

# Pre-Harvest Survey Program

Survey Guideline - Opportunistic Observations (V2)



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# 1. Opportunistic Observations

## 1.1 Context

Opportunistic observations are observations of a species, ecosystem or habitat that is not the specific target of the survey technique being implemented. Opportunistic observations include incidental records of non target species observed while conducting a specified survey technique or may simply be an opportunistic observation while travelling to or from a survey, walking into a coupe etc.

Observations on, or in the vicinity of, coupes involved in the PHSP are of particular interest as they may constitute the only records of a particular species obtained for a particular coupe in the program.

It is not intended that surveyors will record all observations of all species as this is not possible.

## 1.2 Objectives

To make incidental observations of threatened species on an opportunistic basis, particularly on and in close vicinity to coupes visited in the PHSP.

To take advantage of the presence of field teams in Regional areas to increase our knowledge of the distribution of rare and threatened species.

To record opportunistic observations of threatened species in a timely but accurate manner.

## 1.3 Survey effort

The triggers for recording an opportunistic observation, in order of priority, are:

- A species, ecosystem or habitat that are the target of the PHSP as defined in the appendices, but not the target of the survey technique being implemented e.g. spotlight a sooty owl during a LBP survey
- A species, ecosystem or habitat that are not the target of the PHSP but that are considered rare, threatened or to be an otherwise unusual observation e.g. hear an owlet nightjar or a more common non target frog species while conducting a PHSP targeted frog survey
- A species that is identified during a standard survey technique that may not be the target but is an incidental record e.g. spotlighting a brushtail possum during a greater glider spotlight transect
- Identify and record incidental records of non target species when analysing camera trap images

Field observers shall always be vigilant for potential, unsolicited observations of rare and threatened species during their field activities.

Observers shall not deliberately seek out extra observations of species i.e. additional to those already being sought via the targeted surveys or the CHASS.

Observers shall not interrupt their field schedules, nor take time, beyond about 5-10 minutes, out of targeted surveys, to make opportunistic observations.

In most cases field observers shall only spend a matter of minutes on confirming and recording opportunistic observations.

For initially fleeting observations, observers shall aim to spend little time (minutes) attempting confirmation, exercising their best judgement based on the conservation status of the species, the time available, and the likelihood of it being detected again then and there or by future planned targeted surveys.

If an opportunistic observation is made then observers shall take enough time to record the required details in the OppObs dataEntry worksheet.

## 1.4 Staff requirements

Observers may be required during audit, to demonstrate that they have the relevant expertise in identifying the observed e.g. the threatened species and its ecology and habitat.

Observers are required to be aware of all the species, ecosystems and habitats of the threatened and non-threatened fauna that may be within an area, not just the ones that they are specifically targeting in surveys. The list of relevant fauna species is provided in the SOP appendices.

### 1.5 Equipment for the technique

- Camera for recording species of interest
- Field data sheets or electronic recording device
- Site maps and aerial photos, and a search plan for the coupe
- Range finder
- Binoculars
- Hand-held compass or similar

### 1.6 Conducting the survey

This survey technique is opportunistic and may be conducted at any time while engaged in the Pre-Harvest Survey Program.

No specific effort is required for this survey technique.

Applies when observers are conducting any of all other survey techniques

### 1.7 Data reporting requirements

Data requirements are outlined in the OppObs data sheet

PHSP data is to be recorded and reported in accordance with the procedures outlined in the SOP.

