

WILDLIFE AND THE LAW

A Guide to Recognizing Wildlife Crime in Belize

Belize Forest Department
Rev. Edition 2022



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WHY IS WILDLIFE PROTECTED OR REGULATED?

In 1980, only forty-two years ago, Belize had an estimated 144,000 people. Today, in 2022, Belize supports an estimated 400,000 people - more than double the number in the same area. During that time, the area of forest outside protected areas has decreased, reducing the availability of game species. Hunting is a way of life for some people. It supports families and is culturally important for communities. Belize's forests, however, can't support the increasing number of people and their demand for game meat. Without better regulation and enforcement, Belize will lose its game species, and future generations will only be able to see these animals and birds in the zoo. The law is designed to help us keep these species in the fire hearth and on the table, whilst still having sufficient in the wild to provide resources for many years to come.

The white lipped peccary (warrie) once roamed across Belize, living in large herds of 100 or more in connected forests. Today, it has disappeared from most forests outside protected areas, and even from some protected areas, such as the Manatee Forest Reserve. Where it does still exist, group size is now as small as 5 or 6 animals. It is slowly being wiped out, and will disappear completely if hunting is not effectively regulated.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "GAME SPECIES"?

Game species are those animals (mammals, birds and reptiles) that can be hunted for meat in Belize. Peccary, deer, paca, and curassow are all examples of game species.

To hunt these species, hunters have to have both a valid gun license and a valid hunting license. Hunting without these licenses and in areas where animals are protected is against the law.

GAME SPECIES

White-tailed Deer	Venado
Brocket Deer	Antelope, cabrito
Collared Peccary	Kekeo, javelin, jawilla, pecari
White-lipped Peccary	Warrie, chancho del monte
Paca	Gibnut, Tepezquintle
Game Birds - Great Curassow	Paujil, faison, chak mut, k'un bul
Game Birds - Crested Guan	Quam, cojolito, pu'u, cosh
Game Birds - Ducks and Quail	Pato careto, quail, cordoniz,
Armadillo	Hamadilly, ouetch
Green Iguana	Iguana

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THREATENED SPECIES?

A Threatened Species is one that is declining - the number of individuals is going down.

This may be because of disease or the changing climate...but more frequently, it is because of us. Unsustainable hunting and land use change reduce numbers until the populations are so low, they find it hard to recover. These species may then become extinct.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has developed a list - the IUCN Red List - with a series of global categories that indicate which species are at most risk of extinction.

GLOBALLY ENDANGERED SPECIES FOUND IN BELIZE (IUCN RED LIST)

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

CR	Central American River Turtle
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ENDANGERED

EN	Baird's Tapir
----	---------------

EN	Yellow-headed Parrot
----	----------------------

EN	Yucatan Black Howler Monkey
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EN	Central American Spider Monkey
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EX

EXTINCT

There are no more living examples of these species left on Earth - our children will never be able to see these in the wild - ***EVER***.



CR

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

These species will become extinct in the near future unless we work harder to protect them.



EN

ENDANGERED

These species are declining fast, and are at risk of becoming critically endangered in the near future unless we work hard to protect them.



VU

VULNERABLE

These species are declining but not yet endangered. However they will continue to decline unless we work to protect them.

THE WILDLIFE PROTECTION ACT

*Chapters 220 of the Substantive Laws of Belize,
Revised Edition, 2000.*

Licenses (Prices in \$BZD)

- Annual Game License (Nationals) - \$500.00
- Annual Game License (Non-nationals) - \$1,000.00
- One day local Hunter License - \$10.00
- One day Visiting Hunter License - \$100.00
- Annual Dealer's License - \$2,000.00
- Temporary Dealer's License (3 days) - \$100.00

Permits

- Captive Wildlife - Contact the Forest Department

The Wildlife Protection Act states that:

It is **ILLEGAL** to hunt:

- any of the species of wildlife set out in the Schedule;
- any species of wildlife (game species) unless in possession of a valid hunting licence
- any obviously immature wildlife or any female accompanied by its young;
- using fire, traps, poison, dogs or any artificial light.
- in any area closed to hunting (protected areas, private lands);
- OR be in an area closed to hunting, carrying wildlife, wildlife parts or a gun

It is **ILLEGAL** to:

- sell wildlife or wildlife parts (including game meat) except if in possession of a valid dealer's license (this includes on the roadside, in meat shops, restaurants, and markets)
- import or export any wildlife of any species, dead or alive, without an import or export permit

Any person:

- found in possession of any wildlife or wildlife parts (including game meat without a valid hunting license) is presumed to have committed an offence under this Act.
- who commits an offence under the Wildlife Protection Act may be charged, and fined up to \$1,000 or face six months imprisonment.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

“**wildlife**” means all undomesticated mammals, birds and reptiles and all parts, eggs and nests of any of these wildlife forms;

“**to hunt**” means to kill, take or molest by any method and includes attempting to kill, take or molest by any method any species of wildlife

“**dealer**” means any person who, in the course of any business or trade, imports, exports, processes, buys or sells any wildlife of any species or part or product thereof or therefrom

“**schedule**” includes the list of species that cannot be hunted

CONTACT DETAILS FOR REPORTING WILDLIFE OFFENCES

Forest Department (Belmopan): 822-1524

Email: wildlife.manager@forest.gov.bz

FB: Belize Forest Department

WHAT IS LEGAL AND WHAT IS **ILLEGAL**?

GAME SPECIES (*YELLOW FRAME*)

IS IT LEGAL TO HUNT GAME SPECIES?

Yes...but only if:

- It is open season for this species
- You have a valid hunting license
- You have a valid gun license
- You are not taking young or female with young
- You are not hunting in a protected area or on private land without permission

IS IT LEGAL TO HAVE THE MEAT?

Yes...but only if:

- It is open season for this species, you have a valid hunting license and dealer's license.

IS IT LEGAL TO SELL THE MEAT?

Yes...but only if:

- It is open season for this species
- You have a dealer's license

IS IT LEGAL TO KEEP, TRANSPORT OR SELL LIVE GAME SPECIES, THEIR YOUNG, OR EGGS (GAME BIRDS)?

No, you are not allowed to have young game species, eggs, or parts thereof. For guidance contact the Forest Department.

**THIS GUIDE HAS BEEN
DESIGNED TO ASSIST IN THE
RECOGNITION OF WILDLIFE
CRIME AND IDENTIFICATION OF
WILDLIFE SPECIES.**

Yellow Frame: Game Species

This species can be hunted if the regulations are followed.

Orange Frame: Protected Species

This species is fully protected. Anyone found with this species is committing an offence.

The Hunting Season (1):

Provides the dates of the Open Season, when this species can legally be hunted

Species ID Photo:

Provide easy identification of the species.

Level of protection:

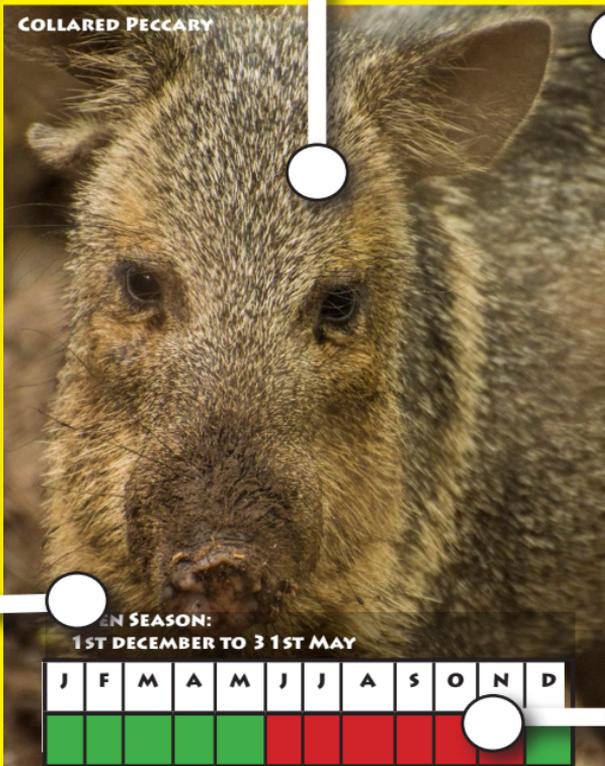
Yellow Frame:

This species can be hunted if the regulations are followed.

Orange Frame:

This species is fully protected. Anyone found with this species is committing an offence.

COLLARED PECCARY



The Hunting Season (2):

Provides a calendar for easy reference of when the open and closed seasons are.

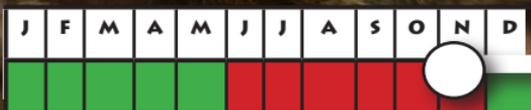
CLOSED SEASON



OPEN SEASON



OPEN SEASON:
1ST DECEMBER TO 31ST MAY



WHITE-LIPPED PECCARY

**OPEN SEASON:
1ST DECEMBER TO 31ST MAY**

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green

COLLARED PECCARY

**OPEN SEASON:
1ST DECEMBER TO 31ST MAY**

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green

WHITE-TAILED DEER RED BROCKET DEER



OPEN SEASON:

MALE: 1ST OCTOBER TO 30TH JUNE

FEMALE: 1ST MARCH TO 30TH JUNE

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Males	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green
Females	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red

NINE-BANDED ARMADILLO

**OPEN SEASON:
1ST JULY TO 31ST JANUARY**

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

GREEN IGUANA



Tony Rath Photography

**OPEN SEASON:
1ST JULY TO 31ST JANUARY**

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

GAME BIRDS

OTHER GAME BIRDS
BLACK - THROATED
BOBWHITE,
BLUE-WINGED TEAL,
LESSER SCAUP



CRESTED GUAN

OPEN SEASON:
16TH JULY TO 31ST JANUARY

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

CHACALACA



**OPEN SEASON:
16TH JULY TO 31ST JANUARY**

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

Tony Rath



GREAT CURASSOW



**OPEN SEASON:
16TH JULY TO 31ST JANUARY**

Eran Gissis

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

WHAT IS LEGAL AND WHAT IS ILLEGAL?

PROTECTED SPECIES (*ORANGE FRAME*)

IS IT LEGAL TO HUNT, CAUSE HARM, KILL, FEED OR DISTURB A PROTECTED SPECIES?

NO...it is not legal to hunt, cause harm, kill, feed or disturb a protected species.

IS IT LEGAL TO HAVE OR SELL THE SKIN, TEETH, MEAT OR OTHER PARTS?

NO...it is not legal to keep or sell any protected species parts.

IS IT LEGAL TO KEEP, TRANSPORT OR SELL LIVE PROTECTED SPECIES?

NO...IT IS ILLEGAL to keep, transport, or sell live protected species

Parrots are an exception, **BUT** only if a captive wildlife permit has been issued by the Forest Department. The permit needs to be presented when requested by an enforcement officer.

Note, however:

- NO Young parrot chick should be kept or sold.
- Scarlet Macaw are not allowed to be kept, sold, or have in your possession.

BAIRD'S TAPIR



PROTECTED SPECIES

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D

ANTILLEAN MANATEE



PROTECTED SPECIES

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D

LARGE CATS - JAGUAR AND PUMA



PROTECTED SPECIES
INCLUDES THE POSSESSION OF SKIN
AND TEETH

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D

YUCATAN BLACK HOWLER MONKEY



PROTECTED SPECIES

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D

SCARLET MACAW



PROTECTED SPECIES

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D

OTHER PARROTS



PROTECTED SPECIES

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D

WHITE-NOSED COATI (PISOTE, QUASH)

PROTECTED SPECIES

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D

CROCODILES

**PROTECTED SPECIES
INCLUDES THE POSSESSION OF SKIN
AND TEETH**

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D

ANIMAL CRUELTY

What is Animal Cruelty?

Animal cruelty ranges from physical violence; where humans purposefully cause harm, injure, or kill an animal; to



neglect such as depriving an animal of water, shelter, food, and necessary medical treatment. Cruelty can be intentional, such as kicking, burning, stabbing, beating or shooting an animal. But cruelty can also be caused by lack of knowledge of proper diet and care for an animal. Animal fighting, in which animals are trained or forced to attack each other in violent confrontations, is another form of animal cruelty.

Belize's Cruelty to Animals Act, Chapter 115 of the Substantive Laws of Belize Revised Edition, 2011.

Referred to as "The Cruelty to Animals Act", this act serves to regulate cruelty to animals in Belize. While further revisions are necessary we want to share some of the important points.

- Paragraph 3. Keeping a place for baiting or fighting animals is prohibited under this act. Permitting baiting or fighting, or charging admission to any place for the purpose of baiting or fighting animals is also prohibited.
- Paragraph 4.(1) Any animal that is kept confined in any area must be provided with fit and wholesome food and water.

- Paragraph 5.(1) If more than 12 hours passes without proper food and/or water, any person can enter where the animal is confined and provide food and water, without it being deemed trespassing and the owner shall compensate for the food and water.
- Paragraph 6. Any person who beats, ill treats, over-loads or tortures any animal is committing an offence. Procuring ill treatment, abuse and torture is also considered an offence.
- Paragraph 7. Ill-treatment is further defined to include: urging an animal to cross water sources where being attacked by another species is possible, hoisting or raising horned animals by the horns or twisting tails or any act likely to cause torture, hoisting or raising any animal by a noose or rope.
- Paragraph 8. Any constable, upon view of complaint by a person who declares their name and home, may arrest any person offending against this Act and without any other authority or warrant convey such offender before a magistrate.

Fines are currently very small with a range from \$10/day for neglecting to provide proper food and water and fines not exceeding \$100 for the other offenses.

Why is reporting Animal Cruelty important? It protects humans as well!

There have been various studies carried out by multiple governmental criminal enforcement agencies on the link between violent crimes against humans and animal abuse in the past of the perpetrator. This well documented “Link” can even begin from a child witnessing animal abuse, which can then escalate to the child committing acts of abuse to animals themselves.

FBI states: "...recent research shows a well-documented link that animal abuse is a predictive or co-occurring crime with violence against humans (including intimate partners, children, and elders) and is associated with other types of violent offenses." The FBI have therefore began to track animal abuse cases. According to Johnson (2018) "The mistreatment and abuse of animals is a significant indicator of violence towards humans, up to and including intimate partner abuse, sexual assault, rape, murder. All too often mental health professionals and prosecutors miss the seriousness of any cruelty towards animals and the significant role animal cruelty plays. The literature supports that animal cruelty is one of the earliest markers for future acts of both violent and nonviolent criminal behaviors." <https://alliance-health-wildlife.org/animals-tanked-over/>

Cruelty to animals is linked to violence to humans! So, protecting an animal from abuse, or charging a person for cruelty to animals may save a human's life!

EXAMPLES OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

- Stoning of any living animal, including birds, reptiles and amphibians
- Tying limbs or chopping limbs and abandoning any live animal
- Drowning or setting fire to any living animal
- Tying an animal on a short leash with no accessibility to water/food/shelter.
- Neglecting to feed an animal its proper nutritional diet



**IMAGINE A
BELIZE WITHOUT
WILDLIFE...**

**ITS FUTURE IS IN
YOUR HANDS...**

**CONTACT DETAILS FOR
REPORTING WILDLIFE OFFENCES**

***Forest Department: 822-1524
BWRC (24/7) Hotline: 615-5159***