

April At 28!



It was a great day for a very great animal. April the Tapir's 28th birthday celebration at the Zoo was kicked off with an amazing performance by the Belize Tumbler's Association. Talented young acrobats wowed the crowd with their aerial twists and turns. What a performance!! Then, over 100 children along with teachers and parents, joined together to bring birthday wishes to April. First, the "Mountain Cow Song" was sung by the La Democracia Pre-school Gibnuts.

Then....April's cake appeared, brought onto the scene by Education Officer, Jamal Andrewin. Horse chow and honey, grated carrots and cucumber, and garnished with hibiscus flowers, what mountain cow wouldn't be thrilled? April was! While the crowd sang Happy Birthday to her, she eagerly devoured the birthday cake masterpiece. The kids all saw that sharing is a good thing, as April allowed her mountain cow friend, "Bullet Head", to join her in the birthday feast.

The story of April is heartwarming. She was brought to Sharon Matola in April of 1983, by a hunter. He found her lying along the Sibun riverbank, unable to move. She was seriously infested with infamous screw worm maggots. Clearly, if she had not been rescued, the young tapir would have died.

Sharon was just starting The Belize Zoo at that time. She and "April" became roommates and the lucky mountain cow received round-the-clock tender loving care. April was nursed back to health, and remained friendly towards people. The idea to promote her as an important symbol on behalf of all Tapirs, which are officially listed as Endangered by the IUCN, quickly took form. From early on, April began showing hundreds of folks that our National Animal is a gentle herbivore, and plays an important role in the ecological profile of Belize.



Birthday parties for April the Tapir began when she turned 2 years old. Back then, perhaps

there would be 10-15 kids on board to share in the fun. Gradually, the birthday parties gained a reputation of being a "must attend" event, and more and more kids came to the Zoo to enjoy April's big day. When April turned Sweet 16, CNN made her an international star, by featuring her birthday party on their newscast! Clearly, April is a mountain cow who has done a mountain of good on behalf of all Tapirs. Happy Birthday April! We love you!