

Our Whiskers in Wisconsin

Once upon a time, a young male jaguar roamed the area of Honey Camp lagoon and began to hunt cattle for his dinner. His misdeeds eventually found him a place in The Belize Zoo's renowned Problem Jaguar Rehabilitation Program. Safe and sound at the zoo, the male jaguar, given the name, "Pat the Cat", calmed down in short time and became a beloved member of the jaguar clan undergoing off-site behavior training. It sure would be nice to be able to send the rehab cats back into the forests of Belize, but unfortunately, it is not possible. They become "bad cats" in the wild due to having something not-quite-right with them, such as missing teeth or claws. In some cases, shotgun pellets are lodged in their bones which work to weaken their hunting abilities.

The Belize Zoo, along with the government of Belize and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, noted the cry from the people who maintain jaguars in zoological facilities in North America. "There is a need for fresh genes in the captive population so that it can be healthy and strong!"

While it was hard to say goodbye to our much-loved Pat the Cat, off he went for a life of romance and conservation symbol at the Milwaukee Zoo in Wisconsin. Pat's charm was magnetic. In short time, he had jewelry made in his image, ample television and newspaper coverage, and a book which has brought Belize into the jaguar conservation spotlight, PAT THE GREAT CAT.

Perhaps Pat the Cat's engaging personality was somewhat attributed to his love-interest, Stella. This very attractive female jaguar was provided as a companion for Pat the Cat. They spent months side-by-side in a quiet off-exhibit area at the zoo. When their zoo caretakers were satisfied that Pat and Stella were two jaguars who showed "I really like you" behavior, they were put together. Then what went on? Daily romps in the sunshine were frequent. Mating efforts from Pat became a regular report, and we were proud of his very "Belizean profile"!!

Then, the good news came in November. Pat was a father! Yes, on the 13th of November, two little cubs, pictured here, were born to Stella. The Associated Press thought it important and exciting and wrote a profound article about the birth of the two male cubs. They were strong in noting the vital role Belize played in contributing fresh "wild" jaguar genes into a population which was in great need of this biological resource.

Good for The Belize Zoo and good for Belize, and good for jaguars, and ultra-wonderful for two very-much-in-love-jaguars, Pat the Cat and his mate, Stella. PAWS UP!!

