Scientific Name:  
*Dromiceius novaehollandiae*

Other Names:  
Spotted emu

Range:  
Australia, Kangaroo Island and Maria Island

Habitat:  
Open country ranging from semi-desert to grasslands and open woodlands

Average Size:  
Height: 6 feet  
Weight: 110 lbs

Lifespan:  
In captivity: 50 years  
In the wild: 20-30 years

Diet:  
In the wild: Grass, herbs, fruits, grain, insects and pebbles to aid with digestion  
In the zoo: Ratite pellets, greens and oyster shell

Incubation:  
58 - 61 days

Fledging Period:  
Not calculated

Clutch Size:  
9 - 20 eggs

Plumage:  
Male: Large bodies with brown/grey shaggy, loose feathers. Slightly blue skin on the long neck and a small head. Grey legs, feet and bill.  
Female: Larger than the male with stronger blue coloration on the head and neck skin.

Predators:  
Dingos

Population Status:  
Not Threatened

Conservation  
Until the late 18th century, there were several species and subspecies of emu. Soon after the Europeans settled in Australia, the dwarf emus of King and Kangaroo Islands and a Tasmanian subspecies were exterminated. Currently, emus are not endangered and are quite common throughout their range. They have also been successfully introduced with great success to islands near Australia. While many birds are threatened by loss of habitat and human encroachment, the emu has quite possibly benefited from human intervention. Establishing water vessels for cattle and sheep has provided permanent water sources. Erecting fences to exclude predators has kept those animals from preying upon emus.

The government encouraged the killing of emus in western Australia (the Emu Wars) until a barrier was built to keep emus out of wool and cereal growing areas. Even with this intense hunting pressure, emu populations have remained stable and almost unaffected.

Behavior  
The emu lives a nomadic life that revolves around its food source. Emus travel over vast distances in monogamous pairs and small groups. When food is abundant, they can store a large amount of fat to use when food is scarce. Males typically eat more during the fall to store fat for the incubation period. Emus orient their movements toward places where it has recently rained. Orientation is usually from the sight of clouds, but the sound of thunder and the smell of wet ground may direct them as well. There have been sightings of 70,000 birds involved in a migration toward wet ground.

Although their six-inch long wings are useless for flight, they do serve an important purpose. During hot conditions, the wings are held out to expose the bare underarm and its dense, superficial blood vessels, which helps to cool the bird down.

Emus vocalize by making a variety of hisses, grunts and drumming noises.

Reproduction and Breeding  
Emus pair up in December and January. Both the male and female defend a territory of about 11 square miles while the female lays her eggs. The nest, lined with trampled down vegetation, is made in a slight hollow in the ground.

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The male incubates the eggs himself and does not eat, drink or defecate during this time. If food supplies have not been sufficient in the recent months, he may be forced to desert the eggs before they hatch in search of food. Males can be very aggressive and may drive the female away after she lays the clutch or when the eggs hatch. Although they pair bond during the breeding season, Emus rarely re-pair with the same individuals in the next season. The chicks stay with the male for up to 18 months after hatching.

**Amazing Facts**

The emu is an excellent swimmer!

The emu is the second largest bird in the world!

Emus can run at speeds of 40 mph!

Emu eggs look like avocados!