

CONSERVATION REPORT

July 2024–June 2025



OUR PROGRAMS

<u>Pookila Conservation</u>	3
<u>Orange-bellied Parrot Conservation</u>	6
<u>Regent Honeyeater Conservation</u>	9
<u>Swift Parrot Conservation</u>	12
<u>Koala Corridor Project</u>	15
<u>Aquatic Fauna Facility</u>	18
<u>Conservation in Action Show</u>	20
<u>Conservation Education for Students</u>	22
<u>Interpretation</u>	24
<u>Keeper Talks</u>	26
<u>Accreditation</u>	28



POOKILA

Pseudomys novaehollandiae

BREEDING FOR RELEASE

The pookila, also known as the New Holland mouse, is a small native rodent listed as **Vulnerable** under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (FFG Act) and the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.



Photo - Zoos Vic

PROBLEM:

Once widespread, the species has undergone significant declines due to habitat loss, fragmentation, and predation by introduced species. Wild populations are now patchily distributed across south-eastern Australia and are at risk of localised extinction events.

OBJECTIVES:

- Support recovery of the species through a sustainable conservation breeding program.
- Contribute to re-establishing a wild population of pookila while maintaining genetic diversity.
- Build knowledge and husbandry expertise for captive management of this species.



ACTIONS:

Moonlit Sanctuary has continued to contribute to and support the pookila breeding and recovery effort by:

- Managing part of the captive insurance population for the species, in collaboration with Melbourne Zoo (Zoos Victoria).
- Breeding and maintaining genetically diverse individuals for future release as per Melbourne Zoo recommendations.
- Providing staff and resources to support Melbourne Zoo in servicing and monitoring released mice in the field at local release sites.

RESULTS:

During the 2024-25 period, Moonlit Sanctuary has successfully bred 4 pookilas, some of whom have been released to local release sites, and others have been retained as a part of the captive population. This number is expected to increase in the 2025 breeding season.

Since the inception of the breeding program in 2020, Moonlit Sanctuary has successfully bred 47 individuals (and still counting). Captive-born individuals have shown strong survival and adaptation post-release, supporting the ongoing viability of reintroduction efforts.



KEY PARTNERS:

Zoos Victoria, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), and the Zoo and Aquarium Association Australasia.

The orange-bellied parrot is currently listed under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 as **Critically Endangered**.

ORANGE-BELLIED PARROT BREEDING FOR RELEASE

Neophema Chrysogaster



PROBLEM:

Every year the wild population breeds in south-west Tasmania over summer and migrates to the Victorian and South Australian coast for winter.

The numbers in the wild reached a low of only 17 birds in 2016, and of those there was only 3 females remaining which effectively placed the species on the edge of extinction in the wild.

OBJECTIVES:

The three primary objectives of the National Recovery Plan for the orange-bellied parrots include:

- To achieve a stable or increasing population in the wild.
- To increase the capacity of the captive population, both to support future releases of captive-bred birds to the wild and to provide a secure long-term insurance population.
- To protect and enhance habitat to maintain and support growth of the wild population.

Please refer to the National Recovery Plan for more information on the objectives and strategies for the species recovery.



KEY PARTNERS:

Orange-bellied Parrot Recovery Team, including the Federal Government, the State Governments of Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, Zoo and Aquarium Association Australasia, Birdlife Australia and partners in the conservation breeding program, Zoos Victoria, Zoos South Australia, and Priam Psittaculture Centre.

ACTIONS:

The captive population is held across 10 Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA) institutions. The largest captive collections are currently held at the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) facility, Moonlit Sanctuary Wildlife Conservation Park and Healesville Sanctuary.

Moonlit Sanctuary has contributed the following in support of the orange-bellied parrot recovery:

- In 2016 Moonlit Sanctuary constructed a breeding facility that can hold up to 20 pairs with the support of Zoos Victoria and The Avicultural Society of Australia.
- Moonlit Sanctuary holds the role of Species Coordinator. The coordinator is responsible for managing the studbook and captive population and producing the annual report and recommendations.
- Providing staff to support field work and monitoring.

RESULTS:

Orange-bellied parrots have been recovering from an extremely low wild population of only 17 birds in 2016 and have had a return of 92 individuals in 2024.

In the 2024-25 breeding season period Moonlit Sanctuary successfully bred 40 birds and released 4 birds to the wild population. Since we became involved with the program, we have bred over 390 birds of which over 160 have been released.

The orange-bellied parrot program continues to produce birds for release as part of the Orange-bellied Parrot National Recovery Plan in coordination with the Recovery Team.



DURING THE LAST YEAR, THE CAPTIVE BREEDING POPULATION CONTRIBUTED TO TWO RELEASE EVENTS:

- **Spring Release:** 15 adult birds were released across two events at Melaleuca, Tasmania during October 2024
- **Juvenile Release:** 28 juveniles were released across three events at Melaleuca, Tasmania during January - March 2025

A close-up photograph of a Regent Honeyeater, showing its dark blue-black plumage, yellow wing bars, and a distinctive white patch on its wing. The bird is looking slightly to the left with its beak open.

REGENT HONEYEATER

Anthochaera phrygia

BREEDING FOR RELEASE

The regent honeyeater is currently listed under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 as **Critically Endangered**.



PROBLEM:

In 2010 the total population size was estimated at only 350 to 400 mature individuals, which represents a significant decline over the last 15-20 years.

The biggest threat to the regent honeyeater has been the clearing and fragmentation of woodland and forest containing the bird's preferred eucalypt species.

OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the National Recovery Plan for the Regent Honeyeater include:

- Reverse the long-term population trend of decline and increase the numbers of regent honeyeaters to a level where there is a viable, wild breeding population, even in poor breeding years; and to
- Enhance the condition of habitat across the regent honeyeaters range to maximise survival and reproductive success and provide refugia during periods of extreme environmental fluctuation.

Please refer to the National Recovery Plan for more information on the objectives and strategies for the species recovery.



ACTIONS:

The captive population is currently held across 8 breeding, and 3 display Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA) institutions.

RESULTS:

In the 2024-25 breeding season period, Moonlit Sanctuary successfully bred a clutch of 3 chicks. In the 2024-25 breeding season, the breeding pair housed at Moonlit Sanctuary successfully raised a clutch of three chicks through to fledging.

The regent honeyeater program continues to produce birds for release as part of the Regent Honeyeater National Recovery Plan. In July 2024, 49 birds were released in Tomalpin Woodlands, Wonnarua Country, NSW. Some of the birds released were fitted with VHF transmitters that allow the tracking team to monitor them daily for up to 5 weeks.

KEY PARTNERS:

Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team, including the Federal Government, the State Governments of Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and South Australia, Zoo and Aquarium Association, Birdlife Australia and Taronga Zoo.





The swift parrot is currently listed under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 as **Critically Endangered**.

SWIFT PARROT SPECIES RECOVERY

Lathamus discolor



PROBLEM:

The swift parrot breeds mostly on the east and south-east coast of Tasmania during summer and migrates to mainland Australia in autumn. During winter the species disperses across forests and woodlands, foraging on nectar and lerps mainly in Victoria and New South Wales. Small numbers of swift parrots are also recorded in the Australian Capital Territory, south-eastern South Australia and southern Queensland.

In 2020 the estimated wild population was 750 mature individuals. Swift parrots are primarily threatened by habitat destruction, including loss of suitable nesting hollows and food resources, and nest predation by introduced sugar gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*).

OBJECTIVES:

- The objectives of the National Recovery Plan for the Swift Parrot include increasing the wild population in size to such an extent that the species no longer qualifies for listing as threatened under any of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 listing criteria.

Please refer to the National Recovery Plan for more information on the objectives and strategies for the species recovery.



ACTIONS:

In 2024, the species was elevated to a Zoo and Aquarium Association Species Managed Program (ZAA SMP).

The captive population within the Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA) includes being held across 8 institutions. In 2025 the first Annual Report and Recommendations (ARR) was produced by the Species Coordinator which provided transfer and breeding recommendations for the participating holding and breeding institutions.

Moonlit Sanctuary participate in the Swift Parrot SMP as a breeding institution.

RESULTS:

Moonlit has received new males to introduce to our female for breeding recommendation as per the 2025 ARR.

KEY PARTNERS:

Swift Parrot Recovery Team, including the Federal Government, the State Governments of Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and South Australia, Zoo and Aquarium Association, Birdlife Australia and partners in the conservation breeding program.





KOALA CORRIDOR PROJECT HABITAT CONSERVATION

Phascolarctos cinereus

Koala numbers are dwindling due to threats like disease, dog attacks, and road hazards. The greatest danger, however, comes from habitat loss as the trees they rely on are increasingly felled.



PROBLEM:

Koalas in the Western Port region are facing significant challenges due to habitat fragmentation, reduced connectivity between bushland areas, and increased risk from vehicle accidents and land clearing. This limits movement, reduces genetic diversity, and threatens long-term population viability.

OBJECTIVES:

- Increase the amount of suitable habitat available for koalas and create connected corridors of trees that allow them to move safely across the landscape.
- Reduce the risk of mortality from vehicles, dogs, and other threats by improving landscape connectivity.
- Support the long-term survival and expansion of local koala populations through collaborative conservation efforts.
- Engage the public and visitors in koala conservation awareness and habitat protection.



ACTIONS:

Moonlit Sanctuary uses interpretive signage and multimedia displays throughout the park to connect visitors with the stories behind our wildlife and conservation programs.

- Each animal enclosure includes signage detailing the species' natural history, conservation status, and key threats in the wild.
- Dedicated signage and video presentations explain Moonlit Sanctuary's conservation breeding programs for threatened species, helping visitors understand the importance of these efforts.
- Interpretive displays along the boardwalk highlight the Koala Corridor Project, showing how habitat restoration benefits local wildlife and how the community can get involved.
- Signage is regularly updated to ensure accuracy and engagement, using strong visuals and simple messages that appeal to visitors of all ages.

KEY PARTNER:

Western Port Biosphere Foundation



RESULTS:

- The Koala Corridor Project was officially launched in late 2024, supported by funding and expertise from the Sanctuary.
- Moonlit Sanctuary's keepers and volunteers have participated in habitat restoration, contributing to the first stages of corridor development.
- Signage and keeper talks have increased visitor awareness of koala conservation and inspired community involvement.
- Through education, visibility, and practical action, Moonlit Sanctuary continues to play a vital role in improving the survival outlook for koalas in the Western Port region.
- The long-term goal remains to create safe corridors of trees that allow koalas to move freely and safely, expanding their habitat and strengthening local populations.



EASTERN DWARF GALAXIAS AQUATIC FAUNA FACILITY

Galaxiella pusilla



Small Australian fish, such as pygmy perch and galaxias, are becoming increasing threatened by dangers like loss of habitat and introduced predators.

PROBLEM:

Small Australian fish, such as pygmy perch and galaxias, are becoming increasing threatened by dangers like loss of habitat and introduced predators.

ACTIONS:

Our new Aquatic Fauna Facility will be available to breed fish for release when required and can also be a “safe refuge” for fish populations threatened by natural disasters such as bushfires.

The facility, part funded by a grant from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action Nature Fund, is already under construction and is scheduled to open in March 2026.

The first program will be for the endangered eastern dwarf galaxias, which is threatened by loss of suitable wetlands, competition from introduced mosquito fish and predation by introduced red-finned perch and brown trout. This is a local species, and fish will be supplied to release programs that are already underway or authorised.



KEY PARTNERS:

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
Western Port Biosphere Foundation
Australian and New Guinea Fish Association
Native Fish Association
Middle Creek Farm

CONSERVATION IN ACTION EDUCATION

A range of Australian native birds and mammals are featured in the Conservation in Action show.



OBJECTIVES:

- Facilitate visitors building a better connection with nature, creating a world where all life can thrive. Inspire visitors to adopt small but meaningful actions in their daily lives that contribute to the protection of nature.
- Enhance visitors' understanding of Australian wildlife and ecosystems, including the challenges they face, and the role individuals can play in their conservation.

ACTIONS:

Moonlit Sanctuary's Show Department delivers two Conservation in Action presentations each day. These shows feature an animal cast demonstrating natural behaviours onstage.

Species represented include:

- Bush-stone Curlew, *Burhinus grallarius*
- Long-nosed Potoroo, *Potorous tridactylus*
- Rufous Bettong, *Aepyprymnus rufescens*
- Pink Cockatoo, *Lophochroa leadbeateri*
- Barking Owl, *Ninox connivens*
- Tawny Frogmouth, *Podargus strigoides*
- Dingo, *Canis dingo*
- Yellow-bellied Glider, *Petaurus australis*
- Squirrel Glider, *Petaurus norfolkensis*
-



The show narration uses storytelling to highlight each animal's life, ecological role, and the challenges their species face in the wild, making the information relatable and engaging for visitors.

The narration also promotes simple, achievable actions visitors can adopt in their daily lives, emphasising how these behaviours can positively support the wild counterparts of the species featured in the show.



SCHOOL GROUPS CONSERVATION EDUCATION

PROBLEM:

Species decline, ecosystem collapse, and human-caused climate change are seemingly insurmountable challenges that children and young people of today grow up hearing about daily through schooling, news and in social settings.

The overwhelming nature of these issues can often become barriers to action, when delivered in catastrophising ways that place undue pressure on “future generations”.

OBJECTIVES:

- Facilitate students to have positive and memorable experiences in nature and with Australian wildlife.
- Contextualise zoo animals within their natural ecosystems and habitats.
- Equip students with the knowledge and motivation to make nature-positive decisions, adopt pro-environmental behaviours, or make behaviour changes.



ACTIONS:

To achieve our objectives, we continue to offer excursion programs that:

- Meet school expectations around curriculum, but which also allow educators to comprehensively explore a range of species, highlighting the uniqueness of Australian wildlife, including under-appreciated invertebrates.
- Highlight threatened species and threatening processes, emphasising actionable steps students can take to contribute to the conservation of habitats and species.
- Approach learning as a process of discovery rather than delivery - helping students develop skills in questioning, predicting and critical thinking.

RESULTS:

- Between 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, we have engaged directly with 10,400 students from Kindergarten to VCE levels.
- Terms 2, 3 and 4 have been booked to full capacity.
- The majority of excursions are for returning schools, demonstrating that our programs are well-regarded.

Many visitors to Moonlit Sanctuary are unaware of the conservation challenges facing Australia's native wildlife and the specific actions being taken to protect them.



INTERPRETATION CONSERVATION EDUCATION

PROBLEM:

Without accessible and engaging educational tools, important conservation messages can be overlooked during a visit. This limits the sanctuary's ability to inspire behavioural change and support for conservation initiatives.

OBJECTIVES:

- Use clear and engaging signage to communicate Moonlit Sanctuary's conservation work and values.
- Educate visitors about the plight of threatened species and the steps being taken to protect them.
- Encourage greater visitor understanding, empathy, and participation in wildlife conservation.
- Strengthen Moonlit Sanctuary's reputation as both a wildlife experience and an educational leader in conservation.



ACTIONS:

Moonlit Sanctuary uses interpretive signage and multimedia displays throughout the park to connect visitors with the stories behind our wildlife and conservation programs.

- Each animal enclosure includes signage detailing the species' natural history, conservation status, and key threats in the wild.
- Dedicated signage and video presentations explain Moonlit Sanctuary's conservation breeding programs for threatened species, helping visitors understand the importance of these efforts.
- Interpretive displays along the boardwalk highlight the Koala Corridor Project, showing how habitat restoration benefits local wildlife and how the community can get involved.
- Signage is regularly updated to ensure accuracy and engagement, using strong visuals and simple messages that appeal to visitors of all ages.

RESULTS:

Through clear, informative, and visually engaging signage, visitors leave with a deeper understanding of the conservation work being undertaken at Moonlit Sanctuary. Visitor feedback indicates that signage and video presentations enhance their appreciation of the animals and the threats they face.

A photograph of a koala in a tree, with a blurred person in the foreground and a group of people in a wooden shelter in the background.

Without direct engagement, opportunities to transform curiosity into meaningful conservation action can be lost.

KEEPER TALKS

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

PROBLEM:

While visitors are keen to see wildlife up close, many have limited understanding of the conservation challenges these species face and how their own choices can make a difference.

OBJECTIVES:

- Use daily keeper talks to educate visitors about the species in our care and their conservation status in the wild.
- Foster personal connections between visitors and animals, inspiring empathy and long-term support for conservation.
- Provide practical, actionable steps visitors can take to help protect wildlife and their habitats.
- Support Moonlit Sanctuary's mission to create memorable experiences that motivate real-world conservation outcomes.



ACTIONS:

Moonlit Sanctuary keepers deliver engaging and informative talks throughout the day at a variety of animal habitats. These presentations highlight each species' unique characteristics, behaviour, and the threats they face in the wild.

- Talks feature species such as koalas, dingoes, wombats, and cockatoos—each chosen to represent different conservation stories and environmental challenges.
- Keepers share insights from Moonlit Sanctuary's breeding and recovery programs. Presentations focus on solutions, encouraging visitors to make wildlife-friendly choices such as responsible pet ownership, reducing waste, and protecting native habitats.
- Talks are designed to be interactive, allowing guests to ask questions and connect personally with the keepers and animals.

RESULTS:

Visitor feedback consistently highlights keeper talks as a memorable and inspiring part of their experience. The talks deepen understanding of Australian wildlife and empower visitors to take small but meaningful steps toward conservation in their daily lives.

Moonlit Sanctuary is dedicated to connecting people with wildlife and the conservation challenges they face. This commitment ensures we deliver high-quality care, meaningful visitor experiences, and positive outcomes for wildlife and the environment.



Moonlit Sanctuary is accredited by the Zoos Aquarium Association, showing our commitment to the welfare of the animals in our care.

We have been Eco Tourism Certified by the Ecotourism Association of Australia for over 20 years, showing our commitment to sustainability and the environment.

ACCREDITATION MAINTAINING EXCELLENCE
