

The Spread and Weight of the Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Uroaetus audax*).

By A. M. Morgan.

In May, 1930, I saw in the daily press an account of the large number of "Eagle Hawks" which were being trapped at Koonoona Station, near Burra, S.A., and in consequence wrote to the owner, Mr. G. W. Hawkes, asking him to supply me with measurements and weights. He replied that the birds had then left the district, but suggested that I should write to Mr. John Hardy, Manager of Koonamore Station, where, he told me, Eagles were being trapped in numbers. Mr. Hardy replied at once that he would be glad to assist me, and very kindly went to a great deal of trouble in weighing and measuring 43 birds and sending me the results. An examination of these figures shows that 7 feet 3 inches is the greatest spread, and 6 feet 3 inches the least. The greatest weight was 10 pounds, and the least 5½ pounds. Only nine specimens had a spread of 7 feet or over, and 34 had a spread of between 6 and 7 feet. No bird measured less than 6 feet. The largest bird weighed 8½ pounds, the smallest 7 pounds. The heaviest bird had a spread of 7 feet 1 inch, and the lightest 6 feet 7 inches. The weight,

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therefore, showed little correspondence with the size. It probably depends largely upon stomach contents. The average weight of the 43 birds was $7\frac{1}{2}$ pounds, and the average spread 6 feet 8 2-3 inches.

Gould gives the measurement of the spread as 6 feet 8 inches, Littler (Birds of Tasmania) as 7 feet 6 inches, and Cayley an average of about 7 feet; no other author quotes either the weight or the spread.

Mr. J. Sutton has, during the past five years, collected all the references he could find in the daily press and current ornithological literature, and he has kindly allowed me to make use of his figures. It must be remembered, however, that the daily press records are for the most part of exceptionally large birds, sent in for that reason, and which would not have been recorded had the birds been of ordinary size. Mr. Hardy's birds were not selected, so that it is probable that the average of his specimens is nearer the truth than the other series. Some of these records are too indefinite to be reliable, such as "about 10 feet," or "between 6 and 8 feet." These have been rejected, and only those used which can reasonably be supposed to be accurate. In all there are 83 such measurements of wing spread. There are, however, 11 records of weights, including that in Gould's Handbook. The greatest spread is 10 feet, recorded by "Galtee More," of a bird shot in the Werribee Gorge, Victoria—the gentleman writing under this pen-name is generally regarded as reliable. There are three other measurements of 9 feet or over from Victoria, one from New South Wales, one from Tasmania, one from Queensland, and one from South Australia—this last was taken by Miss Hope, daughter of the owner of Koonamore Station, and can be relied upon. The average spread of the 83 specimens is 7 feet 2 inches. The greatest weight is of 4 birds weighing 51 pounds, or an average of $12\frac{3}{4}$ pounds, recorded by Mr. Tom Carter in *The Emu*. These birds had gorged themselves on the carcasses of two poisoned ewes, and of two of their own species which had predeceased them. Mr. Findlay, of Mutooroo Station, S.A., records a bird weighing 10 pounds. The average weight of the 11 birds is 9 pounds 12 ounces.

The average spread of the whole series of 126 specimens is 7 feet 4-11 inches, and the average weight of 54 is 7 pounds 15 ounces.