

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Rainforest Foundation
Monday 1st September 2008



HELP PROTECT THE FATHER OF THE RAINFOREST THIS SUNDAY - 7TH SEPTEMBER NATIONAL THREATENED SPECIES DAY (AND FATHER'S DAY!)



*The Cassowary - voted our
Father of the Year... but for
how much longer?*

The southern cassowary is the world's third largest bird. It is one of Australia's largest land animals and plays a unique role in the ecology of the World Heritage listed rainforests of tropical Australia. However both the Australian Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and the State of Queensland's *Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 1994* list the Southern Cassowary as an endangered species.

Scientists believe only 1200 – 1500 cassowaries survive in the wild in Australia, this is comparable with the number of Giant Pandas in China.

Generally solitary birds, cassowaries only come together to mate during the breeding season which starts around May/June. The female bird will then lay several clutches of 3-5 eggs, by different fathers, before leaving the eggs to Dad for incubating. Dad will then sit on the nest for up to 50 days until the eggs hatch when it then becomes their job to teach the chicks how to forage, caring for the chicks for up to nine months when they will become independent and head out looking for their own piece of rainforest to roam. This journey often ending in disaster - with 40 cassowaries killed on roads in the Mission Beach area, in far north Queensland alone, between 1989 and 1998. A study released in 2007 by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service reported 31 cassowaries died in the wake of Cyclone Larry (March 2006) and further to Larry, in the year leading up to June 2007, 31 birds died in the region; car accidents accounting for 18 fatalities and dog attacks killing six birds. Other causes of death included malnutrition due to lack of habitat and fights with other cassowaries.

For \$25 you can send your Dad an E-Card this National Threatened Species Day (7th September – the same day as Father's Day) and help the Australian Rainforest Foundation protect and extend critical cassowary habitat and recover this threatened 'Father of the Rainforest'. Go to www.arf.net.au/fathersday08

Read more about the ARF's projects www.arf.net.au/projects

Read more about National Threatened Species day
www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/ts-day

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