



Orange-bellied Parrot (OBP) Recovery Program News, June 2024

Prepared by Kerri Duncan, OBP Recovery Program Coordinator, on behalf of the OBP Recovery Team.

Twenty-three members of the OBP Recovery Team (OBPRT) and eleven relevant observers met via teleconference in April to review current recovery activities and discuss future goals. This report covers updates and outcomes from the major meeting, as well as mainland sightings so far.

One agenda item detailed the outcomes of a full-day, in-person workshop held at Moonlit Sanctuary, Victoria, in early April. The overarching goal of the workshop was to optimise the health of the captive population. The team remains committed to continuously improving and updating husbandry practices as our understanding evolves, thanks to ongoing research and collaborative efforts. Follow-up meetings will continue online to progress items raised at the workshop and continue refining captive health strategies.

The ongoing global expansion of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) was also discussed. The team continues to work on preparedness for the possibility of an HPAI outbreak in Australia, and mitigating the impacts this could have on OBP recovery.

Exciting news from Melaleuca included the successful attachment of 46 VHF nanotags to wild and released OBPs by NRE Tas. These tiny tags, attached to the base of the bird's tail, will hopefully be detected by a network of twenty-six tracking stations along the estimated OBP migration route. The towers have been built by recovery team members and partners, with twenty located across Tasmania and six on the mainland. Positions were chosen to focus on where the birds might move through or stay during winter. The team is looking forward to seeing what insights might be gained from this year's detections.

Speaking of detections, there have been seven new OBP sightings to report from the ground. Six were spotted in Victoria's Western Treatment Plant area, all of which were identifiable via leg bands. The seventh was observed on the Narrung Peninsula in South Australia: a male who was last sighted on the mainland at the Murray River mouth in 2021 as a juvenile. These seven are in addition to the three sightings included in the April news report, which saw two males and one female spotted on Victoria's Bellarine Peninsula. That brings the total number of migrants seen so far this season to ten, one of which was unbanded. We look forward to more sighting reports from our dedicated volunteers and staff during the remaining winter surveys.

These surveys have unfortunately suffered a reduction in funding availability this year, which prompted the OBPRT to discuss changes to their future management. Suggestions were made to implement a new booking system to streamline volunteer organisation and coordination efforts. These arrangements are

being investigated and will be announced once finalised, aiming for completion in time for the July and September surveys. These are still scheduled to take place on:

- July 27th and 28th
- September 14th and 15th

So, keep an eye out for updates if you'd like to be involved. Updates and news releases will now be posted on the brand new OBPR Website (www.obprecoveryteam.org), where you can also sign up to receive news directly to your inbox. The newly implemented OBPR logo can be found on the website, too, as well as at the top of this news release.



Above image: The adult male OBP recently spotted on South Australia's Narrung Peninsula. Photographed by Greg Dare, June 2024.

Fast Facts:

OBPs (*Neophema chrysogaster*) are small parrots that primarily feed on seeds on the ground or low vegetation. Males are bright green, yellow, and blue with a prominent orange belly. The colours of females and juveniles are subdued and they have less prominent orange bellies.

In the summer, OBPs breed in southwestern Tasmania within 5km of the coast. In autumn and spring, they migrate via western Tasmania, the Hunter Island Group, and King Island. OBPs winter in coastal habitats in southeastern Australia. Each year, OBPs migrate at least 600 km over land and sea.

The IUCN Red List and the Australian EPBC Act 1999 classify the OBP as Critically Endangered. The species persists as a tiny wild population, breeding at a single location, after a recent rapid decline.

Many threatening factors have contributed to the decline of the OBP in the wild. Habitat loss and degradation plus introduced predators and competitors likely drove past declines. Today, several interacting threats impact the ongoing survival of wild OBPs.

The Recovery Team comprises 30 government, non-government, and community group representatives. It develops, coordinates, and reviews the OBP Recovery Plan, and preserves expertise and advice in OBP biology, ecology, and conservation.

Volunteers greatly contribute to the actions of the OBP Recovery Program. They assist by collecting data on OBPs in the field and captive institutions. They also raise public awareness and funds for recovery actions.

The organisations within the Recovery Team fund recovery actions. Government and non-government grants, and individual and corporate donations, provide additional financial support.