This is a very distinctive looking pigeon, easily distinguished from other pigeons by their dark blue-grey plumage and large fan-like crest feathers tipped with white and purple. The body is covered in beautiful grayish-blue feathers and the chest in purple feathers, leading to steel-grey belly feathers. There is a lacy sagittal crest on top of the head with tips ending in white. The head is small in proportion to the body, a characteristic of pigeons. The red coloured eyes are surrounded by a dark narrow eye patch. It has a long hooked beak. Legs are long and speckled brown and white; ending in orange feet. The tail is long and has a band of light bluish grey at the tip. This is one of the largest pigeons in the world. It can grow to be the size of a large chicken. They weigh around 3.4 kg and have a length of 75 - 85 cm.

Males and females look almost identical, with males sometimes a little larger than the females. Crowned pigeons differ from other pigeons in having sixteen instead of twelve tail feathers, in the scaling of their legs, in lacking an oil gland and gall bladder, and in possessing the large, fan-shaped crest of erect lacy feathers.

They are distributed in the lowland and swamp forests of northern New Guinea and surrounding islands as well as parts of Indonesia.

It spends a great part of its time searching for food in the soft, marshy ground of its native jungle. If feeds on the ground, mainly on fallen fruit. They also consume berries, seeds, and insects. While searching for food they usually are in groups of two to ten birds.