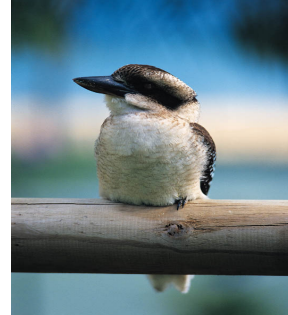


Laughing kookaburra

Dacelo novaeguineae

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Aves
Order:	Cetacea
Sub Order	Mysticeti
Family:	Alcedinida

Status:
Least Concern



Description

The Kookaburra is the largest species of Kingfisher in the world reaching about 45cm from the tip of the bill to the tip of the tail. Laughing Kookaburras are brown and white in colouration which helps them to camouflage in the Australian bush. There is a small amount of blue colouration on the wings and males have a blue patch on the rump. Being a kingfisher the neck is short and the beak is long and strong, used for catching and banging prey on a branch before consuming. Laughing Kookaburras have a distinctive brown stripe on the face and a dark eye to match. They get their name because of their distinctive 'cackling' call which they use to defend a territory of anywhere between one to four acres.

Distribution

As long as there are trees with suitable nesting sites, the laughing Kookaburra will inhabit the area. The Laughing kookaburra can be found in eastern Australia, and have also been introduced to Western Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand. As you travel further north-west in Australia the Laughing Kookaburra is replaced by its close relative, the Blue-winged Kookaburra.

Diet

Kookaburras are carnivores, feeding on prey items including many insects, worms, crustaceans, lizards, frogs, snakes, small mammals and even other small birds. They are ambush predators that sit and wait on a high perch and observe the ground below. As soon as they spot any movement, they swoop down and ambush their prey. It is then beaten against a branch or the ground to kill it and soften it before eating it.

Breeding

Kookaburras nest in naturally occurring tree hollows but if there isn't any suitable sites, they will hollow out an arboreal termite mound. The breeding season peaks from August to December where between two and four eggs are laid. Kookaburras are monogamous and will mate for life. They are very family orientated and both parents will share incubating duties. This lasts for 24-29 days, after which the chicks hatch blind and featherless. They remain in the nest for a month and when they emerge they can already fly. They will usually stay with the parents until the next breeding season. Females will

often stay with the parents for several seasons, acting as helper birds to assist in raising any future chicks born into the family. Kookaburras have been known to kidnap chicks from other nests and then raise them as their own, to increase numbers in their family; greater numbers = higher survival of chicks due to more helpers at the nest.

Threats

Threats include humans, destruction of habitat leading to the loss of viable nesting and feeding grounds, and also the use of pesticides that build up on the insects they eat which can then cause weakness in eggshells resulting in reproductive losses.