

Red-legged Seriema



Classification

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Gruiformes

Family: Cariamidea

Genus: *Cariama*

Species: *cristata*



Range, Habitat, Conservation Status

- **Range:** From central and eastern Brazil to eastern Bolivia. As far south as Paraguay, Uruguay, and northern Argentina.
- **Habitat:** Dry, open grasslands and scrub.
- **Conservation Status:** Least Concern

Physical Characteristics

- **Body Length:** ~35 inches (90 cm)
- **Wingspan:** Not enough data
- **Weight:** 2.2 to 6.6 pounds (1-3 kg)
- **Lifespan:** 20 to 30 years in the wild. The oldest in human care was 48 years old
- **Identifying Traits:** Males are slightly larger than females. Sandy-colored with long red legs, a long tail, curved red beak, and large pale eyes with blue eye rings.

Behaviors

- **Feeding:** Eat small animals, including insects, frogs, reptiles, mammals, and birds. Kill their prey by slamming it on the ground or on a hard surface (ex: rock). This helps break up the bones to make prey easier to swallow whole. If the prey is too large, they use a very sharp, sickle-like claw, found on the second toe, to tear food into smaller pieces.
- **Breeding:** Breed during the rainy season. The male struts before the female, stretching out his flight feathers and lowering his head to show his crest as a courtship behavior.
- **Nesting:** Adults reach nests from the ground, so nests are built low in trees (3-9 feet). Both adults build the nest by collecting sticks and lining it with leaves and mud. Generally, lay two eggs at a time, which are



incubated for around a month by the female. Chicks are fed by both parents and are able to leave the nest between 12 and 15 days old.

- **Migration:** Do not migrate as they rarely fly and prefer to walk when in search of food.
- **Call:** Loud, high-pitched yelps, some describe as sounding like a puppy yapping. Territorial and call often with a partner, especially in the early morning. Call can be heard over a mile away.

Resident Bird(s)

Name: Sebastian (Bash)

- **Age:** Hatched in 2021
- **Sex:** Male
- **Background:** Hatched in the United States at another educational facility. See him during a fly-by and along the raptor trail.
- **Unique Individual Traits:** Enjoys showing off his vocalizations at the most inopportune times for staff, such as during school programs.

Fun Facts!

- Run at speeds of up to 40 miles per hour (70 km/h). They only fly to escape predators or find perching.
- Share a similar ecological niche to Secretary birds (found in Africa).
- One of the largest ground-dwelling birds in South America.

Importance

- One of the few animals that will eat venomous coral snakes.
- Last remaining descendants of giant carnivorous flightless birds that lived more than 60 million years ago in South America.

Sources

- <https://www.peregrinefund.org/explore-raptors-species/seriema/red-legged-seriema>
- <https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/relser1/cur/introduction>
- <https://cincinnati zoo.org/animals/red-legged-seriema/>
- <https://lazoo.org/explore-your-zoo/our-animals/birds/seriema-red-legged/>
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