

# Another cassowary road death

The driver of a vehicle which struck and killed a cassowary on Monday morning has been asked to come forward and give details of the incident.

The call for the driver's assistance comes from Tully veterinarian, Graham Lauridsen, who was once again called out to gather the remains and conduct an autopsy of a cassowary.

The latest cassowary death occurred at about 6.45am Monday on the El Arish Mission Beach Road near Fenby's Gap.

Community for Coastal and Cassowary Conservation (C4) spokeswoman, Liz Gallie, said the group responded to a call and on arrival at the scene found three tourists standing around a dead adult bird.

"The tourists, two from America

and one from Canada, were visiting the Lacey's Creek/Licuala Walk on the El Arish Mission Beach Road in the hope of seeing a cassowary in the wild," Ms Gallie said.

"They did, but not in the way they had planned.

"While on the walking track they heard a loud thump and rushed back to the road only to see an adult cassowary had been hit by a vehicle and lay dying on the road.

"The driver did not stop.

"It occurred on a stretch of road with good visibility and a passing motorist reported the accident.

"The visitors moved the critically injured bird to the edge of the road but were unable to do anything but watch it die.

"Traffic strike is the number one killer of cassowaries after habitat loss and this will bring the recorded deaths on roads at Mission Beach to 57 in 15 years.

"The toll is likely to be higher as not all strikes are reported."

Doctor Lauridsen said, as in this case, it is generally not the person driving the vehicle that hits a cassowary that reports the incident.

"I want to emphasise the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service rangers and I are not out to cast blame on the driver," Dr Lauridsen said.

"We want to find out the details of the incident.

"The rangers and I would appreciate speaking to the driver - without fear of retribution to the driver.

"The bird killed on Monday was alive for a little while after being hit, unfortunately.

"It was a huge adult female, approximately 20 years old, and she had laid eggs in the previous two months.

"She was in very good condition and full of native food.

"Given the size of the bird, there would have been damage to the vehicle unless it had a big bull-bar."

Ms Gallie said she found it hard to understand how anyone could hit and seriously injure a cassowary and not stop to see what they could do, or at the very least report it.

"It is important that these accidents are reported," Ms Gallie said.

"It will allow us to better understand where and why they happen so

strategies can be introduced to avoid deaths such as this in the future.

"We know that speed is responsible for many of the cassowary road deaths and, as proven in the Daintree, reducing the speed limit reduces the risk.

"Increased traffic also increases the risk. The increased traffic that can be anticipated from the oversupply of development already approved at Mission Beach has not been addressed.

"More development is being approved without proper planning or adequate developer contributions to the obvious need there will be for what may be very expensive traffic management solutions."

Report injured wildlife to Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service on 1300 130 372.