



The Belize Zooletter

June 2009

April the Tapir is 26!

It was 26 years ago when the baby tapir was brought to the original zoo. She was barely alive! The culprit; the still striped-and-spotted young mountain cow was severely infested with screw worms.

Back in 1983, Belize was weakened by these "wicked worms". Voracious parasites, they would find their way into the bodies of animals, both domestic and our Belizeans wildlife. The result was usually death!

"April" was brought to Sharon Matola, nearly dead, 26 Aprils ago! The Belize Zoo was just getting started, but Sharon put all things aside and concentrated on saving the little Mountain Cow's life. The key to her "revival" was a steady diet of banana milkshakes, full of vitamins and medications. "April" happily became a member of the new zoo! During those early days, she lived and roamed in the backyard, coming eagerly up to any visitor for a pet under the chin and a banana.

Because of her friendly nature, Sharon saw the potential of having "April" get people excited about our National Animal. "April" the Tapir's first birthday party was the zoo's very first big event, in April 1984. Due to the newness of it all, only a handful of people showed up. However, all had a fun day, and it was the beginning of an annual event that has brought a spotlight upon

"April", as all tapirs!!

The Central American Tapir is an endangered species. Making people feel happy about these gentle beasts, works to see that their future is more secure. Today, "April" the tapir's birthday party is attended by hundreds! One year, the "Tapir-Bash" was filmed for CNN news! And this year, Belize's favorite Mountain Cow turns 26 and like always, kids from different primary schools came out to sing her birthday song and offer well wishes. The Democracia Gibnuts rock n rolled "April" with "The Mountain Cow Song" as she munched on her special made birthday cake.

We are in awe: It's a Baby Macaw!

The Belize Zoo became happily overwhelmed in mid-May when the residents Scarlet Macaws hatched three healthy babies! The parents were bred in captivity about a decade ago. From the start of their love affair, it was clear that they were clueless about the process of Macaw-Mating..

Scarlet Macaws nest high off the ground, and the loving pair was provided with a four-star nest-box. But a high-rise honeymoon suite was not to their liking. These two raucous red parrots chose, instead, to nest on the ground.

TBZ keepers were frantic at their nest choice. Possums and foxes were possible unwelcome visitors, putting the birds and their eggs, at high

risk. This happened during a time of unseasonable wet weather, and a drenched nest would easily result in a “no hatch situation”. But the Big Reds insisted that it would be on-the-ground or no love nest at all for them.

We did our very best to counter-act their risky nesting regime, and our efforts worked! Mid-May was a special spring event, when three Scarlet Macaws hatched! Due to Mom and Dad not knowing how to raise young, the babies were carefully taken and put under the care of TBZ keeper staff. Every two hours they were fed a baby bird formula, and tending to the birds on “Macaw Night Watch” turned TBZ staff into first class Scarlet Macaw infant caregivers. Day by day, the featherless tiny birds gained weight, and have grown to love their zookeeper buddies.

In the wild, the nestlings will remain in the nest for 3 months. After that, Mom and Dad Macaw will urge them to fledge, and then teach them the ways of being a wild Scarlet Macaw. Breeding these rare birds in captivity is not difficult. Seeing them return to the wild is not possible, because they do not know the necessary survival strategies for a safe existence “out there”.

Our baby Scarlet Macaws will eventually be joining Mom and Dad in their home roomy enclosure located at the entrance of The Belize Zoo. Since they have been lovingly raised by TBZ keeper staff, the young macaws will enjoy the company of all upcoming human admirers. We haven’t named them as yet! But their names will reflect how very special they are to TBZ, and to Belize!

From the Director...

Spring sprang forward with one important event following another here at the zoo. This summary will bring to you the latest updates

which are all involved in positive change!

Fallet Young, with the initial help received from Dr. Rob Horwich back in the 1980’s, was the fuel behind one of Belize’s most important conservation engines: The Community Baboon Sanctuary. Located in Burrell Boom, Fallet and Horwich worked with the community to see that the forests under private land ownership remained standing, in order to support the local populations of Black Howler Monkeys. The Community Baboon Sanctuary, CBS, grew to be an important conservation role-model, and has proven to be successful in seeing that these special primates have a place, forever, to call home. Thousands, from both in Belize and outside our borders, have visited the CBS, taking away a memorable experience. Those of us who knew and worked with Fallet, mourn his passing. He left us on 9 April, after a valiant battle with cancer.

Fallet’s wife Jessie, and son, Colin, are establishing a Memorial Scholarship Fund in Fallet’s name. This will be used to provide school assistance to young Belizeans living in the Belize River Valley, encouraging future “Protectors of Nature” in honor and memory of Fallet Young. Here is the Tribute to a man who was a gift to us all....

The White Howler Singers— Fallet Young Howler Monkeys
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Zyk2ZXgfVA>)

In Early April, Alan Rabinowitz, the first person to study Jaguar ecology in Belize, and author of the popular book, JAGUAR, returned. Alan now heads up a “cat-focused” conservation organization called Panthera, and they put extreme effort in trying to save the world’s remaining big cats from extinction. His visit included two important events. First, Alan gave a presentation in the nearby village of La Democracia. Located in the heart of the Central Jaguar Corridor, the folks in this village play a key role in seeing that Jaguars, still remaining in the area, are given their “rights to roam” minus

persecution....an imperative concept! Hon. Minister Michael Hutchinson was the Guest of Honour, and many turned out to hear Alan and to meet Omar Figueroa, a Belizean researcher currently studying Jaguars

The conservation organization Lighthawk was present that day, and flew University of Belize professor, Dr. Elma Kay, La Democracia Village's Arita Wiltshire, and Belize Zoo Education Director, Celso Poot, over the Jaguar Corridor. And of course, in honor of the day's events, the LA DEMOCRACIA GIBNUTS sang a special JAGUAR SONG for the Minister and for Alan!!

As part of his exciting week, Alan, along with Panthera's Howard Quigley, Hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources, Gaspar Vega, Minister of State, Michael Hutchinson, Wildlife Officer, George Hanson, his often-times jaguar-consultant, Humberto Wohlers, and Jaguar researcher, Omar Figueroa, flew over the Central Jaguar Corridor and then around Victoria Peak in the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary. Following that, their helicopter, provided by conservation heroes, British Forces Belize landed on the established HLS G219....This site is just over a half-day's walk south of Victoria Peak and all received an "on-ground" Jaguar Jungle perspective from Alan, Omar, and Howard. A lot was learned! The Ministers were proud of the efforts being made by researchers who study the cats and the organizations (Belize Audubon Society, The Belize Zoo, Friends of Conservation and Development, Programme for Belize) who direct their time and energies into Jaguar protection. Happy moods captivated the day's dynamic events! Humberto Wohlers gathered interviews from everyone which I later edited for worldwide broadcast on the BBC "UP ALL NIGHT" program.

Maya naturalist and Guide, Greg Sho, presented Minister Vega with a photograph of a Jaguar, taken by Carol Foster, and then gave a slate carving of a Jaguar to Alan.

Thanks to Anne Kok, who hails from Denmark,

landmark progress has been made in the bringing of important messages about wildlife conservation into the Mennonite community of Blue Creek. Anne lived in Blue Creek years ago, writing about their interesting history and social structure for a Master's degree thesis based out of the University of Amsterdam. Returning, she focused her education work around the Jaguar and the Harpy Eagle. Early April saw Blue Creek community members, and Anne, visit the zoo to "meet and greet" our Jaguars and of course!! PANAMA the Harpy Eagle!

Iguana Mama Calls Belize Zoo Home

No, The Belize Zoo does not have an "official enclosure" home for the beloved Green Iguana. However, walking down the shaded pathways usually provides the opportunity to see one of these gentle lizards stalking about. Spot a big orangey-brown iguana? That, for sure, is a male. The females are always green and much smaller than their male counterparts.

Our zoo resident Green Iguanas share food daily with the Tapirs and the Deer, and none of the involved parties show signs of conflict with this eating strategy! This spring, somewhere on zoo grounds, a gravid female laid her eggs. The months of March and April are key times for females to lay their eggs in Belize. They prefer sandy areas because it allows them to dig out their "nursery-nesting-niche". The eggs hatch in late May or June, and out crawl miniature Green Iguanas, ready for life in Belize.

A clutch of iguana eggs can easily number over 50 eggs! This high number, however, does not ensure that all will survive once

they do hatch. Iguana eggs themselves have a mountain of hungry predators. A troop of Coatimundis can easily bring a nest-full of Green Iguana eggs to ground zero! Once a nest of Green Iguana eggs hatches, predation is still a large threat. Birds-of-prey, wild cats, Tayras, Coatimundis, Grey Fox..... The Green Iguana Food-Fan Club list is a long one!

Green Iguanas eat only plants. They prefer living near rivers. This habitat type provides food, shelter, and sandy banks where they can nest. Green Iguanas are good swimmers, too. If one of these placid lizards feels threatened, it will quickly dive into the water, and, using its long tail as an efficient "engine-rudder", swims swiftly away from danger.

Sadly, numbers of Green Iguanas in Belize are declining. This isn't the fault of the hungry Coatimundi, it is our fault. People still over-harvest Green Iguanas, especially the gravid females. It is a popular belief that eating iguana eggs provides more sexual vigor for menfolk. This myth has led to a consistent decrease in our Belizean Green Iguanas. Then, add intense collecting for the stewpot. These combined practices simply result in our having less and less Green Iguanas. Hey! It doesn't take a Wizard to see that it's tough to be a Lizard.....We are happy to offer a safe and secure home for the Green Iguanas freely roaming the grounds of The Belize Zoo!

Tarantula Time at the Belize Zoo

The Mexican red-rumped tarantula is the most common type of tarantula found in

Belize. And for many people, this is one of the SCARIEST creatures which calls Belize home, too!

But don't be scared! Tarantulas are shy and timid spiders. They may have a "horror movie" reputation, but in reality, tarantulas only attack insects and very small animals, so that they can eat and survive.

They are large, black, hairy spiders with pretty red rumps, and their gangly eight legs can bring about a few raised and concerned eyebrows. But remember! They are gentle by nature!

Think about this: We consider the mosquito a mere nuisance in our lives, yet these flying pesky insects give us malaria and yellow fever! Now THAT'S something to be fearful of!

If you see a tarantula crossing one of our roads, that would be a male, on the move. The females are far more sedentary. And the tarantula gals live much, much longer than the males. While a male tarantula will live 2-5 years, a female can live well over 10 years, and when she has youngsters, she has over 15 in one hatching.

At The Belize Zoo, you can have an exciting "spider experience"! Belize Zoo staff is ready and waiting to introduce you to our zoo tarantula, and all who have made the acquaintance of "Tarantula Tom", absolutely love it!

Green Wave is the Rave

What is the GREENWAVE? All over the world, this environmental campaign is unifying children everywhere in an effort to appreciate the importance of biodiversity.

Simply stated, a healthy environment equals a happy and healthier society, no matter where that particular society is based on planet earth.

There will be GREEN WAVE activities taking place throughout every nation. Here in Belize, events will be scheduled, leading up to the important day of Friday 22 May. This date has been formally designated as the International Day for Biological Diversity. To celebrate, children from east to west will plant a tree, creating a "GREEN WAVE" of ecological goodwill. What a great initiative! And positioned to have such a positive effect on our very own Mother Earth!

GREEN WAVE embraces the idea that this simple, yet important action, will foster an even greater appreciation and understanding of conserving forests and trees to protect global biological diversity.

The Belize Zoo, along with their nearby local school, La Democracia Government School, has joined the important GREEN WAVE. A tree seedling was planted this past week, and the children were all excited to be "GREEN WEVERS" by doing this!!

What kind of tree was planted? Our National Tree, of course! The mighty Mahogany Tree. Later during the month of June, the pre-schoolers will visit The Belize Zoo and have a good look at the Mahogany trees growing on zoo grounds. Just under 20 years old, they are tall, strong, and beautiful symbols of our nation's wealth of natural resources. The Belize Zoo has promised the kids that a GREEN WAVE visit to the zoo will also include a JAGUAR JOURNEY, too!

Meet "Indy" the Baby

Mountain Cow

"Indy" wasn't born at the zoo, he was brought from the southern village of Independence by the Forest Department in mid-June, and has quickly won the hearts of the entire Belize Zoo staff.

A baby tapir, or "Mountain Cow", resembles a gibnut. They are covered in stripes and spots, and for the first few weeks of their lives, truly are "gibnut-like" in appearance. Their entire baby-spotted coat takes an entire eight months to fade away. Then they are left with a brown coat which is a suitable "overcoat" for the rest of their lives.

"Indy" should still be nursing with Mountain Cow Mom, and while we do not know the circumstances involved which led to his arrival in Independence, TBZ staff has readily taken up the important role of "Nanny" to the little fellow. He eagerly receives his bottle of milk and vitamins three times every day, and receives a visit during the evening hours, too, for his milk and banana.

The routine favored by baby "Indy," is to be fed his bottle and then to be "belly scratched" until he rolls back and goes into "Mountain Cow nap phase." He is one very happy baby tapir!

Once "Indy" gets older, TBZ staff will introduce him to the resident tapirs in the zoo. In the wild, tapirs exist as solitary animals. If they are ever viewed as pairs, most likely it is the mother with a youngster. The young remain with their mothers for nearly two years before striking out on their own into the tropical forests.

A definite habitat requirement for all tapirs

is to live near fresh water. Our National Animal not only enjoys a swim, but each day, when they feel the urge to “poop”, guess what? They absolutely have to do this deed in fresh water! How does TBZ address this need for little “Indy”? In his temporary holding enclosure, there is a small pond. And yes! “Indy” is quite fond of his little pool and makes good use of it every day.

Since “Indy” receives so much care and attention, it is a sure thing that his arrival to the main zoo grounds will see him in “fine action” meeting and greeting all zoo visitors who stop by.

Internship experiences

Katie Staples from Virginia Tech

I learned about the Belize Zoo and TEC when I visited during a study abroad session last summer. I am very interested in exotic animal rehabilitation and so I saw working here as a wonderful experience. I have a lot more opportunities available to me here at the Belize zoo than if I were back in the States. My duties include preparing food, cleaning pens, working with certain animals, feeding and assisting the keepers. One really exciting experience is working with scarlet macaw hatchlings. They were only 2 weeks old when I arrived, and I'll be able to watch them grow and see their feathers developing. Other fun things include caring for a baby howler monkey, a baby tapir named Indy, and working with kinkajous. This will definitely be six weeks I will never forget.

Lindsey Daley from United Kingdom 2-weeks internship

My adventure started off at the PoD (Personal Overseas Development) website. PoD is an agency in England that puts people in contact with internship placements worldwide. I spotted the profile of "The Best Little Zoo in the World" and next thing I knew I was on a 35 hours journey to Belize. I have had little experience working with animals but was very willing to learn. The team here provides top notch on the job training -it's an extremely hands on experience! There are countless opportunities to get up close and personal with over 120 animals all native to Belize. Pumas to peccary, Margays to Macaws! If you have a passion for animals and a thirst for adventure I definitely recommend that you to get in touch. Sharon and her team were very welcoming!!

Jaguar Conservation and Education

There has been a historic issue of a strong lack of environmental education in the Mennonite community of Blue Creek, located in northwest Belize and a community which borders on habitat vital for supporting Jaguar populations.

To address this gap in education awareness, TBZ has been working with Anne Kok, from Denmark, and significant progress in community outlook and approach to Belizean wildlife, has occurred over the past year. Anne, a few years ago, lived in the Blue Creek Community to learn about their interesting social structure and customs. She speaks their language, and blended in well with community life. Anne is viewed as

a Blue Creek community member.

Returning a few years later, Anne became TBZ Environmental Education representative in Blue Creek. She made frequent visits to schools and gave lectures and showed videos. She was instrumental in fostering ardent interest within the entire community, towards another top predator, the Harpy Eagle. When a Harpy Eagle was last brought to Rio Bravo Conservation Management Area from the country of Panama, for release, the Blue Creek High School students named the bird and saw to it that "Thor" safely left his flight cage for his new life in the forests of Belize.

Another of Anne's primary aims was linking with farmers to address the "Problem Jaguar" issue which affects the Blue Creek ranching sector. Better management of livestock has been a current theme. The ranchers have given agreement to the idea of using certain techniques, such as corralling of cattle, in order to reduce Jaguar predation problems. The ranchers who do use corrals, see the benefits of this as a "security measure".

Anne was instrumental in saving a superior Jaguar, known as "Rocky". He was a repeated, verified cattle-killer. "Rocky" had five cows to his dining-credit and finally, this large, male Jaguar was trapped. What was planned to follow was his being shot, so that his cattle-predation days would never happen again.....Anne convinced the ranchers to send "Rocky" to "Problem Jaguar Rehab" at TBZ, rather than to end his life.

The ranchers did just that. "Rocky" has done well in "Rehab", and has been a source of "Jaguar data" for researchers studying various aspects of these great cats.

For example, "Rocky" has shown the massive size that a Belizean Jaguar can become. He is the "record contender", weighing in at 165 pounds!

TBZ, with the fine assistance of Panthera, the organization focused upon saving great cats from extinction, hosted a visit in April from members of the Blue Creek community. They enjoyed getting "close up and personal" with our star education Jaguar, "Junior Buddy", got good views of our Harpy Eagles, and paid a visit to their ex-Blue Creek Jaguar "bad-boy", "Rocky". Everyone had a fantastic day, and TBZ looks very much forward to continued Environmental Education work in collaboration with the Blue Creek Community.

Life After "Last Flight"

Time moves on, and the one constant remains: Change. Nearly five years has passed since the Privy Council decision ruled 3-2 in favour of Fortis/Bel and the Government of Belize to build the Chalillo Dam. Since that time, and the subsequent publication of Bruce Barcott's THE LAST FLIGHT OF THE SCARLET MACAW, significant events, relative to the building of the dam, and the publication of the book, have occurred.

The two principal Belize Government leaders, Said Musa, who served as Prime Minister during the time of the Chalillo Dam battle, as well as Ralph Fonseca, the former National Security and Housing Minister, were charged in December 2008 with the theft of 10 million USD, from the people of Belize..

These are the same government Ministers who supported the naming of Sharon Matola as an "Enemy of the State", referring to her actions aimed at halting the Chalillo Dam development scheme.

Charges were dropped against both Musa and Fonseca. No clear explanation was given for this legal decision. In March 09, Belmopan Magistrate,

Earl Jones ruled that Ralph Fonseca “did not have a case to answer”. The Director of Public Prosecutions, DPP Cheryl-Lynn Branker-Taitt, stated publicly that she was “disappointed in the ruling”.

Since the Chalillo Dam has gone “on line”, in 2006, electricity prices have risen. A third dam is now being constructed, more habitat is being destroyed. Diesel fuel is still being bought from Mexico to address the energy needs of Belize (a standard cry from BEL/FORTIS was that the Chalillo Dam would see Belize independent of foreign fuel purchase).

In a published article, The Reporter Press, July 09, it was factually noted that Belize pays the highest energy rates in all of Central America. Meanwhile, Fortis, Inc, the parent company of the Belize Electricity Company, BEL, reported an 83% profit in 2009. They attribute this to their Caribbean electricity utilities, which include BEL.

The quality of the Macal River, due to the construction and operation of the Chalillo Dam, has decreased significantly. People who swim in the river complain of “after-itch”, and skin rashes. Some people report that they no longer swim in the river, due to its “post Chalillo” profile of decreased quality. Many resorts located along or nearby the Macal River have installed swimming pools so that their guests will have a healthy option for bathing. Unfortunately, for people living in villages along the river, the “swimming pool alternative” does not exist.

In August 2009, an environmental scientist from the University of Massachusetts, Dr. Guy Lanza, reviewed the Macal River profile from high resolution photographs and reports. His conclusion, circulated by e-mail, was that, “The water in that river is unfit for human consumption and simply cannot be filtered due to the high turbidity levels”.

He noted, “The recent release of sediments with severe turbidity contaminants from the Chalillo dam is inexcusable and poses immediate risks to human health, livestock health, and the ecology of the Macal, Mopan, and Belize rivers.”

People have been warned, too, that eating fish from the Macal River is no longer safe. This is due to increased levels of the heavy metal, mercury, detected in these river fishes. The increased levels of this dangerous element are a suspected result of the unavoidable biological decay brought on by dam

construction. The Belize Government and the public were warned about this potential health threat, as part of the campaign to stop this project. These warnings were dismissed.

In October 2008, massive amounts of rain caused serious flooding of the Macal River. The National Emergency Management Organization, NEMO, published that “life-threatening floods in communities along the Mopan, Macal and Belize rivers resulted from these floods”

Businesses, homes and other infrastructure were destroyed. 269 people were evacuated from their homes. The total direct losses were estimated to be at 11.3 million BZD.

BEL/FORTIS claimed that the destructive floods would have been far worse if the Chalillo Dam were not there.

They chose to ignore a profound article and accompanying editorial in The Reporter Press, 2 November 08, which noted that the flooding river raged into San Ignacio minus natural-occurring sediments. A sediment-free river, as hydrologists will confirm, flows with horrendous force, causing grave changes and associated damages. Sediments, previously part of the profile of the Macal River, were held back by the dam.

Belizeans continue to be charged with some of the highest electricity rates in Central America. BEL/FORTIS, meanwhile, boasts of huge profits being made from its utility interests. A current conflict in Belize is seeing the Public Utilities Commission, PUC, challenging BEL/FORTIS to return some of these profits to the Belizean rate-payer. In a press conference hosted by the PUC, on March 3, 2009, Chairman John Avery again accused Belize Electricity Limited, BEL, of deliberately misrepresenting its financial position. The PUC states that BEL/FORTIS owes the Belizean consumer approximately 20 million dollars in rebates (April 09).

The Natural Resources Defense Counsel, NRDC, continues to work tirelessly to see that justice is brought into the equation of questionable, unsound development projects. Fortunately, projects which ultimately reduce the quality of the environment, and the living standards of citizens depending on these environments for a healthy life profile, will always receive their deserved legal address.

The Belize Alliance of Conservation NGOs,

BACONGO, has grown and continues to be an important voice in Belize, drawing appropriate attention to projects which show environmental misdirection.

The Belize Institute of Policy and Law organization, BELPO, took the Department of the Environment, DOE, to court over the lack of their seeing that BEL/Fortis implements the Environmental Compliance plan, ECP. To date, there still exists no emergency evacuation plan. In the event of a dam break, which could happen from excessive amounts of rain as a result of severe storms or hurricanes, people living downstream of the Chalillo Dam have no warning system that would assist in alleviating certain disaster. In July 08, The Belizean Courts ruled in favor of BELPO. However, nearly one year later, the ECP still has not been addressed on this level

The Belize Zoo, TBZ, continues to put forward strong initiatives in an effort to preserve the biological diversity in Belize. These efforts are principally aimed at promoting the conservation of the Jaguar and the Harpy Eagle. Conservation strategies promote the concept of "Landscape Conservation": Protect the forest home of the Jaguar and the Harpy Eagle and the future of many species receives a secure future, as well.

TBZ is now strongly focusing upon the conservation of the Central Jaguar Corridor. These forested lands are to the north and to the south of The Belize Zoo. Protecting the integrity of this landscape ensures healthy habitat necessary to sustain our remaining Jaguar populations.

In early April, TBZ was nominated for the Belize Tourism Board, BTB, award "Education Organization of the Year". On April 22, TBZ was presented this honoured award during as part of BTB's 9th Annual National Awards Ceremony.

"People Changes" at TBZ, since the publication of LAST FLIGHT OF THE SCARLET MACAW, are important timepieces.

The Belize Zoo staff, now, minus the burden of the zoo being involved in hard environmental battles, has time for productive environmentally-oriented activities. This includes their putting energies into professional training, both in-country and across borders, serving as members on Boards of Directors, attending both international conferences and meetings in Belize, training foreign students as

zoological assistants, and contributing photography to zoo projects - these are just a few of the dynamic activities TBZ staff is involved with since the Landfill issue and the Chalillo Dam project are no longer present in "Zoo Time".

The Scarlet Macaws remaining in Belize have shown a decline in number. Some of the birds return to the Upper Raspaculo River valley, however, they do not find the river they once knew or their nesting trees which grew alongside that river. The Scarlet Macaws find a lake, or a "mud-hole", as it has been referred to in the height of the dry season, due to the Chalillo Dam. They return in a vain effort to carry out their nesting regime. No successful nesting activity has been noted or reported in their former nesting area. The attempts to place "nest boxes" in the area which the Macaws once used as a vibrant nesting region, and have these "new homes" replace the traditional nesting trees, have been a total failure.

Reports requested from BEL/FORTIS about Scarlet Macaw activities in the area of the constructed Chalillo Dam, by TBZ, the University of Belize and the Forest Department, have been ignored.

The Scarlet Macaws still remaining in Belize, represent a remnant, displaced, and highly-disturbed population. Just thirty years ago, it was reported that "flocks of Scarlet Macaws" could be seen flying down the Macal River towards the town of San Ignacio. The construction of the Chalillo Dam, and associated human behaviour, i.e. poaching, will work to see the sad prediction made by BirdLife International, come true: That there will most likely be a local extirpation of Scarlet Macaws within two generations.

THE LAST FLIGHT OF THE SCARLET MACAW is used in at least five Universities in the USA, as required reading for Environmental Science courses. Many people come to TBZ and state that the reason for their visiting Belize, is all due to the reading of this important book.

Life after LAST FLIGHT OF THE SCARLET MACAW, for Sharon Matola, and for the important institution she founded and still directs, is happy, challenging, and continues to move forward with positive force.

The Belize Zoo named one of the World's Wildest

Zoo's

"The Best Little Zoo in the World," is rapidly getting more and more of the international renown it deserves. In a June 26th article on Travel/MSN-UK, The Belie Zoo was ranked as 7th of the World's Top 10 Wildest Zoos. The article by Izzie Knolles is as follows:

"Belize Zoo keeps only orphaned or rehabilitated animals so visitors need not feel guilty about diminishing wild populations. Moreover, the zoo's collection are all endemic to Belize. You can spy jaguars, puma and ocelots as well as Belize's national animal, the tapir.

For a £40 donation you can climb into a cage with a jaguar, getting close enough for the (tame) animal to lick your face. The zoo may be small internationally but it's uncrowded and intimate. The layout flows smoothly into the surrounding landscape, making the environment more natural for animal and viewer."

A heart warming picture of "Indy," our resident baby Tapir being feed a slice of watermelon, headlines the article.

It is rewarding to see little articles like these about our "Little Zoo," showing that it is moving up in the world, and gaining a positive identity internationally.

Link to article:

<http://travel.uk.msn.com/inspiration/gallery.aspx?cp-documentid=14617963&imageindex=7>

The Belize Zoo takes on greater interactive role

It is easy to see that a huge appreciation of our special wildlife readily happens by "up close and personal" experiences during zoo visits.

Our staff will be ensuring this exciting experiences do happen, with amazing activities such as:

- **Playtime with Junior Buddy:** Our famous captive-bred young Jaguar; come and have Junior somersault for you, then feed him and he might just give you a thank-you kiss!
- **Photos with "Hilario," and "Charlie"** Our friendly ,captive-bred Scarlet Macaws
- **Meet and Greet" with a Boa** Have a cuddle and a photo with resident Boa Constrictor "Bal Boa"
- **"Meet and Greet" with Panama the Harpy Eagle, and Zoo Director Ms. Sharon Matola (appointment necessary)**
- **"Meet and Greet" and give a Hi-5 to Problem Jaguar Rehab Graduate, "Fieldmaster"**

**** (Fees for activities support Conservation Education at The Belize Zoo)**

Beyond the Zooletter

For more exciting news about The Belize Zoo, and our conservation efforts:

Visit our **Zooblog** site at—

<http://www.tbzblog.blogspot.com>, and look up Sharon M.'s profile on **Facebook**. Includes:

- News and photo updates on the animals at TBZ
- Conservation and Education news
- Discussion and comments from local and international TBZ supporters

Also, support **The Belize Project global group**

on Facebook, founded by C. Mayosky of Cortland University, NY.

Listen to Zoo Director Sharon Matola as she takes the Zoo international on **BBC's live radio show "Up All Night"**

(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/fivelive/programmes/upallnight.shtml>)