

## Jaguar Conservation and Education

There has been a historic issue of a strong lack of environmental education in the Mennonite community of Blue Creek, located in northwest Belize and a community which borders on habitat vital for supporting Jaguar populations.

To address this gap in education awareness, TBZ has been working with Anne Kok, from Denmark, and significant progress in community outlook and approach to Belizean wildlife, has occurred over the past year. Anne, a few years ago, lived in the Blue Creek Community to learn about their interesting social structure and customs. She speaks their language, and blended in well with community life.



e. Anne is viewed as a Blue Creek community member.

Returning a few years later, Anne became TBZ Environmental Education representative in Blue Creek. She made frequent visits to schools and gave lectures and showed videos. She was instrumental in fostering ardent interest within the entire community, towards another top predator, the Harpy Eagle. When a Harpy Eagle was last brought to Rio Bravo Conservation

Management Area from the country of Panama, for release, the Blue Creek High School students named the bird and saw to it that "Thor" safely left his flight cage for his new life in the forests of Belize.

Another of Anne's primary aims was linking with farmers to address the "Problem Jaguar" issue which affects the Blue Creek ranching sector. Better management of livestock has been a current theme. The ranchers have given agreement to the idea of using certain techniques, such as corralling of cattle, in order to reduce Jaguar predation problems. The ranchers who do use corrals, see the benefits of this as a "security measure".

Anne was instrumental in saving a superior Jaguar, known as "Rocky". He was a repeated, verified cattle-killer. "Rocky" had five cows to his dining-credit and finally, this large, male Jaguar was trapped. What was planned to follow was his being shot, so that his cattle-predation days would never happen again....Anne convinced the ranchers to send "Rocky" to "Problem Jaguar Rehab" at TBZ, rather than to end his life.

The ranchers did just that. "Rocky" has done well in "Rehab", and has been a source of "Jaguar data" for researchers studying various aspects of these great cats. For example, "Rocky" has shown the massive size that a Belizean Jaguar can become. He is the "record contender", weighing in at 165 pounds!

TBZ, with the fine assistance of Panthera, the organization focused upon saving great cats from extinction, hosted a visit in April from members of the Blue Creek community. They enjoyed getting "close up and personal" with our star education Jaguar, "Junior Buddy", got good views of our Harpy Eagles, and paid a visit to their ex-Blue Creek Jaguar "bad-boy", "Rocky". Everyone had a fantastic day, and TBZ looks very much forward to continued Environmental Education work in collaboration with the Blue Creek Community.