

# Laughing Kookaburra

*Dacelo novaeguineae*



**Class:** *Aves*

**Order:** *Coraciiformes*

**Family:** *Halcyonidae*

## Characteristics:

The kookaburra is the largest member of the kingfisher family (it is also known as the giant kingfisher or laughing jackass). It is up to 18 inches in length and the beak is an average of 4 inches long. While most kingfishers are brightly colored, the kookaburra is rather drab. It has dark brown wing plumage, white head and belly, and its tail is reddish with black bars ([National Geographic](#)).

## Behavior:

The kookaburra's name comes from the aboriginal name for it, "guuguuberra." They spend most of the time perched in high branches looking for food. It is thought they use their loud call to defend territory. They are quite comfortable and social around humans and will often approach them in the wild ([Animal Corner](#)).

## Reproduction:

Kookaburras are monogamous and quite territorial. About 6 weeks before breeding, the male begins to feed the female. They nest in tree the same hole year after year and lay 1 to 5 eggs. The eggs and chicks are collectively cared for by the parents and older siblings. Chicks are born naked with closed eyes and have a very sharp hook on the end of the bill. The firstborn chick has been known to kill and consume their younger siblings, especially if food is scarce ([San Diego Zoo](#)).

**Diet:** Wild: Unlike most kingfishers, they don't eat fish. They prefer invertebrates, small prey animals and snakes. They occasionally prey upon domestic fowl. They snatch up an animal, take it back to a perch and beat it against a hard surface before consuming it. Food is swallowed whole, head first.

Zoo: Mice, feline diet

**Conservation:** Large range, their population appears to be stable.

**FYI:** Well known as the symbol of Australia and the "merry, merry king of the bush" from the children's song.

It's noisy morning and evening choruses have earned it the name as the "bushman's clock."

The kookaburra's unique call can often be heard in the background of classic Hollywood jungle films.



## **Range & Habitat:**

Woodland and open forests such as eucalyptus forests



**Lifespan:** up to 15 years in captivity, 10 years in the wild.

**Special Adaptations:** Best known for their unique, maniacal vocalization.

**IUCN Conservation Status:**  
Least Concern

