**Student Discovery Award**

**APPLICATION TO THE SOCIETY OF CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS**

**FOR PROFESSIONAL OR RESEARCH SUPPORT IN 2023**

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| **Student Awards** |
| Applicant's Name: |  |
| Applicant's Address: |  |
| Telephone: (W) (H)  |  | Email: |  |
| Institutional Affiliation (if any): |  |
| If student: Degree sought:  |  | Date expected: |  |
| Name of Supervisor:  |  |
| Title of Proposal or Project:  |  |
| Amount Requested from SCO-SOC (up to $500):  |  |
| Are you currently a member of SCO-SOC?  |  |
| *(if not, you must submit a membership application along with your dues to the current SCO-SOC treasurer – information is available on the SCO-SOC web site – only current members of SCO-SOC will be considered for awards.) Note that free membership is currently available for those who self-identify as members of an equity-denied group.* |
| **Name and address of individual from whom you have solicited a letter of recommendation**: |
|  |
| Referee’s email address: |  |
| Referee's phone:  |  | Date letter requested: |  |
| Signature of Applicant (electronic signatures accepted) | Date  |
| **COMPLETE APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY March 1 2023** |

**GUIDELINES**

**How to Prepare the Application for the SCO-SOC Research Awards**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The SCO-SOC is committed to removing barriers and promoting diversity and inclusion within the ornithological research community in Canada. The Student Discovery Award is offered to all people who self-identify as being from equity-denied groups, including but not limited to: visible minorities (e.g., Black, Indigenous, and/or members of other racialized groups), minority sexual orientations or gender identities (e.g., 2SLGBTQIA+), and individuals with disabilities. You do not need to disclose which equity-seeking group(s) to which you belong to during the application, but you are welcome to do so if you wish. Awards may be used for professional development, conference travel or research.

**TIPS FOR PREPARING THE APPLICATION:**

Successful applications are usually built around one, or a few, carefully defined, feasible, and clearly-delineated research questions (either for research to be conducted or presented at a conference). The most common problems with applications are that the project is too broad and overly-ambitious, objectives are defined too loosely, and methods are stated too vaguely. Having colleagues read and critique the proposal before its final revision may help to improve substantially its readability and overall quality.

 Applications for professional development opportunities should similarly be built around a carefully defined, clearly-delineated project or opportunity, with objectives and expected outcomes of the opportunity clearly outined in terms of how the opportunity is expected to benefit the applicant and their education and/or career.

 Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria: significance and originality of the scientific question, clarity of the objectives, feasibility of the research plan or its presentation, and letter of recommendation. Other characteristics of a good proposal include necessary background information, alternative hypotheses (if appropriate) and relevant citations and figures. Enclosed with this application is a copy of the scoring sheet that committee members will use in evaluating the proposals.

**LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION:**

The applicant must request a letter of recommendation from one individual. If the applicant is a student, the letter should be written by their supervisor or another mentor (e.g., a thesis committee advisor or close collaborator) who can speak to their professional and/or academic abilities. The applicant should give the letter-writer a copy of the enclosed "Instructions to Advocates" and a copy of the applicant's complete proposal so that the advocate can write a meaningful letter of recommendation. A common, yet avoidable, problem is not giving advocates sufficient time to write a thorough and thoughtful letter. To expedite the application process, letters from advocates must be sent by email to the Chair of the awards committee BEFORE or on the deadline date below. Please ensure your referee is aware of whether the proposal is for professional development, a conference presentation, or a research project so they can tailor their letter accordingly.

**SUBMISSION AND DEADLINE:**

Send the completed application in **pdf format** (and ensure letter of reference has been sent) directly to the current Chair of the Research Awards Committee, to be received via e-mail by **March 1 2023**. Material received after the due date will not be included in the application. Do not fax or mail any portion of the application to the Chair. **Incomplete applications will not be considered**.

**AWARD NOTIFICATIONS:**

Applicants will be notified by **May 1, 2023** as to whether or not they have received an award.

**REPORTING AND ACCOUNTING:**

Successful applicants are required to submit a brief report summarizing their progress and accomplishments no later than 1 March of the year following receipt of an award. This report should be sent to the current Chair of the Research Awards Committee (see contact information below). Successful applicants are also requested to send the current Chair copies of any publications resulting from the funded project.

**USE THE FOLLOWING FORMAT IN PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION:**

A complete application consists of five parts, **SAVED AS A PDF FILE**, as explained below.

1. Cover Page:

Use a copy of the enclosed fillable form and type the required information. Remember to place your full name and date on the cover page.

2. Proposal Statement:

Type-written and double-spaced, **not exceeding two pages** with 2.6 cm top, bottom, and side margins. Font size should be no smaller than 12-point. Cite references in the text according to the author-date method (see "Instructions to Authors" in ***The Auk***). Include the following in the body of the proposal:

a) Abstract: About 150 words.

b) Background Information and Introduction: Briefly establish the foundation for your study. Summarize relevant work by yourself and others, published or unpublished. Clearly state the objectives, the purpose and goals of the project and, if applicable, what hypotheses and associated predictions are being tested.

c) Methods and Experimental Design: Describe and carefully reference your methodology. Write this section for reviewers who may know little about the specific methodological details in your narrow field of investigation. Figures, Legends, and Tables, if used to clarify the text, should be embedded into this section (they will count towards the two-page maximum limit). If the project involves capturing, manipulating, or collecting animals, or otherwise requires permits, make it clear that you have obtained, or at least have initiated the process of securing the necessary permits, and that the project has been approved by the appropriate institutional Animal Care Committee. Any work that proposes to collect (kill) animals must be thoroughly justified, confirmed as necessary by the supervisor in their letter of recommendation, and performed according to provincial and federal permits.

d) Significance and uniqueness of your project.

e) Timetable: Dates for completion of project phases, graduation (if applicable), and publication and/or presentation of results. This timetable will not count towards the two-page maximum limit, but should be kept to half a page.

f) Literature Cited: Cite references according to the format used in ***The Auk***. (This section does not count as part of the two-page maximum, but should be kept to one page).

Note: For a professional development application, use the above as a guideline for presentation of the opportunity. For a conference presentation, use the above to describe the research you are planning to present.

**Sections a) - d) are to be addressed within the two-page maximum limit.**

3. Curriculum Vitae: Include education, employment history, papers presented at meetings and publications list.

4. Score Sheet: This section is included for the sole purpose of providing you with a scoring scheme on which reviewers will base their allocation of marks.

5. Letter of Recommendation: Give a copy of the proposal and the "Instructions to Advocates for SCO-SOC Research Award Applicants" to your supervisor or other academic/professional mentor. Letters of recommendation are due March 1, 2023. Only a letter from the designated letter writer will be accepted; any additional letters will be discarded. Letters from advocates must be sent by email, by the advocate, directly to the email address below:

**SEND YOUR COMPLETED APPLICATION VIA EMAIL TO:**

Dr. Danielle Ethier

Chair, SCO-SOC Student Awards Committee

Birds Canada

E-mail: dethier@birdscanada.org

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** This application form is a modified version of the form used by the Research Awards Committee of the American Ornithological Society. The permission of the American Ornithological Society to adapt their application form and the cooperation of Paul J. DuBowy are gratefully acknowledged.

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| **SCORE SHEET AND COMMENTS: SCO-SOC RESEARCH AWARDS 2022** |
| **For your information only. Do not include with your application.** |
| **Category** | **Possible Points** | **Earned** |
| **Proposed Research** |  |  |
| **Significance**  | 15 |  |
| **Originality**  | 15 |  |
| **Feasibility**  | 15 |  |
| **Presentation of Proposal or Project**(e.g.: clear objectives, citations, methods, and complete proposal) | 30 |  |
| **Special Considerations**(Includes letter of recommendation) | 10 |  |
|  **COMMENTS:** |
| TOTAL POINTS |  |
| RANK NUMBER |  | of |  |
| Each evaluator will rank a subset of all of the proposals and send their ranked list to the committee chair; those highly ranked proposal will then be evaluated by all committee members to determine award winners. A rank number of 1 is best. If several proposals are tied for the same rank, then each will be assigned an "average" rank. For example, if there were 10 proposals, and four were tied for third place, then the ranking scores would be 1, 2, 4.5, 4.5, 4.5, 4.5, 7, 8, 9, 10. If an applicant is a student or close affiliate of an evaluator, then that evaluator will be excluded from the evaluation process for that application. |

**INSTRUCTIONS TO LETTER WRITERS FOR SCO-SOC RESEARCH AWARD APPLICANTS**

Your letter of recommendation for the applicant and their research project can significantly influence the decision of the SCO-SOC Research Awards Committee. Here are some suggestions to follow in preparing your letter that will facilitate the committee's task.

1. UNCONSCIOUS BIAS. We encourage letter writers to follow [NSERC’s best practices for limiting unconscious bias](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/researchportal-portailderecherche/instructions-instructions/cgsm_ref-bescm_ref_eng.asp#2), available [here](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/researchportal-portailderecherche/instructions-instructions/cgsm_ref-bescm_ref_eng.asp#2).

2. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE APPLICANT. Your thorough evaluation and specific comments on the applicant's ability to carry out the proposed research, and personal attributes relevant to completing the work successfully, are the most significant contributions that you can make to help the committee in its evaluation of the application. Emphasize assets as well as liabilities. Be candid, and try to present a fair and balanced picture of the applicant's research qualifications. Blanket statements praising the applicant's general success in graduate school, for example, are of very little help. Comments on exactly which of the applicant's qualities will contribute to the success of the proposed project are valuable. To what extent is the applicant capable of persevering, of collecting and analyzing the data, and of making a final written presentation (e.g., for publication)?

3. PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE AND FEASIBILITY. The awards committee receives applications from a wide variety of disciplines, and it is not always easy to evaluate the relative merit of applications from widely-differing fields. Your letter of recommendation may include a paragraph or two summarizing the applicant's proposed research project if you believe that the committee is unlikely to be familiar with the proposed methodology or approach. A lengthy reiteration of what we already have before us in the form of the proposal itself is not necessary, however. Rather, comments on your interpretation of the project's significance and feasibility will be of greater value.

4. EXPERIMENTAL MANIPULATION AND COLLECTING BIRDS. If the applicant proposes to manipulate or collect birds, the supervisor should provide a statement substantiating the necessity of such activities, and should confirm that necessary permits and approval of an institutional Animal Care Committee have been, or will be, obtained.

5. PERSONAL CONTACT. Briefly state the nature of the relationship between the applicant and yourself (e.g. graduate supervisor, instructor). How long have you known the applicant?

6. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS. Your letter of recommendation will be confidential, of course. Further comments and questions can be directed to the committee chair.

7. SUBMISSION OF LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION. Please send your letter by email to the address listed below. The deadline for receipt of completed applications, including letters of recommendation, is **XXXX 2022**. If you have concerns about sending a letter by email, please contact the chair.

**Send Letters of Recommendation VIA EMAIL to**:

Dr. Danielle Ethier

Chair, SCO-SOC Student Awards Committee

Birds Canada

E-mail: dethier@birdscanada.org

**APPLICANT NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSAL RECEIPT**

Applicants normally will be notified via email (at the address given on the first page of the application) of receipt of their application and of whether or not both letters of reference have been received. If you do not receive notification within 10 days of mailing your application, contact the Chair of the Research Awards Committee immediately by email:

Dr. Danielle Ethier

Chair, SCO-SOC Student Awards Committee

Birds Canada

E-mail: dethier@birdscanada.org