



- 01 Let's talk Turtles
Wildlife & The Law
- 02 Human-Turtle Conflict
Current Patients
- 03 One Health & Zoonosis
Current Patients *ctd.*
- 04 Team Highlights
WAP Updates
- 05 Garbage: A problem
Contact Us



MAY 2022

NEWSLETTER



MAY ISSUE | 2022 | BELIZE WILDLIFE and REFERRAL CLINIC

Wildlife Law: Red Eared Slider - Pet Trade - Exotic Species - Invasive Species



Belize has many different native species of turtles, like this beautiful Neotropical Slider (*Trachemys scripta venusta*). There are also turtles that are

not native. One of these, the Red Eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) threatens native species as an "invasive species" in Belize.

The Red Eared Slider is native to Southern United States and Northern Mexico and is considered one of the 100 worst invasive species globally, by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature). This exotic species is brought in for the pet trade. Since they are not native to Belize, they are not protected under the Wildlife Protection Act. So this species can legally be bought as a pet. However, their trade is regulated with a BAHA import permit and these pets should not be

released under any circumstance, to protect our native biodiversity.

Unfortunately the sad reason for the invasive species problem is... owners releasing their pets once they grow tired of them (Did you know they can grow to become 50 years old?! On our Facebook page and youtube we have a short informational video on pet turtles linked below that you should definitely watch if you are considering a pet turtle). The Red Eared Slider can adapt to a range of environmental conditions and habitat that can also include man made drains and canals. Males can grow from 7-9" and females can grow to 12" in length and can be identified by the red stripe on the side of the head. Their diet is omnivorous and includes aquatic plants, insects, small fish and even some ground nesting birds and snakes. Red Eared Slider turtles

outcompete native species for basking sites, food and habitat. They can also carry some diseases which they can transmit to native turtles. Being an invasive species in Belize we urge you to not release your pet turtle into our environment but to call BWRC Hotline for help (#615 5159). We can also help you with identification of turtles you see and our veterinarian can assist your pet turtle should you observe any health issues in your pet.



The Red Eared Slider is not to be confused with the Furrowed Wood Turtle which has a similar red stripe on the side of its head. The red eared slider's carapace has yellow stripes while the Furrowed Wood turtle doesn't. The Furrowed

Wood's plastron is almost all black while the red eared slider is yellow with scattered rings. You can view the following video to compare both species at: <https://youtu.be/HamNKEF-wkc>.

4000+ Wildlife Patients seen since 2011

21 New patient intake and field checkups

3 Transfers for the month of May

Human- Turtle Conflict

While the previous page was on the Red-eared Slider, the following conflict section is about all freshwater turtle species. Turtles rarely cause conflict for humans. Rather, there are occurrences where humans have caused conflict for turtles.

For example turtles can become accidental bycatch from fishing activities in freshwater sources. There are cases in which the turtles can succumb to swallowing a hook we recommend you call us if that happens. There may also be cases where a turtle is found crossing the road. In a normal case the turtle can be left alone or monitored to cross the road safely. Only move a turtle off a road if you can do so safely and in the direction it is going (many turtles have innate orientation and “they know where they are going”). If you find a turtle burrowing in the ground, it is best to leave them alone. Another common occurrence could be your dog finding a turtle



and bringing it to you. In any bitten wildlife cases, with visible injury or cases where you find wildlife animals in strange places, we advise you to take an picture if possible and call BWRC hotline for advice. A veterinary assessment is required for bite injuries and treatment may be needed to give the animal a chance at survival: call BWRC at 6155159 for assistance. We stand by to advise, assist with ID, hook removal and/or provide veterinary care, surgery and rehabilitation when needed.

One Health and Zoonosis Risk for Pet turtle owners: Salmonellosis

Salmonellosis is caused by the bacterium Salmonella. Salmonella can be contracted from contaminated food but also from pet turtles (and other reptiles)

Most people infected with Salmonella will show symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting and stomach cramps. It can also cause severe illness in people with a weakened immune system.

To prevent infection with Salmonella from your pet turtle, washing hands with soap and water is important. Keep pet turtles away from your face and areas where food is prepared to stop the spread of salmonella. When cleaning time comes, it is recommended to clean their enclosure, toys and supplies outside of the house.

A turtle is not a suitable pet for children under 5 or anyone with a weakened immune system.



15

WAP Workshops for Enforcements

Wildlife Ambassador Program starts workshops with enforcement officers and community Ambassadors. Topic: Introduction to WAP program and common IWT

18

Meeting with Toledo Alcalde Association (TAA)

Our education team will be travelling to Punta Gorda in the Toledo District for a special meetin with the Alcaldes on WAP, One Health, IWT and HWC.

29

Wildlife Ambassador Monthly Live - #9

This month we will be talking about Il-legal Wildlife Traffic in detail and zoonosis related to the illegal trade and handling of wildlife. Check out our facebook page for more info.

30

Diagnosis, Planning and Evaluation on Environmental Education” Workshop

Our Educators will attend a “Diagnosis, Planning and Evaluation on Environmental Education” Workshop being hosted by the Forest Department.

Current Critters at BWRC

For the month of May we have had 21 intakes at the clinic. As always our patients were diverse and matching the season and included many babies. From 3 iguanas, or a nestling white wing dove found in one of our staff members’ back yard, an orphaned Howler Monkey brought in by The Belize Zoo from Camalote Village, Cayo District, 4 orphaned Coatimundi from Placencia and 3 orphan yucatan squirrels from a resident in Cristo Rey Village in the Cayo District, then 3 more came in from Santa Elena, Cayo after falling from their nest and one more came in from Benque Viejo Del Carmen, Cayo District. The first orphaned raccoon for 2022 also came in this month from Belize City. A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL the kind rescuers, helpers and supporters who gave these animals a second chance. BWRC staff also went into the field: Our veterinarian assisted with Scarlet Macaw chick checks in the Chiquibul and BWRC Staff member Godwin spent 1 week supporting our partners at Friends for Conservation and Development. Last but not least the BWRC team and our Minnesota student group went to assist our partners at the San Ignacio Hotel Green Iguana Project

BABY SEASON IS HERE!

The month of May was a busy month at the clinic, we have reached ‘baby season’ where we get many calls in regards to orphans being found in need of care. Some were found with no mom around and were observed and once mom was not seen they were called in. Some were found with their mom sadly a victim of conflict with other animals or persons. The first ‘babies’ were three Yucatan squirrels who have been thriving and are very energetic and the list goes on to more squirrels, raccoon, coatis etc. Thanks to the BWRC team of staff the babies were stabilized and started to thrive. Observation and care continues for each one for the next few months so they can hopefully be released once they have grown and learned to survive in rehabilitation. Thanks also to BWRC’s supporters, volunteers and interns!



FLEDGLING ON THE GROUND



On May 20th our new hotline coordinator Aurora got to take her first solo hotline call for a baby bird on the ground.

The caller had seen the bird on the ground and when looking for a nest, there were multiple nests around. So they were not sure which nest the bird had fallen from. When

the caring person called in, they were advised to keep an eye out for mom. Thanks to a picture (and bird ID experts) the baby bird was identified as a Tropical Mockingbird and a Fledgling (about ready to leave the nest, feathered, yet some “fluff” still visible). Thankfully after a while the callers observed an adult Tropical Mockingbird which was coming near repeatedly, caring for the downed fledgling. They kept a watch on the mom bird to see which nest she went to and once they confirmed, they placed the fledgling back in its nest where it was reunited with the mom bird.

Did you know that fledgling birds may be on the ground for up to a week while they learn to fly properly and they are usually cared for by their parents during this time? Thanks to the callers for their compassion, patience and keen observational skills. Thanks for calling the BWRC 24/7 Wildlife Emergency Hotline with any questions and Welcome to Aurora!



Road Side Hawk



The first patient for May was a juvenile Roadside Hawk who was brought in after being found on the side of the road motionless. It was found not too far away from the clinic and was brought in once it was observed to still be alive. Upon arrival it was examined and it was observed that it was

extremely depressed, dehydrated, with signs of head trauma and worst of all, emaciated (almost starved - so sick or without food for a long time as an orphan). The critical patient was placed on oxygen and fluid therapy before starting to slowly re-feed over the course of the next week. While critical for several days the Roadside Hawk responded well to treatment and made a full recovery. It was kept on close observation and upgraded to a bigger enclosure once it was ready to spread its wings. After practicing flight and learning to hunt he was released in his home range. Thank you to the rescuers and supporters who help BWRC to give injured wildlife a second chance!

BWRC Team Highlights

Let's look closer at our 'oldest' member here at BWRC, Melissa has been with BWRC for 6 years and has become an animal caregiver, receptionist, hotline and administrative assistant, Animal Health Assistant and Wildlife Ambassador. And on top, she developed from bookkeeper to now Financial Officer, managing BWRC's growing number of projects! Her role for BWRC does not fit in one post!



While you will most frequently meet Melissa in the office or hear her on the phone; we wanted to share a bit of what she does... treating a pet chicken to a foot bath was also her job one day, and that smile was

BWRC Veterinary Courses

- July 27th-August 7th 2022- Wildlife Medicine and Conservation Course (WMC). SIGN UP!!
- July 13th-July 24th 2022 - Small Animal Veterinary Experience (SAVE)
- July 13th - August 7th 2022- International Veterinary Experience (SAVE+WMC)

Wildlife Ambassador Program(WAP) UPDATES

What's happening on the education side of things?

The aim of the Wildlife Ambassador Program (WAP) is to bring awareness and education in the areas of the One Health Concept, Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC) and Illegal Wildlife Traffic (IWT) across the country and to provide capacity building for wildlife emergency response. Through online and in person training workshop sessions, we are aiming to reach up to 1000 people across the country.

This month, with the help of Mr. Orlando, the alcaldes of villages in Toledo have been contacted. In the coming month, a short presentation on the objectives of the project, is going to be done to the representatives of these villages. We have also received an email with a list of enforcement officers that will be joining WAP as well, and we hope to start an online workshop with them by the middle of the month of June. We also got an invitation from Sacred Heart Primary School to be able to present during education week.



Our weekly social media posts on One Health, Human Wildlife Conflict



and Illegal Trade continue every Monday, Wednesday's and Friday's. If you haven't liked us on face book or followed us on instagram, find our links on the last page and do not miss out any of our weekly posts.

The May facebook - LIVE event covered Topics: Trashtalk - Impact of garbage on wildlife AND...

The WAP also shared it's first 1 Minute on One Health video introducing the program. Our educators completed the first Newsletter (<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/aJ9Mah8uGHw>)

The Pocket Guide to Wildlife Law in Belize is going into print and we look forward to sharing this with you online (<https://belizewildlifeclinic.org/wp-content/uploads/pocket-guide-2022.pdf>) and in person.

The first recorded presentation on Commonly Seen Species in Belize is added to the BWRC WAP website. (<https://belizewildlifeclinic.org/commonly-seen-species-in-belize/>)

Garbage: A PROBLEM



Single-use plastics are dangerous to humans, the environment and to animals.

The One Health concept connects us all and human made garbage piling up in our environment, rivers and oceans, causes countless problems for all life on Earth. Animals ingest the garbage which can lead to starvation, obstruction, toxicity, disease and sometimes even death also because of the chemical pollutants. There has been the discovery of chemical toxicity of micro plastics which causes health issues through the food chain to us humans. Garbage also attracts unwanted wildlife and creates many Human Wildlife Conflict situations. Garbage/Single use plastic in our Environment causes it to be unhealthy and our health depends on healthy Environments and healthy animals. Improper garbage management hurts the environment and affects us humans and animals with many health issues. Be part of the solution and do take action!

Proper Garbage Management

AT HOME:

- Properly collect garbage in a sturdy garbage bag
- Properly secure garbage containers
- Reduce/ Reuse/ Recycle
- Keep your yard clean

IN PUBLIC:

- Properly dispose of garbage in a garbage bin
- Leave only footprints behind

AS A COMMUNITY

- Dispose of trash at a designated waste disposal or transfer station
- Keep our environment free of garbage
- Participate in community clean-ups

Who benefits from proper garbage management?

The proper management of garbage benefits us humans, our environment and our animals.

The proper management of garbage benefits us humans, our environment and our animals. We are all connected and if our environment is healthy then humans and animals will also be healthy. Proper management will allow for the control of diseases in our environment that in turn affect humans and animals negatively.



Operating Hours for the facilities:
 Monday – Fridays 8:00am – 5:00pm;
 Saturday 8:00am – 1:00pm;
 Sunday – **CLOSED**



26

BWRC Annual Gala
 Mark Your Calenders!

TBA

Wildlife Ambassador 1st Annual Conference

Contact Us



Website
<https://belizewildlifeclinic.org>



Instagram
[@belizewildlifeclinic](https://www.instagram.com/belizewildlifeclinic)



FaceBook
[@bzwildlifeclinic](https://www.facebook.com/bzwildlifeclinic)



Youtube.
[Belize Wildlife and Referral Clinic](https://www.youtube.com/Belize Wildlife and Referral Clinic)



Clinic Email
bzwildlifeclinic@gmail.com



Program Email
bzwildlifeambassador@gmail.com



24/7 Hotline for Wildlife Emergencies
615-5159



Domestic appointments
615-5175

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