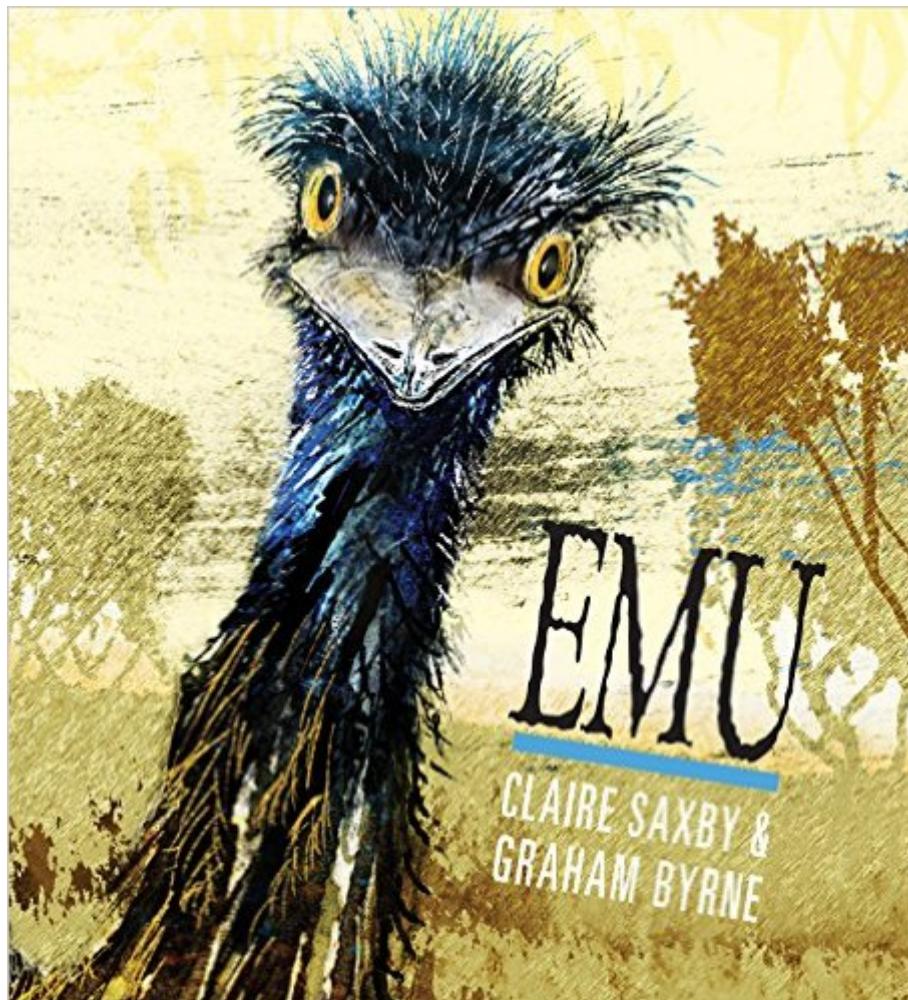


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# Emu



## Synopsis

Did you know it's the emu father who protects the chicks? Follow a doting dad as he keeps his brood safe from when they're granite-green eggs until they're all grown up. In the open eucalyptus forest of Australia, an emu as tall as a human settles down on his nest to warm and protect the eggs left by his mate. When they hatch, the chicks will be ten times bigger than domestic chicken hatchlings and covered in chocolate-and-cream stripes to provide camouflage in the grasslands. This unusual family sticks together until the hatchlings grow up, facing dangers that include eagles and dingoes. Ornithologically inclined youngsters will delight in this visually striking chronicle full of fun emu facts.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars (See all reviews) (5 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #284,229 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #50 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Australia & Oceania #261 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Zoology #543 in Books > Children's Books > Animals > Birds

Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 3

## Customer Reviews

Alas for poor emu. Forever relegated to be consider a second rate ostrich, it encompasses all of the awkwardness and none of the stereotypes. Does anyone ever talk about burying your head in the sand like an emu? They do not. Are schoolchildren routinely called upon to ooh and aah at the size of an emu's egg? They aren't. And when you watch "Swiss Family Robinson", do you ever find yourself wishing that the kids would try to saddle an emu for the big race? Not even once. Emus are the second largest living bird in terms of height, coming right after the ostrich, and you might be fooled into believing that they are the less interesting of the two.

There, you are wrong. Wrongdy wrongdy wrong wrong wrong. I do not wish to start a war of words with the prominent ostrich societies of the world, but after reading *Emu* by Claire Saxby (illustrated by Graham Byrne) I'm a bit of what you might consider an emu convert. Chock full of interesting information and facts about what a typical emu might experience in its day-to-day life, the book is full of thrills, chills, and a species that gives stay-at-home dads everywhere a true animal mascot. Meet the emu. Do not be offended if he fails to rise when you approach. At the moment he is safeguarding a precious clutch of eggs from elements and predators. While many of us consider the job of hatching eggs to be something that falls to the female of the species, emus are different. Once they've laid their eggs, female emus just take off, and it is the male emu that hatches and rears them. In this particular example, the male emu has a brood of seven or so chicks but though they're pretty big (ten times bigger than a domestic chicken hatchling) they need their dad for food, shelter, and protection. The chicks find their own food right from the start and within three to four months they've already lost their first feathers. They zigzag to escape predators, live with their fathers for about a year, and have a kick like you would not believe. Backmatter of the book provides more information about emus, as well as an index. This is not what you might call Saxby and Byrne's first rodeo show. The Aussie duo previously had paired together on the book *Big Red Kangaroo*, a book that did just fine for itself. Following a kangaroo called Red, the ostensibly nonfiction title was best described by PW as, "An understated but visually arresting portrait of a species." For my part I had no real objections to the book, but neither did I have anything for it. Kangaroo books are not rare in my children's rooms, though the book was different in that it was written for a younger reading level. That same reading level is the focus of *Emu* and here I feel that Saxby and Byrne have started to refine their technique. One of the problems I had with *Red* was the naming of a representative kangaroo. It felt false in a way. Like the author didn't trust the readers enough to show them a typical day in the life of an animal without having to personalize it with faux monikers. Byrne's art too felt flatter to me in that book than it does here. This may have more to do with the subject matter than anything else, though. Emu faces, after all, are inherently more amusing and interesting than kangaroos. In terms of the text, Saxby utilizes a technique that's proven very popular with teachers as of late. When kids in classrooms are given open reading time there can sometimes be a real range in reading levels. With this in mind, sometimes nonfiction picture books about the natural world will contain two types of text. There will be the more enticing narrative, ideal for reading aloud to a group or one-on-one. Then, for those budding naturalists, there will be a complementary

second section that contains the facts. On the first two pages of "Emu", for example, one side introduces the open forest with its àçœhoney-pale sunshine àçœ and the emu's job while the second block of text, written in a small font that brings to mind an expert's crisp clean handwriting, gives the statistics about emu (whether or not they can fly, their weight, height, etc.). In the back of the book under the Index there's actually a little note about these sections. It says, àçœDon't forget to look at both kinds of words àçœ, and then writes the words àçœthis kind and this kind àçœ in the two different fonts. Artist Graham Byrne's bio says that he's an electrical engineer, builder, and artist. This is his second picture book and the art is rendered digitally. What it looks like is scratchboard art, with maybe an ink overlay as well. I enjoyed the sense of place and the landscapes but what really made me happy was how Byrne draws an emu. There's something about that bright yellow eye in the otherwise impassive face that gets me. I say impassive, but there are times when one wonders if Byrne is fighting an instinct to give his emu some expression. There's a scene of the emu nosing his eggs, his beak appears to be curling up in just the slightest of smiles. Later an eagle threatens his brood and there's almost a hint of a frown as he runs over to the rescue. It's not enough to take you out of the story, but such images bear watching. In comparing the emu to the ostrich I may have omitted certain pertinent details. After all, the emu doesn't have it quite so bad. It appears on the Australian coat of arms, as well as on their money. There was an Emu War of 1932 where the emus actually won the day. Heck, it's even not too difficult to find emus on farms in the United States. Still, culturally they've a far ways to go if ever they are to catch up with their ostrichy brethren fame-wise. Books like this one will help. I think there must be plenty of teachers out there a little tired of using Eric Carle's àçœMister Seahorse àçœ as their de facto responsible-dads-in-the-wild motif. Now kids outside of Australia will get a glimpse of this wild, wacky, wonderful and weird creature. Consider it worth meeting. For ages 4-8.

Summary: After a female emu helps build a nest and lays eggs, her responsibilities are done. It's up to the male to sit on the eggs for eight weeks, not even leaving to eat or drink, then to take care of the young hatchlings for over a year until they are ready to look for mates of their own. The Australian author-illustrator team that did last year's Red Kangaroo follows the life of a male emu as he waits on the nest, welcomes the new babies, and teaches them to fend for themselves. The text is written in two different fonts; one could be read aloud while the other gives additional related facts and information. A brief author's note and index are included at the

end. Grades K-3.Pros: Before reading this, about all I knew of the emu was that it was a good word for Scrabble or Boggle. One of the lesser-known Australian animals, it is nonetheless fascinating, and Emu has a lot of information for a picture book. The illustrations are unusual but striking and complement the text well.Cons: I wasn't crazy about the color pallet used for the illustrations.

The emu is the second largest bird in the world, but is often overlooked by its relative, the ostrich. EMU is a non-fiction children's book that follows the life of an emu as they are born and until they reach adulthood. I learned some interesting things by reading this book. For instance, I didn't know that the emu father is actually the animal that nests the eggs after the female lays them and he is the one to raise the babies until they are able to survive on their own. On one page there is the narrative of the book and on the other page there is a different text that gives additional information. There is an author's note and index at the end of the book. I didn't really like the illustrations of this book, however. They do complement the test, but they aren't very eye catching.

My Granddaughter loves the book. It's the one she keeps by her bed when she wakes up before the rest of her family.

Fun for kids or adults. Accurate and informative. Especially like the art work.

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