

Wetlands Exhibit Officially Reopened

Friday, the 23rd of September, was truly a milestone at the Zoo. After months of working to restore our Hurricane Richard battered wetlands exhibit, the happy day for re-opening this area of the zoo, arrived. Our Jabiru storks are no longer living in small holding areas, they are back in a habitat so fitting for such a special bird.



Hon. Minister Michael Hutchinson was there to cut the ribbon, leading up to the observation deck. Then, joined by officials from the Forest Department, the Belize Audubon Society, and Birds Without Borders, all watched as both jabiru storks proudly pranced about in their new environment.

A special guest, Mr. Leon Gillett, from Burrell Boom was beaming as he watched Boomer, the larger of the two storks, explore his new territory. Seventeen years ago, when Leon was a “little Leon” he and his Dad rescued Boomer and brought him to the Zoo. Boomer was a weak baby Jabiru, and obviously still should have been in his nest. Sadly, one of his parents was shot and eaten. The other fled the nest. Boomer was abandoned. Thanks to the Gillett family, and the round-the-clock care by Zoo staff, Boomer survived. He now plays a crucial role in educating our visitors about the special status of the Jabiru stork in Belize.

Environmental Educator Jamal Andrewin, used profound words to underscore the importance our wetlands exhibit plays in bringing people close to the majestic Jabiru, and creating a bond of appreciation for the “tallest flying bird in the Americas”. Birds Without Borders official, Wilber Martinez, explained to all that in the entire region of Central American, less than 200 Jabirus remain. The Central Biological Corridor plays an important role in providing them safe habitat to nest and hunt. Quite a few Jabiru nests are within easy flying distance to the nearby tilapia farm, where they are known to skim off the dead tilapia from the facility’s many ponds.

After viewing the storks “in action” all were invited to “meet and greet’ Jaguar Ambassador Junior Buddy. He was one very happy jaguar! Junior Buddy’s joy of “kissing heads” was fulfilled a few times over, and showing off for his guests was obviously high on his agenda. Come and view our Jabiru storks in their beautiful new environment!

