



Photo: Jon Irvine

**SPECIAL ISSUE FEATURING THE
WHITE-BELLIED SEA-EAGLE *Haliaeetus leucogaster***

PREAMBLE

The Australian Bird Study Association is pleased to publish another special issue; this time highlighting three studies on the White-bellied Sea-Eagle. This majestic eagle, as with the Wedge-tailed Eagle (see previous Special Issue – *Corella* 31(2)), sits atop the avian food chain and is threatened by various human induced factors – many of these are outlined in the papers herein, in addition to subsequent management recommendations.

The photographs of the White-bellied Sea-Eagles at Homebush Bay were taken by Jon Irvine who graciously waived copyright charges. Stephen Debus was the instigator of this special issue and has collaborated with all authors in bringing their studies to a publishable level. My thanks again go to Stephen for his inspiration.

Hon. Editor

The papers published herein present the essential content of two student honours theses, and a related study by one of these people, on the ecology of the White-bellied Sea-Eagle in Tasmania. These projects arose from increasing concern over the conservation status of the Sea-Eagle in south-eastern Australia, in the face of accelerating human impacts on its breeding habitat and nest sites. The Sea-Eagle is now officially listed as Vulnerable in Victoria and Tasmania and Endangered in South Australia, and is also listed on the China–Australia Agreement on Migratory Birds, with consequent obligations on the Australian Government.

The first two papers herein examine the nest-site use and breeding-habitat selection of the Sea-Eagle. A third paper examines the Sea-Eagle's home-range and habitat use in relation to the possible effects of marine fish farms, using radiotelemetry (the first such telemetric study on eagles in Australia). These papers make significant steps towards redressing the considerable imbalance between knowledge of the well-studied Wedge-tailed Eagle, and the comparatively neglected Sea-Eagle, although the Sea-Eagle is arguably more threatened, given the pace of coastal development from Tasmania to the Sunshine Coast and beyond. Additional commentary on the Sea-Eagle's plight can be found in *Boobook* (journal of the Australasian Raptor Association) 27(1), June 2009.

Dr Stephen Debus



Adult White-bellied Sea-Eagle Haliaeetus leucogaster feeding nestling.

Photo: Jon Irvine