***NOTE. By completing ONE application, you will be considered for ALL SCO-SOC awards***

**APPLICATION TO THE SOCIETY OF CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS**

**FOR RESEARCH SUPPORT IN 2025**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Student Awards** | | | | | | | |
| Applicant's Name: |  | | | | | | |
| Applicant's Address: |  | | | | | | |
| Telephone: (W) (H) |  | | E-mail: | |  | | |
| Institutional Affiliation  (if any): | |  | | | | | |
| Degree Sought (if any): | |  | Date expected: | | |  | |
| Name of Supervisor: |  | | | | | | |
| Title of Proposal or Project: |  | | | | | | |
| Amount Requested from SCO-SOC: | | | | |  | | |
| Would you like to be considered for the Student Discovery Award  (up to $500; see Guidelines below for eligibility) | | | | | Yes No | | |
| Have you ever received a research award from the SCO-SOC? | | | | | Yes No | | |
| If Yes, list award and date received | | | | |  | | |
| Are you currently a member of SCO-SOC? | | | | | Yes No | | |
| *(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 first individual from whom you have solicited a letter of recommendation**: | | | | | | | |
| Referee’s e-mail address: | |  | | | | | |
| Referee's phone: | |  | | Date letter requested: | | |  |
| **Name and address of second individual from whom you have solicited a letter of recommendation (not required if ONLY applying for the Student Discovery Award):** | | | | | | | |
| Referee’s e-mail address: | |  | | | | | |
| Referee's phone: | |  | | Date letter requested: | | |  |
| Signature of Applicant | | | | Date | | | |
| **COMPLETE APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY 1 March 2025** | | | | | | | |

**GUIDELINES**

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

INTRODUCTION:

**Taverner Awards** are offered by SCO-SOC to honour Percy A. Taverner and to further his accomplishments in increasing the knowledge of Canadian birds through research, conservation and public education. The awards are aimed at people with limited or no access to major funding, regardless of professional status, who are undertaking ornithological work in Canada. **Two awards of up to $2000 each are made annually**.

The **Avian Conservation Award** (previously the James L. Baillie Student Research Award) is open to any student undertaking ornithological research that will make a substantial contribution towards the conservation of birds in Canada. Funds are granted for student stipend, research or travel costs associated with the project. The award is funded with revenue generated by participants of Birds Canada’s Birdathon and is administered by SCO-SOC. **A single award of up to $2000 is made annually**.

The **Fred Cooke Award** is offered jointly by Birds Canada and administered by SCO-SOC to honour the contributions of Professor Fred Cooke to Canadian ornithology by supporting ornithological conference travel or research activities by a student conducting research on birds that occur in Canada. The Award shall be for travel to ornithological conferences at which the student will make an oral or poster presentation, or research activities related to their project. **A single award of up to $1000 is made annually**.

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. Currently we are only able to fund the Student Discovery Award up to $500, while the other student awards are valued at $1000-2000. Due to the difference in award value, we have decided to make the proposal shorter (2-pages) and the number of references fewer (1 reference), to reduce the workload required of applicants who wish to only apply for the Student Discovery Award.

A single application may be made for all awards, but only one award can be won by an applicant in a given year (with the exception of the Student Discovery Award - students may hold both the Student Discovery Award and another award in the same year). After evaluation and ranking of all proposals, the Student Awards Committee will determine the appropriate fund source for the top proposals (i.e., it is not necessary for the applicant to indicate whether they are applying for a particular award, with the exception of the Student Discovery Award). Taverner Awards are given only once for the same project; Baillie Awards only once to the same person. However, past winners of either award may apply for the other. Funds are not awarded for stipends. There is no restriction on an applicant's applying to or receiving awards from other funding organizations (e.g.: AOU, ABS, Sigma Xi, etc.), however, requests for funding from other sources must be indicated as instructed under Item 3 (below). If applicants are successful in obtaining funds from both the SCO-SOC and other sources, they are expected to notify the Chair of the Student Awards Committee.

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 (Student Discovery Award ONLY) should similarly be built around a carefully defined, clearly-delineated project or opportunity, with objectives and expected outcomes of the opportunity clearly outlined 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.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION:

The applicant must request letters of recommendation from two individuals (just 1 reference letter is needed if ONLY applying for the Student Discovery Award). It is recommended that one advocate should be the applicants’ supervisor, however, a general reference could be provided from someone the applicant works with that understands the background, value, and goals of the proposed project (e.g., mentor, advisor, senior member of the lab, other faculty members in the department). The applicant should give advocates a copy of the enclosed "Instructions to Advocates" and a copy of the applicant's complete proposal so that advocates can write meaningful letters 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 e-mail to the Chair of the awards committee BEFORE or on the deadline date below. If applying for the Student Discovery Award, 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 letters of reference have been sent) directly to the current Chair of the Student Award Committee, to be received via e-mail by **1 March 2025**. 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**. Note that this is the deadline for receipt of ALL materials (application and letters of recommendation) by e-mail. Applications that are received at least several days before the deadline are preferred.

AWARD NOTIFICATIONS:

Applicants will be notified by **15 May 2025** as to whether or not they have received an award.

REPORTING AND RECOGNITION:

All successful applicants are required to submit an accounting of expenditures and a brief (500-1000 words) progress report on the project to the Chair of the Student Award Committee by December 1 of the year in which the award was made. Successful applicants must also provide a popular account of their research, including objectives, preliminary findings, and a bio photo or any other supporting photos of graphics, for submission to Picoides, BirdWatch, and/or other communication channels (e.g., social media, blogs), to the Chair of the Student Award Committee no later than February 1st of the year following receipt of the award.

Successful applicants for the Avian Conservation Award and the Fred Cooke Award must acknowledge support from Birds Canada and SCO-SOC in scientific papers and other articles based on research funded by the awards. Similarly, successful applicants for Taverner Awards and Student Discovery Award must acknowledge support from SCO-SOC. Successful applicants are also requested to send the current Chair copies of any publications resulting from the funded project, and are encouraged to recognize Birds Canada and SCO-SOC through other means, such as posters, presentations, and social media.

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

A complete application consists of six 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 five 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 [***Ornithological Applications***](https://academic.oup.com/condor/pages/General_Instructions?login=false)). 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 [***Ornithological Applications***](https://academic.oup.com/condor/pages/General_Instructions?login=false). (This section does not count as part of the page limit, but should be kept to one page).

Student Discovery Award applicant seeking professional development, 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) - e) are to be addressed within the five-page maximum limit (or 2-pages if ONLY applying for the Student Discovery Award)**

3. Budget (this section is not required if ONLY applying for the Student Discovery Award)

Request what you need to do a good job. Be reasonable. Padded budgets and unjustified items may be a detriment to the application. Appropriate budget item requests include the following: essential research-related travel (e.g., to and from a study site); expendable supplies and equipment; living expenses in the field for the applicant, and, if essential, for field assistants. Requests for salaries for assistants are appropriate only if you can convince the committee that volunteers are unavailable. Inappropriate requests for budget items include: routine living expenses, supplies and overhead expenses normally provided by your institution, and most requests for permanent equipment (e.g. binoculars, scopes, camping equipment) unless these are to become property of the applicant's institution.

a) List items: For each item, indicate clearly whether you are requesting it from the SCO-SOC or from another source. The budget list should be arranged according to actual and/or potential funding sources. You may need to indicate "Pending" for some items.

b) Statement of justification and need: In some cases, it may be necessary to explain briefly why you need certain items. All applicants should include a brief statement summarizing how the project may have to be modified if SCO-SOC funding is not granted.

c) Multiple applications to granting agencies: Applicants may apply to additional agencies besides the SCO-SOC for funding the same research project, and even for the same item. Applicants must not, however, accept more than one award or grant for the same budget item.

4. Curriculum Vitae: Include education, employment history, papers presented at meetings and publications list. Restrict your CV to no more than two pages. Do not send reprints, thesis proposals, etc.

5. Letter of Recommendation: Give a copy of the proposal and the "Instructions to Advocates for SCO-SOC Research Award Applicants" on page 7 to your supervisor or other academic/professional mentor. Letters of recommendation are due March 1, 2025. 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 E-MAIL TO:**

Dr. Sarah Gutowsky

Chair, SCO-SOC Student Awards Committee

E-mail: [sarahegutowsky@gmail.com](mailto:sarahegutowsky@gmail.com)

**APPLICANT NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSAL RECEIPT**

Applicants normally will be notified via email reply 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 submission of your application, contact the Chair of the Student Award Committee immediately by email.

​**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 2025** | | | | |
| **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 |  | | |
| **Budget Justification and Presentation (not applicable for Student Discovery Award)** | 15 |  | | |
| **Special Considerations**  (Includes letters 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 ADVOCATES 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 Student Award 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)?

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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?

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

6. SUBMISSION OF LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION. Please send your letter by E-mail to the address listed below. The deadline for receipt of completed applications, including letters of recommendation, is **1 March 2025**. If you have concerns about sending a letter by E-mail, please contact the chair.

**Send Letters of Recommendation VIA E-MAIL to**:

Dr. Sarah Gutowsky

Chair, SCO-SOC Student Awards Committee

E-mail: sarahegutowsky@gmail.com