

2015
PiCA
Recipient

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PASSION INTO
[CONSERVATION] ACTION
GRANT



Save the Cassowary: Bringing the Message from Australia to Birmingham



The Southern or double-wattled cassowary is an iconic yet endangered bird of Queensland, Australia. It is threatened by habitat destruction, feral pigs, dog attacks and vehicle strikes. Rainforest Rescue has created the Save the Cassowary campaign launched throughout Australia in March 2014; with plans to become global in 2015.

Benefit to Conservation

- Participating at the Garner's Beach Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre at Mission Beach and the Daintree Rainforest will directly benefit the local conservation efforts.
- Educating Zoo visitors about the conservation of the cassowary, as well as other animals and plants in their ecosystem will allow our guests to take part in the conservation of this incredible animal.

Benefit to the Birmingham Zoo

- By educating visitors and providing them with opportunities to assist in raising funds for this cause, BZI will show its commitment to the conservation of the cassowary.
- Bringing this global campaign to BZI will help make us a strong international partner of Rainforest Rescue and within the AZA, EAZA and ZAA network.

Benefit to Career

Will give me a greater knowledge of the cassowary, its ecology, plight and conservation which I will apply to education programs. Will be able to use my interpretation skills, newfound knowledge and ideas to create new learning experiences for visitors.

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Feeding grapes to the male cassowary at Cairns Tropical Zoo

PiCA Grant Summary Carrie Brooks

Learning about the Save the Cassowary campaign and cassowaries in Australia was quite an adventure. The purpose of my visit was to learn more about the campaign created by Rainforest Rescue, including how it was being implemented at Australian partner zoos, so that I could successfully bring the campaign to the Birmingham Zoo. I was able to meet many Australian colleagues and cassowaries in my learning process and able to return with many ideas.

During my travels I visited five zoos/wildlife sanctuaries on the Eastern coast of Australia. At each I was able to see their cassowaries and meet keepers, educators and managers to learn more about the care of cassowaries, the Save the Cassowary campaign and education programs. Several of the zoos offered keeper talks and two even offered opportunities to feed the cassowaries. I was able to have discussions with many colleagues about the many problems cassowaries face and ideas for connecting Alabama visitors with an Australian bird.

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A few days later I drove to Mission Beach, an area known for cassowaries. As I approached the area signs became increasingly common alerting people to slow down and that cassowaries had been sighted in the area recently. Amazingly I was fortunate enough to see a wild cassowary one morning. The area along the forest was empty and then suddenly a large cassowary was standing there. It stretched and smoothed some of its feathers before taking a final look around and then walked a short way down the road and vanished into the rainforest. It was incredible to be able to see a cassowary in the wild.



Road signs in Mission Beach urging travelers to drive carefully in areas where cassowaries have been spotted. Car strikes are one of the most common causes of cassowary deaths.



The Save the Cassowary Campaign at Taronga Zoo



Feeding the male cassowary "Princess" at Sydney Wildlife Zoo

**Wild Cassowary –
an unbelievably lucky
sighting of a
wild cassowary
in Mission Beach**



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At Mission Beach I visited the Garners Beach Cassowary Rehabilitation Centre to see the three orphan chicks whose care Rainforest Rescue was funding. The chicks were about five months old and were just starting to lose the characteristic striped pattern of young chicks. Two of the chicks had been found orphaned while the third had been hit by a car but with vet care it had made a full recovery. I found out that they will likely need care for almost a whole year before they could be released into the wild and the Save the Cassowary campaign was helping to fund their care during this time.

Additionally I visited the World Heritage Daintree Rainforest which is another important cassowary habitat. I met with two employees of Rainforest Rescue to learn more about how potential land is assessed for purchase and newly purchased land is restored to a native rainforest. We discussed the challenges and difficulties but I was able to see the successful restoration of several lots, one of which had once been filled with exotic plants and rubbish.



3 orphaned cassowary chicks at Garners Beach Cassowary Rehabilitation Centre
(approximately 5 months old)

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I was also fortunate enough to be able to visit the Rainforest Rescue headquarters. There I met the acting director Grant Binns and board chair Madeleine Faught. We discussed the Save the Cassowary campaign, Rainforest Rescue's work with rainforest restoration, preservation and the care of the orphan chicks at Mission Beach. Then we began to plan how the Birmingham Zoo could become a leading partner in the United States and implement the campaign.



Visit to Rainforest Rescue headquarters and meeting with Madeleine Faught, chair and Grant Binns, managing director



Cassowary habitat being replanted with fruit trees in the Daintree Rainforest

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Cassowary Day was a fun opportunity for families to learn more about cassowaries and how people can help them

Everyone wants to be a cassowary at Cassowary Day 2015



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Rainforest Rescue Save the Cassowary Campaign <http://savethecassowary.org.au/>

