The Belize Zoo is very sad to share that we said goodbye to one of our most beloved animals: “Carlos” the puma. Carlos came to the Zoo 17 years ago from San Carlos Village. A family in the community had found and had been caring for a puma cub, but they realized it would soon to be big and wild to handle, so, they asked the Zoo for help.

He was named Carlos for where he was found, and we saw him grow into the handsome cat who won the hearts of Zoo staff and thousands of visitors for almost 20 years. Carlos was a magnificent representation of his species. Visitors were always delighted to be greeted by a purring 120lb wildcat, who was very vocal about how content he was…especially when he spotted treats in the hands of the Zoo staff! He was a “must see” for many on both day and night tours of the Zoo, and was sponsored by countless donors who would often return to the Zoo over the years to see him.

Puma, mountain lion, panther, red tiger, tigre de monte; all of these names have been used when describing the second largest wildcat in the Americas. The puma has the largest range of any mammal in our hemisphere; from Canada clear down to the tip of Argentina. In Belize they thrive in a variety of habitats, and often have territory overlap with jaguars, as they hunt similar prey.
Even though they can reach over 300 pounds in the northern parts of their range, they are not considered to be one of the “true big cats” such as jaguars, simply because they cannot roar; big cats roar, and “small” cats purr.

The Zoo will never be the same without Carlos and his exuberant purr. Our Zookeepers continue to care for “Freddie” and “Princess,” two female rescue pumas who will continue to represent their species in Carlos’ absence. Carlos will live on, however, in our hearts, and of all those who had the honour of meeting him.