
Notes on the Wedge-tailed Eagle, *Uroaetus audax*,
in the Farina District, S.A., During 1934-1935.

By Chris. Cain.

During 1934, and especially 1935, the Wedge-tailed Eagle proved very troublesome among the lambing ewes and the rest of the flocks, for owing to the bad seasonal conditions the stock were in a very weak condition, and were thus easy prey for the Wedge-tailed Eagle. I have on two occasions during the course of my work ridden near to this species killing a sheep—one bird only on the first occasion, and a pair, ♂ and ♀, on the second. The single bird made swooping dives at the head of the weak sheep till the sheep reached a stage of exhaustion

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and dropped to the ground. I went over to the carcass and found the skull literally riddled with talon-marks. This kill took place several weeks after shearing, when the wool was very short, and the marks on the head were easily discernible. On the second occasion the pair adopted the following tactics. The female made fluttering swoops in front of the sheep while the male violently swooped and struck at the animal's head. This method of attack was repeated four times, when the victim fell to the ground. The birds lost no time in getting to work, for when I reached the scene of the kill the cap of the skull had been torn off, and about a third of the brains had been devoured. The brains seem to be a delicacy with the Wedge-tailed Eagle, as the brain cavity appears to be the first portion of a carcass to be eaten. On one occasion I saw a bird of this species feasting on the carcass of a Kangaroo near a dam, and hardly ten minutes elapsed before another bird hove into sight, descended, and began to feed on the body. I recorded fifty-seven of this species which had been poisoned with strychnine. The majority of the birds came over from the cattle country, where they bred unmolested. Before the lambing occurred very few were to be observed on the station; however, when lambing was in full swing, they arrived in fair numbers.

The sheep killed were "weaners," from four to six months old.
