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## Hunting and prey

*'For the sake of refuse thrown away by the Kangaroo-hunters it will follow them for many miles, and even for days together... I saw no less than thirty or forty assembled together around the carcass of a dead bullock, some gorged to the full perched upon the neighbouring trees, the rest still in enjoyment of the feast.'*

John Gould (1865).

It is relatively easy to gather pellets from in and around nests and, in part because of controversy over the eagle's impact on livestock, its breeding diet has been much studied. Researching the diet of eagles that are not breeding is more challenging.

Like all raptors the eagle regurgitates a wad of indigestible material: fur, feathers, scales and some bone, much of which can be identified to species of origin. This is what is left after the eagle's highly acidic stomach (pH about 1.7) has digested the food, and is quite sterile and not unpleasant to sort through to identify its contents. Pellets are ejected about once a day, provided the eagle has fed; that is, about 21–22 hours after a meal. The rest of the waste is excreted, as uric acid and faeces, which are often voided together as white urine with a small amount of darker faecal material.

The Wedge-tailed Eagle captures, steals and scrounges a wide range of food, from koalas and kangaroos, to wallabies, foxes, cats, rabbits, goats, lambs, possums, Echidnas, Tasmanian Devils, quolls, reptiles and birds including Galahs and larger parrots, crows, kestrels, magpies, kookaburras and ducks, and even the odd fish. Typically the bird species taken weigh over 100 g and the mammals