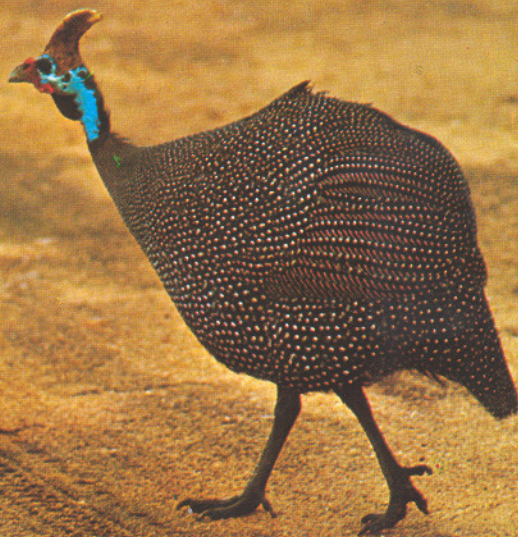


Helmeted Guinea Fowl



Helmeted Guinea Fowl

Has a curious horn on its head

The closest relative of the helmeted guinea fowl is our own domestic guinea fowl, which it resembles in its plumage colour, typically black finely speckled with white; the ornamental horn on the upper part of its head is much more pronounced though. The helmeted guinea fowl also has pendant blue gape wattles. It is in fact one of the many sub-species of the common guinea hen, *Numida meleagris*.

The helmeted guinea fowl is a sedentary bird; it lives in flocks and is a common sight in areas where there is no game shooting. But it is a wary bird and will turn and scurry out of sight behind any intervening scrub; when pressed, it flies off and alights some distance away. It has swift, powerful flight, but flying is not its usual

method of getting about; it far prefers running. It always keeps within reach of water, being one of those creatures which drinks at a set hour every day, in this case around late afternoon.

In the breeding season helmeted guinea fowl break away from the flock in pairs and find a suitable spot to build their nest, a rudimentary collection of roots and twigs arranged in a circle on the ground, where the female lays her eggs. These have exceptionally thick shells. When the young are half grown they and their parents regroup into flocks numbering several hundred birds.

At night, or when they sense a threat, they perch on the lower branches of trees where they feel safe from their enemies.

Laying: 12 to 20 thick-shelled eggs
The eggs vary in colour from yellowish to buff
Incubation: 24 days

Weight of egg: 37 g (1½ oz)
Adult weight: 800 g to 1.5 kg (1¾ to 3¼ lbs)
Length: 55 to 58 cm (22 to 23 in)

Phylum:
Vertebrata

Class:
Aves

Order:
Galliformes

Family:
Numididae

Genus and species:
Numida meleagris damarensis