



**AWAY YOU GO:** Scott Sullivan (QPWS Head of Conservation Services North Queensland) gives a helping hand to a cassowary as it comes out of sedation, while Hamish Campbell from the University of Queensland photographs the moment.

# World first project on cassowaries

Members of Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, CSIRO, researchers from the University of Queensland and local veterinarians were involved in a world first research project involving cassowaries in the Etty Bay and Mourilyan areas.

The project involved the sedation and capture of wild cassowaries in their native habitat, placing GPS and UHF tracking systems on them, taking blood and feather samples for DNA and health profiles, micro-chipping them for later identification and then releasing them again where they were found.

"The use of GPS tracking systems is a first for cassowaries," Tully veterinarian, Doctor Graham Lauridsen said.

"As a pilot project this will be able to give a lot of useful information regarding how well the system will work in the future.

"We expect it will give us a lot of information on what cassowaries do all day, especially when they are out of the sight of humans in their true rainforest habitat.

"It will also tell things like how much time they spend foraging, how many times they transect roads, how much distance they move over time and what they do during the night.

"We get anecdotal reports about this sort of information but to be able to have this information captured and subsequently published in the scientific literature will be a first for science.

"Five cassowaries were captured and subsequently released over a four-day period.

"These birds were tracked with the UHF system post release to ensure they were back in their natural habitat and behaving normally.

"A couple of the birds were spotted post release and were handling the tracking system placed on them with no sign of discomfort or irritation.

"The tracking systems are designed to remain in place for about 40 days.

"Once the systems are recovered the data from them will be downloaded and hopefully we will have some interesting information to share with the world."

The Garners Beach Rehabilitation facility has been a hive of cassowary activity also in the last few weeks with some sad news and good news happening there.

The sad news was that the "featherless" cassowary known as "Reggie" was euthanised and an autopsy was performed.

Results from this are still coming in but it seems that "Reggie" was suffering a thyroid gland disease, which has never been seen in cassowaries before.

The good news is that there are three new cassowary chicks at the centre.

These three are orphans from the Daintree area where their father was hit by a car about one month ago.

They were successfully captured and transported to the Garners Beach centre where they have settled in nicely.

"The plan for these chicks is that they will be kept safely housed and fed and then hopefully at some point in the future be able to be released back into the forest somewhere near to where they came from," Dr Lauridsen said.