

AZURE KINGFISHER

HABITAT

The Azure Kingfisher lives amongst shady vegetation overhanging freshwater.^[1] They are native to the northern reaches of Western Australia, the Northern Territory, and Queensland, and down the east coast of New South Wales, as well as Victoria and Tasmania.^[2]

DIET

They dive from overhanging branches into water to catch their prey, including aquatic insects, fish, crustaceans, frogs, and various invertebrates. They fly above platypuses that are searching for prey underwater to steal the disturbed food sources. They kill their prey against a perch before they swallow it headfirst.^[3]

REPRODUCTION

They breed between September and January, laying 4 to 7 eggs per clutch. The eggs then hatch after 21 days, and the chicks remain in the nest for 28 days. Both parents care for the eggs and feed the young.^[4]

THREATS

The vegetation surrounding waterways that are damaged by livestock affects their environment, and artificial flooding because of human activity can drown their nests. They also must compete with others in their species for the limited food sources available.^[5]

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

It is illegal to take or interfere with them in New South Wales,^[6] the Northern Territory,^[7] Queensland,^[8] and Victoria without a permit.^[9]



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DESCRIPTION

They are 17 to 19cm long,^[10] with long, slim black bills, short tails, and red legs and feet. Their upper bodies are blue, and their underbellies are orange, with orange stripes on both sides of their necks and a small orange spot under both of their eyes.^[11]

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Ceyx azureus^[12]

CONSERVATION STATUS

Least Concern^[13]

CLASS

Birds^[14]

LIFESPAN

Up to 9 years^[15]

POPULATION SIZE

Unknown^[16]

FUN FACT

The Tasmanian Azure Kingfisher (*Ceyx azureus diemenensis*) sub-species is listed as Endangered.^[17]

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- [2] Australian Museum, 'Azure Kingfisher', Distribution.
- [3] Australian Museum, 'Azure Kingfisher', Feeding and diet.
- [4] Australian Museum, 'Azure Kingfisher', Breeding behaviours.
- [5] Australian Museum, 'Azure Kingfisher', Conservation status.
- [6] Department of Planning and Environment, 'Protected species', *New South Wales Government* (29 Dec. 2022), para. 1, <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/native-animals/protected-species>, accessed 25 May 2023.
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- [9] Victorian Government, 'The importance of protecting wildlife', *Victorian Government* (15 Feb. 2022), para. 1, <https://www.vic.gov.au/regulating-protection-wildlife/importance-protecting-wildlife>, accessed 25 May 2023.
- [10] Australian Museum, 'Azure Kingfisher', Size range.
- [11] Australian Museum, 'Azure Kingfisher', Identification.
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- [16] BirdLife International, 'Azure Kingfisher *Ceyx azureus*', Population size.
- [17] Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas), 'Tasmanian Azure Kingfisher (*Ceyx azureus subsp. diemenensis*)', *NRE Tas* (2023), Status, <https://www.threatenedspecieslink.tas.gov.au/Pages/Tasmanian-Azure-Kingfisher.aspx>, accessed 13 Apr. 2023.