

SOUTHERN CASSOWARY

Casuarius casuarius



FACTS AT A GLANCE

TYPE OF ANIMAL

Bird, Ratite

OTHER NAMES

Murder bird

FOUND WHERE

New Guinea
Isolated Indonesian islands and
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

The Southern Cassowary is a large flightless bird found in 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' their diet consists of fruit that have fallen to the ground. There are up to 150 different varieties of fruit in their diet. They are a major player in seed dispersal 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 and 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!