

NEST-SITE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE *Aquila audax* IN SOUTHERN VICTORIA

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Nest-site characteristics of the Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax* were investigated in the outer Melbourne region of Victoria in 1999–2000. Nests ($n = 20$) were found in a range of local habitats (isolated trees to forest) and forest or woodland types. Nests averaged 12.6 metres above the ground (5–20 m, $n = 14$) and were placed mainly in the top one-third of live eucalypts, within the canopy level of surrounding trees, if present. Nest trees averaged 18.1 metres tall (8–28 m, $n = 14$), and were located in sheltered positions, in gullies or on moderate slopes ($<30^\circ$) with south-westerly to easterly aspects; most nests and nest-trees were situated below the top of the slope on which they were located. These characteristics conferred shelter from prevailing winds and bushfires during the breeding cycle (mid-winter to early summer), and security from nest predators. Most nests were on private land or Crown land with restricted access. Nearest-neighbour distances averaged 4.7 kilometres (4–5.5 km, $n = 5$), giving a calculated core breeding territory averaging 17.6 square kilometres (12.6–23.8 km²).