

## MEMBER SURVEY 2018 – Gary King

In March-April this year, we conducted a survey of our members, sending email invitations to all current members who had joined prior to December 2017; we excluded more recent members since we ask them to reply to similar questions in the “Welcome” email which we send them when they join. We received 355 responses from the 695 invitations sent, a response rate of 51%, which is considered to be excellent for this type of survey – thanks to all who participated.

The survey was designed to elicit information from both active (those who submit photos to our website) and non-active members, with different questions being asked of each group. A number of questions were the same for both groups, and the reply to one of the survey questions was used to determine which set of questions was asked. For one question (Which areas of the website do you use?), additional options were available for active members.

This article presents a summary of the major findings of the survey, with results grouped for active and non-active members. A number of questions in the survey allowed multiple responses (eg. reason for joining BLP), generally with an option to provide an “Other” response; this summary does not include every such reply, it covers the main responses received. *Figures shown are percent of responses.*

### All Members

#### What prompted you to join BirdLife photography?

Reason	All	Active	Non-act
To view photographs of Australian birds	57	57	57
To submit photos to the online galleries	42	59	21
To access the bi-monthly newsletter	32	31	33
To learn how to improve my ability to photograph birds	73	73	72
To access resources to improve my photographic skills	48	46	50
To improve bird identification skills	44	40	48
To network with other bird photographers	37	40	33
To participate in the on-line forum	6	7	5
To support the work of birdlife photography	42	43	40
It was an affordable add-on to my BLA membership	33	26	42
Other	8	9	6

#### Demographics

Age Group	All	Active	Non-act
20 or under	2	3	1
21 to 40	3	2	5
41 to 60	27	27	28
Over 60	68	69	66

**How often do you visit the BLP website? Include visits where you do not log in with your member account.**

<b>Visit Frequency</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Active</b>	<b>Non-act</b>
Daily	8	13	1
Weekly	21	31	9
Monthly	27	27	27
Occasionally (average less than once a month)	37	29	47
Never	8	1	16

**How often do you log in to the BLP website?**

<b>Log In Frequency</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Active</b>	<b>Non-act</b>
I stay logged in (via the Remember Me checkbox)	12	18	4
Daily	2	3	0
Weekly	14	23	4
Monthly	20	21	18
Occasionally (average less than once a month)	41	32	53
Never	10	2	21

**Have you ever submitted a photograph to the BLP website?**

<b>Submitted Photograph</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Active</b>	<b>Non-act</b>
Yes	55	100	0
No	45	0	100

**Which areas of the website do you/have you used?**

<b>Area</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Active</b>	<b>Non-act</b>
Viewing bird photos	88	94	79
Submitting photos to non-competition galleries	38	66	-
Searching for photos of specific species	45	55	31
Submitting entries to photo competitions	41	72	-
Viewing entries in photo competitions	70	80	57
Voting for entries in photo competitions	46	65	21
Managing your photos	16	28	-
Reading forum posts from other members	32	39	22
Posting to the forum with a question or response	12	20	1
Reading newsletters or newsletter articles	63	71	53
Reading latest information on the Home page	32	44	17
Requesting an image download	4	4	4
Reading Mystery Reviewer critiques	36	48	19
Reading other documents from the Resources page	25	29	20
Reading articles in the About Us section of the website	20	23	17
Reading about the Tom Oliver Award	20	24	14
Other	7	6	8

**Are you interested in the BLP Biennial Conference?**

<b>Interest</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Active</b>	<b>Non-act</b>
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Yes; have attended a previous DPITB event	23	30	14
Yes; have not attended a previous DPITB event	10	10	9
Yes; will definitely attend a future BLPBC event	4	6	3
Yes; may attend a future BLPBC event	25	25	24
Not sure	26	17	37
Not interested	9	9	10
Other	3	3	4

## How could your membership of BLP be improved?

Improvement	All	Active	Non-act
Happy with all aspects of my BLP membership	46	54	35
Engagement with BLP through social media	16	13	18
Mentoring by experienced bird photographers	36	36	36
Other	36	32	40

The “Other” category included 120 comments, often variable and conflicting. It is clear that some members love competitions and some hate competitions. Some think BLP should be involved in social media and others do not. A number of members find navigation of the website difficult. Many of the comments noted that members did not have sufficient time for their bird photography activities. Many of the comments under “Other” were already been covered under the question “What would assist members to submit photos in future?”, which was asked of non-active members (see below). There was also a call for local activities such as bird walks and workshops to improve skills. Some members clearly do not understand BLP’s purpose. There is also confusion between BLP, BLA and State and regional bird photography groups.

## Active Members

For this survey, we have defined active members as those who answered “Yes” to the question “*Have ever submitted a photograph to the BirdLife Photography website?*” 196 of the 355 responses (55%) were from active members. It is worth noting that, from website statistics, only about 40% of current members have ever submitted photos to the website; this indicates that our active members were also more active in responding to our survey! The questions in this section were only asked of active members.

## Which galleries have you submitted photos to?

- New Images 77%
- Current Competition 71%
- Slides 15%
- Creative images 11%
- Critique 8%
- Science and Conservation 6%
- Landscape/habitat 4%

## **How do you rate your level of expertise as a photographer/which competition level do you enter?**

- |                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| • Entry level  | 22% |
| • Intermediate | 56% |
| • Advanced     | 22% |

## **What type of camera do you use for bird photography?**

89% of members use a DSLR camera, 7% using a super-zoom/compact and 4% other. The “other” included those using both types or using a mirror-less camera.

## **What brand of camera do you use for bird photography?**

- |           |     |
|-----------|-----|
| • Canon   | 55% |
| • Nikon   | 29% |
| • Olympus | 6%  |
| • Sony    | 3%  |
| • Other   | 7%  |

Other included members using more than one brand of camera.

## **What brand of lens do you use for bird photography?**

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| • Canon                                    | 48% |
| • Nikon                                    | 19% |
| • Superzoom/compact with unchangeable lens | 5%  |
| • Olympus                                  | 3%  |
| • Sony                                     | 3%  |
| • Other                                    | 23% |

Other included primarily Sigma and Tamron lenses.

## **What type of lens do you use for bird photography?**

- |                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| • Zoom          | 77% |
| • Prime         | 39% |
| • Teleconverter | 31% |

## **Do you normally shoot in camera raw or jpg?**

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|----------|-----|
| • Raw    | 61% |
| • JPG    | 22% |
| • Both   | 13% |
| • Either | 5%  |

## **What image processing software do you use?**

- |                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| • Adobe Lightroom          | 47% |
| • Adobe Photoshop          | 39% |
| • Canon DPP                | 20% |
| • Adobe Photoshop Elements | 16% |
| • Nikon Capture NX         | 2%  |
| • Nikon View NX            | 2%  |

- GIMP 2%
- Other 20%

Other included Apple software, Windows software, Picasa, Neat Image, Topaz and Sony Image Converter.

## Non-active Members

For this survey, we have defined non-active members as those who answered “No” to the question “*Have ever submitted a photograph to the BirdLife Photography website?*” 159 of the 355 responses (45%) were from non-active members. The questions in this section were only asked of non-active members.

### Do you intend to submit photographs?

A total of 60% of currently non-active members said they either definitely will (9%) or probably will (51%) submit photographs of birds in the future. It is not expected that the remaining 40% will ever submit photographs.

### What would assist members to submit photographs in the future?

Advice on:

- How to submit images to the website 49%
- Assessing image quality 45%
- Post-processing of images 45%
- Field skills 32%
- Choice of cameras and lens 18%

A few had concerns about resizing. A larger number had concerns (expressed in different ways) about their own photographic skills and felt intimidated by the overall high quality of images on the website and as a result were reluctant to submit images.

Many of the comments under “Other” have already been covered under “What would assist members to submit photos in future?” There was also a call for local activities such as bird walks and workshops to improve skills. Some members clearly do not understand BLP’s purpose. There is also confusion between BLP, BLA and State and regional bird photography groups.

## Follow-up – Younger Members

Given the low number of members under 40 years of age, an additional question was sent to the eighteen members under this age who responded to the initial survey. This question was:

***What do you think Birdlife Photography should do to make our group more attractive to members in the younger age classes so that we gain more active members in these age classes interested in photographing birds?***

Suggestions made by this group were:

- Mentoring and encouragement from older, more experienced members
- Recognition of younger members when they get things right

- Being able to be interactive on social media. Young people want to share experiences on social media. Facebook could be useful for this interaction. Maybe we could have a “Bird of the Day/Week” on Instagram to keep people interested.
- Field trips and workshops in local areas – young people want to meet and do things with like-minded people
- Tips and tricks for learning bird photographers
- Before and after examples of post-processing explaining what was done to the image
- Establish a youth level gallery for competitions

## Discussion of Major Findings

There is clearly room for improving our members’ experience. Only 30% of non-active members and 54% of active members said they were happy with all aspects of their BLP membership.

The demographics of active and non-active members are fairly similar with the majority of members being over sixty years old and very few members less than forty years old. This does not bode well for the future of the organization. This is an issue the committee will have to give serious consideration to in the near future. It is also worth noting that many over-sixties are less computer savvy than younger generations and need more assistance in the areas of website navigation and post-processing skills. It is hoped that BLP’s very recent entry into social media via Instagram will attract some younger members.

The principal reasons for joining BLP were similar for both active and non-active members. Most members joined to improve their ability to photograph birds or to access resources to improve their photographic skills and to network with other bird photographers. Active members also joined to submit photos of birds to the online galleries.

The response from the non-active members was both surprising (159 responses) and encouraging (up to 60% still interested in submitting photos in the future). However, it is apparent that most of those members who might submit photos in the future need encouragement and assistance. The areas they require assistance in are:

- Choice of cameras and lens
- Field skills (including guidance on camera settings for bird photography)
- Assessing image quality
- Post-processing of images including resizing
- Website navigation
- How to submit images to the website
- Mentoring of beginners (both young and old) and less-skilled photographers
- Guidance and encouragement to submit photos

Much of this information already exists as articles in past Newsletters. These articles need to be extracted, collated in a logical order, updated where necessary and placed on the website in an obviously accessible location. Some members both young and old (but clearly not all) are coming from a low photographic and computing knowledge base. The language in these articles should be checked to ensure the processes to be followed are as simple and

clear as possible. At the same time as this process is underway any gaps in information should be identified and a process put in place to plug the gaps.

It should be noted that some active members who responded also mentioned the need for mentoring and assistance with website navigation. We were surprised to learn that almost 20% of non-active members never visit the website. It is worth noting that website statistics show that 27% of current members have never logged in to the website.

BLP should also continue to provide workshops covering the above matters at BLP Biennial Conferences. This should be considered as supplementary to the above as they mostly only serve members in reasonable proximity to the Conference location.

There were 196 responses from active members and not surprisingly they are much more active on the website (see above). There are no surprises in the cameras and lenses used and how members rate their level of photographic expertise. Between 60-80% of members shoot in raw with the remainder producing jpg files. It is surprising that even though 59% of members use Canon cameras and 48% use Canon lenses, only 20% use Canon's free DPP4 post-processing software. Lightroom, Photoshop and Photoshop Elements are the most commonly used post-processing software.

There is interest in the BLP Biennial Conferences from both active and non-active members. Fifty percent of non-active members have either attended (14%) such a conference or would be interested in attending in future. Members from WA raised travel distance as an issue. Seventy one percent of active members have either attended (30%) or would be interested in attending in future.

As noted in the Committee Report earlier in this Newsletter, the committee is now considering how it might address some of the issues raised by the survey. If you would like to comment further, please email us ([photography@birdlife.org.au](mailto:photography@birdlife.org.au)), or start a topic in the [General Discussion](#) area of our online Forum (you must be logged in to post to the Forum – you can do this on the Forum page); the second option will allow other members to contribute to the discussion.