Our colleagues at the Belize Tapir Project (BTP) have been conducting field research focused on our beloved National Animal, the Central American Tapir for over a decade. Led by TBZTEC Operations Manager Celso Poot, the BTP studies the movements and habitat use of the Mountain Cow through the central Belize District. Following tapirs through this landscape has led the Project all along the Burrell Boom Road, as well as to rivers, ponds, and savanna areas behind communities such as Ladyville, and even around the International Airport.

Apart from tapirs, the BTP field cameras record an interesting diversity of wildlife in these areas, including many birds, and, even the mighty jaguar. Recently, BTP cameras snapped amazing images of both a mother tapir and a mother jaguar walking by with their young, although, not at the same time! The Summer months are often “baby season” for many wildlife, so it was delightful to see two iconic species raising healthy young despite the challenges posed by human activities.
The Central American Tapir is Endangered throughout its range, and is even considered locally extinct in parts of Mexico, El Salvador, and Honduras. Belize is still a stronghold for this species. However, vehicular traffic, community expansion, hunting, and intentionally set fires are some of the many threats our wild tapirs face as they struggle to co-exist with us. The vital data being collected by the Belize Tapir Project will be able to inform strategic actions to ensure our National Animal continues to thrive in Belize, along with many other species that share their homelands.

At the Zoo, you can meet our tapir troop up close, including “Lordess”, an old female who was rescued from near Lords Bank Village by the BTP. Lordess and her friends are always ready to meet and greet visitors and teach them about the important role tapirs play in our forests.

Visit the Belize Tapir Project's page [HERE](#)