

**Surveys for the Orange-bellied Parrot, Wedge-tailed Eagle and  
White-bellied Sea-Eagle at the TasGold Exploration area,  
Wart Hill, Southwest Tasmania.**



**Hudson River area (Andrew Silcocks)**

**A report of survey findings prepared by Andrew Silcocks, Jonathon  
Starks, and Robert Green.**

**December 2005**



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## **TasGold Ltd. Bird Surveys, 22 Nov. 2005 to 25 Nov. 2005**

### **Introduction**

Surveys for the Orange-bellied Parrot, Wedge-tailed Eagle and White-bellied Sea-Eagle were conducted within the area of TasGold's mining operations in the vicinity of the Wart Hill and Hudson River areas of the Southwest Conservation Area, Tasmania. The surveys were conducted at the direction of the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, to ensure that mining exploration in the area did not pose a threat to these and other species. The surveys were a continuation of previous surveys conducted in late 2003 and late 2004 – early 2005. Once again, no Orange-bellied Parrots were recorded. Wedge-tailed Eagles and White-bellied Sea-Eagles were sighted but no evidence of nesting was observed.

### **Methods and notes on logistical issues.**

#### *Surveys*

Methods used for surveying for Orange-bellied Parrots (OBPs) consisted of two-hour watches by observers stationed at the edge of suitable wooded nesting habitat with hollow-bearing trees and open sedgeland foraging habitat. Birds commuting between the two habitats would be detected visually and by their contact calls. Surveys coincided with the breeding period of the parrots. During the OBP surveys, and at all other times, the observers would be looking out for Wedge-tailed Eagles and White-bellied Sea-Eagles. Any eagles observed would be watched for any evidence of nesting activity in the vicinity. All surveys were conducted by Jonathon Starks (JS), Andrew Silcocks (AS) and Robert Green (RG). All observers have had considerable experience in identifying *Neophema* parrots, and are expert ornithologists. All used state-of-the-art optical equipment.

#### *Study area*

From the supplied map, TasGold identified three priority zones in the Wart Hill/ Hudson River exploration areas for searching.

Areas of study:

- Wart Hill area Voyager 19.
- Wart Hill area Voyager 34.
- Hudson River areas.

### *Summary of activities*

22 Nov.

Arrived at Wart Hill at 15:00, which was later than planned due to bad weather. After a brief introduction at the camp site the first two hour watch for OBPs commenced at 16:00 in the Wart Hill area. Only one watch per observer could be undertaken due to time restrictions.

23 Nov.

All day was spent surveying the Wart Hill area. Surveys in the Voyager 19 area were high priority, so completed first, before starting the surveys in the Voyager 34 area.

24 Nov.

All three observers set off on quad bikes to conduct the surveys of the Hudson River area with a TasGold employee acting as a guide. It took a longer time to reach the site than had been expected due to the poor state of the tracks. Because of the limited time available at the Hudson River sites, it was felt that the duration of the surveys had to be reduced slightly, so survey time was cut from 2 hours to 1 hour 30 minutes.

The first survey commenced at 11:30 and a total of nine surveys were possible before departure back to camp. Unfortunately, a mechanical problem developed with one of the two quad bikes. With no tools to attempt to fix the problem, the bike had to be left where it broke down and all three ornithologists had to return to camp on a single quad bike. This proved a very slow exercise until the TasGold guide was found. He had been bogged in heavy mud for many hours. On pulling him out, the homeward progress was much quicker.

25 Nov.

BG completed the two remaining surveys in the Wart Hill area, Voyager 34.

AS & JS set off for the Hudson River area on a quad bike, to complete as many of the remaining surveys as possible, accompanied by a TasGold mechanic on another bike. Progress was somewhat swifter due to a better knowledge of the route. The broken bike was quickly fixed and the TasGold mechanic departed leaving two bikes for use. A further six surveys were undertaken, each of 1 hour 30 minutes. Because of the lack of tracks, access to the most easterly sites had to be made on foot, and was extremely slow owing to thick understory growth. This further eroded the time available for surveying, with the result that three of the 18 sites in the area could not be surveyed in the time available.

The team left the area on 25 Nov, rather than the planned 26 Nov departure date, at the advice of the camp logistics officer. The remaining three surveys could have been completed on the morning of 26 Nov, had departure not been brought forward.

### *Weather*

Weather conditions on the 22, 23 & 24 of Nov. were fine and sunny with moderate winds. The weather on the 25 Nov. consisted of light rain clearing to hot and sunny conditions, with a strong northerly wind.

## **Results**

### **Orange-bellied Parrots**

A total of 30 person-hours of direct surveying for OBPs along forest edges were conducted at the Wart Hill sites and 22.5 person-hours were spent surveying in the Hudson Bay area. No OBPs (or Blue-winged Parrots) were seen nor heard during these surveys. Table 1 provides a summary of the locations and duration of surveys. Other hollow-nesting species recorded during surveys are also listed.

### **Wedge-tailed Eagles**

During the OBP surveys and outside survey times, no Wedge-tailed Eagle nests were located. Two adult birds flew in a southerly direction, passing low over Wart Hill, before being lost from sight. One adult bird was observed soaring near the eastern Hudson River sites. None of the birds showed any evidence of nesting in the vicinity.

### **White-bellied Sea-Eagle**

During the OBP surveys and outside survey times, no White-bellied Sea-Eagle nests were located. One, probably two adults were observed flying high in a southerly direction over the Hudson River area. It/they showed no evidence of breeding in the area.

### **Other notable species recorded**

A single adult Grey Goshawk was observed in the Hudson River area. The bird was thought to be hunting along the edge of a patch of forest before it flew into the dense under storey and was lost from view.

A single Blue-winged Parrot was observed on the Low Rocky Point track, north of the Lewis River crossing on 24 Nov (381,496E 5,246,781N), with a pair seen in a similar area the next day (381,702E 5,246,364N). When flushed, the pair flew into a group of large trees that may have been suitable for nesting. It was somewhat surprising to find Blue-winged Parrot in this area, because this species is not usually found in open sedgeland habitat. However, a single bird was seen by Jonathon Starks at Wart Hill in late 2003.

A total of 35 bird species were recorded in the area. Table 2 provides a breakdown of species recorded during the OBP surveys and in the area as a whole.

## **Conclusion**

At the proposed Wart Hill and Hudson River drilling sites, no Orange-bellied Parrots were detected. This suggests that these areas were not utilised on a regular and frequent basis by OBPs during late Nov 2005. Wedge-tailed Eagles were seen in the Wart Hill and Hudson River areas, while White-bellied Sea-Eagle was seen in the Hudson River area, but none showed any signs of breeding in the vicinity.

**Table 1.** Summary of OBP surveys. Other hollow-nesting species detected on surveys are also included. (Note that given the close proximity of observers to each other, the same hollow-nesting birds are likely to have been recorded by each observer).

Date	Easting	Northing	Start time	Finish time	OBPs	Sea-Eagles	Wedge-tailed Eagles	Observer	Area	Notes
22/11/2005	379050	5251600	15:59	17:59	Nil	Nil	Nil	JS	(WH1) V19	
22/11/2005	379050	5251800	16:03	18:03	Nil	Nil	Nil	RG	(WH2) V19	Green Rosella
22/11/2005	379600	5251900	16:10	18:10	Nil	Nil	2	AS	(WH3) V19	2 Wedge-tailed Eagles flew south (about 80 meters east of viewing position) and passed low over Wart Hill. Green Rosella, Striated Pardalote, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Tree Martin, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo
23/11/2005	379600	5251700	8:10	10:10	Nil	Nil	Nil	AS	(WH4) V19	Green Rosella, Striated Pardalote, Tree Martin
23/11/2005	379650	5251500	8:06	10:06	Nil	Nil	Nil	JS	(WH5) V19	Green Rosella, Striated Pardalote, Tree Martin, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo
23/11/2005	379600	5251300	8:07	10:07	Nil	Nil	Nil	RG	(WH6) V19	Green Rosella
23/11/2005	379700	5251100	16:32	18:32	Nil	Nil	Nil	JS	(WH7) V19	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo
23/11/2005	379750	5250900	10:28	12:28	Nil	Nil	Nil	RG	(WH8) V19	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo
23/11/2005	379950	5250700	11:05	13:05	Nil	Nil	Nil	AS	(WH9) V19	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo
23/11/2005	380000	5250500	12:52	14:52	Nil	Nil	Nil	RG	(WH10) V19	Green Rosella, Tree Martin
23/11/2005	380500	5251600	10:35	12:35	Nil	Nil	Nil	RG	(WH11) V34	Green Rosella, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo
25/11/2005	380550	5251800	8:25	10:25	Nil	Nil	Nil	RG	(WH12) V34	Green Rosella
25/11/2005	380800	5252500	16:40	18:40	Nil	Nil	Nil	RG	(WH13) V34	
23/11/2005	380950	5252600	16:45	18:45	Nil	Nil	Nil	AS	(WH14) V34	
23/11/2005	380550	5252000	16:32	18:32	Nil	Nil	Nil	JS	(WH15) V34	Green Rosella
24/11/2005	384150	5244000	11:36	13:06	Nil	Nil	Nil	JS	HR1	Striated Pardalote, Tree Martin
24/11/2005	384050	5243800	11:35	13:05	Nil	Nil	Nil	AS	HR2	Striated Pardalote, Tree Martin
24/11/2005	385050	5244200	11:37	13:37	Nil	Nil	Nil	RG	HR3	Tree Martin
24/11/2005	384600	5243800	14:35	16:35	Nil	1 (possibly 2)	Nil	RG	HR4	1 White-bellied Sea-Eagle flying high in a southerly direction. About 2 minutes later one flew along a similar flight path as the earlier bird and was almost certainly a second individual. Green Rosella
24/11/2005	384450	5243600	16:18	18:18	Nil	Nil	Nil	RG	HR5	Green Rosella
25/11/2005	384850	5243400	10:05	11:35	Nil	Nil	Nil	JS	HR6	
25/11/2005	384850	5243200	10:10	11:40	Nil	Nil	Nil	AS	HR7	
25/11/2005	385350	5243200	12:45	14:15	Nil	Nil	Nil	AS	HR8	1 Grey Goshawk hunting along forest edge
25/11/2005	385350	5243600	12:53	14:23	Nil	Nil	1	JS	HR9	1 Wedge-tailed Eagle soaring some distance away to the north
25/11/2005	385500	5243800	14:40	16:10	Nil	Nil	Nil	AS	HR10	Green Rosella
25/11/2005	385650	5244000	14:45	16:15	Nil	Nil	Nil	JS	HR11	
24/11/2005	385100	5244600	14:30	16:00	Nil	Nil	Nil	AS	HR15	Green Rosella, Tree Martin
24/11/2005	385050	5244400	16:05	17:35	Nil	Nil	Nil	AS	HR16	Green Rosella, Tree Martin
24/11/2005	385100	5244200	14:31	16:01	Nil	Nil	Nil	JS	HR17	Green Rosella
24/11/2005	384850	5244000	16:13	17:43	Nil	Nil	Nil	JS	HR18	

**Table 2.** List of all species recorded during surveys and incidental sightings within the Wart Hill and Hudson River area.

Species	Species recorded OBP surveys Wart Hill area	Species recorded OBP surveys Hudson River area	Full list
White-bellied Sea-Eagle		+	+
Grey Goshawk		+	+
Wedge-tailed Eagle	+	+	+
Brown Falcon	+	+	+
Latham's Snipe			+
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	+		+
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	+		+
Green Rosella	+	+	+
Ground Parrot	+	+	+
Blue-winged Parrot			+
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	+		+
Southern Boobook			+
White-throated Needletail	+		+
Southern Emu-wren	+	+	+
Striated Pardalote	+	+	+
Striated Fieldwren	+	+	+
Brown Thornbill	+		+
Tasmanian Thornbill	+		+
Yellow-throated Honeyeater	+	+	+
Black-headed Honeyeater		+	+
Crescent Honeyeater	+	+	+
New Holland Honeyeater	+	+	+
Flame Robin			+
Golden Whistler	+	+	+
Olive Whistler	+		+
Grey Shrike-thrush	+	+	+
Grey Fantail	+	+	+
Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike	+	+	+
Black Currawong	+	+	+
Forest Raven	+	+	+
Richard's Pipit			+
Beautiful Firetail	+		+
Welcome Swallow	+	+	+
Tree Martin	+	+	+
Silvereeye	+		+