

Activity Assessment of Nest #130 at the Tippogoree Hills 2008



**Jason Wiersma, Eagle Project Officer,
Forest Practices Authority, Nov 2008**

A Report to *Gunn's Ltd*

FPA

FOREST PRACTICES AUTHORITY

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DISCLAIMER

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Background

This survey is part of an annual compliance monitoring program to evaluate wedge-tailed nest occupancy in close proximity to the proposed Gunn's Pulp Mill.

Aims and Method

The aim of this nest survey was to establish whether nest site #130 was in use by a resident pair of breeding wedge-tailed eagles.

The methods used were as detailed in the FPA Fauna Technical Note No. 1 developed by FPA staff in collaboration with DPIW Threatened Species Section. Nest surveys were undertaken during the second week of September and November 12/9/08 & 10/11/08 . Nest activity status was determined from a number of observations -

- The presence of prey remains at the base of the tree (although an active nest will not always have prey remains as they are regularly visited by scavengers).
- The presence of droppings on the vegetation around the base of the tree and near the nest on branches.
- The presence of green leaves or sticks with leaves attached indicates at the very least that the nest is being maintained.
- Adults or a chick at the nest indicate activity (although adults nearby the nest may simply indicate that the nest is occupied territory).
- The shape of the nest indicating the level of recent activity. Active and well-maintained nests will have a bowl (early in the season) or flat top (late season) but tend to become rounded with neglect. Old unused nests appear to sag at the edges and may appear dilapidated.
- Bleached grey sticks particularly on the top of the nest suggest no recent use, whereas brown unbleached sticks are fairly recent additions.

Nest Site History and Location

Nest #130 is located 494370mE 5446653mN with a precision of approximately 20m. Nest #130 has been known to be successful in the past (Figure 1). A second nest site is also located along the Tippogoree Hills area (nest #1401 located 495214mE 54471778mN). Only nest site #130 was assessed because nest #1401 is more than 1km from the proposed development and therefore is highly unlikely to be effected.

Survey outcomes

Nest #130 was observed on the 12/9/08 for approximately 20 minutes. The nest contained no obvious signs of use, i.e. white wash, green leaves or adult presence, during this initial inspection. The nest was observed on this occasion from the hill opposite the nest. From this initial inspection it was deemed that the nest was probably not in use.

The second nest check occurred on the 10/11/08 . Although no signs of use were observed in September there were obvious signs of use in this November check. Fresh green leaves, white wash and some down surrounded the rim of the nest were observed. The nest had a well formed bowl or lip and numerous green leaves and fresh brown sticks. A vantage point was located at right angles to the nest on the same side of the hill as the nest. Due to past fires the epicormic growth forming on nearby eucalypt trees obscured the best observations points. However, while difficult to view clearly, the wing of a young chick was observed.

Both adults were also observed on a nearby roost immediately adjacent to the nest. While clear signs of nest use were visible, it is likely that the epicormic growth forming on nearby trees will make it more difficult to observe this nest clearly in the coming seasons.

No pictures were taken of the nest site during the November visit due to difficulties encountered in viewing the nest site.

The possible explanation for the discrepancies between the two checks can be accounted for due to timing of breeding. During this years aerial surveys, a number of nest sites contained very young chicks. While not unnatural some sites tend to start breeding later which accounts for the lack of visual signs of breeding from the early nest check. Since nests often appear untidy in morphology, they may tend to look abandoned particularly if they are located in dead trees, as is the case for nest #130.

Raptor Nest Activity Assessment Form

NB:
 Ground assessments are NOT to be conducted if the weather is cold or wet.
 Time within 100m of the nest not to exceed 20 minutes.
 Time within 200m of the nest not to exceed 1 hour.

Nest Number: #130

Date: 12/9/2008

Observer Name and Contact Details:

Chris Spencer
 Lisa Cawthen
 Forest Practices Authority
 30 Patrick St Hobart
 0448 299937

Location Name:

Tippogoree Hills Nest #130
 Northern Tasmania Region

Environmental Variables

Estimated Temperature: 12 - 15 Deg
 Fine/Overcast/Showers (Please circle)
 Notes: Clear fine day minimum cloud cover.

Grid Reference

Datum (circle): GDA*
Easting 494373
Northing 5446491
This is a vantage point

(hh:mm)

(hh:mm)

Start Time:

11:45AM

Finish Time:

12:00PM

Duration (mins):

15 min

Nest Description: (Write a description of what was observed e.g. indicate quality, nest composition, colour, shape, size, condition.)

Nest #130 is in poor condition with no fresh material and may have a broken branch lying on it. Nest tree is dead. Photograph taken

Were any of these observed on the nest?

(tick box if present)

Green Leaves	NO
Fresh (brown) sticks	NO
White wash (droppings)	NO
Prey remains	NO
Bird on nest or nearby (note age if possible)	NO

Bird Activity Observed: (Write a description of what was observed e.g. Two birds soaring over the nest, bird carrying sticks)

No Activity See attached Photo



Nest #130 September check 2008

Raptor Nest Activity Assessment Form

NB:

Ground assessments are NOT to be conducted if the weather is cold or wet.
 Time within 100m of the nest not to exceed 20 minutes.
 Time within 200m of the nest not to exceed 1 hour.

Nest Number: #130

Date: 10/11/2008

<p>Observer Name and Contact Details: Jason Wiersma Eagle Biologist BSc Hons Forest Practices Authority 30 Patrick St Hobart 0448 299937</p>	<p>Location Name: Tippogoree Hills Nest #130 Northern Tasmania Region</p>
<p>Environmental Variables Estimated Temperature: 19 Deg Fine <u>Overcast/Showers</u> (Please circle) Notes: Clear fine day minimum cloud cover.</p>	<p>Grid Reference Datum (circle): GDA* Easting 494370 Northing 5446653</p>

<p>Start Time: 1:20PM</p>	<p>Finish Time: 1:50PM</p>	<p>Duration (mins): 30 min</p>
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<p>Nest Description: (Write a description of what was observed e.g. indicate quality, nest composition, colour, shape, size, condition.)</p> <p>Nest #130 is a medium sized nest (e.g. 1.2 metres x 1metre), has good structure and form which suggests this site has been used successfully over a number of years. The nest was lined with fresh green eucalypt leaves. It contained a distinctive nest rim made up from recently added brown sticks. There were distinctive portions of faecal material on a section of the tree trunk that supported the nest. Small quantities of down were also evident on the nest rim.</p> <p>While a chick was not viewed in full profile, a (downy) wing was evident briefly.</p>	<p>Were any of these observed on the nest? <small>(tick box if present)</small></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Green Leaves</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">YES</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fresh (brown) sticks</td> <td style="text-align: center;">YES</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White wash (droppings)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">YES</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prey remains</td> <td style="text-align: center;">YES</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bird on nest or nearby (note age if possible)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">YES</td> </tr> </table>	Green Leaves	YES	Fresh (brown) sticks	YES	White wash (droppings)	YES	Prey remains	YES	Bird on nest or nearby (note age if possible)	YES
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<p>Bird Activity Observed: (Write a description of what was observed e.g. Two birds soaring over the nest, bird carrying sticks)</p> <p>An adult female (large individual) was present on a roost tree immediately adjacent to the nest tree on arrival at the site. The adult (jet black in appearance), flushed on my arrival. Due to difficulty in observing the nest clearly the 30 minute visit allowed me to see in full view both adults circling the prior to leaving.</p>

References

Forest Practices Authority (FPA) (2007). Online version of the Threatened Fauna Manual. <http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/index.php?id=82>