

# Belize Wildlife & Referral Clinic's Annual Report 2022

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## 2022: A year of challenges and growth!

### Director's note



Gratitude fills me when looking back at BWRC's 11th year in operation. The financial support received is of course crucial, but on a personal level what gives me the most hope for the future is BWRC's growing team. Now a team of eight trained staff; animal health assistants, educators, admin assistants. As well as volunteers and now also Wildlife Ambassadors who learn about the importance of wildlife health and biodiversity for our human health, One Health.

While the Pandemic continued to show its impact, BWRC provided free veterinary care and rehabilitation or health checks in the field for 597 animals in 2022. Within the shared highlights of patients is our orphaned ocelot whose entire rehabilitation to release and post release monitoring was adopted by Nature Trust of the Americas (NTOTA).

Aside from the animal numbers, I am elated to share the wonderful progress BWRC has made towards its long-term goals since our last annual summary: Thanks to the Nature Trust of the Americas, BWRC was able to acquire two acres of property in Cayo. Thanks to an anonymous donor, initial development of the site was started with a site plan, fencing, planting of fruit trees as well as construction of an entrance, exit and parking lot. Small holding ponds were started and a plan for the facilities was drafted and about to be turned into an architectural plan. The next step will be cost estimates for construction. So of course, we will have to continue to seek further funding, but my personal long-term goal of establishing a facility that can continue its operation beyond my own involvement seems to come closer into reach.

Thanks to the GIZ Selva Maya Program and GEF-SGP Belize, BWRC's 2022 growth was even more significant in the education department with the Wildlife Ambassador Program (WAP). I can't express how wonderful it is to observe the team of educators grow to the challenge of developing and rolling out a nationwide campaign via multiple media; virtually, self-guided and in person, on site with a most diverse target group of those on the front lines of wildlife conservation and One Health. It has been a pleasure to start in person training for 100+ police officers and we continue into 2023 with training and on January 28th the first WAP Conference. Please find out more about WAP through our website, social media or YouTube and join the team.

Just as the year closes we finalize the customization of our first wildlife emergency AMBULANCE! No shortage of news from a year that brought on many challenges and difficult tasks but also opportunities which ultimately saw us adapt, succeed and grow to new levels as an organization. Thanks to your support and BWRC's amazing staff and last but not least our Board! I hope you enjoy the annual report and wish you only the best of Health, Happiness and Adventures for 2023!

*I. Paquet Durand*

Isabelle Paquet Durand, DMV, PhD, CWR



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# The year in numbers - 2022 at the BWRC



Number of wildlife patients seen:

**597** **Veterinary Program Activities and Numbers**



Seen in field:

**459**



Confiscated:

**25**



Hospitalized:

**127**



Released:

**37**



Transferred:

**30**



Hotline calls:

**613**

**FAQ:** Why do we write invoices for “bad clients”...? While our wildlife patients do not pay their bills, BWRC accounts for each patient seen and the value of services provided. Then we have our accountant “write off” these expenses once per year. Within BWRC’s objectives is to support the Belize Forest Department in its mandate, as well as conservation partners in the field. This means that we provide service to the Government of Belize and approved conservation partners nationwide at no charge to them and BWRC raises the funds to cover those costs.

In 2022 we accounted separately for wildlife patients and field support to the Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education - BFREE, Friends for Conservation and Development - FCD, San Ignacio Resort Hotel Green Iguana Project - SIRH and of course Government of Belize’s Forest Department and we have listed the value of veterinary services below:

BFREE (Central American River Turtle) -	\$3,419.10 BZD
FCD (Scarlet Macaw Conservation) -	\$5,648.50 BZD
SIRH (Green Iguana Conservation) -	\$2,706.41 BZD
Government of Belize - Wildlife Program	\$33,700.16 BZD

TOTAL VALUE OF CHARITABLE VETERINARY AND ANIMAL CARE SERVICES PROVIDED IN VETERINARY CARE, SURGERY, RESCUE. RELOCATION AND FIELD ASSISTANCE IN 2022 WAS **\$45, 474.17 BZD**

*\*\*WE DID ALSO LOOK INTO THE VALUE PROVIDED FOR PRIMATES (\$1,963.76), CROCODILES (\$2,967.82) AND IGUANAS (\$4028.13) AND WILL SOON SHARE MORE LESSONS LEARNED FROM OUR 2022 NUMBERS.*

# Wildlife Ambassador Program Activities

**The Wildlife Ambassador Program (WAP) is our outreach and education program set out to decrease wildlife loss through Human Wildlife Conflict and Illegal Wildlife Trade through a One Health Approach. It was launched in 2018 with the aim to get more community members and law enforcement officers aware of illegal traffic and humane Human-Wildlife Conflict resolution and to improve the response ability to wildlife emergencies. Now in 2022, we restarted and aim to train up to 1000 new ambassadors!**

Thanks to GEF-SGP Belize and GIZ Selva Maya, four educators (3 full-time, 1 part-time) and a hotline coordinator were hired and trained. The team reached out to potential ambassadors via email, Facebook, Instagram and in person. The Wildlife Ambassador Training Program was revised and completed. The two pocket guides, Pocket Guide to Human Wildlife Conflict, Emergency and Response and Wildlife and The Law Guide to Recognizing Wildlife Crime in Belize, were revised and 1000 copies of each were printed. Ten hours of self guided lectures and seven hours of additional information were developed and uploaded to Google Classroom for the online portion of the program. Four more hours of presentations were developed for use in the in-person portion of the program. The WAP team conducted 11 monthly Facebook LIVE sessions, which were recorded and uploaded to [BWRC's YouTube Channel](#). Additionally, the team posted 3-5 weekly social media posts with an average reach of 1767 views (total views 284,844).



At the end of 2022, a total of 71 community ambassadors have enrolled in the Google Classroom and have completed in total 220 hours of the presentations in the classroom (614 hours total). From the 71 ambassadors enrolled, 12 persons have completed the online portion of the program, and 5 of those 12 have completed the program entirely including the in-person session.

The WAP team also compiled eight Newsletters that were disseminated to all contacts of BWRC. In the most re-



cent months, eight two-day in-person workshops were conducted for the Belize Police Department: starting at the National Police Training Academy (one session), Benque Viejo del Carmen Town (one session), Belize City (four sessions), Dangriga Town (one session), Corozal Town & Orange Walk Town (one session), training and certifying a total of 140 police officers so far.

Of our conservation partner NGOs FCD and Itzamna Society rangers (19 total) were the first to complete the program in 2022.

The first National Conference to bring together national and regional partners in Wildlife Conservation and One Health is in preparation for the 28th of January 2023. Please find more information [here](#) on the event page or contact us at [bwildlifeambassador@gmail.com](mailto:bwildlifeambassador@gmail.com).

# Financial News, Income and Expenses

**A well deserved new title: Chief Financial Officer or CFO – Congratulations to Melissa Gutierrez who has grasped the opportunity in BWRC’s growth to pursue further education and grown in her role. She has seen the organization’s annual budget grow from \$ 154,256.46 in 2015 to \$454,947.66 in 2022.**



Melissa Gutierrez  
Chief Financial Officer

This would not be possible without the help of grants, and while it entails more work in office and on the grounds, thanks to Melissa we have the certainty BWRC’s mission and our core value of transparency and best practices in accounting is being fulfilled every year. Accounting and auditing are also a must for a growing organization and this year we are delighted to have on board L3G’s Accounting services with Mrs. Fatima Chi as our external accountant. She has been awesome in guiding us through new transitions and making sure our books are up to date.

## Annual BWRC Income and Expenses then and now:

Income 2015 -> \$209,986.22 - (GOB) \$55,729.76 = \$ 154,256.46  
Income 2022 -> \$500, 421.83 - (GOB) \$45,474.17 = \$ 454,947.66\*

*\*Note that the value of our charitable service invoices appears as income, until we have our accountant remove it with a memo.*

## Annual Expenses:

2015 - \$170, 768.7  
2022 - \$351,524.08

## Board of Directors Update:

Our gratitude and congratulations to Mr Mark Wilkins for joining the Board of Directors of the Belize Wildlife & Referral Clinic in December 2022!

# Patient Highlight 2022

## Ziggie - a multi-year effort for a majestic cat

A **baby ocelot** was suspected orphaned, assessed and eventually rescued close to Trio Village in Toledo. Thanks to kind humans for doing the right thing and calling for assistance, the kitten was quickly transferred to the BWRC with the help of the Belize Forest Department. Our veterinarian was elated to find her strong and wild without major health concerns other than being an orphan. After initial examination and stabilization, the young cat was entered into rearing for rehabilitation and release. BWRC was elated beyond words to receive the support from the Nature Trust of the Americas who agreed to adopt the entire process of her rehabilitation, from feeding her to grow up, to a pre-release enclosure in the jungle, and a GPS collar for post release tracking! The kitten was named "Ziggie" in honor of NTOTA.



Of course the ocelot does not know her name and thanks to the "hands off" approach in rehabilitation she remained "feisty" - just how we like wildlife in rehabilitation for release (to those who don't know: "tame" wildlife, that is friendly towards humans is usually not a candidate for release back into the wild). Ziggie has more than quadrupled her weight and will soon be fitted with the radio collar for release. We can't wait to see how she does and hold our breath for her long term success post release back into the wild.



## One of 2022's Field Work Highlights

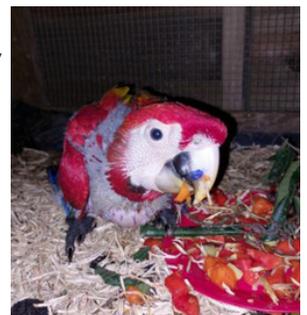
### By Godwin Castillo



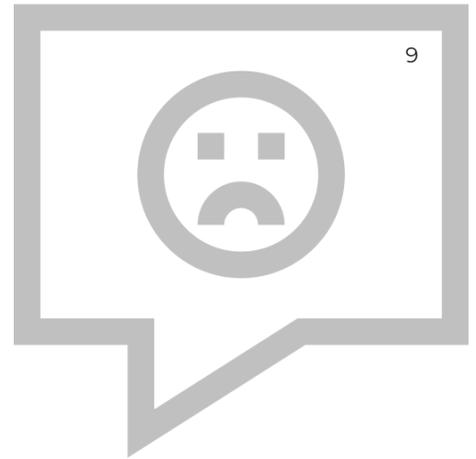
We support Friends for Conservation and Development through their Scarlet Macaw Conservation Project . In April of 2022 I had the privilege and honor to stay, once more, for a week at an in situ lab deep in the Chiquibul Forest rearing two Scarlet Macaw chicks. One of the chicks was only a few days old, while the other was some weeks old. At this stage of their life it is vital to follow strict protocols in order for them to stay healthy, grow properly and transition through their stages of life to release. The chicks had been safely removed by experts (FCD personnel) from so-called "red zones". These are certain spots in very remote

areas, outside of the range of nest protection, where poaching is known to happen on a yearly basis. In other words: these babies were saved from the illegal wildlife pet trade (where 9 out of 10 poached chicks will die before they reach a cage) and were raised to be released back into the wild! Happy end to their story was when they were soft-released into the Chiquibul in August as fully fledged sub-adults .

*\*This conservation effort is conducted with permission from the Belize Forest Department.*



# Abuse & Torture



## Patient Lowlights 2022

While we like to focus more on the positives in our often tough job, it is important to also share some other news. Especially when animal abuse is linked to violent crimes against humans, we feel the need to speak up and educate more on these matters of abuse and torture. In 2022, BWRC received several concerning cases and severely abused animals and victims of human conflict including:

- a live tamandua (anteater) with 10 severely **gruesome machete wounds** to its head, both arms and spine, was rescued by the BWRC team one night. This animal could only be relieved of its suffering and it is unclear why such excessive force was used. The history of this animal stated that it had caused conflict and a case of mis-identification (we suspect fear and lack of knowledge on the gentle and benign nature of these animals lead to extreme retaliation). Education can relieve some fears and lead to better outcomes for all.



- a young male howler monkey with **FIVE bullets in him**, including one behind his eye (shot in the face 😞). Fortunately this animal was rescued after repeated calls of concerned citizens in Santa Elena Town. Thanks to the BWRC team in the field and at the Wildlife Clinic he was able to recover with treatment and later transferred to Wildtracks for rehabilitation and socialization with other howler monkeys.



- a **“chilling case”** of animal torture with a reptile that was used as an illegal tourist attraction and **kept on ice** so that it could be handled easily (which, to those who don't know, being kept on ice is torture for warm blooded organisms, including humans, but even more so for reptiles, who have no ability to regulate their own temperature). This animal regained some strength but ultimately died despite our best efforts.

**Please call our *BWRC Hotline at 615 5159*** if you see wildlife in trouble or wildlife gives you trouble. Please report animal abuse to your nearest Police Station as well, doing so can ***save countless animal lives and possibly human lives as well.***

## It takes a Team!

With a small core team of full time staff and a small army of volunteers, students, wildlife ambassadors, supporters, funders and donors we look forward to serving in 2023 for animals, nature, and humans, with a One Health Approach.



Please check out our [monthly Newsletters](#) for April-December 2022 to see one staff member introduced every month :)

**Equipment Highlight:** stay tuned for our January [Newsletter](#) as we just received the customized Wildlife Emergency Ambulance shown above and will launch in early January!

## BIG Needs in 2023:

Having acquired a permanent home site for the clinic and educational facilities, the BWRC will need further funding as well as a contractor to build the permanent BWRC clinic and an educational building. A call for a contractor will be made in early 2023.

Since the clinic continues to grow and there continues to be a need for small animal referral services, BWRC will also be searching for a small animal veterinarian. This veterinarian will be responsible for all domestic patients that come into the clinic on a daily basis.

Broadening the clinic's horizon will also need the expertise of a social media manager who, as name suggests, will be responsible for all our social media platforms. This will include keeping our followers up to date with activities occurring at the clinic, possible opportunities under the WAP and liaising with our clinic manager in regards to inquiries made through direct messages of all platforms.

## BWRC's Annual Chiquibul Challenge

**After 1 year of not being able to conduct the Annual Chiquibul Challenge Marathon in person, in 2022 we were back at Las Cuevas Research Station!**

After a year of not being able to conduct the Annual Chiquibul Challenge Marathon, in 2022 we were finally back! This year's marathon saw a total of 56 runners (11 full-marathon, 45 half-marathon) and we hope to have more for 2023 CCM. The total funds raised was then split between BWRC and FCD to further fund the Scarlet Macaw Monitoring Project. Dates have been set for the 2023 Chiquibul Challenge Marathon for April 1st - 2nd. Register now to be a part of this eventful marathon and contribute to the Scarlet Macaw Conservation Project.



# How YOU can help BWRC

## 14 ways to help wildlife and BWRC in working towards a vision of conservation and development in balance with One Health

There are countless ways that you can help!

1. You can follow us online on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube: [bwrc.contactinbio.com](https://www.bwrc.org/contact-us)
2. Of course financial support always helps: BWRC can receive donations through Paypal using this QR Code, or through a fiscal sponsor in the US upon request. (paypal QR Code)
3. Just to give you an idea of our average cost and some examples of items needed:
  - o In 2022 the care for one wildlife patient on average cost 127\$ (with much variation depending on species and injury of course).
  - o BWRC needs to purchase further caging at 5 x 300\$/carrier.
  - o Special diets cost about 1,000\$ per year.
4. Donating supplies also helps BWRC to carry out its daily tasks in wildlife conservation. We are always in need of wound care supplies, fluids, bandage materials, sheets, towels, pillow cases, syringes, needles, rubber gloves, cleaning supplies, animal feed and more.
5. Of course as a business sponsor you could also donate items towards our annual fundraising auctions (Art pieces, tourism services and more) and/or support our annual Chiquibul Challenge Marathon with prizes for the winners as well as for BWRC Annual Gala Silent Auction.
6. You can also visit our website at <https://belizewildlifeclinic.org/support-us/bwrc-wishlist/> to find our wish-list.
7. And if you like to shop online, BWRC also has a wishlist on Amazon: [https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2I5JRZMONS7T9?ref\\_=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2I5JRZMONS7T9?ref_=wl_share)
8. For the adventurous traveler: **Take an onsite course or internship.**  
Expand your knowledge and experience while supporting BWRC's efforts to care for injured/orphaned wildlife and return them back to the wild: BWRC will offer onsite courses for:
  - Wildlife Medicine and Conservation on the following dates: (WMC): June 4th - June 17th; June 25th - July 8th; August 6th - August 19th
  - Small Animal Veterinary Experience - (SAVE): July 12th - July 23rd
  - International Veterinary Experience - (WMC+SAVE): June 25th - July 23rd



9. Check out our internship programs for international students and veterinarians here: <https://belizewildlife-clinic.org/veterinary-internship/>
10. BWRC offers online courses in Wildlife Medicine and Conservation (WMC), contact us now [bwildlifeclinic@gmail.com](mailto:bwildlifeclinic@gmail.com) to request a date for this course.
11. For larger construction projects BWRC needs to build another larger enclosure for pre-release conditioning of mammals as well as an educational building at our new site. For those who have followed the development or taken classes with us, you know that our classroom now is in the center of the building. Due to increasing numbers of classes, and patients, we urgently need to expand and locate a dedicated classroom and educational facility with some lab capacities next to the future clinic.
12. In 2023 we hope to introduce a Wildlife Sponsorship Program for our rehabilitation patients (stay tuned).
13. Or you could even host a birthday, BBQ or wedding fundraiser for BWRC. Just let us know your idea and we will gladly assist with support that we can provide.
14. We understand that monetary donations are not possible for many. But you still want to offer your support, we also take Belizean animal care volunteers or interns year round. All you have to do is send us an email to [bwildlifeclinic@gmail.com](mailto:bwildlifeclinic@gmail.com) with your CV and letter of interest.

Note that we can accept volunteer veterinarians, but we cannot offer paid employment for foreigners. So, you see there are more than a dozen ways you can help!

***Last but not least: If you see Wildlife in trouble or Wildlife is giving you trouble (in Belize) give us a call at 615-5159 so that we can help you! For domestic appointments (x-ray) call 615-5175.***






24 Hr.  
HOTLINE

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# Thank you to:

- GIZ Selva Maya  
 - GEF SGP  
 - NTOTA  
 - Belize Diesel and Toyota  
 - San Ignacio Resort Hotel

## Chiquibul Challenge Partners and Sponsors:

- BECOL
- Forest Department
- Friends for Conservation & Development
- Mystic River Resort
- Blancaneaux
- Parrot Nest
- Ian Andersons Cavesbranch*

## Gala Donors:

- Parrot Nest Lodge*
- Chaa Creek Lodge*
- Blancaneaux*
- Turtle Inn*
- Pelican Beach*
- Chan Chich Lodge*
- Ian Andersons Cavesbranch*
- Sun Creek Lodge*
- Orange Gallery*
- Godwin Castillo*
- Eva's Massage*

- Balance Point Wellness*
- Chaa Creek Spa*
- Hode's Place*
- Miss Deb's*
- Aqua Journey- Maria Christina Bacha*

## Also to:

- Gala participants
- Project Vets
- Orlando Jimenez
- Glendy Bautista
- Bambu Tea San Ignacio
- BFREE (Belize Foundation for Research & Environmental Education)



SOL Gas Stations for their support to the Wildlife Ambassador Program with fuel vouchers as prizes!

Ian Andersons Cavesbranch for being the most amazing long term business supporters!



## Special thanks to all Volunteers, students and faculty

Last but definitely not least we have to thank our interns and international student groups Minnesota, Tennessee, Small Animal Veterinary Experience and Wildlife Medicine and Conservation for their enthusiastic participation as well as financial support towards the BWRC's mission. Online courses for Purdue University and Mercy College provided vital support as well.

**Thank You**



**Thank You**



**Thank You**



**BELIZE WILDLIFE & REFERRAL CLINIC**

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