The Wedge-tailed Eagle Research Fund

Guidelines 2024

## Summary

| Opening date | 30th October 2024 |
| --- | --- |
| Closing date | 9 am 2nd December 2024 |
| Managed by | NRM South |
| Further details | Email: wedgies@nrmsouth.org.au |
| Type of grant | Open Competitive |
| Submission of application | Completed applications should be submitted to wedgies@nrmsouth.org.au by the due date |

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## The Fund

The Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagle Research Fund (“The Fund”) has been established from monies required from the operator of Cattle Hill Wind Farm in Tasmania’s Central Highlands. The purpose of these contributions is to offset potential mortalities of Wedge-tailed Eagles (WTE) resulting from collisions with the wind farm’s turbines. The Fund is administered by NRM South and operates independently from Cattle Hill Wind Farm. It is overseen by an independent Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) tasked with reviewing and selecting applications for support from the Fund. The Fund will operate until 2029 and receive annual contributions from the operator of Cattle Hill Wind Farm. The TAC will be making an annual call for applications, usually in the first part of the year, with funds allocated approximately mid-year.

## Objective of the Fund

The objective of the Fund is to support high quality ecological or other relevant scientific research on the Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagle, *Aquila audax fleayi*, the results of which will assist with the management and protection of the sub-species. Support will be given to research that is scientifically rigorous, conducted by suitably qualified, knowledgeable and experienced scientists, and which is consistent with the objectives of the *Threatened Tasmanian Eagles Recovery Plan 2006-2010* or any subsequent eagle Recovery Plan.

## Grants available

For the 2024 round, the total amount available in the Fund is $100,000 (GST **inclusive**). Grants will not be subject to a minimum amount. The TAC will determine if one or multiple projects are supported. Grants can be for one or multiple years (maximum of three years, but should not exceed the full amount on offer in a given year).

## Research priorities

Applications will be judged on merit, and should address at least one of the key research priorities identified by the TAC, which are (note that those marked with \* are of particular priority in this round):

* \* Wedge-tailed Eagle demography. This could include studies into the size of the state population, fecundity, survival of different age classes, and immigration and emigration intra- and inter-state. Such ecological data could be used to update a Population Viability Analysis (see Bekessy, S.A., Wintle, B.A., Gordon, A., Fox, J.C., Chisholm, R., Brown, B., Regan, T., Mooney, N., Read, S.M. and Burgman, M.A., 2009. Modelling human impacts on the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax fleayi*). *Biological conservation*, *142*(11), pp.2438-2448).
* \* Quantification of anthropogenic impacts to WTE, such as collisions with vehicles, powerlines, wind turbines (beyond what data proponents are required to collect for their assessment and or approvals), shooting or poisoning, and the development of mitigation measures to reduce these impacts.
* \* Disturbance to nesting WTE. This includes studies into determining the anthropogenic factors that impact on breeding, and quantification of these such as the distance, duration and types of factors that result in impacts to breeding success.
* \* Studies into the factors that contribute to WTE colliding with wind turbines and strategies to reduce collision rates.
* \* Studies that monitor the effectiveness of current measures designed to reduce impacts of land-use activities on WTE.
* Collection of data that will allow or substantially inform an evaluation of the sub-species conservation status against Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* (<https://dpipwe.tas.gov.au/Documents/Threatspeciesguidelines.pdf> ) and/or the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* criteria (<https://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/what-is-protected> ).
* Novel techniques to monitor nesting behaviour of WTE. Nests are currently very difficult to monitor due to the need to limit disturbance to breeding birds, hence research into novel and cost-effective techniques to monitor nests without disturbing eagles is required.
* Other scientific studies that provide a demonstrable benefit to the sub-species.

Educational activities. Payments from the EPN (Environment Protection Notice) ‘portion’ of the monies (that is, when the number of WTE collisions exceeds that prescribed n Attachment 3 of the EPN, described in EPN condition FF15 3 (3.1) may also be used to fund other WTE-related projects as appropriate, such as educational program or community science initiatives.

Note that support will not be provided for:

* Studies or other activities required for commercial or private developments, including that for development applications.
* Trials and studies required under the conditions of a development or similar permit.
* Studies and other activities required by local, State (including Government Business Enterprises) or Commonwealth Government.

## Eligibility criteria

To be eligible you must:

* Have an account with an Australian financial institution.
* Have a project that meets at least one of the research priorities.
* Have completed all application forms and templates.

You are not eligible to apply if you are an:

* International Entity (although an international entity may partner with an Australian organisation, where the lead partner is the Australian organisation).

### Eligible expenditure

The grant can only be used for:

* Agreed project activities as detailed in a signed Funding Agreement.
* Expenditure on project activities must occur between the start and completion dates of the funding agreement.

### Eligible expenditure items

This includes:

* Studies and/or trials.
* Laboratory or field work.
* Data analysis.
* Travel and accommodation where it is directly related to conducting the project, necessary, and is reasonably priced, e.g. the use of economy airfares.
* Reasonable and justifiable salary for staff directly carrying out the project activities.

It may be a requirement of a funding agreement that project costs are verified, including evidence in writing such as quotes for major costs.

### Ineligible expenditure

The following will not be supported:

* Purchasing land.
* Grants from you to other entities.
* Wages/salaries except those that relate directly to the project.
* Activities that have commenced before execution of the Funding Agreement (unless it is a new phase of the project).
* Costs for the preparation of the grant application.
* Administration costs for an organisation, including electricity, phone and rent.
* Overseas travel unless essential to the project.

## Application process

Applicants should complete the Application Form – “WTE Research Fund Application From” and submit a document detailing the following:

* Objective/s of the research.
* Relevance to the research priorities of the Fund and/or recovery objectives of the “Threatened Tasmanian Eagles Recovery Plan 2006-2010”.
* Methods, including where the research will be conducted.
* Duration of the research.
* Whether the research is part of a larger project (if so, include details of the larger project).
* Amount of funds being sought and project budget. **Please note that the budget should specify the GST exclusive amount, GST and total. The total cannot exceed the amount on offer.**
* Whether relevant permits have been obtained, or if not, when they are likely to be obtained.
* Details of the researchers involved, including their qualifications, research background and capability to achieve undertake the project and report on it.

Applications cannot be changed after the closing date, unless requested by the TAC.

Please note that giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under legislation (including the *Criminal Code 1995*). If there is evidence of this, the application will be excluded from further consideration.

## Selection criteria

The grant applications will be assessed in the following manner:

1. **In relation to Applicant/s**

**Suitability of candidate – including:**

* Relevant tertiary qualifications and experience in scientific research on fauna.
* A record indicating successful completion of research and publication in peer-reviewed scientific literature, and experience delivering similar projects.

**Compliance with the requirements of the Fund, such as:**

* Likely to successfully obtain relevant permits, including Animal Ethics and Scientific permits within a suitable timeframe.
* No past non-compliance with requirements of the fund.
1. **The project:**
* Addresses at least one of the Fund’s research objectives.
* Is consistent with the recovery objectives as specified in the “Threatened Tasmanian Eagles Recovery Plan 2006-2010” or subsequent Recovery Plan.
* Demonstrates that the project is achievable in the specified time frame.
* Demonstrates that the experimental design is sound, including a sound experiment design and appropriate analysis.
* Demonstrates the budget is appropriate and good value for money.

## Notification of the TAC decisions

All applicants will be notified in writing of the success or otherwise of their application. The TAC may request modifications to the project proposal before it agrees to the support the project.

Unsuccessful applicants can request feedback on why their application was not supported, but discussions with the TAC about the selection process or its decisions will not be entered into.

The TAC reserves the right to not offer any grants if no suitable applications are received.

## Successful applicants

Those receiving support from the Fund will enter into a legally binding Funding Agreement with NRM South. No payments will be made until the Funding Agreement is executed. Each agreement will have terms and conditions that cannot be changed, and will include the following requirements:

* Evidence of receipt of all necessary permits before project commencement e.g. Animal Ethics, Scientific, etc.
* An interim report if the research continues for greater than six months, within 30 days of the first six months (or date prescribed as midway through) of the project. This report will outline progress on the research and will be reviewed by the TAC.
* A final report outlining the details of the research, including objectives, methods, results and discussion, within 60 days of project completion, for review by the TAC.
* NRM South will publish a general article/s about the research to be published on the NRM South website and/or social media, following completion of the project.
* Notification to the TAC as soon as reasonably practical if the research is substantially delayed or must be discontinued, or that outcomes cannot be met, or will be impacted.
* Conflicts of Interest, including perceived or actual.
* Confidential information.
* Acknowledgement of that supported in full or part by the Research Fund in all promotional activities, including:
	+ Events and announcements.
	+ Public relations activities including workshops, forums and conferences.
	+ Display materials including banners, posters and on-ground project signs.
	+ Publications such as reports, books, and other scientific publications.
	+ Information kits and fact sheets.
	+ Websites and social media posts, either through direct acknowledgement or hashtags.
* Inappropriate reference to the Fund. The Fund cannot be assumed to support personal opinions, agendas or political positions.

## Payment of monies

Funding will be provided in the following stages:

* An initial part payment to commence the research (in the order of 60%).
* A mid-term payment if the project is of a duration of a year or more (20%)
* Final payment upon evidence of successful completion of the project and approval by the TAC of necessary reports and articles (20% if there was a mid-term payment, or 40% if there wasn’t). Project leads may be required to present their results to the TAC.

Any unspent funds remaining after the project is completed must be returned to NRM South.

## Termination of funding

If a project is determined by the TAC to be non-compliant with grant requirements, funding may be terminated. Grant recipients should raise with the TAC any potential issues with satisfying requirements at the earliest opportunity.