

Exploring interdisciplinary collaboration in Australia's ecosystem science and management community

Below is an overview of the research. For more details, download the [summary report](#)

Interdisciplinary collaboration amongst ecosystem scientists and managers is vital for developing innovative solutions to the complex issues surrounding Australia's changing ecosystems.

Who is engaging in interdisciplinary collaboration in Australia's ecosystem science and management community? What are the barriers to collaboration? Is interdisciplinary collaboration important?

These were some of the questions investigated by Lucy Keniger, a University of Queensland Masters student who explored the factors associated with interdisciplinary research collaboration in the Australian ecosystem science and management community.

Overall, 751 ecosystem scientists and managers responded to an online survey from December 2011 to February 2012.

About the respondents

The respondents were mainly from universities (45%), followed by government (25%) and private consultancies (15%), and most were from capital cities (67%). Of the respondents, 48% were members of the Ecological Society of Australia, by far the largest of any membership nominated in the survey.

Most respondents thought that interdisciplinary collaboration was important for both ecosystem science and for management, but actual collaboration told a different story.

Why do ecosystem scientists collaborate? (and why don't they)

The key perceived incentives for collaboration were learning, extending professional networks, gaining experience and opening up opportunities to work on different topics.

Key perceived barriers were financial and institutional constraints, lack of time, and distance between potential collaborators.

Further analysis showed that:

- respondents from CSIRO, herbaria and museums were most likely to have high levels of recent collaboration.
- respondents more advanced in their career were more likely to collaborate with other disciplines.

Synthesis centres such as ACEAS are important vessels for improving collaborative effort within the community by providing financial resources, bringing distal researchers together, creating sufficient, dedicated time to focus on a project, and helping overcome both institutional and social barriers to collaboration.

For more information, [download the summary report](#)

Several papers are being prepared. For more information, contact [Lucy Keniger](#) or ACEAS Program Manager
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