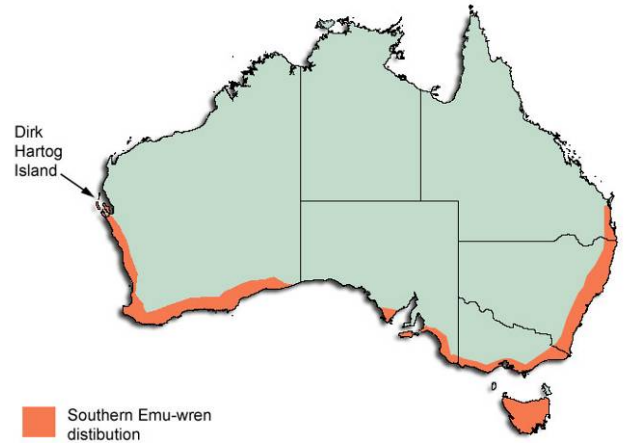


## Dirk Hartog Island Southern Emu-wren (*Stipiturus malachurus hartogi*)

### What does it look like?

The emu-wren looks nothing like an emu! It is just 15–19 cm long – and more than half of that is its tail! This dainty ball of feathers is so called because of its tail plumes which, like emu feathers, lack the interlocking hooks that usually 'zip' feathers together. As a result the emu-wren's tail looks like a lacy fan. Although usually held upright, the tail is ducked low when the bird runs under vegetation. During flight the emu-wren looks like a large insect, slowed by the drag of this long trailing tail.

The Dirk Hartog Island southern emu-wren is similar to mainland southern emu-wrens, but paler. Its back is sandy-brown with black streaks, its crown is pale brick-red, and its undercarriage is sandy-cream with a paler belly. The male has a purplish-blue bib and eyebrows.



### Where does it live?

This subspecies is only found on Dirk Hartog Island, in the Shark Bay World Heritage Area. It pecks about low, dense vegetation looking for insects to eat but is occasionally seen bouncing across open ground. The mainland southern emu-wren (*Stipiturus malachurus*) is found in coastal areas in southern parts of Australia (see map).

### How does it breed?

The emu-wren will climb to perches high up in the scrub to sing. Its call is similar to the shrill, reeling call of fairy-wrens, but has a higher pitch. Nesting is from August to December. The domed, oval nest has a side entrance and is hidden in dense heath low to the ground. Woven of grass and fine twigs, it holds 2–4 brown-speckled eggs.

### Any threats to its survival?

The Dirk Hartog Island southern emu-wren is considered a rare species and receives special protection under Western Australia's Wildlife Conservation Act. Although it has survived more than one hundred years of grazing, and the introduction of cats and mice, the possible introduction of rats to Dirk Hartog Island would be catastrophic for the species. The emu-wren's eggs and chicks would be easy pickings for a hungry rat. Large-scale bush-fires may also harm the bird, although the island is too large and the vegetation too sparse for a fire to wipe it out. Dirk Hartog Island is soon to become a national park, which will give the emu-wren greater protection.