

Big Congratulations to Tony Gare!



Everyone at The Belize Zoo is so proud of Tony. The Belize Audubon Society awarded our superb animal management supervisor with the extremely prestigious James A. Waight Award. The gala event, which took place recently at the Chateau Caribbean Hotel, was a highly-spirited evening. Tony received his beautiful plaque from James Waight's grandson, Mica James Del Margo.

Zoo Director, Sharon Matola, gave an introduction to Tony, citing his many contributions to Belizean conservation efforts over the past 25 years. Some of Tony's accomplishments include: His pioneering of the captive breeding program for the green iguana. Thanks to this initial breeding program, our charming green iguanas have a far better chance of survival into the future. Tony's love of Belizean wildlife has never been just a "Tony ting". He has gone to extreme measures, aimed at sharing his knowledge with fellow Belizeans.

Crocodiles? There's Tony, assisting the Forest Department in the safe capture of any crocodile believed to be injured or a possible threat. Problem Jaguars? Again, Tony, along with his colleague, Humberto Wohlers, is on the front lines with the Forest Department to address these difficult environmental issues. No other jaguar rescued by the zoo reflects this professional approach more than our beautiful black jaguar, Lucky Boy. Tony and colleague, Humberto, stayed patiently with Lucky Boy for over a day. Finally, after a long wait, skinny and emaciated Lucky Boy, dragged himself into a crate which had some chicken treats inside. They gently closed the door. Then, they drove ten miles an hour all the way from the Toledo District to The Belize Zoo, where Lucky Boy began getting his necessary survival care.

Tony was at the forefront in efforts to save the Sibun River from a hideous and badly-planned landfill project. As the head of the Sibun Watershed Association, SWA, during that difficult time, he showed possible funding agencies the true science behind the project. Landfill goes in? Then the Sibun river would be toxified forever. Thanks to Tony's hard work, the development plan was subsequently dropped. And today, people living along the Sibun River can safely bathe and fish in these waters.

Tony designed and supervised the development of the beautiful accessible zoo pathways which are nothing short of remarkable. Due to Tony's focused efforts, The Belize Zoo is the only nature destination in the country which is accessible for wheelchairs. Want to make your heart smile? Watch as wheelchair bound children glide around the zoo, with looks of amazement on their faces as they observe the beautiful wildlife of their home country. Thanks to Tony.

Tony's upcoming contributions to Belizean conservation include a revised version of A FIELD GUIDE TO THE SNAKES OF BELIZE. Beautifully illustrated and "user friendly", this field guide will assist everyone who wishes to identify the many important species of snakes which share our country.

The Belize Zoo extends a warm thank you to the Belize Audubon Society for recognizing Tony's earnest and vital conservation work which has spanned over two generations, and has undoubtedly made a huge positive impact in Belize. Tony Gare!, YOU ROCK!