



Video 7 Teacher Resource – Threats – Part 2: Nesting

Tuning In: The following [short video](#) (6.02) associated with the *Where? Where? Wedgie! (WWW!)* project discusses how sensitive nesting Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagles are to disturbances. If they are disturbed during the breeding season, typically during July – February, they will often abandon their nest and any baby wedge-tailed eagle. Helicopters and drones are particularly problematic, but eagles may also give up on a nest site if a curious person simply approaches within several hundred metres. Individuals vary, but nesting Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagles are generally very worried by us.



Questions for students after watching the video

- What sorts of trees do wedge-tailed eagles like to build their nests in?
- How far should people be away from a wedge-tailed eagle's nest if they cannot see you? (at least 500 m - some eagles are more nervous than others)
- How far should people be away from a wedge-tailed eagle's nest if they can see you? (at least 1000 m/1 km).
- What are some things that you can think people could do to help ensure wedge-tailed eagles do not abandon their nests?



Wedge-tailed Eagles mate for life. Photo Albert Wright (www.gypsytwitchers.com)
Courtesy of [Bush Heritage Australia](#) (Note that this photograph is not of Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagles, which can easily be put off breeding by someone trying to take a photograph like this).

Finding out: Amazing facts about the nesting practices and life cycle of the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle

- They can live for up to 40 years. They have their young at the age of 5 or 6.
- The nest is a huge bowl of dead sticks and small branches, built into the fork of the tree.
- The tree has to be very strong, because the nest may weigh up to 400 kg. As the nest is re-used and added to in successive years, it can reach over 3 metres in diameter and be 3 metres deep.
- The nests are so large that smaller birds, like finches, can nest in the underside, benefiting from the protection from predators offered by the eagles!
- Where there are no large trees available, the eagles will create nests in shrubs, on telegraph poles, on cliff faces and even on the ground.
- A pair may have several different nests within their territory, depending on how disturbed the area is, and the availability of what they consider to be a safe nesting habitat. If they've been put off breeding on one nest, they may try another one the following year.
- Eggs are laid in response to local food availability. After 45 days of incubation, a chick emerges, covered in white down.
- While two eggs may sometimes be laid, the parents typically rear only one young per clutch.
- When food is scarce, the larger chick may kill and eat its smaller sibling. Yikes!!

Nests and nesting

“Built of sticks and lined with leaves, their nests can.... weigh more than 400kg! ...so large that smaller birds, like finches, can nest in the underside, benefiting from the protection from predators offered by the eagles!”

- [Bush Heritage Australia](#)



Bunjil's Nest

The [Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre's First Peoples exhibition](#) is a great place to see cultural and artistic representations of the nest of Bunjil, the wedge-tailed eagle and ancestral spirit, and hear how he sang Country, Law and people into being.



An example of students creating a classroom interpretation of Bunjil's nest - <https://www.zartart.com.au/zartstatic/page/bunjil-eagle-bunjils-nest>

Activity: Build a Wedgie nest!





Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle nest. 'An eagle nest normally measures 1-3 m across and 0.5-3 m deep, usually in a flat, robust fork close to the tree trunk, within the forest canopy and away from the ground slope.'

More details on Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle nests and how to protect them: [Threatened Species Link](#)

Photo: James Pay

Sorting out: You've explored the key threats that our wedgies face in their day to day lives. Your Day 6 activities saw you have a go at designing a special safety intervention for the wedge-tailed eagle to help protect it from specific threats.

Going further: In yesterday and today's video, Clare reiterates the importance of habitat conservation to ensure our wedgies have safe and secure places in which to create their massive eyries (nests)! It's time to design and build a safe place for our wedgies to snuggle down.

- Inquiry question: What special features can you include in your design to help protect the wedge-tailed eagle from the threats it faces?

A quick search online will reveal an abundance of nest-creation education resources alighting processes, inquiry emphases and discipline/subject/learning area connections. You might like to see how other teachers and education providers have tackled similar inquiries that could be adapted or contextualised to your education setting. Remember to always acknowledge the source when/where appropriate.

Go outside and use materials from around your house or school to build a life sized nest. If you don't have a bush area nearby where you can collect sticks you'll need to be creative with what materials you use. Items they may collect could include sticks, leaves, feathers, mud or even manufactured objects.

Remind students to move with care and if they come across a real nest in their adventures, it is important that they do not disturb it and understand how much effort has gone into designing it. You never know what kinds of nests might have been built in your school grounds, or local park; they're usually very well hidden (for good reason!) and not easy to find unless you're looking out for them specifically.

Reflect and Act: When planning and making the nests, consider:

- The kinetic possibilities (Art, Science, Design, Engineering)
- The environmental considerations (Art, Science, Design)
- Being aware and respectful of cultural dimensions (Intercultural Understanding)
- How to be resourceful in your selection and working with available materials (Design, Engineering)



Australian Curriculum v9.0 links:

Year 3-4:

Science (Strands: Science inquiry, Science understanding)

- (Sub-strand: Communicating) Write and create texts to communicate findings and ideas for identified purposes and audiences, using scientific vocabulary and digital tools as appropriate (AC9S4I06).
- (Sub-strand: Biological sciences) Explain the roles and interactions of consumers, producers and decomposers within a habitat and how food chains represent feeding relationships (AC9S4U01).

Technologies (Strand: Knowledge and understanding)

- (Sub-strand: Technologies and society) Examine design and technologies occupations and factors including sustainability that impact on the design of products, services and environments to meet community needs (AC9TDE4K01).
- (Sub-strand: Technologies context - Engineering principles and systems; Materials and technologies specialisations) Describe how forces and the properties of materials affect function in a product or system (AC9TDE4K02).

Visual Arts (Strands: Exploring and responding, Developing practices and skills)

- Explore where, why and how visual arts are created and/or presented across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts (AC9AVA4E01).
- Experiment with a range of ways to use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials (AC9AVA4D01).

HASS (Strand: Knowledge and understanding;

- (Sub-strand: Geography) Understand and appreciate the ways First Nations Australians in different parts of Australia are interconnected with Country/Place (AC9HS3K04).
- (Sub-strand: Questioning and researching) Locate, collect and record information and data from a range of sources, including annotated timelines and maps (AC9HS3S02).

Victorian Curriculum links:

Level 3 and 4 Content Descriptions:

Visual Arts

- (Strand: Explore and Express Ideas) Explore ideas and artworks from different cultures and times as inspiration to create visual artworks ([VCAVAE025](#))
- (Strand: Visual Arts Practices) Explore visual conventions and use materials, techniques, technologies and processes specific to particular art forms, and to make artworks ([VCAVAV026](#))



- (Strand: Respond and Interpret) Identify and discuss how ideas are expressed in artworks from a range of places, times and cultures, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ([VCAVAR028](#))

References

- Museums Victoria (2022). Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre, *First Peoples*. Retrieved from: <https://museumsvictoria.com.au/bunjilaka/whats-on/first-peoples/>
- Bush Heritage Australia (2022). *Wedge-tailed Eagles (Aquila audax)*. Retrieved from: https://www.bushheritage.org.au/species/wedge-tailed-eagles?gclid=CjwKCAiA-9rTBRBNEiwAt0Znw-e1dZcYVXqwezqwhnBTvyy80kZGLp-ha_hSvmgczJf0DfV4fiyrRRoCbDoQAvD_BwE
- Threatened Species Section (2022). *Aquila audax subsp. fleayi (Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagle): Species Management Profile for Tasmania's Threatened Species Link*. <https://www.threatenedspecieslink.tas.gov.au/Pages/Wedge-tailed-Eagle.aspx>. Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, Tasmania. Accessed on 30/4/2022.
- ZartArt (2019). *Bunjil the Eagle and Bunjil's nest*. Retrieved from: <https://www.zartart.com.au/zartstatic/page/bunjil-eagle-bunjils-nest>