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## The eagle's country

*This noble bird is so universally spread over the southern portion of Australia ... it is also as numerous in Tasmania and on all the 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 on which it subsists ... I believe that it becomes more and more scarce as we advance northward from the south coast.'*

John Gould (1865).

### **Distribution**

Most of the aquilas are widespread and the Wedge-tailed Eagle is no exception. It is found right across Australia and in the Trans-Fly region—the far south-west of New Guinea and south-east of Irian Jaya, the small underbelly of Papua-New Guinea. It also inhabits many of the larger continental islands but apparently not the islands of Torres Strait. It breeds across its entire Australian range and in New Guinea. Of course, there are parts of the country that do not particularly suit the Eagle, for example, it visits but does not stay to breed at the highest altitudes, and it is uncommon (but breeds) in the far north (Kimberley, Top End and Cape York) and on the Nullarbor.

As Gould surmised, it seems that temperate and semi-arid parts of all but the far north of Australia support relatively large, stable numbers and the far north and New Guinea have relatively small, stable populations. He also