

# 11

## Threats

*'The Wedge-tailed Eagle (Uroaetus audax) is a scarce bird in the Clarence River district, which is probably due to the kangaroo shooters who poison parts of the carcasses of the kangaroos for the sake of obtaining dingo scalps, and I have seen several of these Eagles dead around them.'*

A.J. North (1911–1912).

### **Natural and unnatural mortality**

The eagle has few natural predators. Foxes, dingoes, large goannas or belligerent Tasmanian Devils are a match for an eagle and may challenge at a kill, but can themselves become prey. Crows and other aerial predators would kill a young, unguarded eaglet, but this is unlikely unless the parent is kept off the nest by human disturbance or the eaglet falls to the ground. A large goanna could climb to some nests and kill even a nearly grown chick, but would normally be driven off by an adult. After starvation, humans cause most eagle deaths, either directly, through persecution or motor vehicle accidents, or indirectly, through electrocution, secondary poisoning or collisions with high wires and similar obstructions.

The eagle is timid and prone to desertion of the nest if disturbed during nest site selection, and from egg-laying up until the nestling is a few weeks old. This wariness may be the result of years of intense persecution, but the fact that there is a general trend for large raptors to abandon more readily than small raptors indicates that it is more likely a trade-off that favours adult