

Emu

Scientific Name: *Dromaius novaehollandiae*

Class: Aves

Order: Struthioniformes

Family: Casuariidae



This is the second largest bird, being 5 to 6 tall, 7 long, and weighing up to 120 lbs. The emu has loose, hairlike, brownish-gray feathers tipped with black. The crown of the head and neck are black, and the head feathers appear to have a center part. The sides of the head and neck are bright blue. "Flight" and tail feathers are indistinguishable from the rest of the plumage. There are only about 6 or 7 wing feathers. Emus live in pairs or small groups of one male and several females. They spend the day foraging for the wide variety of food they eat. They swim well, and can run at 30 mph for some distance. The eggs are large, colored green, which later turns to black. The male then incubates the eggs and takes care of the young after hatching. It is the hen's duty to defend the nest during the incubation period, which varies in length depending

on how much brooding the parents do. The chicks grow quickly to adult size, but take 2 or 3 years to mature sexually. The emu has played an important part in aboriginal culture.

Range

Australia

Habitat

Open plains, Eucalyptus forests

Gestation

Incubation: 25 to 60 days, subject to long pauses

Litter

Variable

Behavior

Emus live in pairs or small groups of one male and several females. They spend the day foraging for the wide variety of food they eat. They swim well and can run at 30 mph for some distance. When captured young they can be made into friendly pets. In captivity they recognize their keepers and may respond to them. They can do without water for short periods by eating juicy foods but prefer water daily. There seems to be a recognition and a caring for one another within the flock.

Reproduction

Emus pair in December and January, then lay eggs from April to June. The emu's nest, placed under bushes, is merely a trampled mass of vegetation into which the eggs are deposited by the hen. The eggs are large, colored green, which later turn to black. The male then incubates the eggs and takes care of the young after hatching. It is the hen's duty to defend the nest during the incubation period, which varies in length depending on how much brooding the parents do. The chicks are striped longitudinally with black, brown and cream. They grow quickly to adult size but take 2 or 3 years to mature sexually.

Wild Diet

Seeds, fruits, flowers, young shoots, some insects