

**OBP Mainland Release Trial Program 2017**  
**4 week update - 18 May 2017**

It's now four weeks since we released 11 OBPs at the Western Treatment Plant. Overall, we've had very encouraging early results for the first year of this trial.

A loose flock of eight OBPs has formed in the area around the release site. This includes seven of our released birds and one wild adult female who has been associating with the released birds since 3 May. This female has overwintered at the Western Treatment Plant every year since 2013, and provides a real opportunity for our released birds to gain from her local knowledge. An additional released bird, seen 8km away almost two weeks ago, was detected on 18 May not far from the area occupied by this flock.

On 7 May, our field team confirmed the arrival of two juvenile OBPs in another area of the Western Treatment Plant. This pair included Matilda, the first captive OBP chick successfully fostered into a wild nest. It was great to confirm she successfully made the northward migration and was feeding on traditional mainland OBP food plants.

In even better news for this pair, on 18 May Matilda and her companion were found in the core area occupied by our released bird flock, interacting with four of the released birds. If this interaction continues it will strengthen the flock and provide greater safety for the two juveniles, helping them learn about mainland habitats.

Unfortunately two of the released birds are confirmed to have died, including the aided migration male. We have recovered partial remains from each and provided them to veterinary staff at Werribee Open Range Zoo for examination. In both cases the bodies had largely been consumed, limiting the information we can expect to glean from the remains.

One released bird has not been seen or detected by radio tracking since the release. We are expanding our search area to look for this bird, and any wild birds moving into the area.

We have been radio tracking the birds 3 - 4 times a week, recording information on habitat choice, food plant selection, and social groupings. The birds have been observed feeding on at least seven species of wild food plant, including Glaucous Goosefoot and Austral Seablite. As the birds have not eaten any of the offered supplementary food, and the wild foods they are eating are in plentiful supply, we have stopped providing supplementary food.

We will continue to monitor the released birds, to learn more about how these birds fare throughout the winter.

The Mainland Release Team

Some videos about the release are at:

<https://www.facebook.com/DELWPBarwonSouthWest/videos/1338776232883486/> (short version – 1 min). The recent news about Matilda and the other juvenile appears as a comment to this post.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13-n0or3fxE> (longer version – 6 min 40sec)

A group of OBPs at the WTP – now no longer such a rare sight. Photo: Paul Rushworth.



A bird that eluded us for some time, but this week was confirmed to be part of the loose flock. Photo: Paul Rushworth.

