

Regent Honeyeater Captive Release & Community Monitoring Project – Update #35 – August 2019

Hi everyone (Regent Honeyeater email group), Update #35 -- 2yrs + post 2017 release

When a pair of Regents are fleetingly seen in Chiltern with a total of two leg bands – it makes the usually simple individual identification of those birds' way more difficult.

That was the scenario confronting BirdLife Australia's Chris Timewell who, with Sandra Beasley, was conducting surveys in Chiltern recently.

A few days later we subsequently located the birds and unravelled the puzzle.

When leg bands go missing

One of the birds, the male, had two leg bands (Orange Metal) on the left leg (accordingly a 2017 release bird) but none on the right – that's a dilemma!



The other, a female, had none. But it's OK – that's a wild bird and was paired with the male - that's delight!

Regular readers may recall (Update #29 & 30) a similar scenario late last year when we documented the first known successful breeding (two young raised) between a wild female and captive bred male. The male in that situation had lost one of its leg bands.

Operation Metal band #2

When coloured leg bands detach, we fall back on having to somehow identify the unique, tiny, 5-digit number inscribed on the metal band.



Initial observations and photos revealed two metal band numbers: #12. That's great, but all the 2017 release birds had the same #122 sequence! Accordingly, the last two digits were the critical ones left to determine.

Fortunately, Neville Bartlett was soon on site to acquire the definitive evidence.



Regent Orange Metal Green Black (OMNP)

Up until that point, OMNP (NP = Black Green in bird banding code!) had been last recorded on 23 October 2017.



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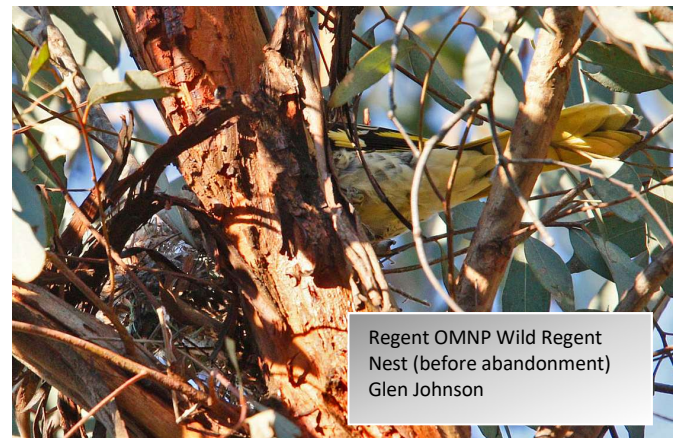
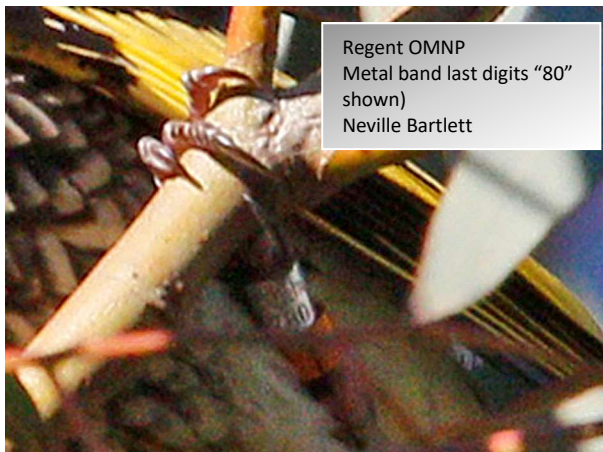
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Heads or tail-less?

Tail feathers are essential for Regents - they aid flight (aerodynamics and manoeuvrability), enable food (especially flying insect) collection and assist predator avoidance.

The release team had previous radio tracking experience where two Regents 'suddenly' lost all tail feathers – likely the result of very close Sparrow-hawk encounters.

Yet we'd also documented those same birds over a three-week period re-growing tail feathers, and successfully surviving each ordeal.

Armed with that experience, we took the punt that OMNP would cope with entering the wild tail-less at the time of release.

History has proven this to be case with OMNP now the 14th Regent confirmed alive 12 months or more post the 2017 release.

Nest, but not quite nesting

Unfortunately, the OMNP wild Regent nest that had almost reached incubation commencement, has recently been abandoned.

Please contact us if you have any queries:

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Earlier times.... when only one band missing



And earlier again – both bands present



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