

Jaguar HI-5

He is the King of “Meet and Greet” at The Belize Zoo, and his name is “FieldMaster”. This too-gorgeous-for-words male Jaguar, weighing in at about 130 lbs, is a former “Problem Jaguar” and a star graduate of the zoo’s “Problem Jaguar Rehabilitation” program.



“FieldMaster” got into trouble during the year 2005. His hunting skills turned from the usual Jaguar prey of gibbon, armadillo and peccary to dogs. Dogs! “FieldMaster” was unaware that his appetite for home-dwelling potlickers was causing high stress levels in the communities along the Western Hwy.

And what a bold Jaguar he was! “FieldMaster” was not shy when it came to taking prey, and on repeated occasions, was found under a stilt-raised house, obviously in search of a meal.

Finally, afraid that more dogs, and perhaps other food items like free-ranging hens, would become a meal for this large cat, The Belize Zoo was requested, through the Forest Department, to set a trap. If captured, there would be an end to this worrisome situation.

Using a dog as “bait”, this big fellow was easily trapped, and then transported to the Jaguar Rehab facility at the zoo. Every Jaguar coming through the program is thoroughly examined by a vet, and his examination pointed to why he was hunting dogs, and not the usual Jaguar prey. Close examination revealed that he had worn out and missing teeth. There were shotgun pellets lodged in his body. His eyes appeared to be “off-set”. In summary, the poor guy was unable to compete effectively for necessary food. Consequently, when he was hungry, finding and taking a dog for dinner was an easy answer to his need for filling an empty Jaguar-tummy!

Zoo Director and animal-trainer Sharon Matola, began working with “FieldMaster” every day for long periods of time. At first, and expected, he expressed aggression and a “I Hate You” profile. How long did this last? Not so long at all! “FieldMaster” quickly learned that he was admired and strongly-liked by zoo staff. He no longer had to risk being shot for his odd hunting

behavior. “FieldMaster” began to look forward to being hand-fed chicken dinners, and seemed to enjoy learning “tricks for treats”.

One of the tricks taught to “FieldMaster” was “Give Me a High Five”!!!

Today, zoo visitors can meet and greet the ex-dog killer, “FieldMaster”, and do something unique and ultra-special – Give this beautiful Jaguar a “High Five” ! He is successful in teaching all who visit that Jaguars are beautiful, rare and special. Saving them for future generations is focused upon. Thanks to “FieldMaster” this important objective is expressed with gusto! Jaguars Forever!!