

A blue bird, possibly a cassowary, is partially visible through dense green foliage and brown branches. The bird's head and neck are visible, showing a blue body and a brown eye. The background is a dense thicket of green leaves and brown branches.

1. The cassowary in European natural history:

- particularly early European depictions and perceptions of cassowaries

2. Briefly mention Lord Walter Rothschild and his cassowaries

The cassowary in European natural history

The first European encounter with a cassowary was by a Dutch expedition to Java which brought a live cassowary back to Europe.

This voyage was led by the explorer Cornelis de Houtman.

This expedition laid the foundation for the future trade in spices with the Dutch East Indies.

The cassowary in European natural history

Houtman's fleet of four vessels and 249 sailors left Amsterdam in February 1595, and arrived in Banten, a port in northwest Java, on 27 July 1595.

Their primary objective was to find spices, but they also picked up a number of other valuable imports, including one large bird known as an “**emeu**”.

Until the middle of the 18th century the cassowary was referred to by Europeans using the Indonesian word emeu [ē'myōō].

The modern name cassowary is from the Malay kesuari.

The cassowary in European natural history

The year after their return, one of the Dutch members of the expedition, Willem Lodewycksz, published his diary of their adventures in his *Historie van Indien* (History of East India). He was a keen observer and made sketches to support his written descriptions

The book states that on 4 December 1596, the prince of Sidayu (a district of Java) gave a bird named “emeu” to Schellinger, a captain of one of the ships.

This bird was said to have come from the Island of Banda.

The cassowary in European natural history

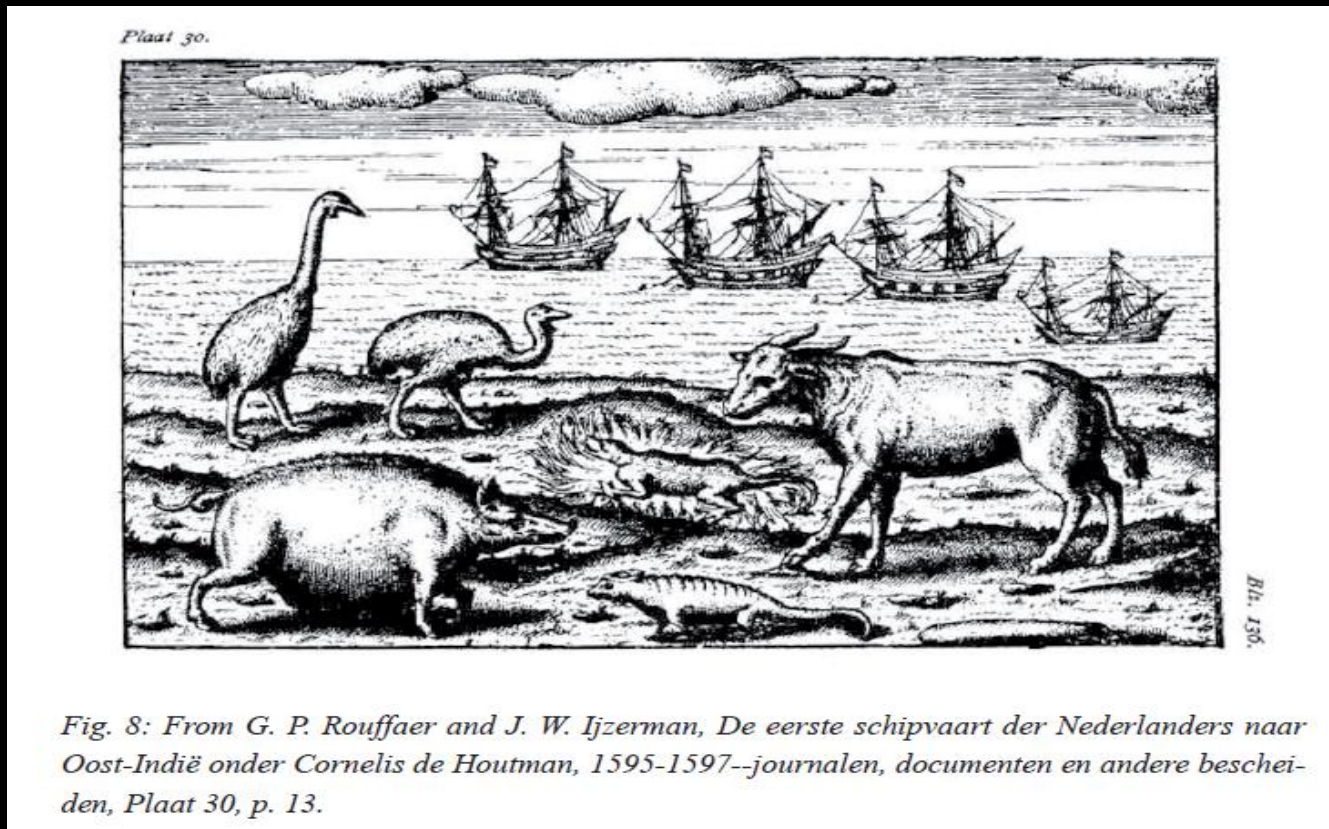


The Banda Islands are a group of ten small volcanic islands about 140 km south of Seram Island and are part of the Indonesian province of Maluku.

Dutch interest = nutmeg

The cassowary in European natural history

This historic expedition appears to be the first encounter between Europeans and the cassowary.



Sketch from Lodewycksz's published diary

The cassowary in European natural history

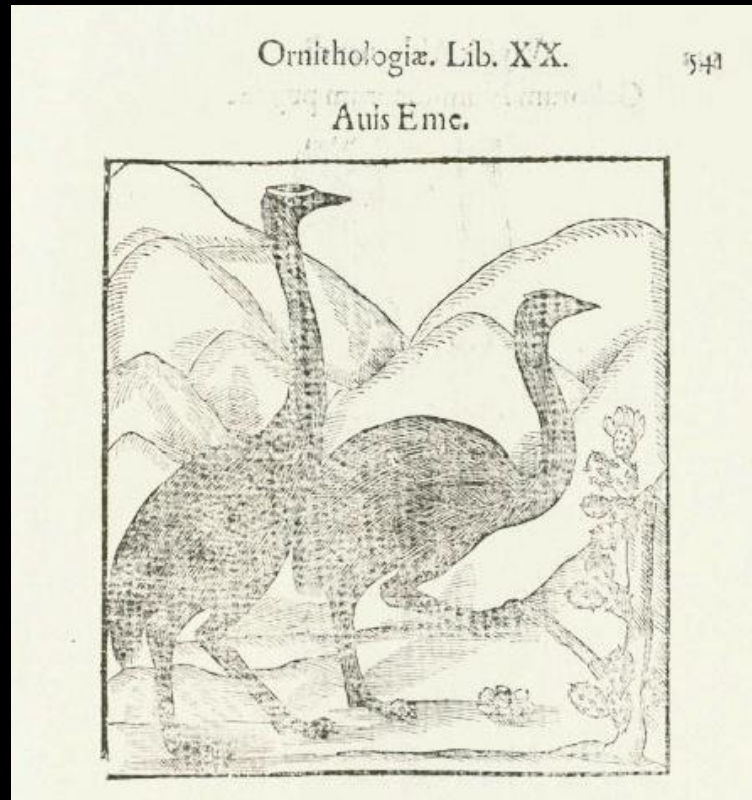
Lodewycksz's diary became well known throughout Europe.

Latin and German editions were published.

The German edition, by L. Hulsius, achieved particularly wide circulation.

The cassowary in European natural history

The Italian nobleman and natural historian Ulisse Aldrovandi had never actually seen the cassowary, and drew his information solely from the published diary.



The cassowary in European natural history

The German engraver Johann Sibmacher made engravings specifically for the Hulsius translation of the diary.

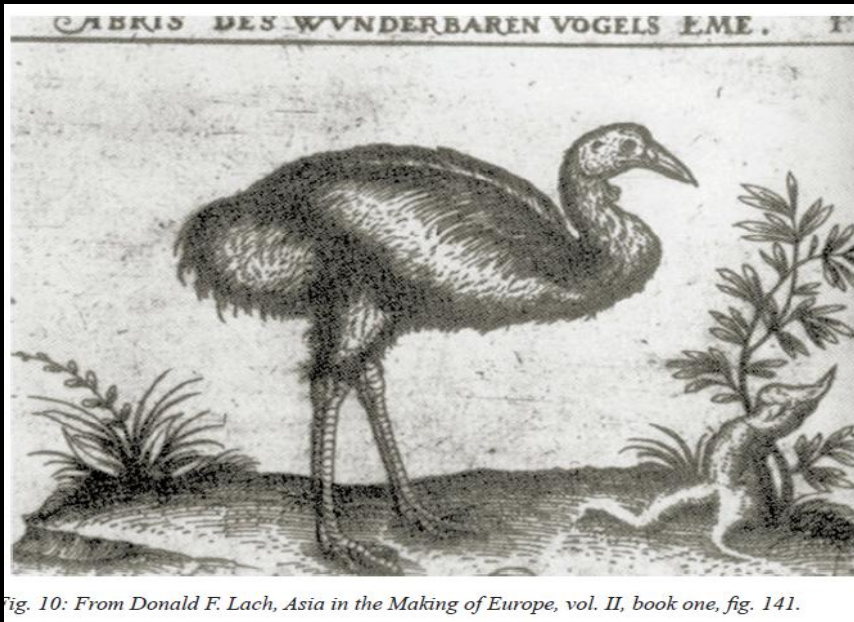
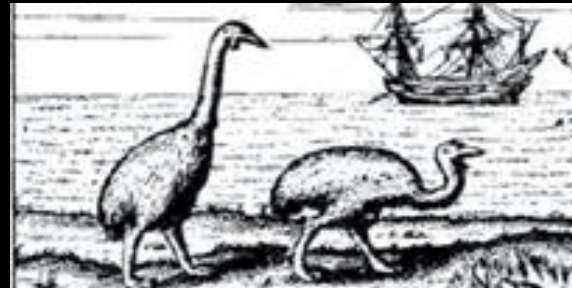


Fig. 10: From Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. II, book one, fig. 141.

The engraving appears to be a copy of the right-hand bird drawn by Lodewycksz.



It does not have the cassowary's distinctive casque, which has led some to wonder whether the emeu that Houtman brought back really was a cassowary.

The cassowary in European natural history

Luckily, the bird was bought by a Count von Solms and later given to the Archbishop of Cologne.

At Cologne, it was observed and described by the famous Flemish natural historian Clusius.

He gives an account of his observations in a book published in 1605.

The cassowary in European natural history

The book states:

“Starting from the middle of the crop to the top of the head, there is a horny crest, about three inches high.”

This and his drawings makes it certain that the bird is indeed a cassowary.

The cassowary in European natural history

Clusius also included this drawing of the cassowary in his book – obviously a double wattled or southern cassowary.



The cassowary in European natural history

The bird was finally requested by and given to the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II.

It arrived in Rudolf's menagerie in Prague in August 1601.

Two paintings of Rudolf's Banda Island cassowary still survive.

The cassowary in European natural history



Fig. 12: From Herbert Haupt, Eva Irblich, Manfred Staudinger and Thea Vignau-Wilberg, *Le Bestiaire de Rodolphe II*, no. 118, 119.

The cassowary in European natural history



Because a printed image can be easily reproduced, Clusius's print became the standard image of a cassowary (looks a bit like a chook!).

Clusius's account including his measurements and description of the bird's appearance, became the authoritative European text on the cassowary for a long period of time.

The cassowary in European natural history

For example, the cassowary (still under the name emeu) is described in an ornithological work published in 1650 by the Polish scientist Johannes Johnstone but it simply reproduces Clusius' text.

The images are similarly reproductions of Clusius' 1605 prints.

Johnstone confused things by including reprints of an earlier drawing by Aldrovandi who you will recall never sighted a cassowary but relied on descriptions from Lodewycksz's original 1598 diary.

The cassowary in European natural history



Aldrovandi's print



Clusius' print

The cassowary in European natural history

This led Johnstone (in 1650) to assume that there were two distinct and different cassowaries in Europe:

1. one depicted in the 1605 Clusius print,
2. the other from a 1635 book using an image based on a 1598 drawing.

He was unaware that the two images both show the same bird retrieved in 1597 by Houtman – the Banda Island cassowary.

The adventures of the Banda cassowary

Pre- Dec 1596 – Banda Islands to Java

4 Dec 1596 – Java to Dutch ship the Eerste Schiffart

July 1597 – Arrived in Amsterdam after 9 months at sea

1597 -1598 – on display – visitors charged to view it

1598 – bought by Count von Solms – moved to The Hague

1600 – gifted to the Archbishop of Cologne

August 1601 – gifted to Rudolf II – moved to Prague

1607 – no longer alive

The cassowary in European natural history

Other cassowaries in Europe – not the Banda cassowary

The interest among European collectors in the cassowary remained strong even in the 18th century.

The French animal painter Jean-Baptiste Oudry painted portraits of Louis XV's Versailles collection including this cassowary.

The cassowary in European natural history



From Mary Morton ed., Oudry's Painted Menagerie: Portraits of Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Europe, p. 137.

The cassowary in European natural history

This cassowary portrait was later used in a variety of formats including:

- woven into a rug
- incorporated into building decorations.

In 1743, the French architect Desportes placed the cassowary in a mural over the lintel of a door in Château de Choisy, one of the royal family's residences near Paris.

The cassowary became a motif widely appreciated in Europe.

It also has strong historical connections to European royalty.



Cassowary painting by Francis Barlow in the Entrance Hall at Clandon Park, Surrey 1670's.

Barlow has been called England's first wildlife painter

King Charles II kept several cassowaries in his aviaries at St. James's Park

Also included in *Ornithologia* (1676) which was one of the first modern scientific treatises on birds.



Bird Engravings by Eleazer Albin
Cassawar cock **1730's**

From the French edition of
The Natural History of Birds.



George Louis Leclerc Buffon and Francois
Nicolas Martinet

Casoar des Indes orientales 1770's

From the most famous & comprehensive
ornithological work of the 18th century



When more live birds began to arrive in Europe, the details of illustrations greatly improved but the habitat detail was still incorrect



Australian Cassowary, reproduced from *The Birds of Australia* by John Gould 1851

The cassowary drawings were completed by Henry Richter. This Richter watercolour painting of the cassowary is on display in the Melbourne museum.

Cartoon of 1868



But the Voracious Bird does his best to prevent the missionary from ever doing so. Hence the doggerel:

"Where stalked the dusky Cassowary,
On the plains of Timbuktoo;
There he ate the missionary,
Beads and prayer,
and hymn-book too."

Lord Walter Rothschild (1868-1937)

[shown here with his trained zebra]



Lord Walter Rothschild

Although the scientific name of the Southern Cassowary (*Casuarius casuarius*) was registered by Linnaeus in 1758.

The first detailed taxonomic and morphological descriptions of the genus *Casuarius* were the work of **Rothschild**.

Lord Walter Rothschild

Rothschild was an eccentric but probably the most important and prolific collector of zoological specimens during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Working from his museum and home at Tring in Hertfordshire he amassed an enormous collection of insects, bird eggs, bird skins, mammal skins and other specimens.

Rothschild was most fanatically interested in birds of paradise, fleas, BUT most particularly cassowaries.

Lord Walter Rothschild

At Tring Rothschild amassed a lot of cassowary stuff.

His collection included 62 mounted cassowaries, as well as many skins and skeletons.

Rothschild studied these specimens with the aim of producing a book that described the different forms of cassowary.

He regarded it as essential that his descriptions were based on live specimens, not just on skins, so he also collected all the live cassowaries he could get his hands on.

Lord Walter Rothschild

Little has been published on how Rothschild and his staff maintained his live cassowaries, but it is known that they were not kept artificially warm. He once wrote:

"My laying female has lived through 6 English winters without heat".

Bit of an aside

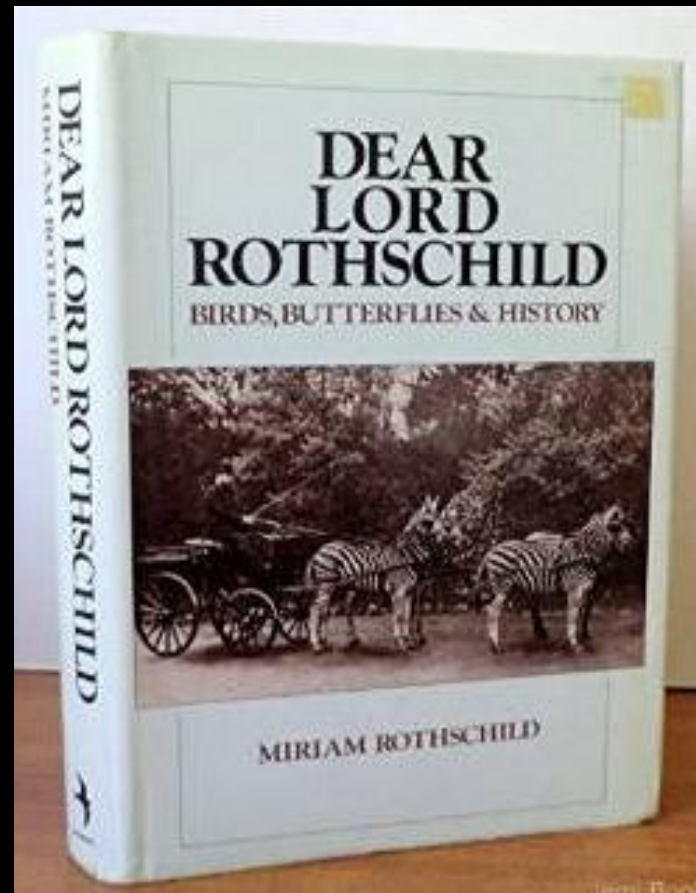
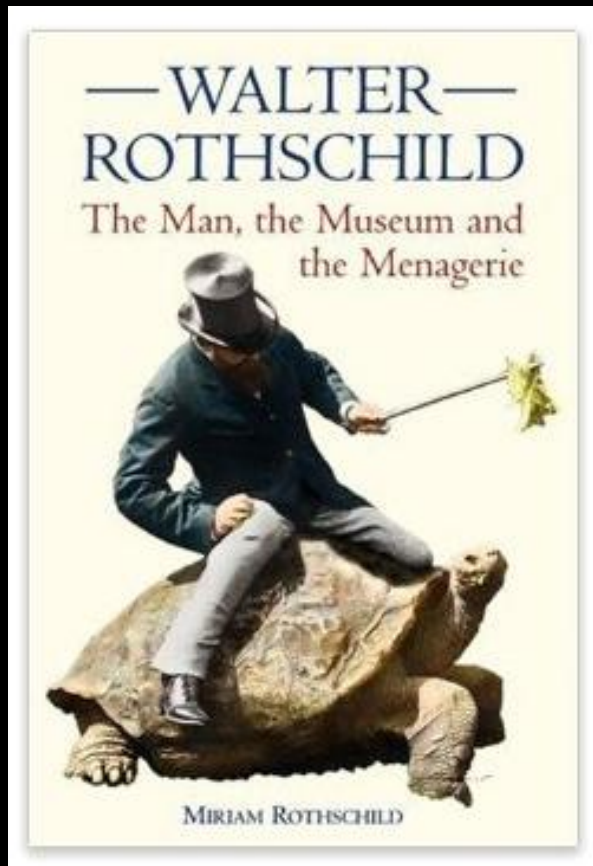
Walter Rothschild's brother Charles was also into fleas and personally described over 500 new species of flea.

Charles was a banker by profession but is regarded as a pioneer of nature conservation in Britain, and established the UK's first nature reserve.

Charles' daughter, Miriam continued the family flea obsession and was a very famous zoologist in her own right - and was known as the flea lady.

In her later years she authored a couple of biographies on her Uncle Walter and his zoological estate and museum at Tring.

A couple of biographies on Lord Walter Rothschild by his niece
Dame Miriam Rothschild (the flea lady)



Lord Walter Rothschild

Rothschild completed and published his work on cassowaries in 1900 in which many new species and subspecies are named based on the colour of their necks or configuration of their wattles - features now regarded as too variable for much basis in taxonomy.

His manuscript was lavishly illustrated by John Gerrard **Keulemans** - these are a couple of examples of what are still considered subspecies of the Southern Cassowary.

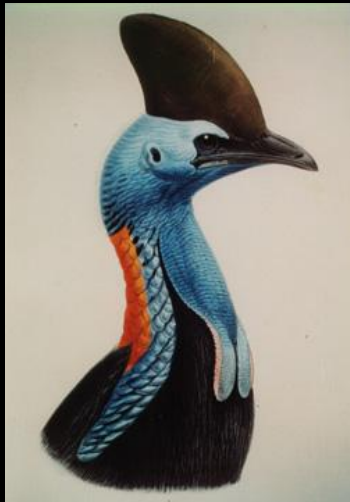


In December 1900,
Walter Rothschild
published his seminal
work on the cassowary.



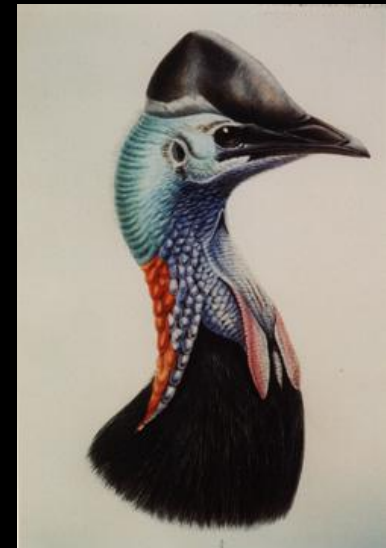
Casuarius casuarius beccarii

Casuarius casuarius bicarunculatus



Casuarius casuarius intensus

The work included
exquisite plates by the
bird artist John Gerrard
Keulemans.



Casuarius casuarius salvadorii

Lord Walter Rothschild

Rothschild's contribution to the science and taxonomy of the cassowary was huge and the cassowary collection at Tring of:

- 213 skins and mounted specimens
- eggs
- skeletons
- preserved specimens

Is by far the largest, if somewhat macabre resource of its kind in the world.

The latter half of the 19th century

A prosperous period for cassowary taxonomy with no less than 19 new cassowary species being described between 1857 and 1900.

Most were based on either immature specimens or poorly defined characteristics and only 2 have survived the test of time.

C. bennetti (dwarf cassowary) described by Gould in **1857**
C. unappendiculatus (northern cassowary) described by Blyth in **1860**

C. casuarius (southern cassowary) described by Linnaeus way back in **1758**

Late 19th century to mid 20th century

Between the years 1898 and 1937; Rothschild himself described no less than 25 new species and subspecies of Cassowary – only some of his subspecies are still recognised.

I will conclude with the next slide which has a few of the cassowary paintings from Walter Rothschild's book published in 1900.

Rothschild's cassowaries



Recently a case has been made that a fourth species of cassowary closely related to *C. bennetti*) should be recognised. This is the Papuan or Westermann's cassowary, the proposed name for which is *C. westermanni*

