

## Coming Soon: Our National Bird!

Yes! Soon we will proudly have on display, the Keel-billed toucan, our colourful and charismatic National Bird. Not long ago, a farmer in the Cayo District contacted us and pleaded for rescue assistance. Three baby keel-billed toucans had been orphaned when their nesting tree was chopped down. The babies were in urgent need of help. Mother toucan fled the scene, leaving the feather-less youngsters in need of nutrition and care.

TBZ animal management staff quickly responded to the alarm call. All three birds were taken to the zoo's "emergency room", where they were provided deluxe quarters, and baby bird formula to assist in their development and growth.

Their beginning days as zoo residents in "ICU" saw that the little birds were fed every hour on the hour. There is always a time of risk with birds so young. Rejection of food, possible ailments developing, or just plain bad luck, can lead to an early demise. But happily, due to the fine care received, the three thrived and grew quickly. They are now living in off-zoo quarters. Their home is a friendly walk in aviary, and they receive constant care and attention from their zookeeper friends.

The keel-billed toucan is a beautiful example of our colourful natural Belizean world. They are forest birds found in noisy groups. And no problem have they flying with a bill so large! The keel-billed toucan's rainbow-coloured big bill is made of similar material as our very own fingernails. So, while it may be large, the bill is very fly-worthy, thanks to its meager weight. What's on the menu for a keel-billed toucan? They love fruits and seeds, and are also known to nest rob and steal away with a young chick for dinner. Those who are familiar with the call of our National Bird, will agree that it sounds more like the call of a croaking frog, as opposed to a feathered Belizean!

What are the names of our upcoming zoo-stars? So many schools and other visitors have inquired about our National Bird. It is strong zoo policy not to take wildlife from its wild home. Only rescues, confiscated critters, or captive-bred animals see their way to The Best Little Zoo in the World. But Hallalueja!!!! We so look forward to an upcoming display which will show off to all visitors, our three special representative National Birds – Hal....LaLa....and Lou-ya!

