

Report on the Square-tailed Kite (*Lophoictinia isura*) from Brown Mountain, East Gippsland

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February 2010

This report covers two separate incidental observations of the Square-tailed Kite from Brown Mountain, East Gippsland made by the author.

On the 11/11/2009 at 6:45pm at the Junction of Legges Rd and Bonang Highway, I observed a Square-tailed Kite glide above me at canopy height, flying in a southerly direction before being chased by an unidentified small bird and heading in a south-westerly direction. The location of this observation is less than 500m from the northern end of proposed logging coupe 840-502-0026.

On the 15/12/2009 at 10:34am while within the recently logged coupe 840-502-0020, a Square-tailed Kite was observed flying (again over my head) in a fast and steep descending glide from a considerably high position in the sky (heading west) and start to slow glide above the canopy of the unlogged forests of and between proposed coupes 840-502-0015 and 840-502-0019. The kite appeared to be foraging and was covering an area of forest several hundred meters in size, and was observed gliding over the area for 8 minutes. Eventually I lost sight of the kite as it continued to forage further afield.

Although I was primarily in the region conducting nocturnal surveys (for owls and arboreal mammals from the 10/11-11/11 and 14/12-15-12), I was surprised to make two incidental observations of this species despite limited time spent in daylight in the area. The two observations were made approximately 2.5km apart. With one observation of the kite late evening (just over an hour from dusk), and with the two observations within close proximity during spring/early summer (when the Square-tailed Kite is usually in early stages of nesting), it appears to me that there is a good possibility that they may be nesting somewhere in the nearby vicinity (however, Square-tailed Kites can potentially have very large home-ranges of 10,000ha or larger (Marchant and Higgins 1993)). It has been estimated that approximately only 50 or less Square-tailed Kite breeding pairs may exist in Victoria (Debus and Silveira 1989), so these observations suggest that the forests around Brown Mountain may be of important conservation value to this species.

References

Debus, S.J.S. and Silveira, C.E. (1989). The Square-tailed Kite *Lophoictinia isura* in Victoria. *Australian Bird Watcher* **13**, 118-123

Marchant, S. and Higgins, P. (1993). *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds, Vol. 2: Raptors to Lapwings*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.