



Raptor Fact Sheet: CARRY OFF CARRION

It is sad but true that many native animals fall victim to vehicle strike on our busy highways and roads. On major highways where large, heavy vehicles are travelling at speeds of up to 100 km/hr, it is often impossible for drivers to avoid hitting wildlife, mostly kangaroos.

The unfortunate demise of kangaroos on our highways leads to a secondary death toll among Wedge Tailed Eagles.

When carrion is left on or near the carriageway, scavenging Eagles can also fall victim to vehicle strike. The Wedge Tailed Eagle is a large bird and can only take off into wind to generate enough lift to get airborne. Whilst they do have quick reflexes, they are not 'traffic wise' and have difficulty taking off to a safe height when startled by a vehicle. In this way, many Eagles are killed by cars and trucks. When this happens, damage to vehicles and injury to drivers and passengers can also occur.

One member of the Society for the Preservation of Raptors observed and photographed fourteen Eagles that had been struck and killed by vehicles on one 530 km road trip in Western Australia's Goldfields in 2008. All of these birds had been feeding on carrion that was on or close to the carriageway.

How can we help? We can carry off carrion.

By removing dead kangaroos and other animals from the carriageway and road shoulder, we can reduce the risk of Eagles and other scavengers being struck by vehicles. By doing so, we also reduce the risk to ourselves and other road users. It is very easy to remove a fresh kangaroo carcass – simply protect the hands with gloves and drag the animal off by a leg or a tail. If the animal is female and you know how to check the pouch for young, please do so once the carcass is off the road.

Points to consider:

- **Only stop to remove a fresh carcass if it is safe to do so.** Consider visibility and road conditions for road users approaching you from all directions. Park in a safe place. Put your hazard lights ON.
- Beware long grass and undergrowth in warm weather – snakes do not like being trodden on.
- Remove the carcass to a safe distance. If you can move it 10-15 m from the shoulder, that is ideal, but do not put yourself at risk by traversing hazardous terrain.
- Ensure you have a barrier (ie: glove, towel or rag) between yourself and any body fluid that may be on or around the carcass.
- Dispose of soiled gloves thoughtfully (please don't litter!) and clean your hands using water or a moist towelette immediately.
- Be careful and check the traffic before pulling back out onto the roadway.
- If you cannot stop or feel that it would not be safe to do so, please report the carcass to the local authorities (Shire office, Lessee or Mine Site Environmental Officer) responsible for that stretch of road. They may be able to handle the removal safely.

You may find it useful to carry the following items in your car on long trips:

- Disposable latex gloves (useful items to have in your first aid kit in any event.)
- Moist and/or antibacterial wipes (useful in all sorts of situations, especially if you have children.)
- A rubbish disposal bag (for all manner of litter.)

The more people there are who are willing to carry off carrion, the safer our roads will become for our Wedge Tailed Eagles and road users alike. Removing a carcass safely only takes a few minutes out of a journey and is an investment in the future of our wildlife.