BIG ISSUES IN BIODIVERSITY SCIENCE

WABSI
WEBINAR SERIES

Solar photovoltaic energy development and biodiversity conservation

- **Thursday 23rd July 2026**
  4.00pm – 5.00 pm (Australian Western Standard Time)

ONLINE EVENT

Register here

Join us as we explore a critical and often overlooked question in the global energy transition: How do we scale solar photovoltaic (PV) energy while safeguarding biodiversity?

Solar PV is now the second-largest renewable energy source worldwide, yet our scientific understanding of its ecological effects has not kept pace. This webinar presents results of a comprehensive review of current knowledge on the impacts of PV infrastructure on biodiversity, together with existing mitigation measures.

It provides an overview of the available research in Oceania, key knowledge gaps and the strong geographical biases in the literature, which has focused on desert ecosystems in North America. The gaps are particularly relevant in agricultural landscapes, where much of the recent and projected PV expansion is taking place in Europe, yet ecological evidence remains limited.

The session will explore examples of current research focusing on key questions that remain. For example, species' responses to PV infrastructure across spatial scales, nesting ecology, and potential mechanisms underlying bird collisions with solar panels, such as the 'lake effect' hypothesis. The examples will illustrate how research is being designed to address critical uncertainties and support the reconciliation of bird conservation with the expansion of renewable energy.

Bridging science with decision-making is critical and our guest speakers will share recent initiatives for transferring scientific knowledge to different stakeholders involved in the energy transition.

The Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute

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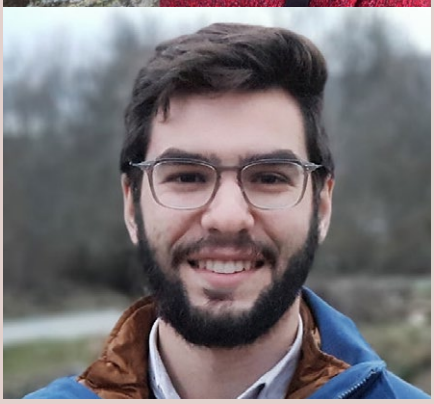
GUEST SPEAKERS



Julia Gomez-Catasis, Assistant Professor and David Gonzalez del Portillo, Researcher

Department of Ecology, Terrestrial Ecosystem Ecology and Conservation Research Group, Center for Research on Biodiversity and Global Change, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

Julia's work centers on conservation biology, with an emphasis on understanding how human activities affect biodiversity and how this knowledge can inform practical conservation solutions. More recently, her research has focused on renewable energy infrastructure, including wind and solar power, and their associated transmission networks, examining both their ecological impacts and strategies to mitigate them.

David's research focuses on steppe bird ecology, particularly the ecological requirements and conservation of the little bustard (Tetrax tetrax), analyzing habitat quality across multiple spatial scales through GPS-tracking, spatial modeling, and climate analyses. He is actively involved in the UAM-CTFC-TotalEnergies Steppe Forward Chair, evaluating photovoltaic plant impacts on agro-steppe biodiversity. David combines advanced statistical modeling and spatial analysis to develop evidence-based conservation strategies for Europe's most threatened farmland birds.

FACILITATOR

Professor Owen Nevin

Chief Executive Officer, The Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute (WABSI)

Owen is an experienced conservation biologist and research leader and is the Chief Executive Officer of The Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute (WABSI). Owen's research work has focused on advancing the conservation of threatened species and their habitats through developing better management and understanding of behaviour and ecosystem function, and human impacts including ecotourism and resource. Owen is a member of the Biosecurity Council of Western Australia. Previous positions include Head of the National School of Forestry (UK), Dean of Graduate Research and Associate Vice-Chancellor at CQUniversity Australia.

Owen has served on the Society for Conservation Biology's European Board and on the Global Board of Governors. He was elected as a Fellow of the Zoological Society of London and appointed as Anniversary Visiting Professor of Conservation Biology at the University of Cumbria.