

Fact Sheet

Orange-bellied Parrot



The Orange-bellied Parrot

Orange-bellied Parrots (*Neophema chrysogaster*) are medium sized parrots that migrate from south-west Tasmania to the mainland of Australia each year. Unlike migratory shorebirds, Orange-bellied Parrots breed in Tasmania during the summer and visit the mainland during winter to feed. They are one of only 3 migratory parrots in the world.

Orange-bellied Parrots can be hard to identify as similar looking species such as the Blue-wing Parrot can often be seen in the same habitat. Some of the key features of an OBP include (BirdLife Australia):

- are an average size of a budgie
- have a greyish-black bill, a dark-brown eye and greyish-brown legs.
- are bright grass-green on the head, back and most of the wings, fading to a yellowish-green on the throat and breast, to bright yellow under the tail. Bright orange belly patch and a deep blue band between the eyes, bordered above by a faint blue line. Males tend to be more vibrant than females.



Migration

Orange-bellied Parrots breed over summer in a place called Melaleuca, located in south-west Tasmania. In autumn and winter, they migrate to coastal Victoria and South Australia and stay close to the coastline where they forage on coastal saltmarsh vegetation. There are several key sites within Victoria's South West which provide suitable overwintering habitat for about 70% of the entire population. These sites include the saltmarshes on the western shore of Port Phillip Bay (Point Wilson, Swan Bay and Swan Island), Lake Connewarre on the Bellarine Peninsula and the Yambuck wetlands west of Warrnambool (SWIFFT).

Map of local OBP sites in Victoria

- 1 Point Wilson
- 2 Swan Bay + Swan Island
- 3 Lake Connewarre
- 4 Warrnambool



Fact Sheet

Orange-bellied Parrot



Behaviour

Orange-bellied Parrots nests in tree-hollows including knot-holes in trunks and holes in dead branches. The female cleans out the nest hollow then lays the eggs about two days apart. She incubates the eggs and broods the nestlings, while being fed by the male every two to three hours. The juvenile birds leave the nest four to five weeks after hatching and may be fed by their parents before becoming independent (Australian Museum).

When visiting Victoria and South Australia, they feed on the seeds and fruits of grasses and saltmarsh plants including Shrubby Glasswort (*Tecticornia arbuscula*), Beaded Glasswort (*Salicornia quinqueflora*), Saltbushes (*Atriplex* genus), Southern Sea-heath (*Frankenia pauciflora*) and Austral Seablite (*Suaeda australis*).



Shrubby Glasswort
Tecticornia arbuscula



Marsh Saltbush
Atriplex paludosa



Southern Sea-heath
Frankenia pauciflora



Austral Seablite
Suaeda australis

Critically Endangered

These beautiful parrots are Critically Endangered, which means that they have been categorized by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild. Over the last few decades, the population has decreased to a point that introduces issues of genetic decline. The Orange-bellied Parrot is mainly threatened by:

- habitat loss and degradation at wintering sites
- predation by species such as foxes and feral cats
- noxious weeds replacing indigenous food sources
- Inbreeding and genetic decline.

Learn more

Australian Museum: www.australian.museum
BirdLife Australia: www.birdlife.org.au
DEECA: www.environment.vic.gov.au
ISWFFT: www.swifft.net.au



Feral cat



**Spiny Rush
(weed)**