

Cassowary Identification Project

We are asking anyone who sees cassowaries regularly in their neighbourhood to sign up for our "Cassowary Identification Project" All you need to do is keep a diary of what time, what direction and more particularly take notice of the birds appearance so we can positively identify individuals. Digital cameras have made it so much easier to observe our wildlife at close range.

Conch St/Oasis

Many birds are moving about now with chicks such as this male with four very young stripeys. The photo below was sent into C4 so that the "awesome sight" of this new family could be shared. It was taken near the vegetation line on the southern side of Conch Street.



Photo Doug Pidgen

A resident whose property is in the middle of a habitat corridor nearby has seen this bird and the female it mates with each year for the last 13 years. The birds were already both adults when he moved into the neighbourhood so with a four year maturity time they would be at least 17 years of age.

Late afternoon a few days after the above photo was taken, a resident in Conch Street rang to say they had a stripey on its own in the yard. It was one of the four chicks and the rest of the family was no where to be seen.



Photo Lynne Scaffidi

Everyone in the vicinity was alerted to call if they saw the birds in the hope the family could be reunited.

After spending the night and most of the next day alone in a cage (near the chook pen for company) the phone call finally came. QPWS ranger Dan and the Conch St resident met on site where the dad and his three other chicks were passing through.

When the dad heard the sound of the chick he rushed to the vehicle where ranger Dan had to

hurriedly release the chick which was very happy to be back where it belonged.



Photo Lynne Scaffidi

A big thanks to Dan, Lynne, John and all those who worked to help make this a happy ending. If Doug had not shared his delight at seeing the new family go through his yard by sending in the photos we would not have been able to act so quickly to reunite them.



Photo Doug Pidgen

The male is very easy to identify as he has no wattles. We checked photos of the bird with two chicks photographed trapped inside the Oasis fence last year.

Yes, it is the same bird, reinforced by the photos Doug sent showing him last year with two chicks.

This bird has been ranging in the same area all its life. The introduction of fencing associated with residential development has placed an enormous barrier to free movement and increases the threats of interaction with not only cars, humans, and dogs but in their natural order, conflict with other cassowaries. The map below shows where there has been positive identification of the bird with no wattles. We suspect that it also crosses the road over to Royal Palms Estate as there were reported sightings of an adult with two chicks around the time of the one trapped in Oasis.



This important information will help to inform future local area planning and strategic revegetation projects to ensure the best possible outcome for wild-life reliant on habitat connectivity in our high biodiversity area.

Bingil Bay/Garners Beach

Over at Bingil Bay/Garners Beach way a very interesting situation is being observed. Early in August C4 received a phone call from a driver who stopped to let two adult cassowaries with three chicks cross Garners Beach Road. It was the first report of chicks for the season and several residents in the area were subsequently alerted and delighted by the sight of the family together.



Photo Margaret Johnson

The male, easily recognised by his slightly deformed left foot had not been seen for three months. The family are seen regularly now as they continue to range together. Both the birds are well known in the area, the very large female is known as 'Bella' and the male as 'Dad'



We had a chance to photograph 'Bella' after a phone call from a resident reporting a cassowary with two chicks sitting under a tree at a property near Plantation Drive.

The huge bird was immediately recognisable by her tall straight casque and very large wattles with slight damage

to the one on the left.

It is not unusual for the male and female to pair up again for a few weeks after the chicks have hatched. Without knowing that it was 'Bella', one would assume any bird seen with chicks was a male but now two months after they were first seen together it appears the male and female are sharing the parenting role. They have been seen separately twice now and with a different number of chicks.



We look forward to following the progress of this family.

Carmoo

A male cassowary has been seen with five chicks. Crossing the road at Sellar's farm.

Cassowaries are known to rear up to five chicks but this case is unusual as three chicks are stripeys and two are older and already brown coloured. It isn't known which of the chicks belong to the parent but it is clear some of them are adopted.

There is some concern about a male known to residents in the area that has not been seen around.

There are reports of three roaming dogs in the vicinity of Carmoo which have been seen at various places along the bush line to as far as the South Mission Turnoff. These dogs, if feral, would be surviving by killing wildlife.

Narragon



Photo Preston Clothier

A seldom seen sight these days at Mission Beach of a cassowary accessing the beach (Above at Narragon Bch). The Clump Point area has some of the best developed littoral rainforest in Australia. The high density of plant species growing down onto the beach offers a wide variety of fruits. Protein from marine life such as crustaceans including crabs contribute to the balance of the diet and health of the species.

A large cassowary was seen recently at the mouth of Wongaling Creek, (commonly known as Porter's Creek). The vegetation is critically endangered littoral rainforest including wetlands and connects to the World Heritage Area on the Walter Hill Range. Only a few habitat linkages still exist across Cassowary Drive, the widest being Garrett Corridor.

The less developed areas of Garners Beach and Lugger Bay also offer the opportunity for birds to access the beaches.

Liz Gallie

Please call 4068 7315 if you have a story to tell of a cassowary near you.