



Capybara Appreciation Society

*Student Community &
Development Grant
Round 1 - 2024*

International Capybara
Symposium

June 14 & 15
Rio De Janeiro
Conference Centre



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1. Society Overview

(It may seem silly telling us who you are given you're already affiliated to us, but we don't always know everything you do as a club – we can only see from the outside based on bookings and grants. Tell us what you do!)

The UNSW Copybara Appreciation Society (CAS) is an Arc-affiliated society with a passionate community dedicated to studying, appreciating and conservating the world's largest rodent species, the capybara. Our club activities include researching and discussing our mutual interest in the practices and dynamics seen within the capybara species. Likewise, we engage in various activities to promote awareness and education about capybaras and their habitats.

Our club consists of 350 members who have a strong involvement with campus life, holding regular events including weekly meetings, multiple social events throughout the year such as BBQs and movie nights, and consistent involvement Arc events such as O-Week, International Markets and Stress Less Week.

2. Event Overview

(It never hurts to lead with an overview of your event, what it is and how you fit into it. Remember to sell yourselves!)

The International Copybara Symposium is an annual event first founded in 1974 by the Brazilian non-governmental organisation *A Royal Society para o Consumo de Capivaras* (www.capybara.org.br), to discuss all aspects of capybara ecology, life and the world of capybaradom, and an opportunity for Copybara specialists from around the world to share new discoveries and work relating to Copybaras and their conservation.

This year's conference will be attended by renowned animal behaviour experts and conservationists from across the world, as well as students and researchers from multiple universities, colleges and research institutes.

a. Purpose of event:

A team of eight Arc members from the Copybara Appreciation Society will be travelling to Rio De Janeiro in Brazil to present their world-first findings on how climate change has affected the social organisation of Copybara groups at the annual Copybara Symposium.

This year is a milestone for the annual Copybara Symposium, as it is the 50th year the conference has been running. The Symposium will take place on June 14 and 15, 2024, at the Rio De Janeiro Conference Centre. It is an amazing privilege to be offered the opportunity to speak at the conference in any year, but to be offered in such an important year is flattering, moreover as the UNSW Copybara Appreciation Society was offered the opportunity to present over other Australian universities including Sydney University, Australian National University and Monash.

This is the first time students from UNSW have attended this conference and as such, the first time we have applied for funds via the SCDG scheme.

(Remember to point out things that set you apart – if you're the only, or 1 of a few unis attending, you should absolutely mention that. Same for if this is your first time doing it – if you've done it before but changed something to make it different – tell us about it, and how it's different.)

b. Outcomes for Arc members attending:

The conference allows Capybara Appreciation Society members to network with leaders in their field and create leads for future research opportunities.

- Eight UNSW students will present the findings of their three studies on Capybara social dynamics, technological innovation, monitoring practices, and genetic diversity and the use of artificial intelligence and its applications at the conference.
- The Capybara Science Prize of the Year is being presented at this symposium. Members of the CAS are nominated and may win this prize for their work on the 'Genetic Diversity and Population Structure of Capybaras in the Indo-Pacific' (Sofia Ramirez and Jiao Sun)
- Attending the international Capybara Symposium presents a remarkable opportunity for UNSW Arc and CAS members to showcase their commitment to the club and its mission. Additionally, the strategic planning undertaken by executive members holds considerable value in shaping their post-graduation prospects.

(A big part of the funding allocation is to make UNSW, Arc and yourselves stand out and look good – if you're up for an Award or your event will strengthen industry ties or you're a leader in your field – you should tell us about all of these!)



Figure 1 - CapySoc members on our recent field event.



c. Symposium Schedule

Presentations by CAS members highlighted

Day 1 – 14th June 2024	
9:00 AM - 9:15 AM	Registration and Welcome Remarks by President of ICS, Prof. Moreau
9:15 AM – 9:30 AM	Keynote Speech delivered by former General Secretary of the United Nations, Ban-Ki Moon.
9:30 AM - 10:15 AM	Presentation: "The Social Dynamics of Capybara Groups" <i>Dr. Ana Silva & others</i>
10:15 AM - 11:00 AM	Presentation: "Foraging Behaviour of Capybaras in Wetland Ecosystems" <i>Carlos Gomez, Ulysses Chong, Diego Song</i>
10:15 AM - 11:00 AM	Morning Tea
11:30 AM - 12:15 PM	Panel Discussion: "Challenges and Opportunities in Studying Capybara Behaviour" <i>Dr. Johan Ngeli, Prof. Samantha Botha and special guest David Hasselhoff</i>
12:15 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch
1:30 PM - 2:15 PM:	Presentation: "Human-Capybara Conflict Resolution Strategies in Urban Environments" <i>Professor Maria Hernandez</i>
2:15 PM - 3:00 PM	Workshop: "Best Practices in Capybara Habitat Conservation" <i>facilitated by Dr. Juan Martinez</i>
3:00 PM - 3:30 PM	Afternoon Tea
3:30 PM - 4:15 PM	Presentation: "Population Dynamics and Management Strategies for Capybara in Agricultural Landscapes" <i>John Deere, Jane Doe and Forn Baybay</i>
4:15 PM - 5:00 PM	Poster Session and Networking Reception
Day 2 – 15th June 2024	
9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	Recap and Introduction to Day 2
9:30 AM - 10:15 AM	Presentation: "Technological Innovations in Capybara Monitoring" <i>Sadie Chen, Ijaz Azharuddin, Courtney Pietersen</i>
10:15 AM - 11:00 AM	Presentation: "Genetic Diversity and Population Structure of Capybaras in the Indo-Pacific" <i>Sofia Ramirez & Jiao Sun</i>
10:15 AM - 11:00 AM	Morning Tea
11:30 AM - 12:15 PM	Panel Discussion: "Future Directions in Capybara Research" <i>Dr. Jorge Czetsan & Dr. Rosemary Jain</i>
12:15 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch

1:30 PM - 2:15 PM:	Presentation: "Educational Outreach Programs for Capybara Conservation" <i>Eva Allende & Hugo Maduro</i>
2:15 PM - 3:00 PM	Workshop: "Engaging Local Communities in Capybara Conservation Initiatives" <i>facilitated by Dr. Maria Garcia</i>
3:00 PM - 3:30 PM	Afternoon Tea
3:30 PM - 4:15 PM	Presentation: "Artificial Intelligence Applications in Capybara Population Monitoring" <i>Cameron Chan, Neha Prasad, James Reynolds</i>
4:15 PM - 5:00 PM	Closing Remarks and Symposium Wrap-Up

(A program of events isn't strictly necessary, but like the pictures, it adds colour to what would otherwise be a dry read. Remember, you are trying to sell to us why you deserve money – put your best foot forward. Show us smiling photos of your club members, give us a schedule of speakers at the conference if you are presenting – it makes you look more impressive!)





3. Graduate Capabilities

(You need to include responses to the graduate capabilities within your application, this is the why and how of your application – you need to sell us on why its necessary for this event to happen and for you to go!)

Our attendance at the International Capybara Symposium will be not just beneficial for those who attend but for students at UNSW – the information we garner from networking and our attendance at the conference will be of great significance for those unable to attend, it will pave the way for future research, while simultaneously providing our non-scientific members with a greater appreciation and understanding of the capybaras and how they fit into the broader realm of biodiversity. We look forward to being able to share this with the wider student community so that they too can embrace the wonder of capybaras!

a. *‘Scholars capable of independent and collaborative enquiry’*

The Arc members presenting at this conference have conducted exhaustive research over the last two years and are presenting world-first findings into social organisation of Capybara groups. The pursuit of this research as a group represents collaborative enquiry into little known dynamics of Capybara groups in areas of the world and using technologies that have previously not been seen or utilised. The pursuit of this groundbreaking research required intensive collaboration, with regular meetings, field work expeditions, manuscript editing, and much trial and error.

b. *‘... able to innovate by applying their knowledge and skills to the solution of novel as well as routine problems’*

Questions about social organisation are pervasive in the Capybara field and have been the subject of a slew of recent research outputs. The world-first application of sound-meters and camera traps in Serra de Capivara National Park in Brazil has allowed these researchers to observe never-before seen behaviours. The use of these technologies to determine these behaviours represents novel solutions which make use of new advances in the animal observation space. The ability of researchers to conduct this work also involved the routine hurdles to research – risk assessments, gaining approvals from governments, publication process.

c. *‘Entrepreneurial leaders capable of initiating and embracing innovation and change’*

The Capybara Symposium serves as a platform for pioneering researchers to showcase their innovative approaches in studying capybaras, the largest rodents in the world. From pioneering methods in tracking and monitoring capybara populations to developing sustainable conservation strategies, the symposium highlights the entrepreneurial spirit within the research community. Researchers not only explore new avenues of inquiry but also drive change within the field, pushing the boundaries of knowledge and practice.

d. *‘... engaging and enabling others to contribute to change’*

The symposium isn’t just about presenting individual research findings; it’s about fostering collaboration and inspiring others to contribute to the advancement of capybara studies. Through panel discussions, workshops, and networking opportunities, attendees are encouraged to share ideas, collaborate on projects, and explore new avenues of research. This



collaborative environment empowers emerging scholars and seasoned researchers alike to become entrepreneurial leaders in their own right, driving positive change within the field of capybara research.

e. 'Professionals capable of ethical, self-directed practice'

Ethics is at the forefront of every discussion and presentation at the Capybara Symposium. Researchers adhere to strict ethical guidelines in their study design, data collection, and dissemination of findings to ensure the well-being and conservation of capybara populations. Moreover, the symposium provides a platform for discussions on ethical considerations in research, fostering a culture of integrity and responsibility among attendees.

f. '... independent lifelong learning'

The symposium isn't just a one-time event; it's part of a lifelong journey of learning and discovery for capybara researchers. Beyond the presentations and workshops, attendees are encouraged to pursue independent learning opportunities, whether through further research, attending additional conferences, or engaging in continuous professional development. By promoting a culture of lifelong learning, the symposium cultivates professionals who are not only well-versed in the latest advancements but also committed to ongoing self-improvement and growth.

g. 'Global citizens who are culturally adept'

The Capybara Symposium brings together researchers and enthusiasts from around the world, creating a diverse and culturally rich environment. Attendees share perspectives and insights shaped by their unique cultural backgrounds, enriching discussions and broadening understanding of capybaras and their ecosystems. Moreover, the symposium fosters cultural exchange and appreciation through social events, cultural showcases, and collaborative projects, promoting cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.

h. '... capable of respecting diversity and acting in a socially just and responsible way'

Respect for diversity and social justice are core values of the Capybara Symposium. Researchers actively engage with local communities and indigenous groups to ensure their voices are heard and their knowledge is respected in capybara conservation efforts. Moreover, the symposium promotes initiatives aimed at addressing social and environmental injustices, such as habitat destruction and wildlife trafficking, empowering attendees to take action and advocate for positive change. By embodying these values, attendees become global citizens who are not only committed to protecting capybaras but also to creating a more just and sustainable world for all.



4. The Cultural, Social, Historical and Reputational Significance

(This is where you talk about why the event, and your attendance or running of the event, is important. If you skip this bit, we won't know why you think it's good and it will impact your funding level!)

Attending the annual Capybara Symposium, and nomination for the Capybara Science Prize of the Year would be a monumental achievement for the School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences within the Science Faculty at UNSW, as well as for Arc through the Capybara Appreciation Society resonating across campus and enhancing the overall student experience in several ways:

a. Cultural and Social Significance

Conservation Interests: The involvement of the Capybara Society in a global convention discussing environmental changes that affect the Capybara species is significant for the UNSW Science Faculty's research and engagement with conservation methods and practices. The success of this event affirms the university's interest in environmentalism and identifies student interests and research within the field.

Community Engagement: The success of BEES and CAS in securing The Capybara Science Prize of the Year fosters a sense of community pride and engagement. Students, alumni, and supporters alike will rally behind the achievement, strengthening ties within the campus community and fostering a sense of unity and belonging among all stakeholders.

Overall, winning The Capybara Science Prize of the Year not only acknowledges the outstanding contributions of BEES and CAS to science but also enriches the student experience, enhances campus morale, and strengthens the reputation of the institution on a global scale.

Networking Opportunities: The recognition garnered from winning The Capybara Science Prize of the Year, and simply by presenting and attending at the Symposium, opens doors to invaluable networking opportunities for students. It provides a platform for students to connect with renowned researchers and professionals in the field of zoology, facilitating mentorship, collaboration, and potential avenues for future research endeavours or career opportunities.

b. Historical and Reputational Significance

Enhanced Reputation: The recognition garnered from winning such a prestigious award would elevate the reputation of the BEES School on both national and international platforms. As students witness their professors and researchers being honoured for their groundbreaking contributions to capybara science, they will take pride in their affiliation with an institution that values excellence and innovation.

Inspiration and Aspiration: The achievement of winning such a prestigious award sets a high standard for current and future students, inspiring them to aspire to similar levels of excellence in their academic and research pursuits. It creates a culture of aspiration within BEES and CAS where students are encouraged to aim for the highest levels of achievement in their respective fields of study.

c. Contribution to Campus Culture

Participating in the Capybara Symposium will enrich campus culture by fostering a deeper appreciation for biodiversity and ecological conservation among students and faculty. Social media and internal newsletters can be utilised throughout the event to update students and faculty on the trip and the outcomes of CAS' involvement in the symposium. Through our participation, we will spark curiosity, inspire dialogue, and promote a sense of stewardship for the natural world, enhancing the vibrancy and diversity of campus life.

We will also hold events on campus targeting the wider student demographic and utilise new techniques for the handling of capybaras and provide more insight into technological advancements within the sector so even non-members of CAS can learn and enjoy the wonderful world of capybaras.

(It can often be difficult to explain how your event will create opportunity not just for club non-attendees but for the wider university community. Think of it in terms of things you learn at the event and will take back – can you pivot that new information into change that will benefit a wider audience? We want to give funding to groups that can provoke change for lots of people – it's a small funding pool so we want to get bang for our buck. Make sure you don't neglect this part).

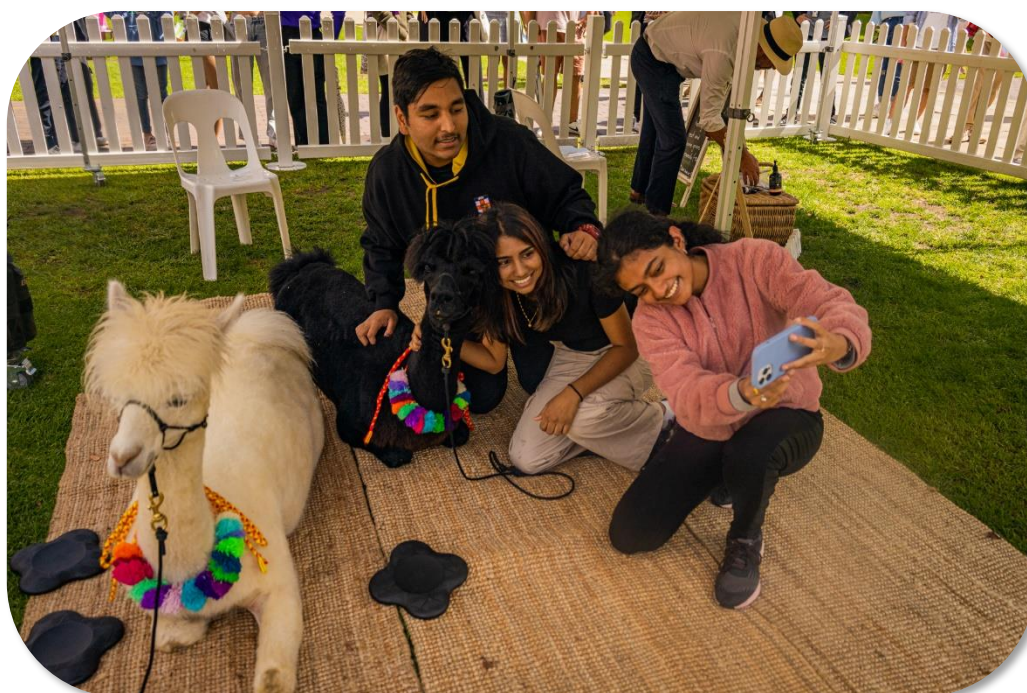


Figure 2 - CapSoc Members at Stress Less Week with a rare extra-long-necked Capybara.



5. Publicity & Culture

(It is a requirement of SCDG that you thank those that supported you with the event, such as Arc and UNSW. This can be as simple as a post following the event with our logos. Failure to do this may result in a loss of funding for your society, should you reapply for SCDG in future!)

a. Publicity Schedule

The below is a publicity schedule, designed to showcase our event, and the generosity of Arc and UNSW to our 4,652 followers, and other social media users who engage with our posts. Last year, we saw a 20% increase in engagement with our social media accounts, and we hope to increase engagement with our attendance at this event. We have also spoken with UNSW Science who will be promoting our posts while at this conference, especially if we are successful in winning the Capybara Science Prize of the Year.

1 – 7 June (two weeks prior to event)

Monday: Facebook Post: "We are thrilled to announce that the Capybara Appreciation Society has been awarded a generous grant from Arc@UNSW and UNSW! 🇺🇸 We are incredibly grateful for their support in our mission to promote capybara research and conservation. Thank you, Arc and UNSW, for believing in our vision! #CapybaraAppreciation #Arc #UNSW"

Wednesday: LinkedIn Post: "We extend our heartfelt thanks to Arc@UNSW and UNSW for awarding the Capybara Appreciation Society with a grant to further our initiatives in capybara research and conservation. Your support is invaluable and will make a significant impact on our efforts. We look forward to sharing our progress with you! #CapybaraResearch #Gratitude #Arc #UNSW"

Friday: Twitter Post: "Big shoutout to ARC and UNSW for their generous grant to the Capybara Appreciation Society! 🌟 Your support means the world to us and will help advance our mission of promoting capybara research and conservation. Thank you for believing in our cause! #CapybaraLove #Grateful #Arc #UNSW"

8 – 14 June (one week prior to event)

Monday: Instagram Story: Share a photo or video of the society members holding a banner or sign saying, "Thank You Arc and UNSW!" with a caption expressing gratitude. Include relevant hashtags such as #ThankYou #CapybaraResearch #Arc #UNSW.

Wednesday: Facebook Post: "We want to express our deepest gratitude to Arc@UNSW and UNSW for their generous grant to the Capybara Appreciation Society. With your support, we are one step closer to achieving our goals in capybara research and conservation. Thank you for investing in our vision! #CapybaraConservation #Grateful #Arc #UNSW"

Friday: Final Thank You Post: "As the week comes to a close, we want to once again thank Arc@UNSW and UNSW for their incredible support of the Capybara Appreciation Society. Your grant will fuel our passion for capybara research and conservation, and we are eager to make a positive impact with your investment. Cheers to a brighter future for capybaras everywhere! #CapybaraLove #Gratitude #Arc #UNSW"



Post-Event: We will create a Facebook post with our winners holding their trophies (fingers crossed!!!) and thanking everyone who got us here including Arc, UNSW, BEES and everyone who bought a sausage at our BBQs!

6. Financial Breakdown

(This should be a basic breakdown of costs. For more detail you should attach a budget to your application. Failure to provide one or both of these **will** adversely affect your funding).

The funding request will be projected from the costs associated with engaging with the Symposium's two-day conference, travel over four-days, and quoted pricing for eight students travel, accommodation, and activity expenses.

a. Projected Financial Breakdown

Expenses	Amount (AUD\$)	Further detail
Plane Tickets	21716	LATAM Airlines (Sydney – Santiago – Rio De Janeiro)
Accommodation: 8 nights	2324	We understand the conference is only 2 days long but would request funds to cover at least 4 days to cover the nights before, during and after the conference (roughly \$1162)
Registration	840	\$105 pp (full pass) (\$357 BRL R\$)
Food	480	Estimated \$15 per meal over 4 nights
Travel	300	Uber from airport to hotel to venue
Total	25660	

b. Other Avenues of Funding Support: fundraising & student funding.

Further projected funding support in the lead up to the event will be run by club executives through attendee's contributions via ticketed amount, and fundraising events on campus. Fundraising events will include club ran BBQs with an optional monetary value if students and faculty wish to support. CAS have identified six possible BBQ dates over two trimesters. These events will further involve campus society by spreading awareness of the event and CAS' involvement, as well as an opportunity for CAS to break even with the expenses associated with the event.

The School of BEES through the Science Faculty has also agreed to provide \$4000 toward the cost of the conference.

Income	Amount (AUD\$)	Further detail
School of BEES	4000	Likely spend on accommodation, shuttles, food etc.
Fundraising projection	500	6 BBQs on campus
Total	4500	

7. Conclusion

The International Capybara Symposium is a world-recognised event that seeks to better understand Earth's most friendly creature. It also a great opportunity for Capybara Appreciation Society Members to meet their contemporaries and share knowledge on a global platform, being challenged to strengthen their leadership and research skills while also building on what they have learnt both within their club, as well as the classroom. Capybara Appreciation Society's goal is to give our members not just a cuddly time with the cutest rodents on earth, but to provide them with a broad skillset (including empathy towards misunderstood critters) that will enable them to rise to the top of whatever their desired field of study or employment is.

In conclusion, Capybara Appreciation Society would be extremely grateful for Arc's assistance which will be pivotal in making it possible for students to attend this event.

Thank you for considering our application!

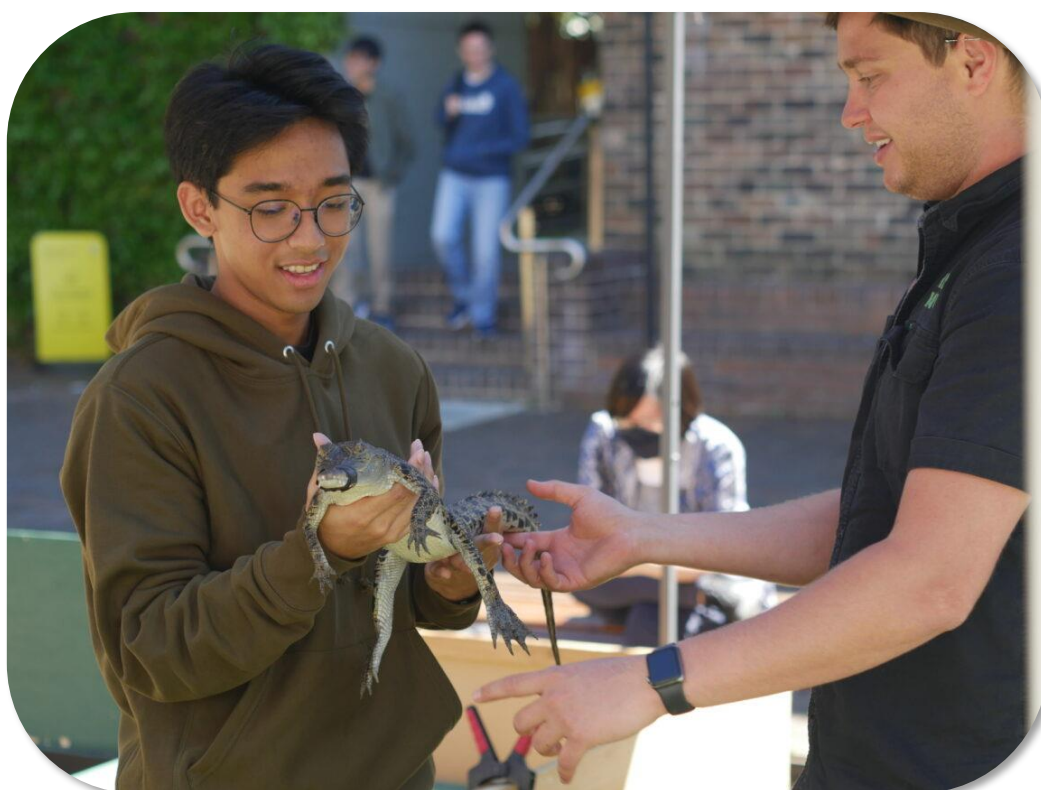


Figure 3 - CapySoc Member at O-Week meeting an extremely rare scale-backed capybara.



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