# 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 (White-lipped ONLY), deer(White-talied ONLY), 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.

White-tailed Deer	Venado					
White-lipped Peccary	Warrie, chancho del monte					
Раса	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					

#### **GAME SPECIES**

#### 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

ENDANGERED								
EN	Baird's Tapir							
EN	Yellow-headed Parrot							
EN	Yucatan Black Howler Monkey							
EN	Central American Spider Monkey							

Eran Gissis



#### 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**.



### **CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

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



#### 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.



#### 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 artificail light.
- in any area closed to hunting (protected areas, private lands);

#### It is **ILLEGAL** to:

- sell wildlife or wildlife parts (including game meat) except if in posession 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
- be in an area closed to hunting, carrying wildlife, wildlife parts or a gun

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 or a dealer's permit.

#### 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.

HITELIPPED PECCAR

N SEASON:

M

**1ST DECEMBER TO 3 1ST MAY** 

M

#### 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.

> The Hunting Season (2): Provides a calendar for easy reference of when the open and closed seasons are.



## WHITE-LIPPED Peccary



### WHITE-TAILED DEER

### OPEN SEASON: MALE: 1ST OCTOBER TO 3OTH JUNE FEMALE: 1ST MARCH TO 3OTH JUNE

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	5	0	N	D
Males												
Females												

## NINE-BANDED ARMADILLO





## **GREEN** IGUANA

(AAGEGEE M





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

D

CRESTED GUAN

Canto Jr.





## GREAT CURASSOW



### 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







Vildtracks

## LARGE CATS -JAGUAR AND PUMA



Takuto Kurosawa

## SMALL CATS -OCELOT, MARGAY, AND JAGUARUNDI

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



len Slater

## YUCATAN BLACK HOWLER MONKEY



Eran Gissis

## CENTRAL AMERICAN SPIDER MONKEY

## **PROTECTED SPECIES**

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Eran Gissis

## YELLOW-HEADED PARROT



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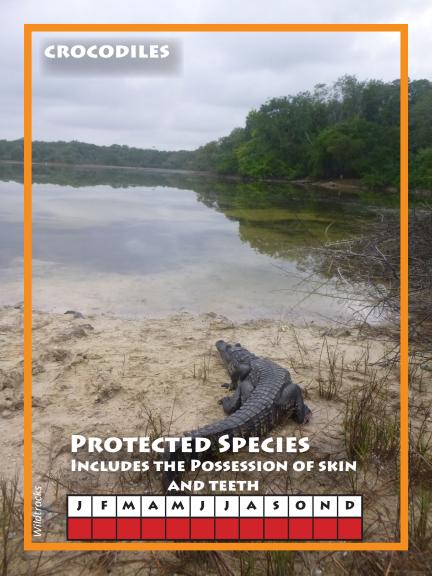




## WHITE-NOSED COATI (PISOTE, QUASH)



E<mark>ra</mark>n Gissis



### **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 Sustantive 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."

Cruelty to animals is linked to cruelty 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

Fran Gissis

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