

TBZ Creature Feature: Juvenile Ornate Hawk–Eagle

What a beauty! And what a lucky beauty this juvenile so–rare–to–see–in Belize, Ornate Hawk Eagle is. During the recent rainy weather, the young raptor was found wet and shivering, sitting in the middle of a road on Yalbac Ranch.



A concerned guard contacted a Hillbank forest ranger who, together with two ornithologists, identified the bird and then brought the young eagle to The Belize Zoo for emergency care. And emergency care was needed! A respiratory problem was immediately detected – antibiotics, please! Force – feeding followed, to ensure that the youngster received vital nourishment. The Ornate Hawk Eagle has a fairly wide range, reaching from southern Mexico into the middle of South America. However, as with so many animals, they are extremely rare to find in most of their Central American haunts. The Ornate Hawk Eagle is one of the most beautiful birds of prey in existence. Crested, white and rufous coloured, what a stunning raptor we have here! The females can be up to 50 percent larger than the male Ornate Hawk Eagle; a size trait not uncommon in the raptor world. What's for dinner? These large hawk eagles dine on coatimundis, kinkajous, snakes and rodents. They nest high up in the canopy and their clutch numbers one, maybe two. The juveniles, once fledged, will remain around the nest area for a year, sometimes longer.

We know that this young Ornate Hawk Eagle had not fledged, but exited its nest by some other means. Due to the fact that the "fledge – feathers" had not even appeared, we know that the bird should still have been in the nest, not out of it. The upcoming plan is to see that the young raptor is kept away from people, and to keep all human contact at a strict minimum. Flying predators contribute greatly towards maintaining a balance within our ecosystems, and ideally, we would like to see this beautiful bird of prey released back into its Belizean home forest. He or She was Born to Be Wild!!!

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