

IRISH RAPTOR STUDY GROUP

SMALL STUDENT RESEARCH GRANT GUIDELINES

The Irish Raptor Study Group (IRSG) carries out monitoring and research on Raptors and Owl distributions, abundance and demography that are of great value for conservation management, species protection, planning advice and a range of issues concerned with environmental policy and ecological science. The IRSG Student Research Grant supports scientific ecological Raptor related research in Ireland. Students and early career Ecologists can apply for Student Research Grant project funding up to €1,000.

Objectives

We support Irish matriculated full time and part time Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) and Master of Science/Research (M.Sc / M.Res) projects. The Student Research Grant is not available to Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students. The IRSG support research where there is a clear ecological science focus to the work; any other aspects, i.e. sociology, economics, etc., must be clearly integrated into Raptor related ecology and scientific goals of the project. The grant(s) are to support work of the highest standard and applicants need to show how the work will advance our understanding of Raptor Ecology.

Research grants are to provide funding:

- for new and innovative Raptor related ecological research
- to help student and early career ecologists to establish an independent research career in ecology

Deadline

The application round is open until **5:30pm Friday December 21st 2018**. The next round of funding will open in July to December 2019.

Apply

Please read these guidelines carefully. They contain important information relating to your application for funding and not following these guidelines may jeopardise your application. Application is by email only. Individual applicants are only able to submit one grant application per round. Please email your completed application form to **secretary@irsg.ie** by 5:30pm Friday December 21st 2018. The IRSG will acknowledge (by email) receipt of your application. We aim to notify all applicants within 6 weeks of the grant deadline.

Applications are for awards made in January 2019 for projects which begin during the Academic Calendar 2018/2019 and entirely or largely complete by October 2019.

When completing your application, please note the following carefully:

What the IRSG fund:

The IRSG will fund scientific studies with clear aims and objectives (ideally with clearly stated hypotheses) where the methods are clearly explained, robust and appropriate to answering the questions asked within the application. Successful proposals will combine the applicant's development of skills that will be useful for their future career in ornithology with sound science. Applications may be on any aspect of Raptor Ecology but the IRSG will look especially favourably on areas identified as research priorities. All applications are expected to fulfil the following requirements:

- **Applications are from individuals only, not from organisations.**
- **The applicant must be the principal investigator for the study.**
- **The research must be of high scientific quality.**
- **The research must be interesting, innovative or a potentially high impact piece of work.**
- **The project is feasible in terms of resources and time allocated.**
- **The applicant must be competent to undertake the research.**
- **The project has a clearly justified budget.**
- **The project is a stand-alone research project or thesis.**

We do not fund:

- **Projects already commenced in the previous Academic year following the current application deadline.**
- **The salary or course fees of the applicant.**
- **Species inventories, i.e. site based surveys for the purpose of documenting species' occurrence.**
- **Studies of the abundance of a species at a particular site where there is no wider scientific aim.**
- **Distribution surveys which do not address wider ecological questions.**
- **Descriptive studies.**
- **Conservation implementation, education, outreach or awareness raising.**
- **Attendance at conferences or meetings.**
- **Publications.**

Eligibility and Conditions:

- You do not have to be an IRSG member to apply.
- Applicants cannot use an IRSG Student Research Grant to fund a component of a larger, already funded study.
- Funding is available for work that will form part of Undergraduate and Graduate research (e.g. Degree/Masters thesis).
- Applications to take part in an expeditions will not be considered.
- Applicants are responsible for obtaining all relevant permits and permissions required to undertake the proposed work.
- Applications for projects should demonstrate appropriate liaison with collaborating organisations, local environmental agencies, NGOs and/or communities.
- Funding will not be provided to cover course fees.
- This grant will not fund attendance to a conference.
- This grant will not fund publication costs.
- We will not award more than one grant to any one applicant in any one academic year, and no more than two grants in any five year period.
- IRSG support and collaboration for the award are dependent on delivery of a direct contribution to the wider field of research through published peer reviewed publications. It is a condition of all grants that our contribution is acknowledged in any publication or publicity that may arise from the research. An appropriate authorship determination and agreement with IRSG (e.g. Publication /Presentation Contract) will be required prior to award.
- Failure to comply with the Publication /Presentation Contract will mean the grantee is ineligible to apply for further grants.

Who can apply?

Undergraduate and Graduate research will be considered, but only if the research meets the following criteria -

- where the applicant is a Degree or Masters candidate the project must be a stand-alone thesis and not a constituent part of wider research programme (i.e. forming one chapter or paper, rather than contributing to the entire thesis); and,
- the research costs applied for are not already fully supported by bench fees or fieldwork elements within a studentship or research council award.

The IRSG may also consider applications for additional funding exceptional requirement(s)/opportunities which were unforeseen at the planning/start of a project, but which arise during the work.

Size of the IRSG Student Research Grant(s)

IRSG Student Research Grants are aimed at funding small projects in their entirety or part-funding small-to-medium sized projects. Lower priority will be given to those projects to which the IRSGs contribution represents a small proportion of the overall project costs.

The IRSG has very limited funds at its disposal and grants are normally awarded to a maximum of €1000. The IRSG may consider occasionally awarding more for an exceptional application.

The IRSG will undoubtedly receive more applications than we can afford to support. Competition is strong, but this should not deter applicants with good projects.

Species

Research can be undertaken on any Raptor or Owl species. As part of your application, you are required to provide details of the key species your project aims to study.

Project costs/budgets

As part of the application you are required to submit a credible budget, which details the total project costs, the amount requested from the IRSG, any funds already obtained, any other funds applied for or where additional funding will be obtained.

Reasonable travel costs will be supported. All costs must be clearly justified. Any costs that are not justified will not be considered. Please note that the maximum rate for car travel is 15c/km. The IRSG may consider funding or part funding items of equipment crucial to the project. These should be identified with costings and the source of items clearly referenced. Please be as transparent as possible, cost your project and the items for which funding is being sought from the IRSG as carefully as possible.

Total project costs must include all the costs of running the entire project (excluding the stipend of the applicant) and not just the total for the items for which funding is being sought from the IRSG. The IRSG needs to be able to accurately assess the size of any contribution it may wish to make to a project.

The IRSG Committee has knowledge of project costs and can often easily calculate if a project, or an individual component, for which funds are being sought, is not accurately costed. Applications can be jeopardised by a lack of transparency and accurate costing of the project.

Funding is not available:

- **for general subsistence or overheads**
- **to supplement the salary or income of the applicant**
- **to cover replacement costs of the applicant**

IRSG Mission Statement

Applicants should note the IRSG's objectives:

- a. To promote and participate in Raptor fieldwork, defined as the study, survey and monitoring of Raptors (diurnal birds of prey, Owls and Raven) in the geographical area.
- b. To promote the conservation and protection of all wild breeding and migrating Raptor species and their habitats primarily in the geographical area but elsewhere as the Group may decide;
- c. To encourage research and monitoring of all Raptor species and the publication of such work where appropriate;
- d. To raise awareness of Raptors, their conservation needs and the issues facing them;
- e. To assist Group members with the above and co-ordinate members summary results;
- f. To act as the parent body for the Group's any Sub-Committee(s) or separate Provincial Branches;
- g. To circulate the results of monitoring to outside individuals and bodies, to enhance the conservation of Raptors, but only if pursuant to the Group Policy on Data and Information;
- h. To assist members with any licensing requirements relevant for the purposes of Raptor monitoring as issued by the National Parks & Wildlife Service or any successor body to it;
- i. To set up and maintain a confidential nest recording scheme;
- j. To co-operate as necessary with outside individuals and bodies in the furtherance of the above objectives.
- k. To inform and assist An Garda Síochána and any other relevant bodies (governmental or non-governmental) with regard to known or suspected illegal Raptor persecution, nest interference, or other disturbance of Raptors.

IRSG Data Policy

The IRSG holds data on the locations of Raptors which are protected under National and European conservation legislation. These species are often rare and highly sensitive to disturbance. Applicants will be required to abide by the IRSG Data Policy.

IRSG Ethical Policy

The IRSG expects grantees to have proper regard for conservation considerations and best practice in work with wild or captive animals. Attention is drawn to the 'Guidelines for the Use of Animals in Research' published regularly in the journal *Animal Behaviour* (*Animal Behaviour* 2006, 21:245-253) and the specific guidance provided by ASAB/ABS for submissions to *Animal Behaviour*. In particular grantees should consider the potential impacts of disturbance, trapping, and manipulations such as marking or tagging on their study animals and provide details in the application and subsequent thesis, presentation or manuscripts/papers on how these aspects have been adequately dealt with. Awards will not be made to applications if they are deemed to potentially result in cruelty to animals or if the work may have put at risk endangered populations, species or habitats.

The IRSG is not opposed in principle to the 'taking' of specimens from the wild for scientific research purposes but would expect that only in exceptional circumstances is such an approach adopted. Applicants are referred to the guidelines on collecting of specimens from the wild proposed by Collar (*Bird Conservation International* 2000, 10: 1-15).

IRSG requires that all applicants disclose any potential sources of conflict of interest. Any interest or relationship, financial or otherwise, that might be perceived as influencing an applicant's objectivity is considered a potential source of conflict of interest. These must be disclosed when directly relevant or indirectly related to the work that the applicant describes in their application. Potential sources of conflict of interest include but are not limited to patent or stock ownership, membership of a company board of directors, membership of an advisory board or committee for a company, and consultancy for or receipt of fees from a company. The existence of a conflict of interest does not necessarily preclude a grant award. This shall extend to peer reviewed publications arising from the associated grant award. It is the responsibility of the applicant to discuss with all authors pursuant to the Publication /Presentation Contract to collectively list in the covering letter to the Publication(s) Editor(s), in any submitted manuscript (under the Acknowledgment section), and in the online submission system ALL pertinent commercial and other relationships as declared or identified in discussion with the IRSG. It should be noted, that as part of the any general journal submission process, corresponding authors will be asked to confirm whether or not a conflict of interest exists.

The IRSG expects all grantees authoring papers derived from data associated with the award and subsequently submitted to any journal - to act within the standards and procedures laid down by Irish national legislation. Applicants must ensure they have the necessary licences and permits for the activities described in the thesis, presentation or prepared manuscript/paper.

Statements of Support

Each application requires at least one personal reference statement from the Institution verifying that the proposed project is part of a degree or thesis. We will automatically contact the referee(s) using the emails provided in the application; reference statements must be submitted to IRSG before the application deadline. The IRSG will not consider your application until these have been provided.

Consideration of your application

Applications are circulated to members of the IRSG Committee who then make their recommendations to the serving IRSG Chairman. Applicants are contacted in January to inform them of the outcome of their application. Grant application reviewing criteria are:

- Excellence of the ecological research being proposed
- How the project develops the hypothesis and provides evidence for the next stage of the research
- Feasibility of the proposal
- Promise and productivity of the applicant, and ability to work independently
- Value for money and justification of the resources requested

Where an application is associated with an existing funded project, the relationship of the proposal to that existing project needs to be made explicit in the proposal. The research should be distinct from mandatory timetabled attendance at the Institution and should primarily have been planned and organised by the applicant.

Taking up an award

If your application is successful, awards must be taken up in that academic year. The award will be paid direct to the applicant's bank account. No other account or third-party recipient will be accommodated.

If an award is not taken up by the deadline, and the award is still required, the recipient must email the IRSG Office requesting special dispensation and explaining why the award has not been taken up and when it will be required. Failure to take up an award by the end of the academic year of the Institution in which they are matriculated will render the award void and it will not be issued. Acceptance of an award indicates acceptance of these and any other terms detailed in the award offer from the IRSG.

Reporting back to the IRSG

A strict condition of accepting an award is that successful applicants will adequately report back to the IRSG. This is done in two parts with a preliminary status report submitted to us within five months of the completion of the project and a full copy of the submitted thesis at the end of the academic year. The IRSG is a not for profit organisation and has a responsibility to our Members and patrons to illustrate where our funds have been spent. Failure to adequately report back to the IRSG within six months of the conclusion of the work will render yourself, and any other person from your institute, ineligible to apply for future funding from the IRSG. In such circumstance the IRSG also reserves the right to request for the award to be returned. **Please note that the Publication/Presentation Contract agreed with each grantee will provide clarity on specific terms with each individual and would continue beyond the academic year.**

Loss of an award / return of award

If the IRSG is not satisfied that the funds it has awarded have been spent as per the application for which funding was sought, or a suitable report is not submitted to us, then the IRSG reserves the right to request, for the award, in part or in full, to be returned. An award cannot be transferred to a third party. If the original recipient is unable to complete the project for which the award was made, or is unable to undertake the project in the timescale agreed (i.e. as detailed in their application) then the award must be returned in full.

Unsuccessful applications

If your application has been unsuccessful, then you will receive notification of this by email. If specific feedback as to why any application is unsuccessful is requested, we would be happy to provide this.

Re-submission Policy

We do not accept re-submissions of the same project. Applications will be rejected without review if they are re-submissions of a proposal rejected in a previous round, or if they represent only a minor revision of such a proposal (for example, with a modified experimental design). As a guide, to be significantly different, at least 50% of objectives and activities should be different to the original proposal.

The IRSG look forward to receiving your proposal.

SCORING CRITERIA

A) Scientific Excellence/Potential of the Project

5 – Exceptional

There is an outstanding alignment with the grants objectives and requirements - The proposed work is at the leading edge internationally - The work is likely to lead to significant advance in scientific understanding - The objectives of the proposed work are achievable and this is supported by an outstanding, highly appropriate research plan and methodology - The work represents outstanding value for money and all resources requested are completely justified - A clear understanding of the potential impact of the work is demonstrated - Outreach activities proposed are appropriate to the work, use both routine and novel ways to engage end-users, and are likely to generate very significant potential for impact

4 – Excellent

There is an excellent alignment with the grants objectives and requirements - The proposed work is at a high international standard - The work will make a significant contribution to the advance in scientific understanding - The objectives of the proposed work are achievable and this is supported by an excellent, highly appropriate research plan and methodology - The work represents excellent value for money and all resources requested are completely justified - A clear understanding of the potential impact of the work is demonstrated - Outreach activities proposed are appropriate to the work, use both routine and novel ways to engage end-users, and are likely to generate significant potential for impact

3 – Very Good

There is very good alignment with the grants objectives and requirements - The proposed work is internationally competitive - The work will make a contribution to the advance in scientific understanding - The objectives of the proposed work are achievable and this is supported by a very good, appropriate research plan and methodology - The work represents very good value for money and most resources requested are justified - An understanding of the potential impact of the work is demonstrated - Outreach activities proposed are appropriate to the work, use both routine and novel ways to engage end-users, and are likely to generate potential for impact

2 – Good

There is some alignment with the grants objectives and requirements - The proposed work has merit but isn't internationally competitive - The work will lead to only a minor advance in scientific understanding - The objectives of the proposed work are mostly achievable and this is supported by a good, appropriate research plan and methodology - The work represents reasonable value for money and some of the resources requested are justified - Some understanding of the potential impact of the work is demonstrated - Outreach activities proposed are appropriate to the work, use either routine or novel ways to engage end-users, and may generate potential for impact

1 – Not competitive

There is little or no alignment with the grants objectives and requirements - The proposed work potentially has some merit but isn't internationally competitive - The work is unlikely to advance scientific understanding - The objectives of the proposed work are not achievable and is supported by a poor research plan and methodology - The work represents poor value for money and little or none of the resources requested are justified - Little understanding of the potential impact of the work is demonstrated - Outreach activities proposed are not appropriate to the work, don't use either routine or novel ways to engage end-users and are unlikely to generate potential for impact

B) Potential of the Candidate

5 - Exceptional

The applicant has an outstanding proven track record in delivering results of this nature - The applicant has demonstrated outstanding performance at an international level - The applicant has surpassed expectation with regards to the required standard in relation to past contributions or future potential

4 - Excellent

The applicant has an excellent proven track record in delivering results of this nature - The applicant has demonstrated excellent performance at an international level - The applicant exceeds the required standard in relation to past contributions or future potential

3 - Very Good

The applicant has a very good proven track record in delivering results of this nature - The applicant has demonstrated very high performance at an international level - The applicant has reached the required standard in relation to past contributions or future potential

2 - Good

The applicant has a proven track record in delivering results of this nature - The applicant has demonstrated good performance at a national/international level - The applicant reaches the required standard in relation to past contributions or future potential

1 - Not Competitive

The applicant does not have a proven track record in delivering results of this nature - The applicant has little or no experience of performing at an international level - The applicant does not reach the required standard in relation to either past contributions or future potential