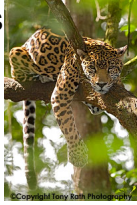


Conservation

The Belize Zoo provides an exciting spot for the people of Belize, as well as visitors to our country, to see and learn about the dynamic wildlife which calls Belize home. Other important conservation work is also carried out by The Belize Zoo. Here is a quick look at two of these programs



Problem Jaguar Rehabilitation Program

A "Problem Jaguar" is a jaguar who has been repeatedly preying upon livestock or domestic animals. From a nationwide survey, funded by the Wildlife Conservation Society, WCS, it was revealed that over 60 cats had been shot, between the years 2002 and 2004, due to their repeated attacks and kills upon cattle, sheep, and horses.

Trying to reduce this serious problem calls for a variety of strategies. Continual loss of jaguar habitat and the steady reduction of prey base are key factors in the situation which leads to jaguars becoming "problems".

The Belize Zoo developed a "rehabilitation program", so that a more positive option could be offered to problem jaguars. First, the jaguar is kept in a holding enclosure and given positive human contact daily. By hand-feeding the cats often each day, a bond of trust forms, and the negative association with humans is lessened.

Once this level of behavior is achieved, the jaguar moves on to "step 2" of Rehab. This is when the cat goes out in a spacious exhibit, with climbing, walking and swimming areas. The cats still remain on a close contact level with people.

For the final step of Rehab, people contact is increased. This is to prepare the cat for a new life in an approved American Zoological Association, AZA, facility. Working in concert with the AZA and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the problem jaguar would then be transferred to a zoo in North America. There, the jaguar would become part of an important captive breeding program. At this time, zoos are eager to bolster the genetic base of the North American captive jaguar population.

Any zoo receiving a rehab jaguar from this program, would exhibit the cat with education graphics. This information would explain about the natural history of the jaguar, as well as the

predator/prey conflict which currently persists in Belize and in other parts of the Mesoamerican region. Also, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has set as a condition for acceptance, that the particular zoological facility must also contribute funds back into the jaguar's home range country, to support in-site conservation work.

It is not possible to return a problem jaguar back into the wild. Many times, these are injured animals, unfit to compete among their wild counterparts for prey. It has been noted that a jaguar, known to be a livestock/domestic animal predator, trapped and released, will return to its "bad habits". The Belize Zoo recognizes that this rehabilitation program is not an answer to the problem, but stands as a brighter option to that of killing the cat.

The Belize Zoo is proud to have kick started this project. And we thank the following for their participation and support:

- The Forest Department/Ministry of Natural Resources, Belize
- The ZOO in Gulf Breeze, Florida
- Milwaukee Zoological Society
- Lowry Park Zoo, Tampa, Florida
- The Philadelphia Zoo
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- Jaguar Conservation Trust
- The Armand G. Erpf Fund
- Maria Norbury Trust
- Wildlife Trust

[For The Maya Mountain Expedition - Belize 2007 Image Gallery](#)