



# Searching for Pekpek: Cassowaries and Conservation in the New Guinea Rainforest

*Andrew L. Mack*

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Andrew Mack immersed himself in a vast expanse of roadless, old growth rainforest of Papua New Guinea in 1987.

He and his co-investigator Debra Wright, built a research station by hand and lived there for years. Their mission was to study the secretive and perhaps most dinosaur-like creature still roaming the planet: the cassowary.

The ensuing adventures of this unorthodox biologist--studying seeds found in cassowary droppings (pekpek), learning to live among the indigenous Pawai'ia, traversing jungles, fighting pests and loneliness, struggling against unscrupulous oil speculators, and more--are woven into a compelling tale that spans two decades. Mack shares the insights he garnered about rainforest ecology while studying something as seemingly mundane as cassowary pekpek. He ultimately gained profound insight into why conservation is failing in places like Papua New Guinea and struggled to create a more viable strategy for conserving some of Earth's last wild rainforests.

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