

JR FACT FILE



SUPERB LYREBIRD

Menura novaehollandiae



AT A GLANCE

Size:

Roughly the size of a rooster with a long lacy plumed tail.

What It Eats:

Worms, spiders, beetles, insects and occasionally seeds.

Life Span:

Lives for approximately fifteen years.

Habitat:

Wet forests and woodlands of south eastern Australia.

Threats:

Larger birds, cats, foxes and humans.

What Is a Superb Lyrebird?

The Superb Lyrebird is a protected species of bird which looks similar to a peacock. Its most easily recognisable feature is its lacy plumed tail that fans out behind its body. The bird was named after this unusual tail; as it looks like an ancient Grecian musical instrument called the Lyre.

With a small head, long neck and legs the Lyrebird is the largest of the

singing birds, and is remembered for its song.

The lyrebird combines its own song, with an extraordinary ability to mimic natural and artificial sounds from their environment. They commonly mimic anything from another species of bird or animal to objects such as chainsaws, car engines, rifle-shots and crying babies!

Both male and female are similar with brown feathers on the upper part of their body, lighter brown below and redbrown throat markings. The tail feathers are dark brown above and silver grey below.

Whilst the female's tails reach 75-85 centimetres in length, the males tail reach 80-98 cm in length.

Unlike the emu, the lyrebird can fly, although it rarely does as they can run quite quickly to avoid most dangers encountered.

Did you know, most Australians commonly carry an image of the lyrebird with them, featured on the Australian 10 cent coin!

Where Does a Superb Lyrebird Live?

Lyrebirds are commonly found in wet forests and woodlands in the south eastern mainland Australia and southern Tasmania. They roost in trees at night and spend most of the day sifting through fallen leaves, decaying logs and debris in search of food.

What Does a Superb Lyrebird Eat?

A lyrebird's diet is the same all year round. Their long beaks catch worms, spiders, beetles, and insects and they occasionally include seeds in their diet.

A Superb Lyrebird 's Family Life:

Breeding for lyrebirds occurs from May to September. The male secures a territory and attracts potential mates by raising his tail above his head. He dances for her on one of the several mounds of earth he has scraped together beforehand and sings, imitating sounds of the forest as he dances. The male will mate with several females.

The female builds a dome-shaped nest on the ground, on a ledge of rock or a cavity on top of a tall stump.

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FASCINATING FACTS:

- THE LYREBIRD HAS AN EXTRAORDINARY ABILITY TO MIMIC NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL SOUNDS.
- SPECTACULAR COURTSHIP DISPLAYS.
- APPEARS ON THE AUSTRALIAN 10 CENT COIN.

She makes a frame of sticks and a soft lining of fern roots and feathers into which she lays a single purplish brown egg. The egg takes approximately 6 weeks to hatch, after which the young Lyrebird stays in the nest for a further six weeks and then remains with its parents for 3-4 years.

The lyrebird is a timid, shy and solitary bird. It is more often heard than seen. When seen, it is usually alone, occasionally in pairs or small parties.

Although once seriously threatened by habitat destruction, the Superb Lyrebird is classified as common. However, they are vulnerable to cats and foxes and it remains to be seen if habitat protection programs such as a nature reserves, national parks and land for wildlife programs will stand up to increasing human population pressure.

Where to find a Lyrebird in Victoria?

Lyrebirds live in many parks throughout Victoria including in the Dandenong Ranges and Morwell National Parks. Visit www.parkweb.vic.gov.au for more information on tracks and maps.

Want to Know More?

www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

www.austmus.gov.au/factsheets/superb_lyrebird.htm

www.zoo.org.au/