

## **Phases and duration of the White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* breeding season in South Australia and the implications for habitat management**

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With courtship and nest repair behaviours commencing in early May and late fledging events in early January, the endangered White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* population in South Australia exhibits a variable and protracted breeding season.

Analysis of events in 75 active territories spanning 21 breeding seasons, showed the majority of egg-laying occurred in July (64.0%), with a peak in the second week. A few egg-laying events were in June (9.3%), with the remainder through August and early September. Most young were fledged by late November, with late egg-laying events extending the potential fledging timeframe into early January. The mean duration from hatching to fledging in 12 territories averaged 83.1 days (range 80–88 days).

*Haliaeetus* spp. are prone to abandoning a nesting attempt early in the breeding season, with the period of greatest sensitivity and risk of abandonment for the White-bellied Sea-Eagle in South Australia extending from mid-May (intensive courtship) through incubation to mid-September (early nestling period). Habitat management prescriptions that include at least a seasonally imposed buffer zone refuge over breeding habitat, are advocated to mitigate further population declines among the White-bellied Sea-Eagle population in South Australia.