



# Amazing Animals Fact sheets

## Kingfishers

Kingfishers have chunky bodies, short necks and tails and strong, long beaks. Kingfishers are carnivorous - they perch above the banks of freshwater streams to catch small fish, crustaceans, reptiles, amphibians and aquatic insects. The most famous kingfisher is the Australian Laughing Kookaburra, with its iconic laugh. Kingfishers are essentially tropical and subtropical land birds, and are closely related to the hornbill.



### Laughing Kookaburra

The Laughing Kookaburra is the largest of the kingfisher family, and famous for its chorus of laughter which echoes through the Australian bush. Unlike most of its relatives, kookaburras occupy the same territories year-round which they mark with their noisy calls. Each group knows the boundaries of each other's territories by communicating before the spring breeding season to establish boundaries.

#### Habitat

Laughing Kookaburras live in woodlands and open forests and occur in almost any part of eastern Australia with trees big enough to build their nests and open patches suitable to use as hunting grounds. You can see Laughing Kookaburras in the north of Cape York Peninsula, inland to western edge of the Great Diving Range and southwest to Eyre Peninsula.

#### Diet

Kookaburras aren't selective eaters. Their diet consists of snakes, lizards, rodents and the odd small bird, but they live primarily on different insects and invertebrates. Their method of hunting is to perch and pounce. This technique is consistent in all kingfisher

species. They spot their prey and fixate on it before fluttering down to seize it in their bill, and flying back to a tree branch to eat their catch.

#### Breeding

Laughing Kookaburras mate for life and take so long to rear their young that they rarely have more than one clutch each season. They have a low birth rate to keep pace with their longevity. Once the young reach independence, instead of being forced out of the territories, most stay to help parents defend the territory boundaries and rear further clutches. Kookaburra nesting season starts in September and finishes in January. They nest in hollows found in trees and termite mounds with incubation beginning with the first egg laid, although they can lay up to four. Incubation and feeding of the chicks is carried out by all members of the family group.

### Australia Zoo Laughing Kookaburra profiles



#### Tok

Tok is a very funny fella to work with, as he is always laughing at one thing or another!

Tok was bred here at Australia Zoo in 2001 with a large group of other Kookaburras. Tok and his brother Tik grew up very quickly, with all seven other kookaburras feeding the little ones several times a day. At about four weeks of age, both of these featherless critters were removed from the nest to be hand-raised. This was to help the birds become more comfortable around people so that they could be used in the Wandering Wildlife program.

Fortunately for us, Tok showed a keen interest in flying and very quickly completed his free flight training. Tok loves doing his part in the show, and more importantly he loves keeping the Crocoseum clear of other kookaburras, because the Crocoseum is Tok's territory and no other kookaburra is permitted to enter!

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