

### Let Me Introduce You

Animals are very much like people. Some get along together just fine. Others don't care to share the same space and territory. And there isn't any family court to step in and offer a judgment to ease a rocky relationship in the animal world.



#### Springfield the Jaguar greeting CT for the first time

Animal introductions need to be done with care and steady awareness of behavioural reactions. At The Belize Zoo, introducing our Tapirs to one another has been high priority. Do mountain cows instantly get along when put together? In the wild, they exist as solitary animals. If a pair is seen, it is most certainly a mother with young. Sure, their relatives are horses, but they do not share a horse-like "herd behaviour". The same manner of thinking goes with the mighty Jaguar. Unlike the Lion, which lives happily in a family group known as a "pride", in the wild, Jaguars exist as solitary animals. These great spotted cats come together only to mate. A sighting of more than one Jaguar is always a mother with her cubs. Dad Jaguar? He is far away and not involved in any family situation. A visit to the post Hurricane Richard Belize Zoo will bring the delightful view of our recent successful introductions of both our mountain cow squad and the two once-kept-apart-but-now-very-much-together, Jaguars, CT and Springfield.

How was this accomplished? Carefully, over time, the Tapirs were given separate space alongside one another. There, smells could be shared, the mountain cows could see one another, and they would often vocalize – wouldn't it be fun to know what they were saying in "mountain cow-speak"?! Though they seemed to tolerate being close to each other for a long time, TBZ staff were still wary of introducing young "Indy" to the older Tapirs. Luckily, Hurricane Richard decided to play "zookeeper" for a day, and did the introduction for us! Sending a huge Guanacaste Tree crashing down on the dividing fence was Richard's idea of a careful introduction.

And what a success it was! Jaguars CT and Springfield, meanwhile, were side-by-side for over six months, a strong fence keeping them from each other's claws and teeth. Daily monitoring of their behaviour showed us that they had pleasant moments when close to each other – no aggressive moods came into sight. Next step? Take down the fence and let the animal good times roll! Bringing the people of Belize close to their beautiful wildlife is a high priority for our staff at The Belize Zoo. Keeping The Belize Zoo animal crew happy and content adds to their joyful days and brings about many smiles to our many visitors.

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