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## Eagle specifics

*‘[Wedge-tailed Eagles are] ... often the only moving objects above a wilderness of trees and stones, and undoubtedly add to the grandeur and beauty of the landscape.’*

A.J. North (1911–1912).

### Identification

Typically, the Wedge-tailed Eagle is observed when it soars. From its size and shape, few would have difficulty recognising it as an eagle. Indeed, it is like no other Australian raptor: large, lanky and dark, with a narrow protruding head and an unmistakable, long, diamond-shaped tail. It soars in high, lazy circles on long, broad wings, spanning two metres, often held rigidly angled up in a shallow V, upswept and fingered at the tips. Its generally dark undersurface is broken by its pale feet and undertail coverts, and a pale line made by the white bases of the primaries visually splits the wing down the long axis. The blackest eagles are definitely adults, whereas youngsters are more golden or blonde. However not all adults are black, and the age at which the change from lighter juvenile plumage to dark adult plumage occurs varies. In Tasmania as a rule, and on the mainland occasionally, the oldest birds attain a deep chocolate brown and first-year birds are light brown with a striking blonde nape.

Languid and masterly in the air, the eagle seldom has need for flapping flight, but when it does its wing-strokes are deep and powerful. By contrast, it can be awkward and apparently ill at ease on the ground. As Nick Mooney says, the eagle walks like a sumo wrestler. Unless on a hilltop, it struggles to