



Many-coloured Cassowary (*Casuarius uniappendiculatus multicolor*)
A. S. Le Souef, sub-sp. nov.

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Observations on Cassowaries with Description of a New Sub-Species

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The Cassowaries are a distinctive group of birds confined to the tropical scrubs of Ceram and the Aru Islands, New Guinea, and North-eastern Queensland. They are specialised for their environment. The shape of the body, being like an inverted cone, is perfectly adapted for rapid progression through dense undergrowth. The stout bare quills, projecting from the wings, protect the sides of the body to some extent, while the cranium is well guarded by the casque. A Cassowary must at all times be treated with respect, for the powerful feet are armed with sharp claws which form an effective fighting weapon, the bird fighting by jumping upwards and striking forwards and downwards with the legs. The note of the Australian form is three or four grunts uttered rather rapidly, usually when running. The coloration of the head and neck is most remarkable. This is produced by special pigmentation of certain portions of the skin, which are bare of feathers. Probably in no species of bird are the tints more vivid or more sharply contrasted—scarlet, blue and orange are the predominating hues, and in some species white, green, and grey are also to be seen.

Science is specially indebted to Lord Rothschild for his research in this group. A number of species and sub-species have been described from New Guinea. This more or less differentiation in generic forms might be expected, as the country being sectioned by rivers and mountains, naturally tends to isolation of groups. The same thing is noticeable among the mammals of New Guinea, and to step further

afield, among the brown bears of North America, where nearly every mountain range seems to be inhabited by its special type.

In Taronga Park there is a bird, received from the Mandated Territory, New Guinea, in 1925, which was captured in the Bainings district, New Britain, about 30 miles west of Rabaul. This appears to be a fairly well marked sub-species of the *uniappendiculatus* group. It is powerful and robust in form, being much heavier than the Australian species. The wing quills are about 12 inches long and stronger than those of *C. casuarius*. It is interesting to note that the feathers, especially those of the lower back, are erectile. The feathers can also be withdrawn from the lateral neck corrugations, and the bare skin, together with the face wattles, can under excitement be enlarged and become more brilliant in colour. The face wattles can also be enlarged and altered in shape. It is estimated that the bird was one year old when received, and that it only reached its full coloration in its sixth year. The brown juvenile hue is still in evidence (February, 1930) on some of the tail feathers.

The bird referred to seems to be allied to *C. u. rufotinctus*. Rothschild has noted that in this species the coloration of the throat changes from blue to red during growth, so it is evident that too much reliance cannot be placed on the particular hue of any given part until the specimen is fully adult (*Nov. Zool.* 34, 1927, p. 35). This bird differs from *C. u. rufotinctus* in having a black face and throat, and a differently-shaped casque.

Casuarius uniappendiculatus multicolor sub-sp. nov.

General colour black, with a brownish underlay, individual feathers being fawn-brown from a half to three-quarters of their length, and black terminally; horn, olive-green laterally, and horn-colour supero-anteriorly, which colour is confluent with the top of the bill; posterior base of the horn light blue, the colour being confluent along the sides of the head and extending partly round the eyes; cheek wattles, and lower cheek wattles, intense marine-blue; face, throat and sides of the mandibles, black; mandibles edged with horn-colour; throat, reddish-orange, speckled with blue supero-anteriorly, merging into orange on the lower posterior nape, and into scarlet on the sides of the neck; throat wattle, blue in front and red posteriorly; irides, light brown. Outer and middle toes furnished with short broad nails, while the inner toe has a long curved claw.