

The Jaguar: Help Me or Hurt Me?

Jaguars of Belize are faced with a variety of human influenced challenges, including deforestation, prey population decline, and persecution by farmers. Even with all these troubles, they have to contend with one more: The selling of souvenirs made from Jaguar body parts, namely teeth and claws.



A stunning poster was thus created, aimed at completely eradicating this ugly and ILLEGAL trade countrywide. Designed by Jaguar-Enthusiast and Belize Zoo Environmental Educator, Jamal Andrewin, the message is clear: Buying these artifacts only works to harm our very rare jaguar population. The target audience is visitors to our country. Oftentimes, tourists are approached to buy souvenirs which have been obtained by the killing of Jaguars. Tourists are usually not aware of what they are buying into as they purchase a Jaguar canine tooth necklace. They do not know that the cats are hunted for this illegal activity. They do not see, in their minds, a powerful, healthy Jaguar shot and killed, its teeth and claws pulled out, and then cleaned up a bit for their exotic souvenir-appetites. Sadly, some people living in Belize are also guilty of contributing to the illegal trade of buying "Jaguar jewelry".

We are even aware of a Belizean resident who, not only sports a necklace from an unlawful Jaguar-kill, but bought the same for his 10 year old daughter! How unfortunate that a child is introduced to the persecution of our Jaguars, rather than to a strong feeling that our country's Jaguars should be admired and protected. With less than 800 jaguars remaining in Belize, we need to unify our concerns, our efforts, and our actions aimed at helping them, not hurting them. We must join together to ensure that our grandchildren live in a time Jaguars still roam the forests of Belize, as opposed to hearing tales of how "they once lived here". Similar illegal activities are going on throughout the remaining range of the Jaguar. Belize has always been viewed as being a progressive and forward-thinking nation when it comes to the protection of our natural resources. Stepping up with this aggressive poster campaign will work to help secure a future in the wild for the Jaguar citizens of our country.

The Belize Forest Department, Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA), Programme for Belize, Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) and the international cat conservation organization, Panthera, have proudly placed their logos on this important message. Though Hurricane Richard "rescheduled" the Zoo's conservation action agenda, it by no means halted it. The poster, originally set to be launched on November 3rd 2010, was launched on December 1

st

when the Zoo re-opened. The HELP ME OR HURT ME poster will have a place alongside the two newly-introduced superb books about "Jaguar Ambassador" Junior Buddy. Yes! It promises to be a very important year for Jaguars at The Best Little Zoo in the World!

[Click to download PDF file](#)