

The newsletter of the Australian Rainforest Foundation

September 2007

### In this edition

- › Local Partnerships with global affect
- › Funding Boost for Feral Pig Control
- › Free Weed Management Workshop
- › Cassowary sightings in the Daintree
- › Reggie's recovery at the beach
- › Our rainforests are sick
- › Save \$\$\$ on Operation Big Bird Merchandise
- › Featured Artist: Breakaway Art
- › In brief

### Working with you to help save Australia's rainforests

As the weather warms up, with the wet season just around the corner, the rainforest is beginning its seasonal transformation which is just a fantastic time for visitors. But as plants and wildlife blossom and grow – so do weeds, a major headache for locals. In this edition of the arfnews find out about our FREE weed management workshop for Daintree landowners and residents.

Also check out our October special on Operation Big Bird – Save the Cassowary merchandise. These amazing but endangered birds need all the help they can get, and you can help by buying from our range of hats, bags and towels – great gift ideas for Christmas.

And a big thank you to everyone who has responded with email addresses and comments on our new look website and e-newsletter, the response has been fantastic but we hope it doesn't stop there. We encourage you to forward this e-newsletter to as many people as you can and help us spread the word about the threats to our very precious rainforest treasures.

### Local Partnerships with global affect

Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ), the Cairns City Council and the Australian Rainforest Foundation (ARF) have been brought together through a new program developed by the tourism industry to showcase far north Queensland's world leadership in responsible tourism.

Unveiled in Cairns last month the Planet Safe Partnership (PSP) aims to strengthen the tropical north's reputation as not only being the world's leading nature-based destination but one which is proactive in ensuring the survival of the region's delicate ecosystems.

At the launch Rob Giason, Chief Executive Officer of Tourism Tropical North Queensland, said that the organisation recognised its role in providing an example to both the local industry and other tourism promotion organisations.

"As guardians of the Reef and Rainforest, we promise to ensure that these same wonders remain for our visitors' children and great grand-children," Mr Giason said.

As part of its investment in the environment and the planet's future TTNQ has chosen to support the ARFs Hero2 program with a \$5,000 donation which has also been matched by Planet Safe Partnership participant Cairns City Council.

Each \$5,000 donation will be used by the ARF to:

1. Protect old growth rainforest – 1,035 m<sup>2</sup> will be protected in the Daintree– this will be equivalent to storing 112 tonnes equivalent of carbon dioxide.
2. Plant 375 trees to establish wildlife corridors – this will not only help endangered species such as the Cassowary by will also soak up 94 tonnes of carbon dioxide over the life of the trees.
3. Support the operation of our Cassowary hospital at Mission Beach.



Roger Phillips, CEO of the Australian Rainforest Foundation said it was fantastic to see local supporters of a global problem signing up to the Hero2 program.

"The Foundation's mission is to build awareness and support for our rainforests on a global scale but to do that we also need the support of those people who enjoy these world heritage treasures in their own back yard, this commitment by Cairns City Council and TTNQ is a great start."

Australia's tropical rainforests are extremely sensitive to even minor changes in temperature. The CSIRO's modeling in North Queensland predicts that the habitat for many native vertebrates in highland rainforest will be reduced by more than 50% with only one degree of warming, which will put enormous pressure on endemic species.\*

\*"Sensitivity of tropical forests to climate change in the humid tropics of north Queensland", Hilbert, D.W.; Ostendorf, B.; Hopkins, M.S. (2001), Austral Ecology 26 (6), pp. 590-603

### How Does Planet Safe Partnerships (PSP) Work?

To be a PSP all participants must:

- Conduct an energy Audit (Carbon Footprint) – ie review energy use in the
- business operation through an Australian Government accredited audit system.
- Demonstrate environmentally sustainable work-practices through certification
- with a relevant and credible accreditation organisation.
- show practical commitment to the conservation of the ecosystems of Tropical
- North Queensland.

From more information on the Planet Safe Partnership Program visit the website at [www.tropicalaustralia.com.au/planetsafe](http://www.tropicalaustralia.com.au/planetsafe)

The Hero2 initiative gives businesses, individuals and organisations the opportunity to actively invest in protecting and extending Australia's ancient rainforests for the future.



*'The right tree in the right place', Julia Cooper, ARF Project Office - Research and Education*

### Funding Boost for Feral Pig Control

The Commonwealth Government has allocated \$100,000 to the ARF to continue with feral animal control measures in the Cassowary Corridor between Babinda and Mossman in Queensland. The Foundation implemented a feral pig trapping program last year in the aftermath of Cyclone Larry, which devastated much of the cassowary habitat in North Queensland. Feral pigs then competed for what little cassowary food remained in the forest. ARF trappers have now removed more than 500 feral pigs from critical cassowary habitat.

There are so many feral pigs across Australia that there is almost a pig for every person.

Steve Garrad, ARF Conservation Officer and Paul Smith, ARF pig trapping contractor recently appeared on an ABC TV Landline program. Read the transcript here: [Feral pig numbers threaten far north Qld.](#)

If you're having a problem with feral pigs in the Mission Beach area call ARF contractor Paul Smith on 07 4068 8732. [www.boarbusters.com.au](http://www.boarbusters.com.au)



*About to get a birds eye view of the feral pig problem. (From left to right) Paul Smith, John Bean and Mark Willacy (ABC TV Landline).*

### Free Weed Management Workshop

Following consultation with the community, weed management, along with feral animal management, has been identified as a major problem on private blocks in the Daintree and Mission Beach areas, with residents calling not only for financial assistance but the skills and know-how to get the job done themselves. The Foundation's response is to congratulate landholders on this enthusiasm and show our support to residents through training and financial assistance. The first of these workshops will be held in the Daintree with further dates to be announced soon.

#### Daintree Workshop (Mission Beach workshop date to be announced soon)

**Who can attend:** Daintree landholders (or their representatives if living away from the Daintree) and Daintree residents.

**When:** Saturday 3rd November 2007, 9.00am – 2.00pm

**Where:** ARF Block, Lot 177 Turpentine Road (corner Cape Tribulation Road) Diwan

#### Topics covered in the workshop will include:

- Basic plant biology
- Diagnosing weed infestations
- Weed identification
- Selecting appropriate tools, equipment and control methods
- Maintenance of tools and equipment
- Safe use, handling and transport of herbicides
- Developing and reviewing a weed control program
- Applying appropriate treatments to weeds



*They may look pretty but they have to go – join us to find out how.*

Bookings are essential: Please register your interest either with ARF Community Conservation Officer Jolyon Ritchie on (07) 4098 9192 or Jacinta Allen at the ARF Head Office on (07) 4051 2000. Landholders who attend the workshop will also receive a Landholder's Weed Identification and Control Package.

## WEED BUSTER GRANTS FROM \$500 to \$5,000

Following attendance at this or subsequent workshops landholders may be eligible for an ARF Weed Buster Grant of up to \$5,000 to assist them with weed management on private land. For further information on this grant contact Jacinta Allen on (07) 4051 2000. Application forms for grants can also be picked up at the workshopcom.au or call 07 4035 4488.

---

## Cassowary sightings

### Jolyon Ritchie, ARF Conservation Officer Daintree

Recent months have produced an excellent breeding season for the Cassowary with Daintree residents sighting numerous individual adults with two to three chicks each.

On 3rd September a male sub-adult Cassowary was sighted on Lot 177 Turpentine Road (an ARF block) with three chicks following. This block which is adjacent to the Coppers Creek precinct, where the ARF has bought a large area of land, is an excellent wildlife refuge and corridor for Cassowaries.

But with the good news comes some bad. A regular mature female Cassowary bird – named Big Girl by locals (as she stood 6.5 feet fully stretched) that wandered the Coppers Creek precinct, was killed in a traffic incident in late August. Environment Protection Agency officers attended the accident and administered euthanasia drugs.

Look out and always drive slowly when travelling through cassowary habitat as the males will be followed by their chicks while teaching them to forage.

Cassowaries like any parent are protective over their offspring. Never come between a male cassowary and his chicks as the male will feel you are threatening them and become defensive.

### To report an injured cassowary:

- EPA officer on duty: 0402 276 752 • ARF Garners Beach Cassowary Facility: 4068 7183 • EPA hotline: 1300 130 372



*A locally 'adapted' sign in the Daintree, too often proven too true.*

---

## Reggie's recovery at the beach

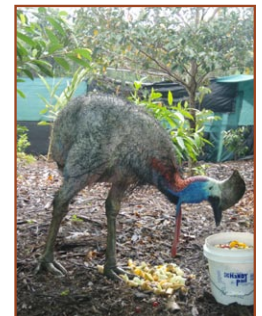
### Steve Garrad, ARF Conservation Officer, Garner's Beach Cassowary Recovery Facility

There has been a flurry amongst Avian Specialists in Australia as it appears the first recorded case of feather loss in cassowaries due to a virus (called circo-virus) has surfaced in Mission Beach. The unfortunate subject of this interest is Reggie, a long time resident of South Mission Beach rainforest, a bird well known to residents. She achieved earlier notoriety for being relocated halfway to Tully with a tracker attached only to reappear in a matter of days.

With her scarred casque, enormous feet and wattles due to 35 year of jungle-living, the loss of her plumage had her shivering in the coolest of our winter nights and at risk of sunburn in the day.

The strategy for her care is just like for humans when a cold virus lays us low - take lots of rest and good nutrition. Reggie is on near double rations to other cassowaries in the facility with vitamin supplements A, D and E.

Is it working? After nearly three months Reggie is showing a fuzz of emerging black feathers all over her body. However the circo-virus is known for causing reemerging feathers to be deformed so Reggie is not yet 'out of the woods', or rather has some time before she is returned to her 'neck of the rainforest'. But as there's nothing wrong with her appetite, her gained weight will stand her in good stead on eventual release - a day we all look forward to!



*Thanks to her healthy appetite Reggie's feathers are returning.*

---

## Our rainforests are sick

Phytophthora root rot, a form of 'dieback', is a disease that affects many native plants and ecosystems, important crops and horticultural plants in Australia and throughout the world. Its global spread has been the consequence of trade and human migration in Australia, the disease infects an especially large range of mainly woody perennial plant species and is also a major threat to some rare and endangered species, including our guardian of the rainforest – the cassowary.

CSIRO monitor a series of twenty long-term research plots across the Wet Tropics. One of these was established near Wallaman Falls on the Seaview Range in 1975, ahead of any logging activity. At establishment there were signs of Phytophthora in the area, and by 1977 it had moved into the research plot. Monitoring of the progress and impact of the

infection continued for the next 12 years. That the disease was present before road-building, logging operations and other human disturbance suggests that another vector introduced the disease to the area.

Extensive pig activity in the area and movement of the infection area uphill out of a gully (infections typically spread downhill as spores are spread in water) support previous suggestions that pigs are implicated in the spread of Phytophthora (e.g. in Brown 1999\*). Phytophthora is not only a serious concern in natural forest habitats, but can cause extensive damage and loss in avocado plantations and to other agricultural crops.

\* Brown, B. 1999. Occurrence and impact of Phytophthora cinnamomi and other Phytophthora species in rainforests of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, and of the Mackay region, Queensland. Pp. 41-76 in Gadek, P.A. (ed.) Patch Deaths in Tropical Queensland Rainforests: Association and Impact of Phytophthora cinnamomi and other Soil Borne Organisms. CRC Tropical Rainforest Ecology & Management, Cairns

To read more about Phytophthora download the following factsheet:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/publications/p-root-rot/pubs/p-root-rot.pdf>

Thanks to Dr Daniel J. Metcalfe, Tropical Plant Ecologist, Tropical Forest Research Centre, Atherton, for this information



Dieback caused by the phytophthora root rot fungus affects a wide variety of ecosystems, such as the banksia woodland shown here. Photo: John Hicks

## Save \$\$\$ on Operation Big Bird Merchandise – October only

### ARF Interpretive Centre and Gift Shop

Check out these savings on Operation Big Bird merchandise available during October only.

- Hand towel & tote bag normally \$33.90 now \$25.00
- Nap sack & bucket hat normally \$32.60 now \$25.00
- Large back pack & cap normally \$35.90 now \$28.00
- Large hand towel & locally made guest soap was \$17.95 now \$15.00

Also purchase any Operation Big Bird merchandise during October and we will send you a cassowary Take Care sticker free.

To see the full range of Operation Big Bird merchandise visit the ARF gift shop and interpretive centre located at 51 Esplanade, Cairns or for mail-orders call us on (07) 4041 1489. Keep watching our website for on-line shopping coming soon.



Think Christmas shopping now – plan ahead, save money and help save Australia's rainforests.

## Featured artist: Breakaway Art

Over the past 18 years Damien Naughton and Samantha Wortelhock have become two of Australia's most popular and collected artists. Now working from Byron Bay under the 'Breakaway Art' banner the joint works of art are colourful and 'naive' in style, with subjects ranging from city landscapes to Red Centre rock's with a variety of colourful flora and fauna in-between, including our much loved cassowary and green tree frog.

Samantha Wortelhock will be painting the portrait of Young Australian of the Year Tania Major for the Archibald prize.

Prints such as 'Sleep Frog' (pictured right) individually signed by the artist are \$22.00 each; greeting cards are \$5 each.



'Sleep Frog' (26 x 20 cms) .

## In Brief

### Grant for Revegetation

The ARF has been allocated \$20,000 from the Threatened Species Network for revegetation of ARF land in the Daintree. The project will start in October and will involve the development of a nursery, collection of seed stock and the planting of a large portion of land acquired in the Cooper Creek precinct of the Daintree. ARF CEO Roger Phillips said the funding would be matched by the ARF to assist with site preparation and feral pig control. "The land is one of three out of our 25 blocks in the Daintree that require some revegetation and we hope to get the trees in the ground before the next wet season," Mr Phillips said.

### Conservation Land For Sale

Lot 5 Leo Road, situated in Tropical North Queensland is a rainforest block of 145 Acres (59 Ha) only 5 minutes from Mission Beach.

The land was purchased by the Australian Rainforest Foundation as over 90% of the land area is rainforest which provides not only habitat for the endangered cassowary but also a linkage to nearby protected areas..

More information and photographs of the block. <http://www.arf.net.au/leoroad/index.html>