

Very Strange Animals



By Sindy McKay

TREASURE **BAY**

Very Strange Animals

A We Both Read® Chapter Book
Level 3

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Chicken



Yellow shaggy frogfish



Komodo dragon

★ You will probably see some animals in this book that you have never seen before.

Some are very odd looking, like the yellow frogfish. Some may look a bit scary, like the Komodo dragon. Some are just plain cute, like the tarsier (TAR-see-er).

And some, like the lamprey (LAM-pree), may seem so alien, it's hard to believe they exist here on Earth!

- How many animal species would you guess there are in the world? One thousand? One hundred thousand? A million? The truth is no one really knows for sure. But scientists estimate between eight and nine million known species. And they believe there are many more yet to be discovered.

Many species are well known and can be easily seen in homes, backyards, zoos, farms, and parks.

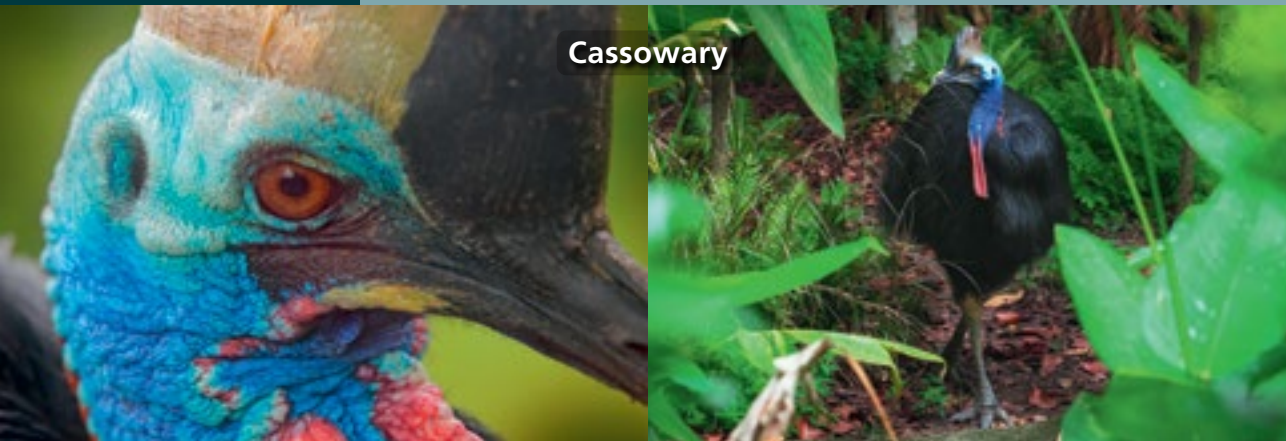
Others are not as common and seeing them may be rare.



Tarsier



Lamprey

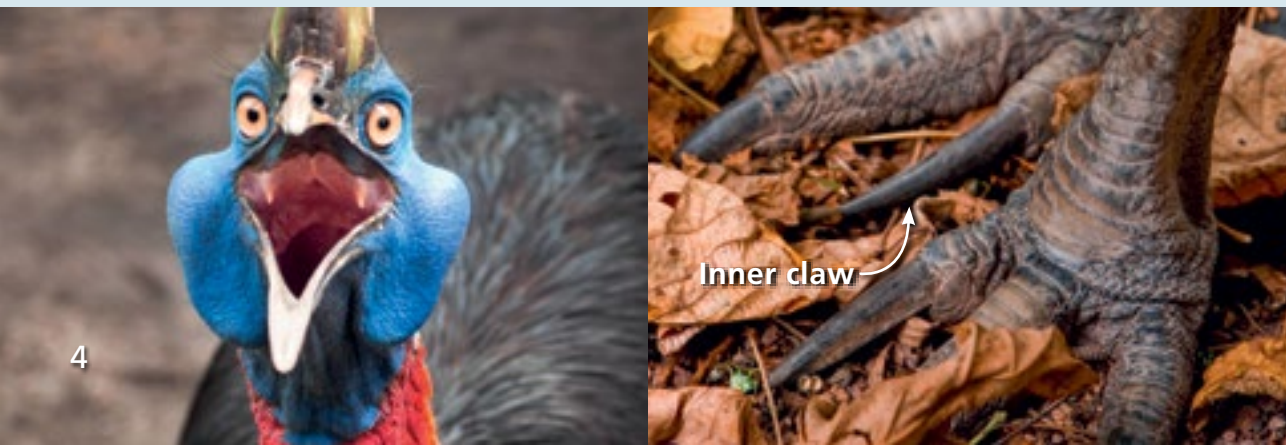


Cassowary

- Some species of animal—like modern humans—are relatively new. Some are positively prehistoric!

Take, for example, the cassowary (CASS-e-ware-ee), a colorful bird found only in Australia, Indonesia (In-doe-NEE-ja), and the island of New Guinea (GIN-ee). Like all birds, cassowaries are modern dinosaurs—but cassowaries have more similarities than most birds to some of the ancient two-legged dinosaurs. They were even one of the earliest types of birds to evolve after the large dinosaurs became extinct.

Cassowaries are more prey than **predator**, but with claws similar to those of a velociraptor (vel-AH-se-rap-tore) dinosaur, they are quite capable of defending themselves when necessary. Their inner claw is particularly lethal and can cut like a five-inch dagger when the bird leaps up high to slash down on its opponent.



Inner claw



Shoebill stork

- ★ The shoebill stork is another modern-day dinosaur. More closely related to pelicans than storks, these huge birds can grow to be as tall as a person and may have an eight-foot wing span. They can weigh up to 15 pounds. Despite their size, however, these birds are still able to fly.

They are top **predators** in the swamps of eastern Africa, where they live. Although their favorite prey are lungfish, their powerful beaks allow them to sometimes snack on small crocodiles!



Komodo dragon

- The Komodo dragon has roamed Earth for over four million years. It can be up to 10 feet long and most weigh around 150 pounds, though some weigh as much as 300 pounds. These giant lizards have been known to **aggressively** attack and kill humans when they feel threatened. But don't worry, they are only found on a few lightly populated Indonesian islands.

Komodo dragons are top predators who feast on everything from small rodents to large water buffalo. They have a venomous bite and 60 extremely sharp teeth. Their jaws can unhinge to open wide, allowing them to swallow huge chunks of meat, and their stomach can expand to allow them to eat up to 80% of their own body weight in one meal. When they feel threatened, they can throw up the entire contents of their stomach to lessen their weight and allow them to run faster.

Komodo dragons are kind of scary but they sure are cool!



Gharial

- ★ Gharial (GARE-ee-el) is another dinosaur-like creature. It has been around for tens of millions of years.
Related to alligators and crocodiles, gharials can grow to be 20 feet long. That's about as long as 20 cats. And they can weigh as much as 400 pounds. That's 40 cats!



They have over 110 teeth in their long, slender snout. However, they are not **aggressive** and would much rather eat fish than take a bite out of you.



Gharial

