

## AQUILA FUCOSA, *Cuv.*

### Wedge-tailed Eagle.

*Mountain Eagle of New South Wales*, Collins, New South Wales, vol. ii. pl. in p. 288.

*Falco fucosus*, Cuv. Règn. Anim., 1st Edit. pl. 3. f. 1.—Temm. Pl. Col. 32.

*Aquila fucosa*, Cuv. Règn. Anim., 2nd Edit. pl. 3. f. 1.—Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 188.—Less.

Traité d'Orn., p. 39.—Steph. Cont. Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xiv. p. 16.

*Aquila albirostris*, Vieill. 2nde Edit. du Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. i. p. 229.—Ib. Ency. Méth. Orn., 3ieme part, p. 1191?

*Wol-dja*, Aborigines of the mountain and lowland districts of Western Australia.

*Eagle Hawk*, Colonists of New South Wales.

THIS noble bird is so universally spread over the southern portion of Australia, that it is quite unnecessary for me to enter more minutely into detail respecting the extent of its range, than to say that it is equally distributed over the whole of the country from Swan River on the west to Moreton Bay on the east; it is also as numerous in Van Diemen's Land, and on all the larger islands in Bass's Straits, being of course more plentiful in such districts as are suited to its habits, and where the character of the country is congenial to the animals upon which it subsists. I have not yet seen it in any collection, either from the northern portion of Australia or any other country. In all probability it will hereafter be found to extend its range as far towards the tropics in the southern hemisphere as the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaëta*) does in the northern: the two birds are, in fact, beautiful analogues of each other in their respective habitats, and doubtless perform similar offices in the great scheme of creation.

All that has been said by previous writers respecting the courage, power and rapacity of the one applies with equal force to the other; in size they are also nearly alike, but the lengthened and wedge-shaped form of its tail gives to the Australian bird a far more pleasing and elegant contour.

I find by my notes that one of those I killed weighed nine pounds, and measured six feet eight inches from tip to tip of the opposite pinions; but far larger individuals than this have, I should say, come under my notice. The natural disposition of the Wedge-tailed Eagle leads it to frequent the interior portion of the country rather than the shores or the neighbourhood of the sea. It preys indiscriminately on all the smaller species of Kangaroo which tenant the plains and the open crowns of the hills; and whose retreats, from the wonderful acuteness of its vision, it descries while soaring and performing those graceful evolutions and circles in the air, so frequently seen by the residents of the countries it inhabits: neither is the noble Bustard, whose weight is twice that of its enemy, and who finds a more secure asylum on the extensive plains of the interior than most animals, safe from its attacks; its tremendous stoop and powerful grasp, in fact, carry inevitable destruction to its victim, be it ever so large and formidable. The breeders of sheep find in this bird an enemy which commits extensive ravages among their lambs, and consequently in its turn it is persecuted unrelentingly by the shepherds of the stock-owners, who employ every artifice in their power to effect its extirpation, and in Van Diemen's Land considerable rewards are offered for the accomplishment of the same end. The tracts of untrodden ground and the vastness of the impenetrable forests will, however, for a long series of years to come afford it an asylum, secure from the inroads of the destroying hand of man; still with every one waging war upon it, its numbers must necessarily be considerably diminished. For the sake of the refuse thrown away by the Kangaroo hunters it will often follow them for many miles, and even for days together. I clearly ascertained that although it mostly feeds upon living prey, it does not refuse to devour carrion or animals almost in a state of putridity. During one of my journeys into the interior to the northward of Liverpool Plains, I saw no less than thirty or forty assembled together around the carcase of a dead bullock, some gorged to the full, perched upon the neighbouring trees, the rest still in the enjoyment of the feast.

Those nests that I had opportunities of observing were placed on the most inaccessible trees, and were of a very large size, nearly flat, and built of sticks and boughs. The eggs, I regret to say, I could never procure, although I have shot the birds from their aerie, in which there were eggs, but which it was quite impossible to obtain; no one but the aborigines, of which none remain in Van Diemen's Land, being capable of ascending such trees, many of which rise to more than a hundred feet before giving off a branch.

The adults have the head, throat, and all the upper and under surface blackish brown, stained on the edges and extremities of many of the feathers, particularly the wing and upper tail-coverts with pale brown; back and sides of the neck rusty-red; irides hazel; cere and space round the eye yellowish white; bill yellowish horn-colour, passing into black at the tip; feet light yellow.

The young have the head and back of the neck deep fawn-colour, striated with lighter; all the feathers of the upper surface largely tipped and stained with fawn and rusty-red; tail indistinctly barred near the extremity; throat and breast blackish brown, each feather largely tipped with rufous; the abdomen blackish brown.

The figure is about one-third of the natural size.