



# SYDNEY FUNGAL STUDIES GROUP INC.

ABN 76 384 308 862

Secretary

[www.sydneyfungalstudies.org.au](http://www.sydneyfungalstudies.org.au)

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Correspond/reply to: Dr. Ray Kearney OAM  
Chairman, Sydney Fungal Studies Group Inc

23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2014

Dear Terry,

I wish to respond, on behalf of the Sydney Fungal Studies Group Inc (SFSGI) to the invitation to comment on the *Saving our Species* program launched on 16.12.13 by the Hon Robyn Parker MP, Minister for Environment.

I commend the Minister and her department (NSW Office for the Environment and Heritage – OEH) for implementing *Saving Our Species* as a new NSW Government program that provides a coherent framework for the conservation of threatened species. However, as I commented at the launch of the program, it is very disappointing to see that Fungi are not recognized as a separate Kingdom to Plants (Flora) and Animals (Fauna).

Whilst this is not the first time this anomaly has been brought to the attention of senior staff in OEH and the associated NSW Parks & Wildlife Service, the ignorance that fungi are neither plants nor animals still prevails and can POSITIVELY hinder meaningful implementation of the *Saving Our Species* Program. We are not alone in expressing our concerns. The following is a copy of correspondence (23.12.13) received from Professor David Minter, President of the International Society for Fungal Conservation:

*Dear Members of the International Society for Fungal Conservation,*

*As this year draws to a close, I want to thank all of you for supporting our young Society. Since it was established in 2010, we have achieved a lot together, and the last twelve months have been particularly successful.*

*Thanks to your contributions, our Editor, Paul Cannon, put together a third issue of Fungal Conservation, the Society's publication. Don't stop the flow of those contributions! We want to see another issue in the first part of 2014.*

*Several of our Members now have active fungal conservation projects, including more than one funded by the Mohamed bin Zayed Fund, which is a leading light among donor agencies because it recognizes that conservation of animals and plants cannot be achieved without parallel protection for fungi. One of those projects has resulted in a superb new website [<http://iucn.ekoo.se/>] facilitating the red-listing of fungi through the IUCN - a very exciting development for which we should congratulate Anders Dahlberg and Greg Mueller in particular. Greg also had a wonderful success in obtaining funding, again from the Mohamed bin Zayed Fund, for a major workshop on fungal red-listing, which took place at the Society's Congress in November.*

*The Congress itself was a further success. Thanks to the generous hospitality of Prof. Mustafa Isiloglu and his colleagues, many of us were able to spend a very fruitful week in the delightful environs of the Turkey's south coast presenting our various projects to protect fungi and debating*

*the issues which this important topic raises. One very strong feeling which emerged from the Congress was that fungal conservation is now increasingly being recognized. Institutions which still insist on talking about "flora and fauna" without properly recognizing fungi look old-fashioned and out-of-touch with modern science. Many of us strongly feel that at some point in the future, hopefully soon, we will reach a "tipping point" when it suddenly becomes normal for governments and institutions to recognize fungi properly. After that "tipping point" has been passed, we can hope that a "herd instinct" will bring rapid progress to fungal conservation.*

*Up till then, wherever necessary, we must continue to press for fungi to be included in conservation plans. Various speakers at the Congress, not least Alison Pouliot, Lyn Allison and Giuliana Furci, gave inspirational presentations showing how this can be done. Work on the "Micheli Guide to Fungal Conservation" - available on the Society's website <http://www.fungal-conservation.org/> - will continue, pointing out how current coverage of fungi in Rio convention national reports is universally inadequate. But naming and shaming is not enough.*

*We also need to provide those responsible for such poor reports with advice to help them improve. That is one important development which I hope we will see in the coming year.*

*One of the most exciting ideas which came out of the Congress was that the world needs an "International Year of the Fungus". UNESCO declared that the years 2010 to 2020 were the decade on biodiversity. So far, the fungi have been totally neglected in this venture. It is not too much to ask that one of those ten years is explicitly dedicated to those beautiful and important organisms which we support! This idea, based on inspirational suggestions from Lynne Boddy and Peter Buchanan, among others, will be taken up by our Society as a flagship venture for raising awareness of the fungi.*

*We have the prospect of a large amount of work ahead, but it will be exciting, and there is also the hope that we can make real progress on this important issue. I know that, unless fungi are protected along with animals and plants, the conservation movement will fail to achieve sustainability. That knowledge should drive us all along.*

*With very best wishes for 2014,*

*David Minter*

Terry, an excellent case of the need to appeal to botanists and zoologists as well as bureaucrats to recognize fungi as separate from plants and animals is found at:

<http://www.fungal-conservation.org/blogs/message-to-botanists-and-zoologists.pdf>

Staff of OEH are reminded that my wife (Elma) and I, on behalf of the SFSGI, set a precedent in fungi conservation in Australia in 1999-2000 by being responsible for the submissions that led the then NSW Scientific Committee, chaired by Professor Chris Dickman, to make a formal Determinations progressing to the Listing (Gazetted by NSW Parliament) of the Fungal Ecological Community of Lane Cove Bushland Park as "Endangered". In addition nine new species in the Family Hygrophoraceae were gazetted either as 'endangered' or 'vulnerable'. An article about this Listing is found in <http://www.fungal-conservation.org/> on page 13 at:

[http://www.fungal-conservation.org/newsletter/issue\\_1\\_2011\\_high\\_resolution.pdf](http://www.fungal-conservation.org/newsletter/issue_1_2011_high_resolution.pdf)

In 2013, the current Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, made a Preliminary Determination to support a proposal, by Ray and Elma Kearney on behalf of the Sydney Fungal Studies Group Inc., to list the Hygrocybeae community of Lane Cove Bushland Park (LCBP) in the Sydney Basin Bioregion, as a CRITICALLY ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY in Part 2 of Schedule 1A of the Act. As a consequence, to omit reference to the Hygrocybeae community of LCBP from Part 3 of Schedule 1 (Endangered Ecological Community) of the Act. Listing of Critically Endangered Ecological Communities is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/committee/PreliminaryDeterminationsByDate.htm>

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/threatenedspecies/HygroCRECPD.pdf>

### **Preliminary Determination**

The NSW Scientific Committee has found:

*“The Hygrocybeae Community of Lane Cove Bushland Park in the Sydney Basin Bioregion is eligible to be listed as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community as, in the opinion of the Scientific Committee, it is facing an extremely high risk of extinction in New South Wales in the immediate future, as determined in accordance with the following criteria as prescribed by the Threatened Species Conservation Regulation 2010*

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/threatenedspecies/HygroCRECPD.pdf>

An article outlining this precedent in fungal conservation has been published on p 27 at:

[http://www.fungal-conservation.org/newsletter/issue\\_3\\_2013\\_09\\_15\\_high\\_resolution.pdf](http://www.fungal-conservation.org/newsletter/issue_3_2013_09_15_high_resolution.pdf)

Terry, at the launch of ‘Save Our Species’ program, I noticed a beautiful photo print of an endangered orchid on display. If the program aims to conserve such a species of ground orchid (and others) then government bureaucrats must begin to think about and understand e.g., that minuscule seeds of all orchids will not germinate without being enshrouded by mycelium of specific fungi. Many such orchids depend upon fungi gnats for pollination by releasing pheromones mimicking fungi to attract the gnats.

Conservation of species CANNOT be successful without acknowledging the crucial role of fungi in the interdependency of species and not be old-fashioned by erroneously assuming they are plants. It is a form of pseudo-science akin to thinking ladybird beetles are birds and dragon flies are flies.

Fungi form their own mega-diverse biological Kingdom which is separate from animals and plants. It has been recognized as such since at least 1970. Fungi need protection too: nobody seriously supposes that, uniquely in creation, they have some magical property which makes them immune to habitat destruction and pollution etc.

It is incumbent upon you and the relevant staff of NSW OEH to recognize that mycologists have experience and skills which can enhance the proposed conservation work. It has been allegedly unethical of the Department’s office staff not to give acknowledgments and proper attributions to the volunteers of SFSGI who provided OEH with detailed lists of fungi recorded in the field studies by its members. Yet in the State and Commonwealth *Atlases*, in the past, OEH allegedly credits only itself! Without such fungi lists by SFSGI and the submissions by Ray and Elma Kearney to the NSW Scientific Committee, such information for the Greater Sydney Region would not exist nor the initiative to conserve fungi by the only gazettal’s of fungi to date in Australia.

Kind regards,

Ray

Dr. Ray Kearney OAM  
Chairman,  
SFSGI

Please note: This response has also been forwarded to Australia’s representative at the forthcoming Rio Conference on Biological Diversity:

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