Laughing Kookaburra
*Dacelo novaeguineae novaeguineae*

**Scientific Name**
*Dacelo novaeguineae novaeguineae*

**Other Names**
Kookaburra

**Range**
Eastern to southeastern Australia. Introduced to Tasmania, western Australia and New Zealand.

**Habitat**
Open woodlands and forests

**Average Size**
Length: 16 – 17 in.
Weight: 350 g

**Description**
Male: Mostly black and brown with large, cream-colored head and brown eye stripe. Bill is black on top and buff below. Tail banded black and brown with blue rump.
Female: Lighter head color and brown rump

**Lifespan**
In captivity: Up to 20 years
In the wild: Up to 10 years

**Diet**
In the wild: Insects, frogs, snails, fishes, reptiles and small rodents
In the zoo: Mice, worms and prepared meat diet

**Clutch Size**
2 to 3 eggs

**Incubation**
20 to 26 days

**Fledgling Period**
20 to 30 days

**Sexual Maturity**
1 year of age

**Predators**
Birds of prey and humans

**Population Status**
Stable

**Behavior**
These extremely social birds are diurnal. Because they are non-migratory, they live in family groups that work together to defend territories used year after year. The Kookaburra is famous for its “laughing” vocalization used to strengthen family bonds and ward off predators or other Kookaburras looking for nesting space. The Kookaburra family is always within eyesight or earshot of the rest of the members and they make sure to gather each night to roost in the trees.

Kookaburras feed on the ground by perching on a branch or fallen tree trunk and waiting for prey. Small prey is crushed in their strong, kingfisher beak while larger animals are beaten against a tree trunk or the ground.

**Reproduction and Breeding**
Breeding season for the Kookaburra occurs within the months of August through December. The nest is made in a tree hollow, termite nest or a hole in walls of buildings 30 feet off of the ground. A large hole in the Mountain Gum Tree makes an ideal home for a Kookaburra family. Once two to three eggs have been laid, both the male and female share parental roles of feeding and caring for the nestlings. After they have fledged, the youngsters remain with their parents to help gather food for the next brood of chicks and to help guard the territory. Eventually, though, they will pair up and establish their own home range.

**Conservation**
The Kookaburra is stable and even common in most areas of its range. Due to its popularity in the region, it has even been introduced to other areas in Australasia. This bird aids in reducing insect outbreaks and has been very useful to colonists because it feeds on snakes. Fishermen have also benefited from this bird and will often keep them as pets to eat their fish remnants.

The one downfall for this species is the same as with many others across the world: loss of habitat. Although they do well in a semi-urbanized setting, the Kookaburra needs open forests and woodlands for food and nesting. When human populations increase and take over the forests for logging, farming and cattle rearing, it pushes this magnificent bird closer to extinction.
Amazing Facts

The Kookaburra is the largest member of the kingfisher family.

In urban settings, this bird has been known to raid goldfish or koi ponds.

The Kookaburra can devour snakes of up to 3 feet in length.