

Birds of Australia

Max, Age 7 years

Birds Down Under!

Fourteen enthusiastic young birders *zoomed in* to listen to and participate in 7-year-old Max's presentation on the *Birds of Australia*.

It turns out that Max's interest in birds is a natural love of birds and nature plus, it runs in the family! Max's grandpa is a serious birder as well and has bestowed his well-loved *Birds of Australia* book to Max. (Max is no doubt the *Australian King Parrot* of his grandpa's eye!)



Max began by orienting us to the continent of Australia. It's a huge and diverse country. Max and his family were visiting his grandpa in the beautiful Sydney area in the state of New South Wales. They were so lucky to attend a bird show with the iconic Sydney Opera House in the background.




Max saw some very nice birds as he and his family visited various habitats including the eucalyptus forest and the harbor where they spotted a handsome Pied Cormorant. Max told us some interesting lore about these birds.

Pied Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax varius*)

Big Fact

- The Noongar Aboriginal people who live in the south-west corner of Western Australia believe that the pied cormorant (medi) is responsible for the transport of souls of the deceased across and beneath the Western sea to their final resting place (Kurannup).

A photograph of a Pied Cormorant perched on a white buoy in a harbor. The bird is black with a white patch on its neck. In the background, there is a white boat and a cityscape across the water.

Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*)

- These beautiful parrots grow up to 55 cm long
- They use their powerful beaks to eat berries, seeds, nuts and roots.
- At breeding time, they lay 2-3 eggs in a tree cavity.

A photograph of a Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo perched on a tree branch. The bird is grey with a yellow crest and a yellow patch on its neck. It is looking towards the camera.

Max and his family had a private showing of several very elegant and large Sulphur-crested Cockatoos perching on their hotel balcony window. Max thought they might be interested in eating bananas, but they said, “no, thank you!” In the wild Sulphur-crested Cockatoos eat berries, fruit, seeds, grain, insects and roots that they get foraging in trees and the ground. Sulphur-crested Cockatoos are cavity nesters and lay 2-3 eggs at a time. These birds must need a pretty large cavity!

Max saw these classic Australian birds too.

Australian Brush Turkey – a baby! The Australian Brush Turkey when grown up is a large and rather strange-looking bird with black body and tail feathers, its head and neck are bright red and it a yellow wattle. The male Brush Turkey is responsible for building the nest and he builds a HUGE mound from leaves and earth – 5 feet high and 13 feet wide! When the mound is ready, the female lays her eggs deep inside the mound. All that mulch keeps the eggs well incubated.


Baby Australian Brush Turkey (*Alectura lathami*)

- Australian brush turkeys are a protected species as are all native animals. Brush turkeys are generally wary of humans and they feed mainly on insects, seeds and fallen fruits. They find food by raking the leaf litter or breaking open rotten logs with their large feet. The majority of food is obtained from the ground, with birds occasionally observed feeding on ripening fruits among tree branches.



Emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*)

- Emus are the second largest bird in the world. What's first? Why the ostrich of course!
- They can live between ten and twenty years in the wild.
- They have two sets of eyelids, one for blinking and the other for keeping the dust out!




Emu – Australia's tallest bird! Max saw Emus at the Zoo and they are second in weight only to the Ostrich. Of course, they have mini-wings and cannot fly. But Emus have long and powerful legs, so watch out because they can run 20 miles per hour!

trees, eating and screeching loudly – they are members of the Parrot family. There are several sub-species.

Red-tailed Black Cockatoo – Often seen in large noisy flocks. They are mainly black in color, but the males have red panels in their tails. These birds like to spend their days in the

Red-Tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptrorhynchus banksii*)

- The red-tailed black cockatoo is also known as Banksian or Banks' black cockatoo.
- They have five known subspecies distributed in all 6 Australian districts. The C.b. banksii in Queensland, the south-eastern red-tailed cockatoo in Victoria, the great-billed cockatoo in Northern Territory, the forest red-tailed black cockatoo in Western Australia and the C.b. samueli in all districts except Victoria.



Thank you, Max, for your terrific presentation. You are 7 years old and an inspiration to all of us. We are so proud of you! Everyone learned a lot and had a lot of fun too!