

A Landmark Day for The Belize Zoo

Many said that "it just can't happen!" With the amount of damage brought on by Hurricane Richard on the 24th of October, how could The Belize Zoo remain closed for one month only and re-open on the very first day of December?



Well, the destruction left Hurricane Richard's wake was no match for the amount of dedication and determined spirit alive at the Zoo. Not only did The Belize Zoo re-open on December 1st, but the celebration was one of the most exuberant events in Zoo history! A special presentation was made to Mrs. Myrtle Flowers, who had served as Director of Education for a decade. She recalled her days at the Zoo with pride. Mrs. Flowers noted, as well, the many Belizeans, now working in professions within the natural resources arena in Belize, got their initial "kick start" through a Belize Zoo training program. Senator Omar Figueroa, who is also a PhD candidate studying the ecology of the Jaguar, gave a profound speech noting that The Belize Zoo is vital for wildlife education and awareness in Belize, and emphasized how much the Zoo was missed by so many during its month of closure. Or, as Joni Mitchell so appropriately sang in the classic song "Big Yellow Taxi" "You don't know what ya got til its gone".... A book launching was also part of the Zoo's re-opening.



Two books are "hot off the press" about "Jaguar Ambassador", Junior Buddy. One, a primary reader, JUNIOR BUDDY: A JAGUAR'S TALE, was written by the world's largest children's book publishing company, Scholastic. Junior Buddy's heartwarming story is now in bookstores throughout the United States, Canada and the UK, bringing a huge amount of attention to Belize, and the conservation efforts being made in our country to protect these great cats for future generations. A book was given to each child at the Zoo's historic re-opening, by Mrs. Kim Simpliss Barrow. Big smiles were everywhere! Music and drumming filled the air by the talented Ugandani Dance Group, bringing "dance fever" to the crowd! Then, just before Zoo Director Sharon Matola gave a short "Let's go and see our up and coming post Hurricane Richard Belize Zoo", the Belize Defence Force flew over the happy attendees in a perfect aerial salute.

Everyone was anxious to enter the Zoo. And even though some of the Zoo is still receiving "first aid", the repaired areas brought these comments...."I just can't believe it!"...."it's so splendid!" "It's better than before!" Zoo officials glowed with pride, joy filled the air, and everyone agreed that The Best Little Zoo in the World is making a strong, innovative, and happy comeback.

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