



Queensland News

Rainforest Live

September 29, 1997

Volume 2, Number 2

LINKING CLASSROOMS AROUND THE WORLD TO RESEARCH SITES AROUND THE WORLD

Magnificent Creatures Inhabit Rainforest...



Lisa Blair
University of Pennsylvania
Sept. 18, 1997
Animals in the Rainforest

Did you ever hear a call of a Wompoo Pigeon, the high pitched whistle of a disturbed Long-Tailed Rat or perhaps the thumps of a nearby Wallaby? The Wompoo Pigeon, the Long-Tailed Rat and the Wallaby are just a few of the numerous animals that one may encounter while hiking, bushwhacking or driving through a tropical rainforest. These magnificent creatures, in conjunction with a plethora of other exotic animals, inhabit



specific niches or ranges within a tropical rainforest. Each animal plays a distinct role within the rainforest community.

The greatest diversity of the animals found here can best be attributed to the diversity of plants, the rich life forms and the wide range of food resources. Tropical

rainforests tend to be structurally complex therefore accommodating more niches for more animals. As far as I'm concerned, the more animals the better!

Animals are wonderful and interesting creatures. One does not have to travel to the rainforest in order to appreciate their beauty. The next time you have

QUOTABLE QUOTE

"The whole secret of the study of nature lies in learning to use one's eyes."

George Sand
Nouvelles Lettres d'un Voyageur
1869

some free time, take a walk, keep your eyes open and listen intently for foreign or unusual sounds. Perhaps, with some perseverance, you might be able to determine the calls, whistles, or thumps of the animals in your neck of the woods. Try it! It might be worth your while!

EXTRA! EXTRA!

- 9/20** Early morning mistnetting (banding birds). We will be able to practice identifying the different birds of the Australian Rainforest. Students get to go into town for the first time tonight.
- 9/21** Students day off! To Lake Eacham for relaxation and swimming. Must check skink pitfalls (animal traps) today. Need to pack and prepare for field trip to Mission Beach.
- 9/22** Packed up and left for Mission Beach. After lunch, field lecture with Joan Bentrupperbaumer on issues of Coastal Cassowary Habitat.
- 9/23** Hiked with Joan through Tam O'Shanter State Forest looking for signs of Cassowaries. Two sightings and many signs of them!
- 9/24** Traveled back to the center. Had an afternoon field exercise on vertebrate field methods (trapping techniques).
- 9/25** Caught four rodents, two different species, in our live traps.

Inside this Issue...

Field Trip

by Daniel Tonkin

Rainforest Corridor

by Bekki Stevens

Mistnetting

by Marah Studer

Research Update

by Ecy McIlvain

Student Journals



Daniel Tonkin
Duke University
Sept 17, 1997
Field Trip to Stockwellia Forest

This afternoon we all took a field trip to the Stockwellia forest at the base of Mt. Bartle Frere. It was a forty minute drive from the center, ending on a little dirt road out in the forest. We then had to hike another half hour or so, which was really cool, because we hadn't gone that deep into the rainforest before. The path was really narrow and mucky, which made it all the more adventurous. We eventually got to an area which had some huge trees called Stockwellia. The area was one of the few areas of undisturbed forest which has never been logged, and the Stockwellia trees don't exist anywhere else. So it was impressive to see these rare trees. One of them was hollow so you could walk in one side and out the other. We talked about whether these trees would make a good tourist attraction, and pretty much agreed that it would be better to keep the trees isolated where they won't have their habitat damaged by tourism. The only problem is that people might be more eager to protect the threatened area if they knew about it and had been there.



Bekki Stevens
Univ. of Denver
Sept. 16, 1997
Rainforest Corridor

Today we went on a field trip to a riparian area, which is an area next to a stream. There was lots of farm land with many grazing cows. There were also two separate sections of forest. The scenery was extremely beautiful. The purpose of our outing was to investigate the progress of the trees planted inbetween the two forested areas. The corridor that is being built will hopefully help animals get from one area to another. There are many reasons why this is beneficial. One of the most important reasons is to link different animal populations genetically. The corridor will help facilitate movement of the animals so that this can happen. A corridor will decrease the isolation of the animals, which is a big concern for cassowaries. It will hopefully increase population sizes of other animals as well.

There are also some disadvantages to corridors. For example, they can promote the transimtion of contagious diseases from one animal to another. It can help fires and other catastrophes to spread from one fragment to another fragment. Corridors also increase exposure of the animals to predators, domestic animals and poachers. The costs of building these are immense as well. The particular corridor we went to today cost about \$15,000 per hectare. Although there are drawbacks, it is most likely that the benefits of the corridors will outweigh the nega-

tive aspects. Helping to monitor this corridor is a very important part of some of the research we are doing here. I believe that every piece of data that we collect will help scientists in the future to save the species that are in isolation.



Marah Studer
Smith College
Sept. 18, 1997
Mistnetting

This morning I got an early start at 5:45 am, which I'm now learning isn't so unusual here at Warrawee. My early rise was due to the fact that a small group of us were "mist-netting" for birds around our center. Mistnetting is done by stretching a nearly invisible net with pockets between two tall poles about twenty feet apart. As the birds are flying, they get caught in the net and fall into the pockets. This is amazing because it allows us to get a really close look at some of the local species with out harming them. We were lucky enough to find eleven different birds in our nets. One of my favorites was the male Riflebird, a black bird about the size of a small crow, with green fluorescent markings on its head and body.

There is really something magical about rising up before the sun and listening to the chorus of waking birds. In this rainforest chorus, there are so many different calls, I realize there are many birds I still haven't seen.





Q&A

Q. What kinds of classes do you have to take to learn about the rainforest?

Ms. Van Alstine's Class, Hull, MA

A: We take three basic classes here in Australia; Ecological Economics, Rainforest Ecology and Forest Management. Combined, they provide a broad overview of the problems in the rainforest and give ideas for how to improve the situation.

We also have lectures in the field to get hands-on experience.



While the professor is explaining something, we get to see what they are talking about. It makes learning it much easier than reading it

from a book, and it's much more fun!

The great part about classes here is that everything I learned in school, in the United States, I can apply to real life situations. It's exciting and encouraging to know that what I learn in class is going to be useful to me in the future.

Sarah Hatfield

Want to send a question?

Email us at
rain@sitalive.com

Q. Are there any poisonous snakes?

Amy, Texarkana, TX

A: In the rainforest where we live there are many snakes, but not all of them are poisonous. Fred, the



python who lives in one of the staff cabins, is more of a pet than a threat. I have not seen any snakes here myself, but the Eastern Brown

Snake, the Taipan and the King Brown Snake all live in this area. The Fierce Snake, a snake that is also found in this area, is one of the most venomous. So far this semester we have not had any problems with snakes!

Christian Frazar

Q. Is it hard to be away from your family and friends? How will you keep in touch with them?

Gena, Oklahoma City, OK

A: It is sometimes difficult being away from friends and family, but, as college students, we're accustomed to being away from the people we love for long periods of



time. When we do miss our friends and family, we can call them on the phone at the SFS Center. Because we're 14

hours ahead of the US E.S.T., we have to schedule our call so that we don't call in the middle of the night. We also write letters, postcards and aerograms to send home. Personally, I write at least one letter every night and most of my cabin does too. One staff member goes to the Post Office daily to drop off mail and

pick up our letters. It takes 10 to 14 days for mail to arrive in the US, so we usually call if we need to tell our family or friends something really important.

Valerie Hansard

Q. What do your cabins look like?

John R., Los Angeles, CA

A: The four cabins of the Center for Rainforest Studies are scattered throughout the forest. My cabin is a ten minute walk down a dirt road and a winding, narrow, muddy forest trail to the main building.

It has eight beds spread around



the cabin, with a plastic cubby next to each one. I place all my granola bars and toiletries in the giant metal cupboard so the kangaroo rats

and possums will not eat them.

Some of the exciting events of the past week include; Andrew finding three giant, hairy spiders in his bed and Jeremy spotting a pademelon hopping on our porch. Our cabin also has an intercom which connects to the other cabins and the center. It is only for emergency use, but a malfunction caused it to ring all night long and kept us from sleeping. Our dim light over the table in the center of the cabin is powered by a solar panel on the roof. The glass windows and wooden floor give the cabin a cozy feel. Tucked in the rainforest, Cabin 1 is a wonderful place to live.

Brian Goldberg



Ecy McIlvain
Connecticut College
Sept. 21, 1997

Research Update: The Endangered Cassowary

Over the past week we have been studying the effects of fragmentation or separation of small patches of rainforest. We have learned that one of the most dangerous and significant effects of fragmentation is the depletion of the cassowary bird population.

Cassowaries are large flightless birds related to emu's and ostriches. They have fluffy black feathered bodies on top of long skinny legs. Their necks are long and black and their heads are brightly colored; blue, red and orange. Cassowaries are a very important part of the rainforest ecosystem. They are involved in seed dispersal for over 200 rainforest tree species and provide the only known dispersal mechanism for at least half. Cassowaries are thought to occupy large territories, so a vast continuous area of rainforest is necessary to sustain a viable population—the amount of birds necessary for the species to perpetuate.

We have only seen one cassowary in our ten days here and apparently it is the only one in the vicinity. The behavior of individual birds and the state of the population in general is studied in large part by examining cassowary scat. The seeds in each scat which can often run upwards of 200 are indicative of what the cassowary is eating and therefore which fruits are important to its survival. Tomorrow morning we leave for a three day field trip to Mission Beach. We will meet with Joan Bentrupperbaumer, a woman has been studying the cassowary population, so we can learn much more about the cassowary. For now though it is clear that the survival of the cassowary is crucial to the survival of the rainforest, and the conservation of large rainforest areas is important to the survival of the cassowary.

Home Connection: Rainforest Animals

Make a list of animals mentioned in this newsletter that are found in the Queensland Rainforest. Discuss what you think they might look like. Make a drawing or two before looking at pictures of the animals—imagining how each animal will look. Next plan a trip to your local zoo or wildlife park. Look for the animals found in the rainforest. What kinds of observations can you make about them? How do they look in comparison with what you thought and what your drew? How do they act? Take the activity one step further by locating the animals in an encyclopedia. What other information can you find out about the animals? Discuss the information that you find with a friend.



1. How do students at CRS mistnet for birds?
2. What types of snakes can be found in the area around the Center for Rainforest Studies?
3. How would you describe a cassowary?
4. What could you do to save the cassowary?

Site's Log

9/25/97

TIME: 11:30 a.m. AEST
 (Australian Eastern Standard Time)

AIR TEMP: 26° C

RAINFALL: 0 mm

WX: sunny and warm with a slight breeze

KEY:

°C=degrees Celsius

mm=millimeter

1. They stretch a thin net with pockets between two tall poles. As the birds fly by they get caught in the net and fall into the pockets.
2. Eastern Brown, Tairapan, King Brown and the Fierce Snake.
3. A large flightless bird with a fluffy black feathered body, a long black neck and a brightly colored blue, red, and orange head.
4. Answers will vary.

Answers to Quiz



Sept. 29, 1997
 Volume 2, No. 2
 © 1997 Ocean Challenge, Inc.
 All rights reserved.

Send us your questions!

phone (800) 890-3049 or 617/357-0055
e-mail rain@sitalive.com
WWW www.sitalive.com
fax 617/357 - 0056
mail Ocean Challenge, Inc.
 20 Park Plaza, Suite 424
 Boston, MA 02116