

## **Jaguar Outreach Education Program**

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**Jaguars** are losing habitat throughout their range due to alteration and destruction of their forest homes. This, combined with increased hunting pressure on their prey base (both jaguars and people like to hunt peccary, deer and paca ...), has resulted in a situation known as “Problem Jaguar”. A Problem Jaguar repeatedly preys upon livestock and domestic animals like dogs and chickens.

**Both** the Belize Zoo and Belize Audubon Society are working to educate the public about this issue, and suggest ways where people can better manage their livestock to help to avoid predator problems.

**Thanks** to the Wildlife Conservation Society, WCS, our education department has begun a campaign aimed at heightening awareness, nationwide, about Jaguar conservation in Belize. Entitled, “Endangered Species in Conflict, Protecting the Jaguar”, this dynamic program travels to schools and communities and highlights both the natural history of this magnificent wild cat, and also, the current problems affecting its survival in our country. Yes, it is difficult convincing people not to shoot a jaguar when it continuously preys upon their livestock, however, providing facts about the ecology of this endangered species, and how best to protect domestic beasts from Jaguar jaws, is certain to make a not-so-nice situation, a bit better.

**Jaguars Forever!** That is the WCS slogan behind a regional Jaguar Conservation campaign and we certainly agree. With unified effort throughout Mesoamerica, we look forward to seeing that Jaguars always remain in our forests.

We also thank the Chester Zoo for their donation of colorful and informative materials to complement our education program.

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### **Belizean Teachers Participate in Earth Expeditions 2005**

The Belize Zoo and Tropical Education Center in conjunction with Miami University and the Cincinnati Zoo, hosted a 2 \_ days professional development workshop for local teachers who continue to use the zoo as an outdoor classroom. The workshop was a part of the Miami University and Cincinnati Zoo's Earth Expedition course offered to US teachers doing their graduate studies. This workshop was coordinated by Belize's Zoo Education staff along with the Earth Expeditions' staff. The workshop was held from July 19 through 21 and had the participation of 19 American and 19 Belizean teachers, all involved in various activities which promoted learning, communication and collaboration, peer driven discussion on inquiry and participatory education and open inquiry investigation.

The goal of the workshop was to build an alliance of educators with first hand knowledge of inquiry driven, community based learning, for the benefit of Belize's ecological environments. It saw small groups of American and Belizean teachers exploring

the savannah and marshy areas of the TEC as well as, various exhibits at the zoo, in their effort to apply and better understand the concept of inquiry based learning. Local teachers agreed that while inquiry learning is encouraged in the curriculum very little is done due to the fact that they have limited knowledge of the concept and resources are limited or expensive.

An outcome of the workshop was the development of several inquiry lesson plans that can be implemented by local teachers. A requirement for US teachers participating in Earth Expeditions is the development of either an Education Action Project or an Inquiry Project. It is anticipated that both outcomes will make tangible impact to Belize's environment.

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### **Belize Zoo Problem Jaguar Rehabilitation Program**

It is terrific to see just how well the Jaguar Rehabilitation Program is doing! One female and four male Jaguars, all who would have had no future in the wild here in Belize, have found sanctuary as part of this important program. The future stands bright for them!

A young male, his mother suspected to have been shot due to her livestock predation habits, was brought to us as an orphan last year. He is scheduled to head to a beautiful home at The Philadelphia Zoo, and live in a spacious and new Feline exhibit. He will be paired with a female, and provide valuable new genes into the North American captive Jaguar population.

The exhibit where he will live shall display important education graphics explaining jaguar ecology, and will bring to thousands

of visitors, information about the efforts Belize is making in order to see that jaguars live on into the future. The Problem Jaguar issue will also be addressed: The serious situation of what is happening in Belize and the region with the chronic problem of Jaguar Predation on livestock and domestic animals... and more good news! As part of playing a key role in this Jaguar program, The Philadelphia Zoo will also continue to support field studies in Belize, aimed at learning more about this great cat.

A documentary television news team journeyed to Belize in early December to interview key people involved in Jaguar conservation, as well as interviewing Dr. Marcella Kelly, who has been studying Jaguar ecology in the Chiquibul forest with funding assistance from the Philadelphia Zoo. They were treated to fine views of Frankie, the young male Jaguar heading for Philadelphia, and the pre-schoolers from our neighboring school in La Democracia, provided singing skills about their favorite problem Jaguar named “Wild boy”.

While we view the Jaguar Rehabilitation program as a positive step, we do not view it as a solution to the Problem Jaguar issue which Belize and other nations currently face. However, providing these endangered cats “another chance”, and one which serves a noble purpose, that of public education and genetic empowerment of captive Jaguar populations, is a far more positive option than seeing them shot or poisoned.

Shrinking habitat and increased human pressures upon wildlife populations worldwide, calls for measures on various levels, which addresses wildlife and human conflict. We are extremely

proud of the Jaguar Rehabilitation program at TBZ, and look forward to seeing it develop to further address this serious issue.

The Problem Jaguar issue, along with outreach education about Jaguar ecology, is now being taken to schools and communities, located nearby Jaguar territory. We extend a very sincere Thank You to the Wildlife Conservation Society, (WCS), for providing the funds necessary to see that this important work is taken out and about.