



Amazing Animals Fact sheets

Ratites

The Ratite family includes flightless birds with a flat, keelless breastbone (the keel is where the flight muscles connect). Most of their muscle is in their legs and thighs. There are only five species around the world. Cassowary, Emu, Ostrich, Rhea and Kiwi.



Cassowary

Cassowaries stand between 1.5-2 metres in height with both sexes similar in appearance. Adults are striking with their glossy black plumage and bright blue neck with touches of red. The female is larger than the male and is also the more aggressive of the two. Cassowaries are the heaviest bird in Australia.

Habitat

Cassowaries are distributed throughout the western and southern areas of New Guinea. In Australia it is restricted to tracts of rainforest in north-east Queensland, from Cape York to Townsville. Cassowary habitat has diminished as a result of agriculture and urbanisation in these areas.

Diet

Cassowaries are frugivores (fruit eaters) and are responsible for the distribution and germination of many north Queensland rainforest trees. Without cassowaries, our rainforests may not be able to survive.

Breeding

Cassowaries do not mate for life or form permanent bonds. The female may mate with several males in a single breeding season (June to October), thus producing several nests. Once the eggs are laid, it is up to the male to incubate the eggs for 2 months and then raise the chicks for a further 9 months.

Australia Zoo Cassowary
profiles

Stomp

Stomp! Her name says it all! If this lady got hold of you, you'd be in big trouble. This long legged beauty has been with us since 1992. Stomp certainly seems to have a soft spot for Rocky and we hope by the end of the breeding season, we will have a story to tell!

Endangered Species!

Very low numbers are left in the wild. Ratites are at risk of extinction within the next ten years. The cassowary is now considered critically endangered in Australia's wet tropics. There are thought to be less than 4000 cassowaries left in the wild. Loss of habitat is currently the greatest threat to the wild cassowary population, however significant numbers are also killed by dogs or run over whilst crossing busy roads which frequently dissect their territory.

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