build their bird monitoring skills and knowledge with the assistance of Dr Kerr and Parks Victoria.

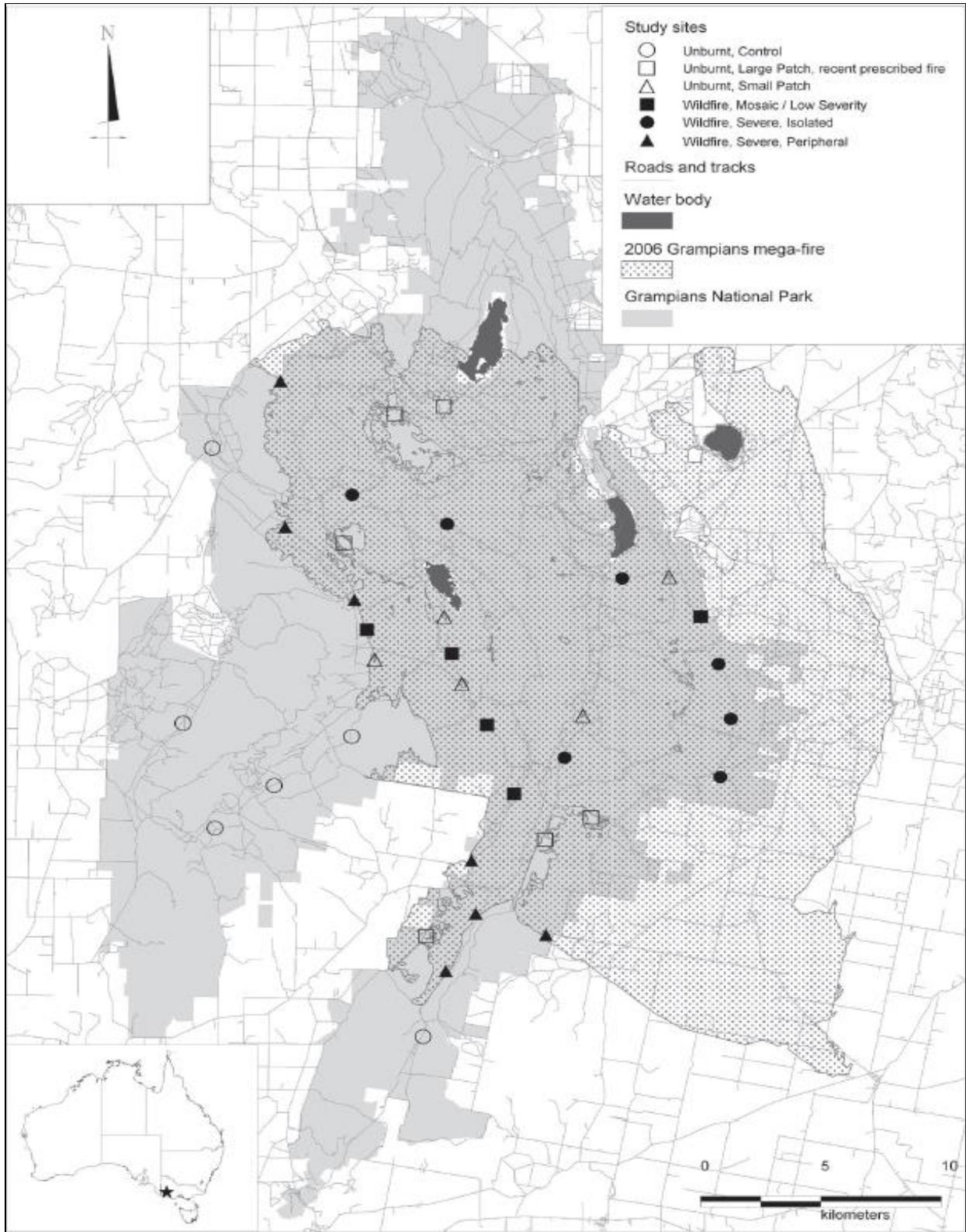
To participate, volunteers must attend the 10-week bird ID and ecology course, induction workshop and safety briefing. We are encouraging volunteers with all varieties of previous bird monitoring and bird identification experience to apply.

### Background

This project builds upon a set of studies initially undertaken in 2008 (*Stevens et al. 2012*) and 2009 (*Vinicombe 2009*), to examine the impact of a severe landscape scale fire and post fire recovery of mammalian and avian fauna after the 2006 GNP wildfire.



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**Figure 1: Locality map of the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park study site, extent of the 2006 severe landscape-scale wildfire (megafire) and distribution of survey sites. Source: Stevens et al. (2012).**

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Since this initial surveillance period, mammal surveys have continued on an annual basis, but the avian surveys have not been repeated (M. Stevens 2019 *Pers. Comm.*). In July 2020, the baiting of feral cats across the National Park, using Curiosity® baits, will be undertaken for the first time. To enable effective monitoring of the outcomes of the feral cat baiting program, a citizen science monitoring program for birds will be reactivated at the 36 sites previously established.

Since 2021, annual autumn and spring surveys have been conducted with the assistance of GGBS volunteers. There is now five years' worth of data collected, which is improving our understanding of bird populations and impacts of recent bushfires on avian diversity and abundance, and assisting with the land management of the Gariwerd landscape.

Citizen Science is a research technique that enlists the public in gathering scientific information or participating in scientific monitoring. This study of large-scale patterns in natural resources management requires a vast amount of data to be collected, across an array of locations, habitats across the landscapes, and over long spans of time. Citizen science projects have been remarkably successful in advancing scientific knowledge, and contributions from citizen scientists provide a vast quantity of data about species occurrence and distribution around the world. Citizen science projects also strive to help participants learn about the subjects they are observing and to experience the process by which scientific investigations are conducted.

### Methodology

The GGBS will build upon the existing Birdlife Australia citizen science monitoring program that has been implemented across Australia for over 30 years.

- 20 volunteers will be trained in a free 10-week bird identification, monitoring and ecology course
- During the survey weekend, volunteers will be working in pairs to conduct standardised 2ha/20min surveys. Each pair will be allocated two sites to monitor over the course of two days.
- Volunteers will complete two 2ha/20min surveys at each of their survey sites per day, totalling 8 surveys over the two days (eg. Sat AM, Sat PM, Sun AM, Sun PM).
- Data collected will be input into Birddata for public use.

### Key dates

<b>Bird Identification, Ecology and Monitoring Course</b>
<b>Halls Gap – Brambuk the National Park and Cultural Centre</b>
Every Monday, 5:00pm-9:00pm, from 16 <sup>th</sup> March to 25 <sup>th</sup> May 2026 (10 weeks excluding Easter Monday)

<b>2026 GGBS Autumn Survey Dates</b>	
Dates	Activity
Friday 17 <sup>th</sup> April* 5-7pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Welcome</li> <li>- Safety briefing</li> <li>- Induction</li> </ul>
Saturday 18 <sup>th</sup> April - Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2026 Main Survey Weekend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 8x bird surveys completed at allocated sites, morning and afternoon</li> </ul>

\* Attendance is mandatory for all new participating volunteers

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### Volunteer description

- Participant responsibilities
  - Attend the 10-week Bird Identification, Ecology and Monitoring course
  - Ensure health and fitness requirements can be met outlined in the selection criteria
  - Ensuring the professional presentation of the program
  - Ensure they are 'fit-for-volunteering' each day
  - Collect field data as instructed (e.g. using the Birdata app to record bird species observed).
- Participants in the program DO NOT:
  - Enforce any Park Regulations.
  - Enter into a dangerous and/or confrontational situation with campers, visitors or staff.
- Positions available - Opportunity exists for up to 20 individuals to participate in the program from the Grampians/Gariwerd area.
- Operational days:
  - Volunteers are required to attend the free 10-week bird identification, ecology and monitoring ecology course in Halls Gap each Monday evening.
- Autumn 2026 Roster
  - Day 1 5-7pm Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2026 (new participants only)**
    - Induction and safety briefing
    - Site allocation and program overview
  - Day 2 and 3 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> April 2026**
    - Morning bird surveys
    - Late afternoon bird surveys

*^Note: hours of operation may be adjusted to account for non-daylight savings times.*

### Logistics

- Day 1 briefing location: Volunteers will begin their placement at the Parks Victoria Halls Gap office (The Brambuk building, 255-275 Grampians Road, Halls Gap) at 5pm on day one. This is mandatory for all new participants.
- Free camping: Volunteers will be allocated free camping if they choose to camp.
- Catering: Participants are required to be self-sufficient for the entire program including accommodation, food, cooking provisions and water.
- Photography: Participants are permitted to take photos of their activities to assist with future articles and communication about the program. Parks Victoria will be taking photos of the activities. If volunteers do not wish to have their photo taken they can disclose this at the induction by signing a release form.

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### Selection criteria

1. Availability – Participants must be available to attend the 10-week course and the survey dates, as well as be an active member for annual surveys in Spring and Autumn.
2. Fitness – The program is designed to offer opportunities for varied fitness abilities. The sites allocated to each volunteer group will depend on their fitness level. Moderate is defined as being able to work-alone in remote areas, walking through woodland terrain up to 4hrs per day. Various distances and terrain for each site.
3. Health – Considering the remoteness of bird surveys, timely medical assistance may not be immediately available. Participants are to have no pre-existing injuries that may affect their ability to participate or health conditions that if presented during bird surveys would require a timely or specialised medical response.
4. Experience – Experience or previous participation in bird monitoring programs is desirable, however we are encouraging volunteers who wish to build on their current bird monitoring skills to apply. Volunteers who have previous experience will be paired with volunteers who wish to build on their current skills for the program. Participants will be required to use Parks Victoria's SPOT trackers - training will be provided at the induction.
5. Equipment and self-sufficiency – Volunteers who choose to camp will be required to have their own camping gear (tent, sleeping gear, torch, cooking gear, camp chair etc.), toiletries and vehicle. All volunteers are required to have clothing appropriate to weather conditions, sturdy boots with ankle support, drinking water, food, batteries and field equipment.
6. Additional equipment - Volunteers are encouraged to bring along field guides and binoculars to assist with surveys. Parks Victoria will provide training in the use of the *Avenza* mapping app and the *Birdata* app during the induction. Volunteers will need to use their personal phone and may require a power bank. If volunteers would like information about the best field guides or binoculars to buy, Dr Greg Kerr can give recommendations during the course.
7. Interest in the program and prior volunteering experience – Prior experience volunteering for Parks Victoria or other organisations (eg. Landcare, citizen science programs, community groups) will be well regarded in your application.

### Essential selection criteria

1. Full license with registered vehicle: Volunteers will be required to drive to and from the survey sites each day in their own vehicle. Some of the sites are on unsealed roads, which vary from 2WD-accessible to 4WD-only.

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### Selection process

1. Prospective participants are to complete the application form (link found below)
2. Applicants will be assessed against the selection criteria for suitability
3. A selection process will occur if more suitable applications are received than positions available
4. **Applications close Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026** for the 2026 bird course
5. Volunteers will be notified by Parks Victoria of the outcome of their application by Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026

### Application process

1. Please apply through this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/zPP71PqkEW> to complete the volunteer application form including your response to the selection criteria. **Applications close on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026.**
2. Once your position has been confirmed, you will be required to accept the position on the [ParkConnect](#) portal. Unsuccessful applicants will also be notified. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026.
3. Once notified, volunteers will be sent detailed information about the volunteer opportunity.
4. It is important if you can no longer volunteer you tell us immediately so we can notify volunteers on a waiting list.

### Contact

For further information please contact Jen Gao E: [Jennifer.gao@parks.vic.gov.au](mailto:Jennifer.gao@parks.vic.gov.au)

### Testimonials

*“The knowledge shared by Greg and other participants is excellent. A great challenge to learn and improve knowledge of birds. Excellent way to meet like-minded people and make friends.”*

*“Greg's knowledge and passion for birds was evident as he guided us through our 40-hour bird course. I soon learnt how much I didn't know about our vast range and complexities of our beautiful native birds. I've been surveying birds for over four years now and sighting/hearing them in their natural habitat is an experience I look forward to each spring and autumn.”*

### References

Stevens, M., J. White, and R. Cooke. 2012. Short-term impact of a mega-fire on small mammal communities during prolonged drought. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria* 124:61-71.

Vinicombe, M. 2009. The Recovery of Bird Communities after a Severe, Landscape-scale Wildfire. Honours Thesis, Deakin University, Melbourne (Burwood) Victoria.