

NEST-SITE SELECTION, DIET AND PARENTAL CARE OF THE WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE *Aquila audax* IN WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Nest-site characteristics and selection of the Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax* were studied in 1997 at Fowlers Gap, in arid western New South Wales, Australia, by measuring parameters of nest trees ($n = 1$ active, 31 inactive) and other trees ($n = 150$ in circular plots around nest trees). Parental behaviour and prey items at two nests were recorded by remote time-lapse video surveillance, from week 4 of the nestling period to fledging. Active nests were mostly in live gums *Eucalyptus* sp. in creeks, whereas most inactive nests were in non-eucalypts or dead trees on ridges. Riparian nest trees were significantly taller, with larger crowns, than nest trees on downs or ridges, and non-nest trees in creeks; ridge nest trees were significantly taller than ridge non-nest trees. Six clutches were all of two eggs; fledging success was 0.6 young per attempt ($n = 9$). The eagles' breeding diet consisted of mammals (44% by number), birds (6%) and reptiles (34%): mostly rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* (33yo), juvenile kangaroos *Macropus* sp. (6%) and Bearded Dragons *Pogona vitticeps* (29%). By biomass, important prey were mammals (77%), rabbits (45%), kangaroos (26%) and reptiles (12%). Parental behaviour is described, and the video surveillance method is evaluated.