

Newsletter



August 2022

Wildlife Law: Green Iguana

Green iguanas (*Iguana iguana*) preferred habitat are riparian forests (along waterways) since they are an arboreal species. They spend most of their time in high canopies basking in the sun. Iguanas are excellent swimmers and divers and use these skills to dive quickly underwater to get away from predators. Green Iguanas are herbivores, and their diet consists mostly of green leafaves and fruits.

The open season for green iguanas in Belize is July to January (closed to hunting: February-June). Unfortunately the “preferred” hunting season for Iguana is when female iguanas have eggs, which is during the closed season. Keep in mind that green iguanas and their eggs are protected by the Wildlife Protection Act, making it illegal to hunt without a hunting permit and during closed season. Remember closed seasons are there to allow game species to produce offspring, for future generations.

The green iguana is listed as ‘Least Concern’ in the IUCN Red list, but some populations are suffering due to over-hunting for food and the pet trade. In the CITES Green iguanas are listed under Appendix II, which requires the trade of this species to be regulated to not have any adverse effects on the species population

Human - Green Iguana Conflict

Green iguanas have many important roles in our environment just as all our wildlife species globally. They serve as a source of food for humans and other predators. Being part of the reptile family, they are great indicators of the health of the environment, since they are much more sensitive to environmental changes than are humans.

If you live close to the river, and suitable Iguana habitat... Green iguanas can get into gardens to eat your vegetables. For small garden plants the best way to keep Iguanas out would be a cage made from wire mesh that can be placed over the plant to prevent iguanas from getting to the plants. Iguana may also climb, feed and rest on tree branches above your yard or house, or swimming pool. Even though they pose no threat to you, some would feel threatened, or possibility may arise that they fall in your swimming pool. To avoid this; you can cut branches that may attract iguanas to roost over areas, like your swimming pool. If there are trees that you would want to stop iguanas from climbing, placing a metal or hard plastic sheet around the base of the trunk can help. Apart from these relatively minor conflicts, iguanas do not cause many issues unless they feel threatened and start to defend themselves from us humans (tail whipping).



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[Download here](#)

Zoonosis: Anthrax - "The rare but deadly"

What is it? You may have heard about Anthrax from scary bioterrorism movies. We know it is a disease that cows get and that vultures can digest (which is cool), but what really is Anthrax and how do we stay safe? Anthrax is a disease that is caused by the bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*. Its spores survive in the soil for decades and can infect many species of animals and humans.

How do we get it? The spores can be inhaled, ingested or can enter through open wounds, multiply, spread and produce toxins that cause severe illness and death. Humans can get infected with the bacteria from contact with infected animals (Note: never open a dead animal body in the field, or without biosafety training!). Humans can also get Anthrax from infected animal products (making veterinary inspection of food animals really important to ensure humans eat healthy food), and we can become infected when spores get into cuts or scrapes. Human to human infection is rare but can occur from coming into contact with discharge from skin lesions of an infected human.

What does it look like? The different forms of Anthrax show many general symptoms. Cutaneous anthrax symptoms are formations of itchy blisters or painless ulcers. Inhalation anthrax symptoms include fever, headaches, nausea, aches, cough and shortness of breath and the mortality (percentage of persons dying from the infection) is highest in this form. Gastrointestinal symptoms include fever, nausea, diarrhoea, headache, and sore throat/hoarseness.

Rare but deadly! So once again, there are lots of general symptoms, that could be anything. This makes it important to focus on awareness and prevention of this dangerous disease. And before you panic: there has not been a reported case of Anthrax in Belize! But this disease has such severe zoonotic implications (death) that it is a globally reportable disease. This means that veterinarians all over the world are required to report

the suspicion of this disease within 24 hours. So, for you this means: when in doubt? Call your veterinarian :)

But to the most important: How to stay safe from Anthrax and Actions to take if you find dead animals...

A vaccine is available to prevent infection in domestic animals, and humans with potential for exposure.

The most important prevention is to not touch, or worse, open, a carcass of an animal that could have died of Anthrax as this could cause the inhaled, deadly form of Anthrax.

How could one tell an animal died of Anthrax? One could only suspect it and veterinary expertise and laboratory testing is needed. Anthrax can cause death within 48 h, sometimes without signs but in some cases leads to bleeding from mouth and or anus.

If you find dead wild animals, take a picture and call BWRC Hotline (6155159). Usually, immediate action is required. If you find dead wild animals, for unknown reasons, with bleeding from orifices - DO NOT TOUCH.

In case of sudden deaths of unknown causes, and/or bleeding carcasses of Livestock animals, call BAHA - Belize Agricultural Health Authority (822-1378), and your veterinarian immediately and help prevent a larger outbreak and contamination of an entire area, for decades to come.

Thoroughly cook meats and avoid coming into contact with animals suspected of having the disease. If you should be suspect of having been infected with the bacteria, visit your nearest health provider.

BWRC Highlights

Morelet's Crocodile - On August 16th a Morelet's crocodile was brought in by the Forest Department. The croc had been found in a residential area with its mouth taped shut. Upon arrival, the vet check revealed a discoloration of the skin, an overall depressed and dehydrated

animal, and signs of having had the tape on its snout for a while :(You of course know that you can always call the hotline in cases of Human Wildlife Conflict. But did you know that often Human Wildlife Conflict (a crocodile in a backyard) can "accidentally" lead into crime (an animal kept as a pet without a permit)?

Thankfully this little croc was brought in in time, responded well to stabilization and was entered into observation and rehabilitation. Two weeks later we are elated to report little Maurey started eating like a champ and is preparing for release soon!

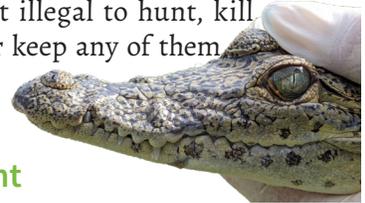
Remember that the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA) protects all Wildlife of Belize, making it illegal to hunt, kill, harass, or keep any of them as pets.

Team Highlight

Calvin joined BWRC in 2020 thanks to a PACT Covid emergency grant and he brought much needed relief for our team of 4 who had worked through the first 5 months of lockdowns and travel restrictions without any intern support, yet much increased workload. Calvin's degree in NRM had prepared him well and his compassion for animals, passion for the environment and work ethic and can-do attitude made him a great fit. Needless to say he became an integral part of the team in no time and we were happy to see him become one of 2 Wildlife Ambassador Educators under the GEF-SGP grant in September 2021. You will see Calvin in the monthly LIVE's, he is behind some social media posts and you will see him during the upcoming workshops too to mention just a few things.



Join the program and let's give a round of applause to Calvin!



Contact Us

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615-5159

Domestic appointments
615-5175



Google Classroom
[Invite Link](#)

The wildlife ambassador Program is now available ONLINE! Click the invite link above to access the virtual classroom.

Wildlife Ambassador Program (WAP) updates

- In the month of August, we were able to kick start our much-awaited Wildlife Ambassador Program workshops with police officers from the Dangriga, Corozal, Independence, Benque, and Belmopan formations. Officers were introduced to the program and our first topic.
- Workshops with everyone who pre-registered for the program also commenced, and several workshops have been hosted with the members via zoom.
- On the 17th of August, a meeting was also held with a Spanish Lookout community member, where we introduced the Program, and asked for assistance in identifying other Conservation enthusiasts from the community who would like to join the program.
- BWRC educators were also invited to present at FCD Chiquibul Junior Ranger Summer Camp 2022. The kids were excited to learn on who we are (BWRC), Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC), how to identify when a Wild animal needs our help and when not to intervene.



JOIN THE PROGRAM

<https://forms.gle/1witAwVWCtju9YMO7>

***Get a Chance to WIN:**
+ 2 Nights for 2 @ Caves Branch
+ Meals
+ 1 Signature Tour



IAN ANDERSON'S
CAVES BRANCH
ADVENTURE CO & JUNGLE LODGE



THE WILDLIFE AMBASSADOR PROGRAM HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH GRANTS FROM

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