

# WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE

*Aquila audax*

The largest bird of prey in Australia, the Wedge-tailed Eagle is a huge, powerful eagle with long wings (up to 2.3 metres) & a distinctive diamond-shaped tail. It has a relatively small, flat head with a massive, formidable beak. Its legs are covered in baggy feathering all the way to the feet. Adults are mostly dark blackish-brown with brown eyes & the cere (top of beak) & feet are creamy white. The female is slightly larger & heavier than the male.

## DISTRIBUTION & HABITAT

The Wedge-tailed Eagle is widespread across Australia, including Tasmania & also occurs in parts of southern Papua New Guinea. This large eagle is found in a wide variety of habitats, from forest & woodland to savanna & treeless plains.

## DIET

They hunt a variety of mammals, as well as some reptiles & birds as well as carrion. Where they are common, rabbits make up most of the Wedge-tailed Eagle's diet, but they will also take wallabies, kangaroos, hares, possums, cats, dogs, foxes, young goats & lambs. This powerful eagle is capable of taking prey several times its own weight & they sometimes hunt cooperatively in pairs or even in small groups.

## LIFE EXPECTANCY & BREEDING

They are believed to mate for life. They build large stick nests which,



after repeated use over many years, may reach up to 2.5 metres across & nearly 4 metres in depth. The female normally lays 1 or 2 eggs which are incubated by both adults for 42 to 48 days. They reach sexual maturity at about 3 to 5 years old. This long-lived species may potentially reach 20 to 25 years old in the wild & up to 40 years old in captivity.

