

Kingdom Animalia

Phylum Chordata

Subphylum Vertebrata

Class Aves

Order Struthioniformes

Family Dromaiidae (emu)

Genus *Dromaius* (emu)

Species

Dromaius baudinianus (extinct)

Dromaius ater (extinct)

Dromaius ocybus (extinct)

Dromaius novaehollandiae

Sub-species

D. novaehollandiae
novaehollandiae

D. novaehollandiae woodwardi

D. novaehollandiae rothschildi

D. novaehollandiae diemenensis
(extinct)

The Pendulous Pouch

In the lower part of the trachea, just before the thoracic inlet, is a segment of trachea comprised of 7 to 12 incomplete rings that form a tracheal diverticulum or open cleft. A very thin membrane covers this cleft. During breeding season this membrane enlarges, creating a pendulous pouch. This pouch is easy to see in females during their first three years of breeding, but in subsequent years does not enlarge as much. Males also have this cleft, but the membrane does not enlarge as much. This cleft is the source of the booming and grunting.



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FACTS FOR THE TEACHER



From the

American Emu Association

About

Dromaius novaehollandiae

Dromaius novaehollandiae

A large cursorial bird, *Dromaius novaehollandiae* originated in Australia but is raised on farms throughout the United States for its lean red meat and food by-products such as fat, hide and feathers. *Dromaius novaehollandiae* actually consists of three subspecies of emu.

As you look at the birds being raised on emu farms, can you guess which of these sub-species were the parent stocks of those birds?

The three living sub-species are:

D. novaehollandiae novaehollandiae –



On maturity and during breeding season, these birds have a cream-colored (or whitish) ruff or bib of feathers starting a few inches below

the head. The pendulous pouch is larger than in other two sub-species and sways during strut.

The metatarsus bone is shorter with a larger diameter. The body is wider than the other two sub-species. This sub-specie originated in southeastern Australia.

D. novaehollandiae woodwardi –



On maturity and during breeding season these birds have a ruff or bib of feathers starting a few inches below the head. This ruff appears darker than that of the

novaehollandiae novaehollandiae and the pendulous pouch is not as apparent. The body is slender and the legs longer than that of *novaehollandiae novaehollandiae*. Overall the feathers are paler than the other two subspecies. This sub-specie originated in northern Australia.

D. novaehollandiae rothschildi –



On maturity this bird does not have a ruff or bib. It looks 'flat-chested' compared to the other two sub-species. The pendulous pouch is

almost non-existent in this emu. Like the *novaehollandiae woodwardi*, the metatarsus bone is long with a small diameter, making this bird taller than *novaehollandiae novaehollandiae*. The feathers are the darkest of the three sub-species. This subspecies originates in southwestern Australia.

These three sub-species are interbreeding in both Australia and the United States.

Extinct Species of Dromaius

There are four other known species/sub-species of *Dromaius* that are now extinct.

D. ocypus exists only as a fossil

D. novaehollandiae diemenensis – This subspecies of *novaehollandiae* was reportedly a large emu with dark feathers. The body type was similar to that of *novaehollandiae novaehollandiae*. It was found on the large island of Tasmania. The Tasmanian Emu became extinct around 1850.

D. baudinianus - The Kangaroo Island Emu became extinct around 1827.

D. ater - King Island Emu – At 4 and half feet tall and weighing under 60 pounds fully grown, this black feathered emu was the smallest of the species. You may find it referred to as *d. minor* or as the dwarf emu. This emu lived on King Island, the northwestern island in Tasmania, Australia. By 1805 it had been hunted to extinction by sealers and visiting sailors. The one thing these three extinct southern Australia emus have in common is that they all had darker feathers than the mainland emu. For this reason early settlers referred to either black emu or spotted emu. *Dromaius novaehollandiae* is the spotted emu.