

# SOUTHERN CASSOWARY

*Casuarius casuarius*



## FACTS AT A GLANCE

### TYPE OF ANIMAL

Bird, Ratite

### OTHER NAMES

Murder bird

### FOUND WHERE

Papua New Guinea  
Isolated Indonesian islands  
Far Northern Australia

### HEIGHT

1 - 1.7m

### WEIGHT

Average around 47kg but  
can get to 76kg

### CONSERVATION STATUS

Vulnerable to endangered

### LIFE SPAN

Up to 40 years in the wild  
Up to 60 years in captivity

The Southern Cassowary is a large flightless bird found in the tropical rainforests of Papua New Guinea, some Indonesian islands and Far North Queensland. There are only around 1,500 cassowaries left in Australia, due to only around 25% of their habitat remaining.

## DIET

Being 'frugivores' the cassowary diet consists of fruit that has fallen to the ground. There are up to 150 different varieties of fruit in their diet. They are a major player in seed dispersion and germination of plants, such as the Cassowary Plum. In fact, cassowaries are what we call a "keystone species", which means the role they play in the ecosystem is so important that it would drastically change or cease to exist without them!



## REPRODUCTION

Cassowaries only come together to breed, and do not mate for life. The female lays eggs in clutches of around 3 to 5. The father will then sit on these eggs for up to 50 days and will then be the sole carer for the chicks once they hatch.

Chicks are very different in colour to the adults – being bright yellow with black stripes!

## FUN FACTS

Cassowaries can run up to 50km/h and jump 2m in the air.

The horn on top of its head is called a 'Casque' or 'Helmet' and is made of keratin! Keratin is a protein that is used to make hair, nail and skin in humans.