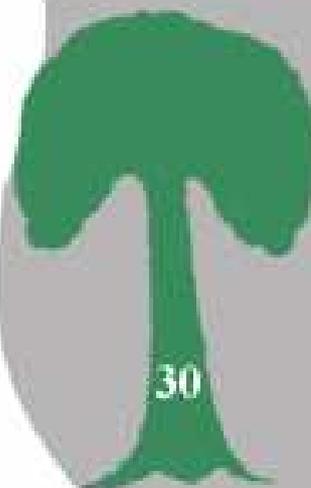




Belize Audubon Society

The First 30 Years



Lydia Waight

Judy Lumb

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Preface

For the past thirty years, the Belize Audubon Society (BAS) has made Belize a model of a developing country with an environmental consciousness. The BAS was Belize's first non-governmental organization [is this true?] and for the first fifteen years it was the only environmental organization. Through a close working relationship with the Government of Belize the BAS worked to preserve the country's precious natural resources for the generations to come. They were consulted on all proposed development projects and warned against those that would be damaging to the environment. They facilitated the early passage of legislation for the protection of wildlife and establishment of protected areas. They proposed areas that should be protected and lobbied until wildlife sanctuaries, natural monuments, nature reserves, and national parks were declared. They led the management of these protected areas. Indeed, Belize's current enviable position as a premier ecotourism destination is largely due to the early work of the BAS.

The BAS was formed by a group of enthusiastic and energetic conservationists on February 6th, 1969. The story of how that came about, and who the founders were, is told in "Formation of the Society" (Chapter 1).

The BAS has developed in three phases. During the first fifteen years the work of the Society was done solely by volunteers using donated materials. By the end of 1984 some funds were obtained to support management of protected areas and establish an office with professional staff. The next five years were a volatile time with inconsistent funding, changes in the Government of Belize and enormous developmental issues for the country. By 1990 the situation had stabilized and the professional phase began in earnest. The BAS staff has continued to increase in number and professional skill ever since. The story of this "Growth of the Society" is told in Chapter 2 of this book.

Since the very beginning the Society has sat upon the same three-legged programmatic stool, the legs of which are:

- (1) "Advocacy for Conservation of Belize's Natural Resources" (Chapter 3)
- (2) "Environmental Education," (Chapter 4), and
- (3) "Management of Protected Areas" (Chapter 5).

Each conservation issue, each environmental education project, each protected area is a story in itself. Rather than tell the whole history of the BAS chronologically, each story is told individually in the respective chapters.

Over the past 20 years the BAS has received and given a number of "Awards" (Chapter 6). The James A. Waight Award for Conservation has been given in honour of the Society's first President since 1987.

BAS has accomplished all this with the help of its partners who have provided financial support and joined with us in the work of preserving Belize for a bright future. Belize's other environmental organizations, international and local funding agencies, volunteer organizations, and corporate sponsors have all been our "Partners in Conservation" (Chapter 7).

This documentation of BAS' remarkable history would not have been possible without the untiring work of Lydia Waight. Her meticulous maintenance of records and sharp, insightful memory of the events of these thirty years are the basis for this book. She was the Society's first Secretary and continued in that position for 27 years when she became Honorary Secretary. She was the one who wrote all those letters for the early lobbying efforts of the BAS, kept the minutes of Board Meetings and insisted upon action as a result of Board decisions. She is in large part responsible for the BAS' many accomplishments. It has been my great privilege to work with her in the production of this history of the BAS.

Judy Lumb
20 February 1999

Chapter 1 ---Revised

The Formation of the Belize Audubon Society

January 28, 1969

"A group of interested persons are desirous of forming a local club or society for the purpose of studying wildlife and its conservation. On behalf of this group, we cordially invite you to meet Mr. C. Russell Mason, Executive Director of the Florida Audubon Society, at the Premier's Lodge on Thursday, February 6th, 1969 at 8.00 p.m. Mr Mason, who will be here with an Audubon tour, will talk on how to go about forming such a society. The film, 'Painted Reefs of Belize' and the newly presented film by Esso will be shown."

This invitation was sent to about 50 people and some 40 attended. The meeting was held at the Premier's Lodge, the house at the end of the Foreshore, formerly the residence of the Colonial Secretary. At that time it was called the Premier's Lodge. The Premier, George Price, never lived there, but he allowed it to be used for receptions and other functions. James Waight chaired the meeting. Here is the text of his comments:

Mr. Premier, Ladies and Gentlemen, first of all permit me to extend very warm greetings to our friends of the FLORIDA AUDUBON SOCIETY from across the gulf. I hope that they will like what they see and that we on this side will be able to make up, even in a small way, for all the difficulties and discomforts of travel which they may experience in a comparatively new country such as ours is. Greetings also to our fellow budding naturalists who live here.

In a few moments I shall ask someone, who is better able to do so, to welcome you on behalf of the whole of Belize. Before doing so, I would like to make a few very brief comments on what the Florida Audubon Society, in co-operation with the Florida State University, will be doing in Belize:

There are about 9 square miles of the Columbia Forest Reserve which has been set aside as a Wildlife Refuge. This block of land is situated in the Toledo District north of the Columbia River. It is one of the last pieces of undisturbed rain forest in our country. The Florida Audubon Society and the Florida State University will work on the conservation of this forest in its natural state and on the conservation of the birds, mammals and other animals which inhabit it. They hope to carry out research on the plants and animals, partly with the view of finding out just what we have there and partly with the view of learning enough about these species so that we can preserve them for future generations to enjoy. Eventually they will set up observation areas for the use of the schools in teaching about our wildlife.

The Florida Audubon Society will give assistance in the preservation here of bird species, such as the Roseate Spoonbill which can be found at Cayo Rosario behind San Pedro Ambergris Caye and mammals, such as our "tiger" (jaguar), species that are in danger of extinction.

They will also bring Natural History tour groups, such as this one here tonight, to Belize so that people from other countries can enjoy our wild life also.

Now our group here wants to organize a local chapter of the Florida Audubon Society, to be called the Belize Audubon Society, for the purpose both of learning more about our wildlife ourselves and of preserving it as part of our national heritage. In a little while I will ask Mr. Russell Mason, Executive Director of the Florida Audubon Society to tell us how to go about doing so.

Just now I wish to tender thanks to the Premier for the use of his Lodge for this first get-together and, as I said earlier, I am going to ask him to say a few words. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Premier.

[The Premier welcomed the group and pledged his support to any such projects that would encourage the preservation of the country's natural resources.] Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are fortunate in having with us the Executive Director of the Florida Audubon Society. He started to do tropical tours in 1958. He has developed co-operative programmes for wildlife conservation in several countries. He has led the Florida Audubon Society in setting up wildlife sanctuaries in the Bahamas, in Panama, in Trinidad and now in Belize. Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Russell Mason.

The first *BAS Bulletin* (March 1969) carried the following account of the formation meeting:

A meeting was held at the Premier's Lodge of persons interested in forming a local Society for the purpose of studying wildlife and its conservation. The Premier welcomed the group and pledged his support to any such projects that would encourage the preservation of the country's natural resources. Mr. C. Russell Mason, Executive Director of the Florida Audubon Society, was present. He addressed the group, making suggestions as to how a Society might be formed, what its functions would be and its relation to the Florida Audubon Society. At this meeting a decision was reached to go ahead with the formation of a Belize Audubon Society as a chapter of the Florida Audubon Society and temporary officers and directors were elected. These officers and directors were instructed to nominate a slate of officers and directors to be considered during an inaugural meeting of the Society held on a date fixed by the temporary board.

At this meeting and subsequently, 55 persons have become members of the Society.

Inaugural Meeting (from the *BAS Bulletin* March 1969)

March 7, 1969

A meeting of the members and friends of the Society was held at the Bliss Institute and the following officers and directors were elected:

Officers:

<i>President</i>	<i>James A. Waight</i>
<i>First Vice President</i>	<i>Dora Weyer</i>
<i>Second Vice President</i>	<i>Louis Lindo</i>
<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Lydia Waight</i>
<i>Treasurer</i>	<i>Albert S. Grant</i>

Directors:

<i>Fr. Leo Weber, S.J.</i>	<i>Colonel Martin C. Hastings</i>
<i>W. Ford Young</i>	<i>Albert Staine</i>
<i>Norman Staines</i>	<i>Henry Fairweather</i>
<i>Magnus Halcrow</i>	<i>Meg Craig</i>
<i>Fr. Charles Woods, S.J.</i>	<i>Ronald Clark</i>
<i>Gil Rosado</i>	<i>Winston Miller</i>

At the same time, Directors Magnus Halcrow and Albert Staine were elected to join the officers on the Executive Committee which would handle the day-to-day running of the Society. The officers and directors were instructed to appoint six Standing Committees as required by the Florida Audubon Society.

Following the business session, Dora Weyer gave a brief talk, accompanied by color slides of some of the birds which can be found in and around Belize City at the present time.

Standing Committees (from the *BAS Bulletin* March 1969)

In accordance with the by-laws of the Florida Audubon Society the officers and directors have appointed six standing committees. In order to maintain liaison between the committees and the Board, each committee is headed by a member of the Board of Directors. These committees are not necessarily closed and if any member has a particular interest in any of these fields, he or she is urged to contact Mrs. Lydia Waight, telephone 2450, and advise her of the desire to join a committee. The committees as presently constituted are as follows:

Field Trips:	<i>W. Ford Young (head), Esther Pendergast, Col. M.C. Hastings</i>
Programme:	<i>M. Halcrow (head) L.C. Balderamos, Jim Parker, W. Barmon, Peter Hill</i>
Conservation:	<i>Louis Lindo (head), Winston Miller, Fr. Charles Woods, S.J., Paul Szabo, Henry Fairweather, Ronald Clark</i>
Membership:	<i>Albert S. Grant (head), Albert Staine, Jim Parker, Hyacinth Waight</i>
Youth Education:	<i>Fr. Leo Weber, S.J. (head), Meg Craig, Ann Carter, Norman Staines, Gilda Wagner, Kathleen Hope, Elvia Verde</i>
Sanctuary:	<i>Dora Weyer (head), Premier George Price, Dr. Peter Schmidt, Gil Rosado, Fr. Len Dieckman, S.J., Jorge Verde</i>

An Introduction to the Founders of the Belize Audubon Society

Dora Weyer was the moving spirit behind the formation meeting. She and her husband had lived in West Africa where he worked with the Firestone Rubber Company. When he retired, they wanted to live in Belize and came here looking for property. Mr. Weyer died very suddenly before they could complete the move, but Dora and her daughter Diane settled here. Dora was an ornithologist, herpetologist and a wildlife person all around. She was very interested in the wildlife of Belize, especially in our birds.

As a member of the Florida Audubon Society Dora knew that the Executive Director, C. Russell Mason (Russ), was interested in starting foreign chapters. She had made friends with Meg Craig, Lydia and Jim Waight, and other people who were interested in wildlife and joined her on bird-watching trips. Dora decided that if she could find enough interested people, a chapter could be formed here. So, she got in touch with Russ Mason who arranged a tour for members of the Florida Audubon Society with the intention of getting a chapter started.

W. (Walker) Ford Young was born in Eugene, Oregon. He came to Belize in the 1950's with Gulf Oil for exploration after working in Nicaragua and Columbia. After retiring from Gulf Oil, he went into the real estate business, forming his own company in Belize.

James Waight was born in Belize City. In 1969 he had retired from his position as Surveyor General of Belize and was working on the 1970 Commonwealth Population Census

Lydia Waight and **Alice M. (Meg) Craig** are sisters who were born in Belize They grew up in a family that was greatly interested in wildlife. Their brother, George Price, was at that time Premier of Belize. Meg's son David later became Vice President of the BAS, son Walter (Mickey) became the first Executive Director of BAS, and son Peter grew up to be one of Belize first and best birders.

Colonel Martin C. Hastings, D. S. O., was the officer in command of the British forces in Belize. He had been in Kenya and was interested in wildlife conservation. Col. Hastings was most helpful in providing transportation for field trips and was able to supply maps for proposed reserves. In 1971 Col. Hastings moved to Devon, England, but he has kept up his foreign associate membership.

Esther Pendergast and her husband, David who was the archeologist from the Royal Ontario Museum, worked at Altun Ha. They were credited with naming Altun Ha, which is a translation of the local name, Rock Stone Pond, into Maya. Herself a keen birder, Esther studied the birds of Altun Ha. She was in contact with ornithologists at the Museum who came here and added several new records for birds in Belize. Later she conducted tours to Belize along with D. H. Baldwin.

Magnus Halcrow was an Englishman who was the manager of the Reconstruction and Development Corporation that built the new capital in Belmopan. His wife, Molly, collected orchids and together they published the first work on the orchids of Belize. Mr. Halcrow was instrumental in the designation of Guanacaste Park as a protected area.

Russell Waters from Glasgow, Scotland, was the Chief Forest Officer. He was. He had a tragic death on December 8, 1969, when the plane in which he was traveling crashed into the sea near the Haulover Bridge.

Louis Lindo was the Chief Game Warden at the time of the formation of the Society and succeeded Russell Waters as the Chief Forest Officer at the end of that year.

Fr. Leo Weber, Fr. Charles Woods, and Fr. Len Dieckman were Jesuit priests teaching at St. John's College in Belize City.

Dr. Peter Schmidt from Germany was the Archeological Commissioner at the time of the formation of the Society.

Jorge Verde lived in Sarteneja and had a tourist business there. He was the first to report on wood stork nesting in the Corozal District and on the slaughter of young birds in the nest. His wife Elvia was a teacher.

Ronald Clark was Secretary of the Tourist Board and later became Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Henry Fairweather, a surveyor, was Head of the Housing and Planning Department of the Government of Belize.

Winston Miller was Fisheries Biologist and later Fisheries Administrator.

Gil Rosado was Fisheries Officer in the Fisheries Laboratory of the Ministry of Trade and Industry..

Albert S. Grant was Chief Draughtsman in the Survey Department.

Albert Staine was Director of Public Prosecution at the time of the formation of the Society. He later became Chief Justice and was knighted.

Norman Staines was Executive Officer of the Scout Association of Belize.

Jim Parker was a volunteer with the U.S. Peace Corps teaching biology in Belize.

W. Barmon was the U. S. Vice Consul.

Peter Hill was Veterinary Officer at Central Farm

Paul Szabo was a Canadian surveyor working with the Survey Department.

Hyacinth Waight was Information Department Secretary.

Ann and Bolon Carter were Papal volunteers working in Belize.

Kathleen Hope was a teacher.

From the beginning BAS had a lot of foreign members called Foreign Associates. They would come here on tours and then kept up their interest. There were some from Canada through Esther Pendergast and the Royal Ontario Museum. BAS used all these contacts their to best advantage because they needed all the help they could get – the foreign visitors, the pilots, the civil servants.

Chapter 2

Institutional Development

Organization

Our membership was a bit complicated at first because we were members of Florida Audubon Society as well. Membership fees were paid in U.S. dollars and sent to Florida Audubon who would remit part to BAS. This lasted only for a time until we became an independent society.

We had to adopt the charter of Florida Audubon as our constitution because we were a chapter, but could make our own Belizean bye-laws. On June 25, 1969, the BAS Board met in the Forestry Department Belize City office to consider the proposed bye-laws. By August 18, 1969, the bye-laws were completed and sent to Russ Mason in Florida with the comment,

"We trust we have made a good job of it."

Russell answered

"Your by-laws are mighty well done, quite thorough and comprehensive. . . We are glad matters are going so well for you. We are all anxious to get back to British Honduras to enjoy the cordial hospitality and to see some interesting birds."

BAS members who had left the country and wished to continue their membership and persons who had come here on tours and were interested in the work of the Society could become Foreign Associates. Such a membership had no voting rights, but our Foreign Associates helped the BAS in many ways.

Becoming an Independent Society

Florida Audubon initiated the severance of the chapter relationship. There were several chapters that Russ Mason had started, but it was difficult for them to handle these foreign chapters. He had the idea to form a Pan-American society composed of these chapters and several organizational meetings were held. The name Audubon was a difficult one for many of the peoples of our region, so the new organization was given a name that everyone could recognize, *Amigos de la Naturalez* (Friends of Nature). It was decided that all *Amigos* chapters had to be independent societies. *Amigos de la Naturalez* only lasted a couple of years, but it did facilitate the process of BAS becoming an independent Society.

"During the conference on Latin America conservation, the delegates of various chapters asked for a meeting to discuss administrative problems. As a result of that meeting, it was decided that the chapters' best interest would be best served by terminating its relationship with the Florida Audubon Society. . . . I wanted to let you know the Board did approve the new relationship. . . . I naturally regret the need to sever our long and happy relationship, but want to remind you that we are ready, willing and anxious to assist you in any way possible in the years ahead." (letter from Hal Scott, Executive Director of Florida Audubon Society, April 23, 1973)

BAS Logo

Diane Weyer designed the BAS logo, which records a common occurrence at Half Moon Caye. A magnificent frigatebird, locally known as "man-o-war," in hot pursuit of a red-footed booby returning from a long day of fishing far out at sea, seeks to make the booby drop its catch. The frigate will then skillfully seize the falling morsel, leaving the hapless booby to fly home with nothing to feed its chick. However, frigates and boobies have coexisted at HMC for a very long time.

Field Trips

W. Ford Young

Soon after the establishment of the Belize Audubon Society, the directors felt that it would be in the interest of the members of the Society to organize birding field trips on a regular basis. Ford Young, a founding member, volunteered to undertake the organization and conducting of trips on one Sunday of each month.

Ford, a lover of the outdoors, having been raised on a farm in Oregon and working in the geological field in Colombia, Nicaragua, and Belize as an employee of Gulf Oil Corporation, was an experienced field trip organizer. Also, he was in the real estate business and had an open back Land Rover so he was able to provide transportation for the groups.

Other members often brought their own vehicles and sometimes a participant would donate a small amount to Ford to help cover the cost of gasoline. When the Land Rover got too old for this work, Ford got a Chevrolet pickup and

installed upholstered seats and a roof with canvas curtains in the back. This was appropriately labeled the "Audubon Birder."

Ford enlisted the services of Meg Craig, another founding member, to accompany him on all trips and act as a recorder. In addition to being a project recorder, Meg is also a knowledgeable self-trained botanist and was able to contribute greatly by identifying various plants encountered on the trips.

Dora Weyer, a founding member and perhaps most responsible for the establishment of the Society, is an excellent ornithologist and was most helpful in identifying unusual species when she could participate.

Trips were taken each month and were either half or full day trips. The first trip was a half day to the Mayan ruins of Altun Ha, some 32 miles from Belize City just off the old Northern Highway. Thirty-seven species of birds were identified. The number of participants on the trips ranged from about 6 to 30. It was most gratifying to note that a number of students were regular participants.

It was not unusual for birders from abroad, who were visiting Belize, to join the trips. The number of species recorded varied widely, depending on whether it was a half or whole day trip, the time of year and the weather. Because the trips were taken during the middle of the day, many species active in early morning or late afternoon were not seen.

One rather surprising count occurred on November 11, 1973 when a half day trip in Belize City produced 57 species. Among the more popular trips were those to Big Falls Ranch, along the various roads from the Western Highway to the Sibun River, Guanacaste Park and the Hummingbird Highway. Summaries of each Sunday's trip were included in the monthly bulletin published by Mrs. Lydia Waight, secretary.

In addition to the field trips, local members were invited to join trips arranged by visiting groups such as the Canadian Audubon Society and Russ Mason's Flying Carpet Tours. Some members of the local Society also participated in bird banding programmes run by Dora Weyer in the vicinity of her residence off the Western Highway, Guanacaste Park and the Columbia Forest Reserve.

Christmas Bird Counts

W. Ford Young

Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) are controlled by the National Audubon Society in the United States and the results of individual counts are published each year in the journal *American Birds*. At present, CBCs are organized and reported by local Audubon Societies in Canada, the USA, Mexico, Central America, Northern South America and the Caribbean.

A local CBC covers a 24-hour day in an area consisting of a circle 15 miles in diameter and is held annually during a period of about two weeks designated by the National Audubon Society and including the Christmas Holidays.

The local Society appoints a compiler who organizes the various parties to participate in the count, assigning them to certain parts of the count area. Then the compiler finishes a tally of species and the number of birds in each species for submission to the National Audubon Society. Also included is a list of species seen in the count area during the count period, but not on count day.

This report also gives a description of the count area including location, type of terrain, any body of water, the weather condition, the number of parties and names of participants, as well as the total party hours and miles broken down into those spent on foot, in vehicles and in boats. Ford Young was appointed compiler and sent the first reports for 1969 and 1970 to the Florida Audubon Society. Subsequent reports were sent directly to the National Audubon Society.

The first count area established in Belize was centered about three miles north 34 degrees east of the village of Burrell Boom and was referred to as the Belize City count area. It included the old Northern Highway from mile 8 to 24, sea coast from 3 miles NW of Belize River mouth to 3/4 of a mile beyond Potts Creek mouth, Bermudian Landing road from Burrell Boom to 3/4 of a mile beyond Sebastian Bridge, Mussel Creek from 1 3/4 miles above Sebastian Bridge to the Belize River, the Belize River from Lime Walk to 3 Miles above Haulover Bridge, Salt Creek Estate, Tennessee Agriculture, Belize Offshore Growers, airport area, Ladyville, Sand Hill and the Sanatorium 2 miles north of Hattieville.

The largest number of species recorded in any Belize City count was 212 and the smallest number was 160. The maximum number of birds seen on a count was 28,512 and the lowest number was 2,418. The large number of birds was due to encountering the migration of the Tree Swallow which could be seen in the thousands along the Northern Highway. The number of species and birds seen would also depend on the number of participants and the weather.

Young remained compiler through 1986, but later due to illness could not continue the rough ride in the pickup. The job of compiler was then taken over by Lydia Waight and Meg Craig, followed by Dr. Douglas James and finally by Mick Craig who has remained compiler.

The second CBC to be established in Belize was known as the Belmopan count area and centered 2.25 miles east of mile post 49 on the Hummingbird Highway. It included Belmopan, Guanacaste Park, Caves Branch and Sibun cacao plantation, the Western Highway from Beaver Dam Creek to Camalote, parts of the More Tomorrow and Never Delay Roads, and the Hummingbird Highway from the Western Highway to Silver Creek.

The sequence of compilers was the same as for the Belize City count. The lowest number of species identified was 137 and the highest 195. The smallest number of birds seen was 1,375 and the largest, 3,795.

A third Christmas Bird count, with its center at the village of Gallon Jug, was established in 1990 by Bruce Miller, compiler. It included Laguna Seca, the south end of the Booth's River escarpment, Sylvester's camp and the north end of Chan Chich Creek. Except for a cleared area of about 2,000 acres around Gallon Jug, the balance consists of Tropical Moist Forest with access on foot along old logging trails opened by Belize Estate and Produce Co. Ltd., many years ago. This count area has the advantage of supporting many forest birds not normally found in the other two count areas.

The number of species recorded in this count area has varied, from 183 to 208, with the number of birds recorded ranging from 2,183 to 2,819.

First Annual General Meeting

The first BAS Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday, February 12th, 1970, in St. Catherine Convent Auditorium. The following quote from the *BAS Bulletin* of February, 1970 gives the flavour of the discussions that occurred at that meeting:

The meeting then went on to discuss projects for the coming year which had been presented on the agenda as follows:

- 1. A vigorous membership drive. We feel that our impact would be greater in proportion to a larger membership. Requests to Government will have a greater influence and our influence on the attitude of the people of this country towards their wildlife and natural resources will increase with a larger membership.*
- 2. A study of the pesticides problem as it is already developing here, with the hope that recommendations to Government, based on solid information, might be helpful.*
- 3. Education programme on the game laws particularly aimed at inviting Government to train police personnel to act as game wardens, enforcing the game laws as they already do the other laws.*
- 4. Further efforts to protect the Jabiru, jaguars, ocelots and Morelet's crocodile. These animals are under severe pressure and badly need help in order to survive.*
- 5. Coral Reef Reserve project, which is already well on its way (Half Moon Caye)*
- 6. Further efforts towards setting aside of Cayo Rosario and Cayos Pajaros for a breeding reserve for Roseate Spoonbills, Reddish Egrets and White Ibis.*
- 7. Increased efforts in youth education.*
- 8. Programme of requesting private landowners to set their land aside as "Wildlife Reserves" in co-operation with our Society. Many large owners have already indicated their interest in joining with us on such a project. This not only gives some of our species protected range, but is of considerable educational value.*
- 9. Crooked Tree Lagoon Water Bird Reserve. This area, during the two months of severe dry, harbours almost our entire population of certain water birds. As more and more hunting and fishing camps for tourist trade develop in that region, it behooves us to protect these species at this time of year.*

After some discussion, it was decided to work on all the above projects during the coming year, all members joining with the various committees and combining their efforts on each particular problem as it was dealt with.

The First Years

This letter from Eugene Eisenmann, Vice President of the International Council for Bird Preservation – Pan-American Section, provides a nice summary of the first five years of the Belize Audubon Society.

"I peruse with interest and admiration your Bulletin, which has appeared with regularity. The President's report of 1974 is one of which you may well be proud. Not only have you issued the Bulletin with regularity and held frequent field trips, organized lectures and other educational activities, but you have been exceptionally effective in persuading the government of your country to set aside national parks and reserves. You are fortunate in having a government whose leaders are aware of the importance of reserving wild habitats and fauna for aesthetic, patriotic, as well as touristic and economic reasons. Your natural history postage stamps are among the most beautiful of any issued and it is of interest to know that a new issue of bird stamps and coins containing birds will soon appear. Let me congratulate the officers and members of the Belize Audubon Society for having made this relatively small organization one of the most vigorous conservation and ornithological societies in tropical America." (Letter from Eugene Eisenman, 3 June 1975)

The response from President James Waight was equally elegant:

“We are very fortunate in having an active and interested group as members of our Board and I know that your recognition of the results of their efforts will be greatly appreciated. A great deal of credit must be given to Mrs. Lydia Waight, our very capable and efficient secretary who edits the monthly Bulletin. It was very gratifying indeed to receive your letter. I will be more than happy to bring it to the attention of the Board of Directors.”

During the next ten years, from 1975 through 1984, the structure and activities of the BAS remained essentially the same. The business of the Society was carried out by monthly meetings of the Board of Directors and the Annual General Meeting of the entire Society. Lectures by visiting scholars were held whenever opportunities arose. The work of the Society – environmental education, management of protected areas, and advocacy – was done by volunteers with donated equipment and materials. The BAS remained the only environmental organization in Belize.

A Time of Change

The end of 1984 brought many changes to the BAS. It was the beginning of grant-funded projects to support the management of protected areas. Funds were obtained to open an office and hire staff. For the first time in its history, the Government of Belize changed when the opposition party won the election in December of 1984. Two proposed development projects for Belize brought international controversy and attention, along with conflicts within the Society. Other environmental organizations were formed. In short, everything changed.

When Government changed in 1984, concerns were raised whether the new government would support Audubon because there were so many of the former Prime Minister’s relatives involved. The invitation to the sixteenth BAS AGM was issued, along with the slate of officers proposed by the nominating committee. But many members raised concerns about the slate, which was dominated by foreigners and composed largely of persons supporting the Crane game ranch project, which is described in detail in Chapter 3 on Advocacy. The AGM was held as scheduled on February 19th, 1985, but was adjourned until March 12th, when a new slate was presented and elected. To resolve this crisis, James Waight served as President for one more year. The next year Dr. Victor Gonzalez was elected BAS President.

Some of the American ex-patriate members of the BAS Board formed a new society, the Belize Heritage Society. It was to be an umbrella organization that could respond quickly to environmental crises and to fund-raising opportunities, but it only lasted a couple of years.

Despite the expressed concerns, BAS worked well with the new government. Hon. Dean Lindo, the new Minister of Natural Resources, was very supportive of conservation in general. He established several reserves, including Hol Chan Marine, Guanacaste National Park, Blue Hole National Park and Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve (then Society Hall Nature Reserve). The Cockscomb Forest Reserve had already been declared as a No Hunting Area in 1984, but the people at the World Wildlife Fund wanted to support Cockscomb and they were concerned that the Forest Reserve status was not a very secure tenure because it could be dereserved. Then Mr. James Hyde found out that there was part of the Cockscomb Basin that had been leased and was not included in the Forest Reserve, so in 1986 Mr. Lindo declared that small area (3,600 acres) Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary.

BAS Administrative Staff

By the end of 1984, BAS had received several grants to support the management of protected areas in Belize, but until the offer from the Massachusetts Audubon Society (MAS), none had included any support for general administration.

“Byron Swift has brought us the good news that MAS would be willing to provide funds for Belize Audubon Society to hire an executive staff person along with a small office and part time secretarial assistant, until we are able to provide these ourselves. As you know, this may take five or six years. This is an important step for the Belize Audubon Society, raising it above the purely volunteer stage.

“The past two years have seen both the development of a great many environmental problems, and a number of opportunities to improve and expand conservation education, as well as to begin the work on a system of parks and wildlife reserves. This has created a real drain on our resources and your help will ease this considerably. . .

[Our priority objectives are:]

A. To establish protected areas and provide management for existing and proposed reserves, including

1. *Half Moon Caye ...*
2. *Proposed Reserves. Three large reserves, Crooked Tree Reserve, Cockscomb Basin Jaguar Reserve and Bladen Rainforest Reserve, have been proposed to the Belize Government. . .*
3. *Sites for future reserves. . . [following list].*
4. *Manatee Reserve at Manatee Lagoon*
5. *Mussel Creek Wildlife Reserve (for tapir, Morelet’s crocodile, wood storks, boat-billed herons, and others)*

6. *Bermudian Landing Village (black howler monkeys live here in and around the village in complete harmony)*
7. *Glover's Reef (large, and only, nesting colony of noddy terns in Belize)*
8. *Mangrove Forest Reserve at Temash River mouth*
9. *The Bald Hills (endemic palms, bromeliads and orchids in the valleys between these hills)*
10. *Gracey Rock area (cockpit karst limestone forest)*
11. *Saltwater Crocodile Reserve – two locations on Turneffe Reef and Lighthouse Reef*

B. To expand and improve our conservation education programs. We will be receiving help, both from WWF Norway and from RARE, Inc., during the coming year for this program. We hope to improve our slide shows for the schools, start a poster program for the schools, and expand our newsletter and distribute it to the primary schools as well as the secondary schools, which we are currently doing.” (Letter to Dr. Gerard Bertrand, MAS President)

The BAS Office at 49 Southern Foreshore opened January 2, 1985, and Walter (Mickey) Craig was employed as part-time Executive Director. A year later MAS announced a five-year commitment of increased support, allowing for a full-time Executive Director.

“BAS has come a long way since the 1960's, and is still growing in its efforts to meet challenges it has accepted. With financial help from the MAS and the Audubon Alliance, it has recently hired staff and opened an office.

“The Alliance has pledged to support the office for up to five years, while a campaign to raise an endowment to support BAS' future operations is underway. . . .

“It is fortunate for Belize that there is a Belize Audubon Society,' says Dr. Archie Carr III of NYZS's Wildlife Conservation International, 'but it is the responsibility of governments all over the world to support parks. ...

“In the meantime, a firm foundation is being laid through the private activities of the Belize Audubon Society and its international collaborators.”(The Biosphere No. 2, Spring, 1985)

In April of 1987 a group from MAS, including Dr. Gerard A. Bertrand and three MAS Board members, visited Belize and reiterated their support for the BAS. They said that this support was to help the BAS manage the established reserves.

But two months later MAS Vice President James Baird visited a BAS Board Meeting and expressed concern about BAS progress. By the fall of 1987 the level of funding from the MAS had been reduced and the Executive Director position reduced to half-time. BAS sent MAS a 19-page report that showed detail on the park management, 216% increase in number of members and 367% increase in income from memberships, and reported \$30,221.18 in the endowment fund.

But this was not satisfactory progress from the MAS point of view. The BAS had been proceeding on the basis of their objectives stated in the original proposal letter, but the MAS expected long-range planning. Following the January 19, 1989, BAS Board of Directors meeting, which James Baird attended, he sent a document describing MAS' long-range planning process for the BAS to use as a guide. However, the funding had already been withdrawn. An urgent appeal was sent out and a donation of \$1,000 from the Regent Insurance Company prevented the closure of the office.

A few months later the MAS agreed to provide \$1,000 a month to allow the BAS to keep an office open with clerical support, but without an Executive Director. In the meantime, MAS announced the formation of a new organization, Programme for Belize, which would manage the lands that MAS was prepared to purchase in Belize.

[Programme for Belize] is intended to be an “umbrella” effort to help raise much greater financial and technical assistance for a variety of conservation and development work in Belize.” (Letter from Bill Burley to “Friends in Belize,” December 30, 1987)

Later MAS made another contribution to BAS Administration. Through Programme for Belize, they provided the funds for the salary of a trainee, Mrs. Dolores Godfrey, who began on February 1, 1990, and later became BAS' second Executive Director. Wild Wings Foundation provided the funds for a Protected Areas Manager, Osmany Salas, who began work in August of 1990. A joint project with the Coastal Zone Management Project (CZM) provided an Environmental Educator from 1991 to 1995 when the position of Environmental Education Coordinator was created under funding from the World Wildlife Fund. WWF supported the position for about 3 years and then Global Environmental Facilities-sponsored CZM continued the support when it started up in 1993.

In 1993 Christine Anthony was appointed as BAS' first Accountant. An Advocacy Coordinator was added in 1998. The field staff and office support staff has grown proportionally as shown in the following graph.

Organizational Structure of BAS

BAS Membership is open to anyone concerned with preserving our natural heritage. There are several categories of membership, including Foreign Associate for non-residents, Foreign Student, Family, Individual, Student, Supporting, Patron, Bronze, Silver, Platinum and Friends to the Parks. The first year there were 55 members and that number had doubled by 1981. Growth has been steady as can be seen by the graph of income from membership. Our present membership totals nearly 400 local members, and over 200 foreign associates.

The governing body of BAS is its Board of Directors, consisting of seven officers, (president, two vice-presidents, three secretaries and treasurer) and a maximum of eight other directors. The Board is elected at the annual general meeting for staggered two-year terms. In 1972, when BAS wanted to buy the area that became Guanacaste Park, the attorney told them that a membership club could not own property. So, they set up a Board of Trustees, including Ford Young, James Waight and Meg Craig. That continued until 1990 when BAS became a limited liability company and the Board of Directors could represent the Society. Then in 1997 BAS created another Board of Trustees to manage the BAS Endowment Fund. The organizational chart of the BAS is shown below.

BAS Chapters

The Cayo Chapter was formally established at a meeting in San Ignacio on November 26, 1990, with Dr. Victor Gongora and Mr. John Link as co-chairpersons. The Placencia Chapter was inducted on January 8, 1994, at Placencia village. Wade Bevier was installed as president.

Financial Trials

The road has not been completely smooth for the BAS. Three losses occurred within one year. On the 18th of February, 1989, Ford Young's office was burglarized and, since his Secretary was BAS' Treasurer, some \$800 of BAS money was stolen. The next December a messenger forged \$3,000 worth of BAS checks and left the country before it was discovered. Then on February 8th, 1990, the upstairs flat had a plumbing leak which flooded the office destroying many files.

In 1995 BAS met with a financial crisis . . . **[is there a way to describe what happened without mentioning any individuals involved?]**

Cooperation with the Government of Belize

In order to provide the conservation point of view to those in the highest positions, gift subscriptions to wildlife and conservation magazines were sent to the Chief Forest Officer and other Government officials. BAS lobbied the Government for the creation of the position of Conservation Officer. Lucilo Sosa Briceño was appointed the first Conservation Officer in June of 1971. We wrote to Mr. Sosa assuring him of our full cooperation and invited him to attend our meetings. We also requested that the Minister of Trade and Industry appoint a liaison officer, preferably someone living in Belize City, who would attend BAS Board Meetings. Lionel Gentle of the Forest Service, Belize City Division was appointed Liaison Officer.

Government consulted us on matters relating to the environment, wildlife protection and developmental proposals. From the beginning BAS had an important role in the management of protected areas. As our requests for particular reserves were granted, our involvement in the management was expected. This arrangement was first formalized in 1984.

In order to foster better management and control of the designated areas under the 1981 acts the Minister of Natural Resources has directed as follows:-

- 1) The Belize Audubon Society is authorized to work along with the Forestry Department of the Government of Belize in the protection and management of areas designated under the Forestry Act and the National Parks and Refuges Acts*
- 2) The Belize Audubon Society may draft (or draw-up) management plans for government's approval and may implement such plans including the building of structures and other works on land and may with the approval of the Minister appoint Wardens in this regard;*
- 3) The Belize Audubon Society may not collect fees on behalf of Government. However, contributions including monetary contributions may be accepted and payment for any services such as the rental of facilities may be received;*
- 4) The Government at any time may itself assume the duties of managing these protected areas.*
(Letter from James V. Hyde, Permanent Secretary of Natural Resources December 7th, 1984)

Responsibilities were further delineated in 1987.

1. *The Belize Audubon Society as a body, is authorized to work along with the Forest Department of the Government of Belize in the management and protection of any of the designated areas specified by the Minister until further notice;*
2. *After consultation with the Chief Forest Officer, the Belize Audubon Society may draft management plans which may be implemented after the Minister's approval has been granted. The said management plans shall make provision for the building of structures, construction of roads and trails and any other form of alternation to the land or environment;*
3. *The Belize Audubon Society may, with the approval of the Minister, hire caretakers to effect the needs of protection and management;*
4. *The Belize Audubon Society may not collect fees on behalf of Government. However, contributions including monetary contributions may be accepted and payment for any services such as the rental of facilities may be received;*
5. *Conferences, seminars, personnel training programmes and release to the news media should be cleared with the Ministry of Agriculture before they materialize;*
6. *The Minister responsible for National Parks retains the right to terminate this agreement at any time."*
(Letter from R. H. Neal, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 16th April 1987)

By 1995 the BAS had considerable experience in the management of protected areas and realized the need for further agreements with the Government of Belize. The Government of Belize (GOB), Forest Department and the BAS signed a five-year agreement on November 15, 1995, which defined the responsibilities for management of six protected areas, Half Moon Caye Natural Monument, Crooked Tree and Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuaries, Guanacaste and Blue Hole National Parks and Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve

In keeping with the provisions of the National Parks System Act, it was agreed that Government, the Forest Department and the Society shall jointly manage and develop the six protected areas for a period of five years and such management shall be renewable for a similar period. The parties jointly formulate and implement management plans with goals, objectives, standards, methods of implementation, priorities, budget, personnel requirements, target dates, and assessment methods for monitoring. Provisions for transition periods and mechanisms for resolving conflicts are included.

The GOB shall put in place legal Statutory Instruments as necessary, and is responsible for infrastructure and security. The GOB handles applications for scientific research permits in consultation with the BAS. The GOB assists the BAS with tax exemptions and authorizes the BAS to collect entrance fees, the apportioning of which is described below.

The BAS is authorized to obtain grants, loans, subsidies, endowment and trust funds to finance the management of these protected areas. The BAS has responsibility for day-to-day management, implementation of all aspects of visitor usage and daily maintenance, and public education campaigns. The BAS has first right of refusal for all recreation-related concessions with the profits for use by the BAS.

Protected Areas Conservation Trust

For several years the Belize Audubon Society had been working along with the Government of Belize, other conservation NGOs and international conservation organizations, to develop a Protected Areas Conservation Trust, an innovative organism for sustainable support of the protected areas of Belize.

The Act to establish a trust for the protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural resources of Belize, to establish a Trust Fund for the Trust and to establish a Board of Directors, was gazetted on September 30, 1995.

Entry Fees for National Parks

The charging of fees for entering national parks and wildlife sanctuaries managed by the Belize Audubon Society came into effect on May 20, 1995. Specific entry fees for Guanacaste and Blue Hole National Parks and for Crooked Tree and Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuaries for Belizean nationals and non-Belizeans were prescribed. Children under twelve years old are exempt from paying entry fees. Government authorizes the Society to collect fees and all fees collected shall be apportioned as follows:

Government	10% for the Consolidated Revenue Fund
PACT	20% for the purposes of the trust
BAS	70% for the management and development of the protected areas

Protected Areas and People

Osmany Salas, 1993

Protected areas were initially established because of their outstanding natural features and unique geological formations, or their scenic beauty. Often, decision-makers based in the capital city and unacquainted with the natural areas in question have devised protected area boundaries based on the impractical ideals of conserving areas rather than for ecological or economic reasons. This, furthermore, has often been done without prior biological studies and, worse, without consulting the local people.

Local communities next to protected area boundaries frequently bear substantial costs as a result of lost access to natural areas, while receiving little or no return. Local residents, who tend to be poor and often receive few government services, frequently perceive protected areas as restricting their ability to earn a living. Local people often see natural areas only as a source of food/nutrition, bush medicines, firewood, and raw materials for construction, and are not immediately concerned about their functions. In short, there exists a marked clash in attitudes towards protected natural areas, exploiting them for short term benefits only, or managing them for long term gain.

In 1981 Belize enacted a law titled the National Parks System Act (NPSA) for protected areas. This legislation has enabled the establishment on national land of 7 national parks, 2 wildlife sanctuaries, 6 nature reserves, and one natural monument. Other types of protected areas that exist under separate legislation or arrangements include 16 forest reserves, 1 marine reserve, and 3 private reserves. In total, Belize's protected areas and reserves amount to an impressive 35.47% of our land surface under varying levels of protection.

BAS has acknowledged that biodiversity and ecosystem conservation efforts should not take the form of "absolute protection" and the "don't touch" attitude which implies that humans are intruders on otherwise pristine environments, an attitude that leads to inadequate relations between local people and protected area managers. We have had to work from the bottom up to change public perception that conservation and resource protection are foreign ideas designed to achieve foreign goals to the detriment of Belizeans. In other words, our main thrust has been to make Belizeans grasp the concept that, "This land and its resources do not belong to us; we are simply borrowing them from our children."

To practice what we preach, and strengthen our protected area management activities, we have strived to promote activities that increase environmental awareness and that integrate conservation with local human needs. Activities that we have promoted include: employment and training opportunities, income generation activities, increased local participation in planning and management, environmental education outreach, revolving loans, and resource management and monitoring.

We currently employ 23 permanent or rotational field employees (wardens) at the seven protected areas BAS manages. Most of these wardens have been recruited from communities near or adjacent to the protected area where they are stationed. Their salaries are considered a sure source of income for themselves and their families. We have also facilitated other income generation initiatives. At Maya Center Village, the gateway to Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, we have assisted a local Maya women's group in setting up a crafts sales center and have provided women with book-keeping and organizational skills, as well as natural history training. The women made about \$2,000 in craft sales during their first year, and five years later, sold over \$40,000 worth of local crafts.

To take advantage of the growing eco-tourist industry, we have offered low interest loans to residents of the Community Baboon Sanctuary villages to set up rustic bed and breakfast facilities. Visitors to our country then get a chance to visit our natural areas and overnight with a local family, thus leaving their tourist dollars behind. Local residents have also been encouraged to set up guide corps. Visitors take advantage of this to learn more about their surroundings. In other instances they have no choice but to hire a local guide if they are to be allowed into an area.

We have actively sought local input in our management planning activities. Cognizant that protected areas management decisions may impact local economies, we have held public consultations at the local level, and have facilitated the formation of local advisory bodies to ensure local participation and involvement. Roaring Creek villagers played an important role in the development of the Guanacaste National Park Management Plan, as did villagers of Armenia for the Blue Hole management plan. We have been consulting with a Crooked Tree advisory committee to resolve fishing and other sanctuary related issues. This committee and other local representative bodies will also play an important role in the development of the Crooked Tree management plan which is currently being prepared. At Crooked Tree, fisheries studies are being conducted in order to arrive at suitable fishing regulations and licensing measures to ensure the long term survival of the Crooked Tree fishery resource for local subsistence use and for the sustenance of the wildlife population that also depends on it for food.

We are acutely aware that public support is vital for the success of protected areas management. This can only be achieved through public consultation to receive input on local needs and how these can be met, and through education

programs that aim to explain the benefits of conservation and the wise use of our natural resources. For BAS, the ultimate goal is to maintain a balance between people and the environment.

The National Parks System Act of 1981 provides for the preservation and protection of highly important natural and cultural features and for the regulation of the scientific, educational and recreational use of the same.

Four categories of reserves are established: National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary, Nature Reserve and Natural Monument. National Parks are established for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public. Wildlife Sanctuaries protect nationally significant species that require specific human manipulation for their perpetuation. A Natural Monument is an area reserved for the protection and preservation of a nationally significant natural feature. Nature Reserves are areas reserved strictly for scientific research.

At the request of the Government of Belize, BAS has been instrumental in the financing, development and operation of six reserves established under the National Parks System Act, totaling over 230,000 acres. The histories of the individual protected areas, including the means of financial support, are covered in Chapter 5.

BAS Retreats and Workshops

Park Management Workshop

From March 30 – 31, 1989, a Peace Corps-sponsored workshop was held for BAS staff and committee chairpersons on park management. The Society was getting quite a number of requests from scientists wanting to do research in our protected areas. The purpose of this workshop was to develop recommendations and policies on research priorities and guidelines, visitor's use of parks, and a training programme for park personnel.

A Vision for the 90s

Through a grant from the World Wildlife Fund – US, a Strategic Management Workshop was held April 29, 1990. Through a series of brainstorming sessions, the BAS officers and staff, evaluated their protected areas management and made recommendations for the future institutional development of the Society. **[picture caption – participants D. Victor Gonzalez, Janet Gibson, Therese Rath, Lombardo Riverol, Lydia Waight, Dr. Victor Gongora, Jose Garcia, Homer Leslie, Dolores Godfrey, Lou Miller, Director, Peace Corps, Rusty Davenport, WWF Facilitator]**

The Belize Audubon Society has a new vision for the decade of the '90's. Earlier this year, the Board members attended a strategic management workshop, which has helped enormously in focusing our attention on the tasks ahead.

The Society, which was established in 1969, has gone through a tremendous transformation over the past 20 years. Initially involved in environmental education and bird watching, the Society is now the manager of seven protected areas and in charge of all the related staff. It identifies and handles funds for these reserves and other projects.

Concurrent with this responsibility, the Society needs to grow institutionally. This is the immediate challenge that faces us. To evolve to meet this challenge, we need to adopt more business-like and dynamic practices.

Changes are already underway in our institutional arrangements. Our office is now headed by a Managing Director. We have recently hired a Wildlands Management Officer and additional secretarial help. In addition, we have recently expanded our office space to better supply the increasing demand for use of our library. We are presently preparing action plans for our major activities which include:

Management of reserves and creation of new protected areas

Influencing resource use

Environmental education

Improving our image and public relations

Collection and dissemination of environmental information

We have also recently appointed a Parks Commission which, along with the Wildlands Management Officer, should help streamline our efforts in park management. I hasten to add there that the previous sub-committees, which assisted us in the management of our various parks, will continue to be used as a source of support in particular projects. The Society is extremely grateful for this invaluable voluntary help over the past few years.

The Board looks forward to the continued support of local companies. To achieve our aims we will require adequate financial backing. We will also look forward to continued financial and technical support from foreign conservation organizations, which have supported us so generously in the past. At the same time, we shall explore means of becoming as self-sufficient as possible.

We are determined to have increased involvement from our membership, which represents a large source of talent that is largely untapped. A membership drive shall be an important aspect of our Society in the next few years.

We also wish to work in cooperation with the other local non-governmental organizations to achieve our common goal of sustainable development for Belize.

The Belize Audubon Society has built up an enviable reputation in the national and international conservation community. Based on our reputation, and with a willingness to change and adapt to meet the new challenges, I am sure we will be ready to enter the 21st century as a vibrant society with a strong sense of purpose and commitment. (Janet Gibson, BAS President, BAS Newsletter Vol. 22 No. 1, 1990)

BAS Board/Staff Retreats

The first joint BAS Board/ Staff Retreat in 1991 was held at Trinidad Farms and facilitated by Belize Enterprise for Sustained Technology (BEST). The purpose was to review BAS' current status and programs in the light of the environmental issues of the 90's. One product of this retreat was the BAS Mission Statement:

The Belize Audubon Society is a non-profit, non-government organization dedicated to the promotion of the sustainable use and preservation of our natural resources in order to maintain a balance between people and the environment. (BAS Mission Statement, September 8, 1991)

A follow-up Strategic Planning Workshop was held October 26 and 27th, facilitated by Johannah Barry of the IUCN with Byron Swift, also of the IUCN, attending.

The third BAS Retreat was held at Spanish Bay Resort in August of 1992. For the first time the park personnel were included. After two days of hard work, President Therese Rath said,

"What we have done here is to focus on one area in more detail as to what our programme should be and to discuss what other areas we should be focussing on."

At the 1993 Board retreat, it was decided to re-focus the Society's activities from protected areas management to environmental education as the main vehicle to "promote the sustainable use of our natural resources" in keeping with our Mission Statement.

Then at the 1994 BAS Retreat it was decided to add a third objective, advocacy, to the other main activities of protected areas management and environmental education.

BAS Programme Review and Assessment

The British Executive Service Overseas (BESO) provided a volunteer consultant, John Bishop, to review and assess BAS programmes. Bishop worked with BAS Executive Director and Program Managers from July 20 – 23rd, 1998, and made the following recommendations:

- Petition the GOB to increase park entrance fees for foreign visitors
- Promote BAS membership in the National Parks and provide training for wardens in recruitment techniques
- Improve signposts and quality of interpretive literature in the parks
- Ascertain accurate membership recruitment and retention costs, review all subscription categories, and closely monitor retention rates
- Identify and train a network of regional volunteers
- Take advantage of the Society's 30th anniversary to launch an appeal to all existing and former members. Organize 30th anniversary fund-raising and public awareness events

BAS Office

The first BAS Office, opened December 1st, 1984, was located on the Southern Foreshore. Eventually that space became too small for the growing Society's activities, especially the library, and the owners want to reclaim the space. The BAS Office moved to 29 Regent Street on March 1st, 1990.

In 1993 we were given the property at 12 Fort Street by the GOB, in appreciation of past and support of future BAS management of Belize's protected areas. At the 29th AGM Lindsay Belisle presented the title to the BAS.

"It now gives me much pleasure to hand over to the Audubon Society, title for a building and property formerly occupied by the Comptroller of Customs, as our government's contribution to help Audubon consolidate and expand its work programme. This spacious building will enable Audubon to have sufficient room in which to mount lectures, educational exhibits and other public education activities. After 25 years of operating out of borrowed or rented quarters, Audubon will finally have a home."

But then in late 1997 there were rumours that BAS' property at 12 Fort Street was to be acquired for the Tourism Village, a major Belize Port Authority development. In fact the Grant Fiat and Property Plan issued to the Belize Port Authority included BAS' present property. But this Grant Fiat was erroneously issued.

"... the grant to the Belize Port Authority was issued in error and [the Commissioner of Lands and Surveys] is in the process of rectifying said Grant to omit Grant No. 306 of 1993 issued to the Belize Audubon Society. It is estimated that it will

take about two (2) weeks to prepare and register the new Grant.” (Letter from Lindsay Belisle, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Natural Resources, 21st January 1998)

“As far as we are concerned, our title is free from all encumbrances and has not been cancelled. We have in our possession a true copy from the Registry Department dated January 29, 1998, that proves this. So, in effect, the 12 Fort Street property is included in two separate land titles. Obviously, there can only be one owner . . . and that owner is BAS. This has been assured in writing by the Permanent Secretary and Lands Commissioner of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

“However, we have persistently asked Government over the past several months to rectify the Port Authority Grant Fiat and Property Plan and this has not been done to date. We now feel that we have exhausted all our options to rectify this at the Ministerial level and are preparing to take legal action. (Osmany Salas, 1998, BAS Newsletter Vol. 30, No. 1)

On April 14, 1998, the following injunction order was issued from the Chief Justice,

“...all proceedings on and the implementation of the Decision by the Minister to freely grant the said land contained in Minister’s Fiat (Grant)#573 of 1997 to the Belize Port Authority be stayed until after the hearing of the motion or until further order.”

Silver Anniversary Celebration - February, 1994

The BAS has much to be proud of in the past 25 years ... staying in focus, garnering the support of allies, never compromising integrity, taking on things gradually, and building a solid reputation based on hard work, focused effort and consistency in applying goals. (Mark Nolan, BAS Newsletter Vol. 26, No. 2)

The BAS during the past 25 years has evolved from a bird watching society to a Conservation/Parks Management Society. After our retreat in late August, it was decided that the Society must play a more active advocacy role, especially as the Earth’s population continues to grow and put an escalating demand on our natural resources.

The triple interaction between individuals, the Society and Nature is becoming more and more complex and disconnected. We all know very well the consequences: deterioration of human health, a menace to the human species, and a menace to life on Earth. Because of the above, the BAS is committed to a sustainable dynamic equilibrium between individuals, the Society, and Nature.

This commitment has given the Society 25 years of financial support from various organizations and persons, who trust and believe in us. On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Belize Audubon Society I want to extend our sincere gratitude to our donors, International, Regional, and National, who have sponsored the Society so generously for the past 25 years. (BAS Executive Director Virginia Vasquez, 1994)

Opening Ceremony

An opening and award ceremony at the Bliss Institute on February 5th was the first event in celebrating the 25th anniversary. This was attended by the Governor General, Sir Colville Young, and Prime Minister and Mrs. Esquivel. The Governor General was the guest speaker and BAS president, Therese Rath, reviewed the highlights of the past 25 years.

Mrs. Esquivel presented certificates of recognition to the 17 BAS founding members and special certificates to BAS presidents (past and present). International organizations that have supported the work of BAS received plaques and the Cayo and Placencia chapters were honored with framed certificates. A dance entitled "WHEN," especially choreographed for the occasion, was performed by the Belize Dance Company.

Guests then moved to the Holy Redeemer Parish Hall to view "Eco-Fest," an environmental exhibit mounted by NGOs and others involved in the environmental movement, which was opened by the Governor General and the Prime Minister. The final activity was a cruise and cocktail aboard the M.V. "Wave Dancer" on February 11th.

Publicity leading up to the anniversary included press releases and advertisements in the local newspapers. Several donated banners were displayed in Belize City streets. Great Belize Productions Ltd. interviewed founding member Ford Young. On January 31, David Craig and Jean Shaw participated in a morning television show on Channel 5.

Essay Contest

An essay competition open to secondary and tertiary institutions was held with the "Mission Statement" as the topic. The winner in category A (secondary schools) was Andrea McSweeney of Belmopan Comprehensive School. Francis Marin of the University College of Belize was the winner in category B. The essays were displayed at Eco-Fest.

Eco-Fest

From February 6 to 8, conservation groups, environmental organizations, and others were represented through exhibits at the Holy Redeemer Parish Hall in Belize City. The exhibit was intended to be educational and attracted over 2,000 viewers, the majority coming from primary and secondary schools.

Bird Walks

Leading up to the anniversary, a committee under leadership of former Board member, Rudi Burgos, conducted some early morning bird walks around Belize City.

The first took place on August 29, with 14 participants birding along the Fort George/Marine Parade area and identifying 22 species. Staff from Great Belize Productions joined the exercise and followed up the activity with TV coverage.

On October 3, 15 enthusiastic birders explored along the Southern Foreshore/Regent Street area. They counted 28 species, including two migrant warblers (American Redstart and Yellow Warbler).

The 19 participants in the November 7th walk included six youngsters. They birded over the St. John's College Landivar campus and sighted 33 species, nearly half of which were migrants.

Silver Anniversary Calendars

Atlantic Bank Ltd. and Shell Belize Ltd. dedicated their 1994 calendars to the BAS. The Atlantic Bank calendar illustration was a reddish egret photograph taken by Tony Rath. Shell Belize carried an environmental message from BAS each month.

Thirtieth Anniversary Celebration

Walkathon and Launching

The BAS thirtieth anniversary celebration was launched in grand style on February 6th, 1999. One hundred and twenty-five sponsored walked in three groups from the BAS Office in Belize City to Guanacaste National Park. One group started from the Office, one from Hattieville, and the last from the Belize Zoo. The Opening Ceremonies were held at Guanacaste National Park with Hon. John Briceño, Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment, who was also one of the walkers, giving the main address.

At the Launching Ceremony two more protected areas were added to those managed by BAS. An agreement was signed by Minister Briceño and the BAS for the BAS to manage the Blue Hole Natural Monument and the Victoria Peak Natural Monument.

Carlos Santos was the Master of Ceremonies, BAS Executive Director Osmany Salas gave the welcome address, Walter (Mickey) Craig gave a summary of BAS history, and BAS President Jose (Pepe) Garcia greeted the assembled group, as well as BAS Trustee Barry Bowen.

James A. Waight Conservation Award

On February 16th, the birthday of its namesake BAS' first President, the James A. Waight Conservation Award was presented posthumously to Julian Cho by David Craig on behalf of the Waight family. A profile of the honouree was given by Lisel Alamilla and a video presentation prepared by Great Belize Productions showed news clips of him speaking. The award was graciously accepted by his wife, Maggie Cho. At the same ceremony a Junior Achievement Certificate was presented by Valerie Woods, Director of the Belize Tourist Board to fifteen-year-old Edwin Francis Colon of Punta Gorda. Diane Haylock of ANDA served as Master of Ceremonies, BAS Executive Director Osmany Salas welcomed the group, and Joy Grant, Chairperson of BACONGO, gave the vote of thanks.

Chapter 3

Advocacy

Jabirus

The jabiru was BAS' first conservation project. The first *BAS Bulletin* included the following report:

Recently reports were received from local airplane pilots of two nests containing large black and white birds located in the northern part of the country in a pine area. As a result of these reports, Dora Weyer arranged with Ford Young to fly over the areas where the nests were reported.

As a result of the flight, two nests of Jabiru Storks were located, miles apart, each on top of a large dead tree. The nests were built of sticks and twigs that formed a platform roughly 8 to 10 feet across with each nest containing two fledglings. These birds are infrequently seen in pine ridge areas. (BAS Bulletin March, 1969)

The Board of Directors of the Belize Audubon Society, the aim of which is to conserve the wildlife of our country, is seeking your help for the protection of the Jabiru Stork. The reason for this request is that the Jabiru is very uncommon; it is rare in Central and South America and may soon become extinct if left unprotected.

Emmet Blake in his book "Birds of Mexico" described the Jabiru as follows:- JABIRU - Jabiru mycteria 48 - 55 inches Adult: Head and neck featherless; mainly black, the lower third of the neck red or bright orange; plumage, immaculate white; bill notably heavy, virtually straight or slightly upturned, Immature: Mainly brownish gray.

Eugene Eisenmann, an expert on Middle American birds, as long ago as 1955, went out of his way to list this bird as "rare" in Central America, a term he applied to very few species. Stephen Russell in his "A Distributional Study of the Birds of British Honduras says in 1959 (p. 61) "The Jabiru in an UNCOMMON resident here."

The Jabiru is the largest stork known to nest here. A mature bird stands as tall as a man; one bird has been recorded at 5 feet 10 inches from beak to feet standing normally and had a wing spread of more than 8 feet; the beak was 12 inches long. Known locally both as "Turk" and "Fillymingo" they feed near marshes and ponds in the pine ridge from Manatee Lagoon to Hill Bank. They build their nests, 6 feet or so in diameter, in tall trees and usually lay only two eggs, sometimes three. Two nests seen from the air by members of our Society each had two nestlings only, The young apparently do not attain the adult plumage of white feathers until in their second year. Whether they begin to breed then or in the third year is not known. However, any species that normally lays only two eggs and of which the young take at least two years before becoming of breeding age, is considered a species of low breeding potential, i.e. they cannot reproduce themselves quickly and always stand in danger of being eliminated quickly. There is good evidence further that if the eggs of young are stolen by a predator this stork does not attempt to nest a second time in the same year. This makes matters even worse. In other words, given the best of luck, a pair of jabiru can only reproduce themselves in two years time! This means that any hunting or killing of the adults within that time will reduce the total number of jabirus in the area. It is no wonder then that market hunting, which has been practised throughout Central America and here too over the years, has brought this species to the edge of extinction.

The Belize Audubon Society respectfully request that the jabiru, Jabiru mycteria, should be put on the list of protected birds making it an offence against the law to kill or capture the bird or to rob its nest of the eggs. If protected here, this bird could be a big tourist attraction. (Letter to the Acting Chief Forest Officer and Chief Game Warden, June 12, 1969)

In 1973 the jabiru was added to the list of protected animals (*Gazette* 7 July S. I. No. 38/1973).

[Jabiru Nest (*Jabiru mycteria*)]

The Jabiru Stork

W. Ford Young, 1993

At the suggestion of BAS, this bird is included in the list of "protected species" in Belize, published by the Government.

Soon after the establishment of BAS, Dora Weyer and I decided to try and determine roughly how many Jabirus there were in Belize (then British Honduras) and what could be done to protect the population. The Society launched a campaign through its monthly bulletin, notes in the local newspapers and radio station, asking the general public not to molest the bird and to report any sighting to Dora or me. This resulted in dozens of reports of the birds feeding in many parts of the country.

In addition to obtaining reports of the birds feeding on the ground, it was felt important to try and ascertain the location of nests and the nesting success. Jabirus do not nest in colonies but each pair will select a high, often dead tree, sometimes more or less in the open, and at other times in a tree which protrudes above the surrounding jungle, and

construct a nest of small sticks which is added to each year until it may be 10 to 15 feet across. It is often possible to see the adult birds from the ground as they stand in the nest, but it is not possible to see eggs or young birds.

Since contents of the nests can only be seen from the air, I used my own plane and spent some 22 hours of flying time, often accompanied by other Audubon members, in search of nests and recording their contents. I also enlisted the help of the British forces and local pilots in this endeavor, after someone borrowed and crashed my private plane.

The results of these flights were reported in the monthly Audubon Bulletin. Several nests have been discovered in the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary.

If a nest is disturbed by too many curious humans or by land clearing operations near the nest, abandonment is suspected. Nesting is usually from mid-November to May, after which the birds will gather in flocks in Crooked Tree and Mexico Lagoons where they can find food. As the rainy season approaches most leave for Southern Mexico where feeding conditions are better.

The first flock to be recorded was seen in the early 1970's in Mexico Lagoon where 14 birds were counted. Since that time Audubon members and employees of the Society in the Crooked Tree area have encountered increasing numbers in the Crooked Tree Lagoon (also known as Northern Lagoon). This culminated in a count in late May, 1993, of 50 birds. Based on increased numbers of bird flocks preparing to migrate, reports of feeding birds from the general public, and the number of nests located, it is suggested that the number of birds in Belize has increased from around 20-30 in the early 1970's to approximately 60-70 in 1993.

As publicity about the Jabirus grew in Belize, Carolyn Miller, Audubon member and Conservation Fellow of Wildlife Conservation International, published an article entitled, "Belize's Celebrity Stork" in the June 1991 issue of *Birder's World*. A reprint of the article was placed in the *Belize Review* issue of September 1992, specifically for Belizeans who were not subscribers to *Birder's World*.

Wildlife Protection Legislation

In 1966 a National Parks Commission was constituted to travel around Belize and identify areas to be recommended for protection as national parks. Among the members were Henry Fairweather, Albert S. Grant, Louis Lindo and James Waight. Ronald Clark was secretary to the Commission. These five men later became BAS Board members. The Commission's report was completed in 1968. After its formation, the BAS lobbied on behalf of national parks.

The Belize Audubon Society is greatly concerned about the preservation and conservation of areas of natural beauty in our country. We are aware that a Committee was appointed by Government to study and make recommendations for the establishment of National Parks and we heartily commend this action.

At a recent meeting of our Board of Directors I was directed to inform Government of our Society's willingness to assist in furthering the National Parks idea in whatever way we can. (Letter to the Minister of Tourism, 27th October 1970).

The Minister has asked me to acknowledge your letter of the 27th October, 1970, written by you on behalf of Belize Audubon Society.

He has asked me to inform you that he greatly appreciates the kind offer of your society. If you have any specific proposals in mind he would be quite happy to look at these. As you are probably aware only recently it has been confirmed that this Ministry should be responsible for National Parks and the Ministry is at the stage of trying to decide on the pace and form of implementation of the Report. (Response from R. A. Fuller, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Trade and Industry, 5th November 1970)

I have been asked by our Board of Directors to state that when we know what form of implementation the National Parks Committee's Report will take, we will be in a better position to make some specific proposals in this regard.

In the meantime our Society would like to suggest, in addition to the acquisition of private lands at Half Moon Caye, that steps could be taken to create underwater reefs and bird parks in certain areas of our reefs and in the lagoons of the Crooked Tree area. If these proposals are of interest, our Society would be happy to work out and submit detailed recommendations. (Letter from President James Waight to R. A. Fuller)

At the request of Government, William O. Deshler was appointed by the United Nations Food and Agriculture [?] to consult on the design of a national park system for Belize. When Mr. Deshler completed his report on National Parks and Wildlife in Belize, BAS was asked to comment on the report. Mr. Deshler had included many of the areas recommended by the first Park Commission.

"The report seems to us to be an excellent study, though a limited one, with attainable – albeit long range – goals. In particular, we agree with recommendations that a new Wildlife Protection Ordinance be passed urgently by the legislature. This is an absolutely essential first step. Provisions for enforcing the regulations should also be established. Here we would

like to mention that we feel there should be clear definitions of subsistence, market and sport hunting, as well as closed seasons and bag limits in drawing up hunting regulations.

Action to establish a National Park system through legislation should be equally rapid. The inventory of possible sites for parks and reserves is excellent, though we feel that there are other areas that should be included. It seems to us that only one or two parks, etc. should be established at first, that they should be well and smoothly operating, and that there should be a genuine national interest in them before further steps are taken. With proper personnel, good picnic and camping sites, modest recreation facilities and educational programmes, people will learn to appreciate and protect their surroundings.

We endorse the recommendation that an active and continuing wildlife conservation education programme for both schools and adult groups should be developed and that emphasis be placed on getting this education into rural schools and villages.

We should be pleased to meet with you at your convenience to discuss our comments and suggestions. (Letter to H.C. Flowers, Chief Forest Officer, 31 March 1980)

On September 21st, 1981, Belize became an independent country. Two of the first acts of the new country were the Wildlife Protection Act 1981 (No. 4 of 1981) and the National Parks System Act 1981 (No. 5 of 1981), which were signed on November 13 and published in the Gazette of November 28th. Both were major achievements for the BAS because members had worked long and hard on these landmark pieces of legislation.

The Wildlife Protection Act came into force on January 2, 1982. The Act provides for the conservation, restoration, and development of wildlife, for the regulation of its use, and for all other matters connected thereto.

Under the Act, the term "wildlife" means all undomesticated mammals, birds and reptiles, and all parts, eggs, and nests of any of these forms. Measures to control hunting are set out in its provisions, and "to hunt" carries the meanings to kill, take captive, or molest by any method. A list of wildlife species, the handling of which is prohibited, is included with the Act. These are animals that are considered rare and/or endangered, many of them listed as needing protection in the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna, known as the CITES Convention, of which Belize is a signatory.

Among the animals protected by the Act are our monkeys, the spider monkey and howler monkey (locally known as "baboon") which are hunted for the pet trade, and our five wild cats, which are hunted for their skins, as well as the pet trade. The Central American or Baird's tapir (the "mountain cow", our national animal) and the manatee are also included, as are our two crocodiles, our dolphins, and any whales that venture into our waters. Our birds, with few exceptions, are also protected, and may not be hunted or captured for sale as pets.

There are provisions, of course, for any person to take measures to defend themselves or other persons from the attack of any animal, and for owners of crops or domestic animals to kill or capture on their property any wildlife threatening or causing material damage to such crops or domestic animals.

Our Wildlife Protection Act also prohibits the hunting of any immature wildlife, or any female accompanied by its young. This means it is illegal to capture young animals for the pet trade. As the mother will always defend her young, in most cases she has to be killed in order to effect the capture.

To hunt our common game animals, a traditional food source - deer, peccary, gibbon, armadillo, and the game birds, curassow, cocrico, quail, and quail - requires a valid hunting license issued by the Game Warden.

A moratorium on commercial dealing, that is, on the sale or dealing for profit in any wildlife of any species, or part or product thereof, is in effect from the day on which the Act came into force.

The Wildlife Protection Act was a big step toward preventing the destruction of our natural heritage. If we are to keep our wildlife for future generations to use and enjoy, that wildlife needs to be protected now, and its use controlled. Many countries have realized too late that their wildlife has been destroyed by over-hunting and the clearing of forests. We must not let this happen here.

Oil Refinery Planned for Monkey River

In 1971 BAS became aware of a proposal to put a \$150 million oil refinery on the southern coast and expressed our concern.

"While welcoming an advance of such magnitude in our economic growth, our society is apprehensive of the possible danger of pollution which an oil refinery might bring to beaches and waters with consequent loss in tourist business, loss to our fishing industry, and, more particularly, the threat to our pleasant quality of life. And mindful of the fact that prevention is better than cure, and far easier, we would therefore urge that sufficient covenants with stiff penalties should be written into any contract granting a licence to build and operate the proposed oil refinery. We suggest particularly that industrial waste shall

not be dumped into the sea, that the licensee clean up any oil spills and be liable for any breach.” (Letter to Minister of Trade and Industry, 13 November 1971)

We wrote to conservation organizations in the U.S. for information, which was passed on to the responsible persons in Government. This went on for some time, but the project was eventually cancelled.

Billboards

“It has come to the attention of our society that large advertising billboard signs are being erected along our roads and highways, mostly in the area reserved for the road. These billboards detract from the scenic beauty of our countryside and can be a hazard to traffic in more ways than one. Some of the signs obstruct motorists’ view of the road ahead and of oncoming traffic and can be a source of distraction. We bring this matter to your attention with the request that your ministry should refuse permission to use our public road reserves for this purpose. We should also like to suggest that you consider setting up legislation to prevent the erection of billboards on private property in close proximity to the roads outside the limits of all towns, including Belize City and Belmopan. Once the sign lobby gets a foothold in this country, government will encounter extreme difficulty and opposition in legislating against it and in getting it under control, as the United States and other countries are experiencing.” (Letter to the Minister of Trade and Industry 1971)

We wrote to the Florida Audubon Society for help. Their response showed our concern was well placed.

“In Florida’s case the sign lobby was so great, that in spite of the fact that we stand to lose \$15 million, the legislature saw fit to refuse to pass the legislation to put us in compliance with federal statutes.”

Pesticides

“Our Society is greatly concerned about the growing number of cases of poisoning due the increased use of pesticides in our country.” (from a letter written to the Minister of Trade and Industry in 1974)

There were cases of Gramaxone (paraquat) poisoning in the cane fields in the north of Belize. It is a deadly poison that can be absorbed through the skin and ingested also. There was much careless use, including containers that were not washed out. There was no legislation yet in Belize controlling the sale, import or use of pesticides. We wrote for information and passed it on to Government.

BAS was concerned with potential pesticide use when a large-scale cotton cultivation project was proposed for Belize. At the time cotton was being raised in Nicaragua and there workers were not protected. There had been cases of pesticide poisoning and workers had died. Mr. Ford Young got in touch with a man he knew through the Pan American Audubon organization to get information which was passed on to Government. This project was never approved.

The Pesticide Control Act was gazetted on 28th December 1985. Later on there were Statutory Instruments setting out regulations for the use of controlled pesticides.

Wildlife Protection

Manatees

BAS got a report that fishermen from Ambergris Caye and other places were killing manatees. So, we wrote a letter to the Chief Game Warden.

“Our society requests that the police officers of San Pedro, Caye Caulker, and Sarteneja, who are deemed game rangers under the Wildlife Protection Ordinance, be reminded that manatee is a protected animal and it is prohibited by law to kill these animals.”

Export of Hides

The BAS had representation on the committees dealing with the control of export of hides and other wildlife products. Hides of cats were the first to be prohibited from exportation. The Florida Audubon Society formally recognized our advocacy efforts by passing the following resolutions:

“Be it resolved the Florida Audubon Society expresses its extreme admiration and appreciation to the Government of British Honduras for passing new regulations concerning the purchase, sale, and export of wild animal skins and hides.

“Be it further resolved that the Society take pride in the work of the Belize Audubon Society who helped to get the regulations adopted.

“Be it further resolved that the Society expresses special thanks to Louis Lindo, the first national of Belize to hold the post of Chief Game Warden, who was greatly responsible for the passage of the regulations.” (Annual Meeting, April 5, 1972)

Parrots

The BAS kept alert to any threat to Belizean wildlife, as is show in the following letter.

“We would like to call your attention to the fact that in a recent radio programme (Opportunities Unlimited) parrots were being advertised for sale.

“Parrots offered for sale are usually young birds taken from the nest, an act which is illegal. Besides, our Society is very concerned about the fact that the Yellow-headed Parrot, the species most in demand because of its ability to talk, is becoming quite rare. The taking of the young of this species may eventually cause it to disappear altogether.

“Our Society would like to suggest that advertising of this nature should not be broadcast over Radio Belize.” (Letter to the Chief Forest Officer with a copy to the Chief Broadcasting Officer, 8 November 1976)

“This is to say thanks for your letter in respect of parrots dated November 8, 1976.

“We are indeed very grateful to the Audubon Society for the efforts made in informing the Chief Broadcasting Officer, of this illegal practice.

“By a copy of this letter, we are requesting that no announcement be made for the sale of birds and/or animals except domestic animals, i.e. dogs, horses, etc, in any radio programme. This is because it is in contravention of the Wildlife Protection Ordinance.” (Response from the Chief Forest Officer, 1st December 1976)

The Society wrote not only to complain, but also to commend officials for their positive actions.

“We understand that an officer of your department was recently instrumental in stopping the export of a large number of Yellow-headed and other parrots.

“Our Society is greatly concerned at the fact that the Yellow-headed Parrot is becoming quite rare in Belize.

“We wish to commend your officer for his prompt action to prevent these parrots leaving the country.” (Letter to Chief Forest Officer, 27th September 1977)

In May of 1987 the BAS was informed that 5,070 live birds in 55 wooden boxes had left Belize on their way to Amsterdam, Holland, via Costa Rica. After investigations and discussions with Government authorities, the Society was able to establish that the birds had not been taken from Belize. The documents were shown to be false.

“The Society views this fabrication as a malicious and deceitful act that damages the good name of the Government and people of Belize.” (BAS Newsletter Vol. 13, No. 3)

Duck Hunting

Concern was raised over the hunting of ducks at Big Falls, as is seen by this letter written in 1976 by W. Ford Young to Ms. Beth LeCroix of Belize Global Travel Service, Ltd.

“Following the recent conversation which I have had with you and Mr. John Searle regarding the Belize Audubon Society’s concern over large groups of hunters shooting ducks at Big Falls Ranch, I list below the ducks and geese which are known to occur in Belize and which are now becoming quite rare and which the Belize Audubon Society feels should not be shot and also those known to occur in Belize and which, while some may not be common in Belize because this country is at the edge of their range, occur in large numbers elsewhere and are in no danger of extinction and could be allowed to be shot.

1. *Resident ducks which should not be shot:*
Black-bellied Tree-Duck, Dendrocygna antumnalis
Muscovy, Cairina moschata

2. *Ducks and geese which could be allowed to be shot:*
White-fronted Goose, Anser albifrons
Blue Goose, Chen caerulescens
Mallard, Anas platyrhynchos
Green-winged Teal, Anas carolinensis
American Wigeon, Anas americana
Northern Pintail, Anas acuta
Blue-winged Teal, Anas discors
Cinnamon Teal, Anas cyanoptera
Northern Shoveler, Anas Clypeata
Ring-necked Duck, Aythya collaria
Lesser Scaup, Aythya affinis
Masked Duck, Oxyura dominica

“The Belize Audubon Society feels that shooting should be confined to ducks and geese only and that no other birds should be shot.”

Five years later the BAS was still concerned with hunters. This radio spot was broadcast on July 14, 1981.

“A favourite stop on the Belize Audubon birding trips to the Burrell Boom/Bermudian Landing area is the bridge over Mussell Creek. Named Sebastian Bridge after a long-time resident of Burrell Boom village, it is here that Christmas Bird Count participants gather in the early dawn to start their count. They can usually record some 25 species without moving from the bridge.

“Just as it begins to grow light, flights of herons and egrets start moving to their favourite feeding grounds. The call of the Mottled Wood Owl can be heard. Among the water lettuce growing in quiet pools of the river, “diving doppers,” as we Belizeans call those primitive aquatic birds, the grebes, float quietly, occasionally diving after small fish. A close watch of the overhanging vegetation by the river bank may be rewarded by a glimpse of the sungrege, or finfoot, a rare resident of our rivers, and one of only three species worldwide.

“Chattering parrots fly overhead and the harsh croak of the “barking gaulin” (the bare-throated tiger-heron) reveals its presence. The jacana (our “georgie bull”), the gray-necked wood-rail (we call it “top-na-chick”), snail kites, kingfishers, the limpkin (which we call “clucking hen”), and many more will be added to the count list. With luck, the muscovy, one of our two species of resident ducks, can be sighted.

“Howler monkeys, our “baboons,” that could usually be found in the fig trees by the river bank at Bermudian Landing, and heard from a long way off, have been seen near Sebastian Bridge.

“Unfortunately, this wealth of bird life also attracts hunters, young and old, with shotguns at the ready to aim at everything in sight, the common as well as the rare. One recent Sunday afternoon, Audubon Society members, returning from a field trip, met up with a party of shooters who had been killing “shegs” (our local name for cormorants). It does not take a great marksman to hit these unwary birds! Like other fish-eating birds, shegs are not very palatable, so the dead birds are just left lying around.

“Not only cormorants are targets for these shooters. A reliable report tells of a farmer fishing out dozens of dead wood storks from Mussel Creek, left there by Sunday shooters. To make use of them, he fed them to his pigs! The wood stork (our “john crow curlew” or “culu”) is a protected bird and its nesting rookeries have been declared bird sanctuaries.

“Should this wanton and indiscriminate shooting be allowed to continue, the birds will soon be gone. Those that are not killed, or wounded and left to die, will be scared away by the noise of the guns, and a favourite spot for bird watching will be lost. Not only the Belize Audubon Society, but other citizens as well, would never like this to happen. In an attempt to prevent this disaster, an earnest appeal is made to all hunters. Please stop shooting at Sebastian Bridge, so that the bird life of that area may be left undisturbed.”

Sea Turtles

Beginning in 1990 an extensive sea turtle program has been carried out in Belize, spear-headed by BAS member Greg Smith. Volunteers patrolled the beaches where sea turtles nest in north Ambergris Caye and later Manatee Bar in the Gales Point area. At the Gales Point site he found one of the largest nesting sites for hawksbill turtles in the Caribbean region.

This program was supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the Reef Preservation Committee. The Gales Point field site was established in cooperation with G. Winston Miller of the Fisheries Department under a grant from the World Wildlife Fund. The “Belize Sea Turtle Recovery Plan was complete and published in 1993 with the assistance of Karen Eckert of Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST). Lobbying by the BAS led to passage of laws protecting sea turtles and then strengthening of the Turtles Regulations through amendments announced on April 1, 1993.

Whaling Commission

BAS was asked by the Government of Belize to select a representative to the Whaling Commission. With support from the Tinker Center for Coastal Studies in Latin America, BAS representatives attended meetings of the Whaling Commission.

Game Ranch Project

In the midst of the elections of 1984, a project was proposed for Belize that caused considerable controversy and conflict within the BAS. Kent B. Crane proposed to develop 20,000 acres of marginal land near Crooked Tree as a game ranch where foreign hunters would come to shoot exotic animals from Africa and other places, along with native wildlife. He also proposed a captive breeding program for endangered species using embryonic transfer in association with the National Zoo and Smithsonian of the USA. An Environmental Impact Assessment was being done. Mr. Crane came to a

BAS Board meeting and brought Mr. Jan Oelofse who had such a game ranch in Namibia, Africa. He showed pictures and a copy of a picture of himself in National Geographic magazine.

BAS raised concerns about the introduction of exotic animals to Belize and sought advice from friends in the US, but the BAS Board was divided on the issue. Some were in favour because of the breeding program for endangered species. Others urged caution. The GOB was said to be agreeable with the approval of the Chief Veterinary Officer and the BAS sent a letter to the Minister of Natural Resources expressing cautious support of the two projects.

But then the BAS saw the Crane Game Ranch proposal and received replies from experts at the New York Zoological Society, who expressed grave concerns about Mr. Crane's project. At this same time BAS had just received the first grant from the World Wildlife Fund to support the new Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary. It was suggested that if BAS supported the game ranch, they might lose the WWF funding. The BAS Board then reversed its position and informed the Minister of Natural Resources. But that did not end the matter. The Chief Veterinary Officer wrote the BAS asking why they supported the proposal originally and what made them withdraw that support. Their response explains the history of this issue.

At a meeting of our Executive Committee held on 27th May, 1985, I was directly to acknowledge and thank you for your letter No. FI/2//85(5) of 17th May 1985, regarding the Belize Audubon Society's position on Mr. Kent Crane's proposals.

In November of last year, Mr. Crane verbally informed a few of our Board members that he proposed to establish a wild game reserve with native animals and five species of imported deer and antelope, which he named. He planned to later establish an endangered species breeding program. He would use up to 20,000 acres of marginal and not good agricultural land. He informed us he had elaborate plans for quarantining imported animals and to prevent the introduction of disease. He assured us his animals would be so well confined and trained that there would be very little chance of their escaping and not being recovered. He was asking the Belize Audubon Society to support his proposals. The subject being entirely new to us, we sought advice from our scientist friends here and abroad.

Around the 12th of January, 1985, we were informed, erroneously as it turned out, that Mr. Crane did not need our support any more as the Minister of Natural Resources had already approved his application to establish his game ranch and breeding program. Anxious that safeguards should be taken to protect our wildlife and our promising cattle industry, we agreed that our letter dated 12th January, 1985, to the Minister should be written, not so much in support of Mr. Crane's proposals, but more to highlight our concern that safeguards be written into any concession granted to him.

Later, our Board was able to see Mr. Crane's written proposals, and after studying them and taking into account the advice received from wildlife biologists here and in the United States, we decided to write to the Minister stating that we did not endorse Mr. Crane's proposals.

*We do not support Mr. Crane's proposals because we are not convinced that he has satisfactorily dealt with the question of disease potential. He does not state that he will provide proper quarantine facilities to assure that the animals imported are free of disease and parasites. We read in the March 1985 issue of Audubon magazine that one of five black rhinos imported into Texas from South Africa died two months after arrival. The rhino was found to be host to a strange tick which after extensive tests turned out to be *Amblyomma hebraeum*, a species that can transmit various unhealthy fevers. The rhinos had supposedly passed as pest free by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.*

Mr. Crane has not dealt satisfactorily with the problem of preventing his imported animals from escaping and competing with native wildlife, or with the problem of keeping jaguars out of his enclosed game ranch. Dr. Alan Rabinowitz, who made a two-year study of the jaguar in the Cockscomb Basin, informs us that it is unlikely "- foot game proof fences" (which Mr. Crane proposes to install) will not keep jaguars out. The big cat will scale almost any type of fence to get to its prey – the various species of deer and other animals which Mr. Crane proposes to import. At one stage Mr. Crane proposed to electrify his fencing. This would mean a minimum of 22 miles of fencing in order to enclose his proposed 20,000 acre ranch. At another stage, we were informed that he would tranquilize and remove any jaguar which found its way into his enclosure. Dr. Rabinowitz, who used this method during his jaguar study, assures us that this is not so easy. The jaguar must first be cornered and the amount of tranquilizer needed must be assessed before it is administered in the right place. At yet another stage, Mr. Crane is reported to have said that any jaguar found in his game ranch will be shot.

Although in his verbal proposal, Mr. Crane mentioned the importation of only five species of deer and antelope, his written proposal listed many more deer and other animals.

Mr. Crane has implied that he was associated with the National Zoological Park/Smithsonian Institution. This was denied by Michael H. Robinson, Director.

For the past several years, the Belize Audubon Society has tried to teach the Belizean people to appreciate and protect our wildlife. We wonder what effect allowing strangers to come to our country to hunt and kill wild animals will have.

We have sought and received advice from various persons in the U.S., some of whom have worked here and are therefore familiar with our need for development as well as the importance of protecting our wildlife. Some of the letters received have already been copied to your Ministry, and we now enclose further copies of these. Some other letters were received under confidential cover and are being treated as such. . .

We believe that any advantages we may gain from Mr. Crane's projects would be far outweighed by the risks involved.

We trust that this information will be of help to the Minister, and we extend our best wishes. (Letter to the Chief Veterinary Officer, May 30, 1985)

Coca Cola

On October 3, 1985 a News Release from Coca-Cola Foods of Houston, Texas, announced their plans to invest in Belize, buying large portions of the vast property owned by Belize Estates.

"Negotiations have been concluded for the purchase of approximately 700,000 acres of land in northwestern Belize by a group of business interests as part of a program to assist in the economic development of that Central American country.

The business interests who will participate in the project include Barry M. Bowen, a Belize businessman; Paul Howell and Walter Mischer, Sr., Houston businessmen; and Coca-Cola Foods, a Houston-based division of the Coca-Cola Company...

"The agreement among the interests provides for Bowen, the Howell-Mischer group, and Coca-Cola Foods to each own 50,000 acres of land individually. The remaining acreage will be held jointly with Bowen holding a 40 percent interest, and the Howell-Mischer group and Coca-Cola Foods holding 30 percent each.

"Coca-Cola Foods announced that it plans to utilize its individually owned acreage for a citrus project. Approximately 25,000 acres of citrus could be planted over the next seven years. Initially, the fruit would be processed by local processors or it could be shipped to Florida for processing. Later a processing plant could be build in Belize if the project warrants it, and the concentrate processed there would be shipped to Florida for remanufacturing and packaging."

"The reasons given for their interest is loss of 200,000 acres of groves in Florida to freezes have caused Minutemaid (22 % share of US market) to depend upon concentrate from Brazil."

This announcement prompted a strong response among environmentalists and international funding agencies that had been investing in various projects to insure that Belize's development could proceed in a sustainable, environmentally-friendly manner.

This letter from BAS Vice President Ford Young shows the role of the BAS in the process.

"Members of the Board of Directors have had a meeting with representatives of the Coca-Cola group and Coca-Cola is aware of the environmental implications of their project and will do everything reasonably possible to minimize adverse effects.

"The Mischer/Howell group has not made any announcement as to their development plans. They have recently formed a corporation known as "Yalbac Ranch and Cattle Corporation" to handle their interest in the area.

"Before the Coca-Cola group came into the picture, Barry Bowen (the then owner of Belize Estate and Produce Co. Ltd) and his associates had a meeting with members of the Board of Directors of the Belize Audubon Society and expressed his willingness to work with the Society in setting aside a protected area and to minimize habitat destruction as far as possible. I understand that Barry intends to utilize some of the better quality land for agricultural purposes, but he also is hoping to be able to set aside a considerable acreage which contains numerous Mayan ruins and which he hopes to develop into a carefully controlled tourist attraction and wildlife reserve – something on the order of Tikal. . ." (Letter to Francis Spivy-Weber of the U.S. National Audubon Society November 27, 1986)

The controversy really heated up when Friends of the Earth reported in a BBC programme that Coca-Cola Foods claimed to be working closely with the BAS and implied that the BAS would be doing the Environmental Impact Assessment for the project.

"Coca-Cola Foods has not worked closely with BAS to determine how best to protect the environment and critical habitats as Coca-Cola Foods implements its development plan and, other than a preliminary meeting that took place on May 22, 1986, there has been no formal contact between Coca-Cola Foods and BAS.

"The Belize Audubon Society agrees that there is a need to for the preparation of an environmental impact assessment before any large-scale development project is undertaken in Belize. However, at this time, BAS has neither the human nor financial resources to carry out such a survey on behalf of Coca-Cola Foods (and has not agreed to do so)." (Statement released by the BAS Board of Directors on January 8th, 1987)

To clarify matters, BAS Executive Director Walter Craig, Michele Beale of Coca-Cola Foods and Charles Secrett of Friends of the Earth had a 15-minute discussion on the BBC on the last Friday in January of 1987.

The BAS consulted Mark Halle of the IUCN for help with the environmental impact assessment of the Coca-Cola Foods Project. By this time, however, the international attention to this project seemed to have had its effect upon Coca-Cola Foods.

“Coca-Cola realizes that there are environmental implications to any project that might be conducted on the land and we have no intention of beginning development activities without an environmental plan. We have conferred with several consultants on how best to pursue the environmental management plan and we will consider such ideas as commissioning the Belize Audubon Society to conduct the assess, or in some other way integrate their ideas into the final plan.

“There has been some question raised that Coca-Cola Foods has misled the public by stating that we have worked closely with the Belize Audubon Society in the past. We have met with the BAS Board and communicated to individual members. There has not yet been a close working relationship because the project has been on hold pending resolution of the business factors mentioned above. It was certainly not CCF’s intention to mislead anyone, and it is our intention to work with the Belize Audubon Society in the future.

The Belize Audubon Society already has indicated to CCF an interest in setting aside a portion of the former Belize Estate and Produce Company as a nature or wildlife preserve. We will continue these discussions although we cannot make any commitments at this time. We are willing, however, to initiate discussions with the other purchasers of the Belize Estates Land, but we, of course, cannot make commitments on their behalf. (Coca-Cola Foods, February 18, 1987)

In the meantime the Government of Belize, in Statutory Instrument No. 116 of 1986 (December 20, 1986), had granted a development concession to Mischer of Houston. The concession refers to “an integrated agricultural enterprise,” but the name “Yalbac Ranch and Cattle (Belize) Limited” suggested cattle ranching. It included a fifteen-year (income) tax holiday through 2001 and provided relief from customs and import duties on items to be brought into the country. In return the company was required to have at least 30 permanent employees by the end of 1988.

On March 18, 1987, BAS members Philip Balderamos and Walter Craig toured the Yalbac portion of the former Belize Estates lands with John Loskot. Loskot had been engaged by Yalbac Ranch and Cattle (Belize) Ltd to oversee the establishment of an integrated agricultural enterprise in the Yalbac area of the Orange Walk and Cayo Districts. The area they saw is in the southern portion of the former Belize Estate and Produce Co. land in northwest Belize. Access to the project site is from Burrell Boom through Bermudian Landing and Rancho Dolores. The BAS representatives found that 125 acres had already cleared and some conservation measures had been taken. They suggested that more trees be left and that 50-meter strips of forest be left undisturbed at intervals leading to the lagoon.

“...The Yalbac Ranch and Cattle Corporation, owned by US entrepreneurs Howard Mischer and Paul Howell, looks likely to become the next target for environmental groups concerned about damage to Belize’s forest ecology, following publication of details of their plans for their portion of the former Belize Estate & Produce Co. lands . . .

“Lands suitable for agriculture will be cleared of all but the larger trees to make way for a 50,000 acre cattle ranch and smaller farming units for production of foodstuffs and protein concentrate crops. The rest will be left for nature study and limited hunting. The Belize Audubon Society commented that as well as being twice as large as Coca-Cola Foods’ proposed development, it will be ecologically far more destructive than permanent citrus orchards.” (Caribbean Insight, September, 1987)

On March 19 Coca-Cola invited the BAS Board to a meeting where the Coca-Cola Foods plans were presented. BAS learned that Coca-Cola Foods had employed an ecologist, that up to then Coca-Cola’s only activity was a nursery of citrus trees and no trees were felled, and that the initial planting was planned for a fairly open area of pine ridge. The BAS Board prepared the following policy statement.

“Because of its relatively untouched natural environment, the Government and people of Belize have the unique opportunity to design and implement a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development that integrates concepts of environmental conservation in the planning process. The Belize Audubon Society is cognizant of the need for economic development of the country so as to ensure the wellbeing of the people. The urgency of the need for development, however, may threaten to encourage measures that produce solely short-term financial gains rather than policies designed to achieve long-term, environmentally sustainable development. Thus, to ensure that the development of Belize results in long lasting, positive change, the Belize Audubon Society urges those engaged in activities relating to the further development of the country to keep the value of natural areas in the forefront of their thinking and fully integrate environmental protection measures into development policies.

“At a meeting held on 19th March 1987, between personnel of Coca-Cola Foods and the Belize Audubon Society, Coca-Cola Foods personnel explained as best they could their present position in the development of citrus groves in the northwestern sector of the country of Belize.

“Coca-Cola Foods is prepared to fund the development of an environmental impact assessment of the area to be cultivated and has agreed to have the involvement of the Belize Audubon Society at all phases of development of the said impact statement.

“Consideration will also be given to the possibility of setting aside a parcel of land which would be left undisturbed so as to ensure the preservation of the flora and fauna native to the area.

“The need for continued dialogue between Coca-Cola Foods and the Belize Audubon Society was recognized and assurances were given the Society that efforts would be made to see that this is done.

“The Belize Audubon Society appreciates the interest of Coca-Cola Foods in addressing the environmental issues associated with the citrus project and looks forward to a fruitful and meaningful working relationship. (10 April 1987)

BAS then learned that the partnership that had originally purchased the Belize Estates Lands had dissolved. Coca-Cola Foods ended up with some 195,000 acres. They intended to develop only 50,000 acres for citrus and were unsure about what to do with the rest. Since MAS intended to buy land in Belize, BAS hoped that they might buy land adjacent to the land that Coca-Cola Foods would reserve, creating a large reserve.

By August Coca-Cola announced that the citrus development was delayed for at least three years and perhaps indefinitely, so the environmental impact assessment was never done. They agreed to reserve 40,000 acres and to spend \$50,000 developing this parcel. Another 10,000 acres was donated to the Government of Belize to be given to Belizean farmers for agriculture. Coca-Cola intended to sell the remaining 93,000 acres at the price they paid. Belizeans were encouraged to purchase this land. A 1,725-acre parcel adjacent to the Belize Zoo was officially donated for expansion of the Zoo.

The Massachusetts Audubon Society and “Friends of Belize” carried on a media campaign to purchase the land that Coca-Cola was selling. The issue was covered on “60 Minutes,” a popular television program in the United States, and there was extensive coverage in Europe. The media exposure brought considerable international attention to environmental issues in Belize and to the Belize Audubon Society.

“Fortunately, the conservation movement in Belize is now a powerful force, thanks to the naturalists’ organisation, the Belize Audubon Society, and its extraordinary influence on a sympathetic government. The separate initiative of the Belize Audubon and other organisations and the government have consolidated this achievement.

In 1981, the government passed the National Parks System Act. Under the act, the Audubon Society has a mandate from the government to help it to develop and run the parks. Since 1981, five parks have been established, and more are planned. . . . Dean Lindo, the agriculture and conservation minister, says, ‘We’re going at conservation hell’s bells. This is the uniqueness of Belize that we can make decisions now to preserve and protect what we have.’” (New Scientist, 29 October 1988)

In the end Coca Cola pulled out altogether. The Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area was established with land donated by Coca Cola and adjacent land purchased with funds collected in the inter-national media campaign. It is now owned and managed by Programme for Belize. The 255,000-acre area is used for research, eco-tourism, horticulture, sustainable forestry, carbon sequestration, community outreach and environmental education.

BAS' 24-Hour Hotline

[when did this start and regular committee meetings?]

Malaysian Logging in Toledo District

In 1994 a logging concession for 24,000 acres of the Toledo District was given to Atlantic Industries Corporation, a Malaysian firm. There was such an outcry raised by the Belizean environmental organizations with support from international organizations that the project was stopped, but not for long. In 1996 the project was back again, this time with a modern forest management plan revolving around selective logging of small blocks of forest and then allowing that block to recover for several years. There was to be no cutting within 60 feet of rivers or streams. The permit covered 18% of the Columbia Forest Reserve and areas along the boundary of the Sarstoon-Temash National Park.

Again there was an outcry from environmental organizations and also from the local indigenous people, the Mopan and Kekchi Maya, who organized massive protests. BAS conducted a fact-finding mission to the area in June of 1996 and found that the loggers were violating the terms of the approved plan by taking too many trees from too large an area and by cutting along riverbanks.

In September of 1998 the GOB declared a halt to the logging until adequate consultation with the local population had occurred. A commission was appointed.

Lamanai Room Declaration

The year 1997 was known internationally “The Year of the Reef,” but in Belize it brought a number of threats to our beautiful, fragile reefs. Two diving boats dragged their anchors over the reef at Lighthouse Reef in July, a captive dolphin theme park was approved, exceptions to the lobster fishing laws were approved to allow for lobster ranching, and

there were rumors of live rock exportation. These threats to Belize's most precious and unique natural resource prompted the BAS to hold an unprecedented joint Board of Directors meeting with the Belize Tourism Industry Association. They invited other environmental organizations as well to the Lamanai Room at the Fiesta Inn. The resulting Lamanai Room Declaration, was signed by 26 organizations.

Whereas, in a joint meeting, the BTIA and the BAS, with the support of numerous non-governmental organizations, after due deliberations, have concluded in preliminary analysis that actions taken by the Government of Belize on the following issues:

- 1) *Dolphin Park - Cangrejo Caye*
- 2) *Cruise ship damage to the reef*
- 3) *Live rock exportation*
- 4) *Lobster ranching and*
- 5) *Logging in the Toledo District*

Are indicating disregard for principles of sustainable development, community consultation, conservation and environment, and are indicating a possible violation of Belizean environmental legislation in regards to the 1990 Environmental Protection Act, the 1994 Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, the Wildlife Protection Act, the Freedom of Information Act, the Fisheries Act, the Constitutional Rights of Belizeans and terms of International agreements and other conventions relating to the environment: Agenda 21, UNCED, 1992; Cartagena Convention; Declaration of Tulum, June 1997: UN Law of the Sea and the International Year of the Reef, 1997.

Therefore, BTIA and BAS and the undersigned urge that the Government of the day, in its decision-making process, immediately suspend the licenses of (1), (3), (4) and (5) and revisit (2); respect the technical expertise afforded them during their period of office and respect the wishes of the Belizean people for full participation, disclosure, transparency and consultation in this process and in current and future development proposals such as the Northern Ambergris Caye Development; and establish a national agency to coordinate coastal and marine affairs by immediately presenting the proposed Coastal Zone Management Agency bill to the House of Representatives.

Be it resolved that we the undersigned shall:

- 1) *jointly retain legal counsel to represent the multi-sectoral interest, and the interest of all Belizeans;*
- 2) *support the position of the fishing cooperatives of Belize on lobster ranching and other reef-related issues;*
- 3) *advise the international environmental community in respect of the above;*
- 4) *not discount the possibility of dialogue with international funding agencies.*

A second meeting between the Belize Audubon Society (BAS) and the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA) was held on October 21, 1997, at the Radisson Fort George Hotel in Belize City and the following update on the five issues was issued:

1) **Live Rock Exportation:** It was reported that the Government of Belize (GOB) has not received any application nor granted any concession for the exportation of live rock.

2) **Reef Damage:** The Ministry of Tourism and the Environment has received the BZ\$ 75,000 from two of the vessels concerned which caused the recent damage to the reef. The statutory Instrument relating to environment protection is currently being amended to increase the fines for reckless damage to the reef.

3) **Logging in the Toledo District:** It was agreed that a closed meeting will be held between the BTIA and BAS to study all the parameters surrounding the issue and that all stakeholders will be invited.

4) **Lobster Ranching:** Two licenses were granted for lobster ranching, one to A&J Lobster near Cosiga Creek (James Wang Company), and a second to Dangriga Taiwan Initiative Ltd. near Bread and Butter Caye in the Dangriga District. A team of fisheries experts reviewed the applications made for these projects and the licenses granted.

5) **Dolphin Theme Park at Cangrejo Caye:** BTIA/BAS officials met with the Minister of Tourism and the Environment, the Permanent Secretary, the Chief Environmental Officer, and the Director of Tourism. The Chief Environmental Officer stated that the Cangrejo Caye investors were given the terms of reference for a required Environmental Impact Assessment Study. Once the investors have identified the company or persons to conduct their study, this should be forwarded to the National Environmental Appraisal Committee (NEAC) for approval. The DOE agreed to consult with BTIA/BAS on these matters.

Tilapia in Crooked Tree Lagoon

In May of 1996 it was reported that strange fish had invaded the Crooked Tree Lagoon and were taking over the lagoon, out-competing the native fish. BAS, under the direction of Clara Cuellar, took members of the Fisheries Department on two occasions to collect samples from the Crooked Tree Lagoon. They confirmed that these strange fish were an exotic African species of fish of the genus *Tilapia*. BAS learned that *Tilapia* were being farmed at Cherak's Farm

at Big Creek. The BAS began to collect information on *Tilapia* and released weekly press releases. BAS Members Bruce and Carolyn Miller warned of the dangers of *Tilapia* in a Letter to the Editor published in the *Reporter* (June 2, 1996). They explained that *Tilapia* are a very aggressive fish that reproduces large numbers of offspring rapidly. They can have a devastating effect upon ecosystems and native freshwater fish. They may even affect the supply of lobster and shrimp in the sea by eating larvae at the shoreline.

This media attention resulted in an invitation by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Honorable Russell Garcia, for the BAS to attend a Press Conference at Cherak's Farm. Following that field trip several concerns were raised. No Environmental Impact Assessment was done until May of 1996, one year after the farm was in operation. There were no monitoring reports at that time. There was a conflict of interest for those responsible for monitoring were personnel hired and paid by the Cherak's Farm. Although the personnel at Cherak's Farm assured the visitors that *Tilapia* would not survive even one hour in salt water, the demonstration failed for the fish were still alive three hours later. The BAS also found that the screens in the catchment system were collapsed, resulting in water from the ponds flowing freely into the environment.

A joint press release from the BAS and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries stated that they agreed to form a joint team to address the concerns of the fisherman about *Tilapia* in the Crooked Tree Lagoon, to review the policies and regulations governing aquaculture in Belize, to ensure that all aquaculture project proposals go through an environmental impact assessment process prior to implementation, and to promote public awareness on the real economic, social and environmental effects of aquaculture in Belize.

[What has happened since 1996? Has there been any attempt at eradication in the Crooked Tree Lagoon]

Caye Chapel Development

BAS expressed concern about the development proposed by Caye Chapel Ventures Ltd. Caye Chapel has a history of extensive development projects and little natural vegetation remained on the island. A golf course was in the process of development. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was submitted to the NEAC for the expansion and relocation of the airstrip. The NEAC rejected the project on the grounds of technical unsoundness, but Caye Chapel Ventures appealed and the assembled Appeals Tribunal granted clearance for the project on 3rd July 1998. Investigation by the BAS showed a number of illegal activities. No shields were used when dredging was carried out and the BAS got photographic documentation of a plume of sediments going out towards the reef. The golf course was built without an EIA. The north end of the island was reclaimed in contravention of the EIA and dredging permit. Further development is taking place even though no Compliance Plan was filed. In the election of 1998, the victorious Peoples' United Party used the Caye Chapel development as a campaign issue on neighboring Caye Caulker and San Pedro. With the support of the other organization BACONGO, the BAS lobbied the new government to revisit the entire Caye Chapel development.

National Conservation Strategy

When Belize became independent, the new nation received international help in developing plans for conservation.

"Dr. Bernardo Zantille, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), was in Belize for a short visit, September 4th to 8th.

"Accompanied by Mrs. Weyer and Mr. And Mrs. Waight, he met with Mr. J. Hyde, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources, and Mr. Henry Flowers, Chief Forest Officer, in Belmopan. As a first step in the development of an overall plan for conservation in Belize, Dr. Zentilli proposed that two consultants from IUCN meet with the Belize Planning Committee, and he suggested a two-week period in early December." (BAS Bulletin, September 1982)

"A mission from the IUCN was in Belize from November 29th to December 11th. The mission consisted of three members of the IUCN Commission for Environmental Planning – Dr. Pierre Hunkeler (head of mission), Dr. Cyrille de Klemm, and Mr. Merilio Morell – who were later joined by Dr. Archie Carr III of the New York Zoological Society, Mr. Bruce Rich of the Natural Resources Defence Council, Washington, D.C., and Mr. R. Dubois of the USAID.

"The mission was here at the request of the Belize government and met with various departments to gather information that will assist in the development of a National Conservation Strategy. They also participated in a workshop with representatives of several ministries, departments and other organizations, including the Belize Audubon Society. Before leaving, the visiting experts met with the BAS Board of Directors." (BAS Bulletin November-December 1982)

The mission was followed up by a visit in October of 1984 from Mark Halle, Manager of the Conservation Development Centre of IUCN, Dr. James Barborak and Dr. Craig MacFarland of CATIE.

“The purpose of Mr. Halle’s visit was to review the priorities for the next stage of work in the Belize National Conservation Strategy and to develop project proposals covering the provision of necessary technical assistance. The report of the first IUCN mission, “Conservation for Sustainable Development in Belize: Towards a National Conservation Strategy,” was presented to Government in May of last year.

“Dr. Barborak and Dr. MacFarland came to identify specific conservation projects in which CATIE could help with providing technical assistance, training and funding. Mr. David Lovell, CATIE intern, who arrived October 5th, will remain in Belize until the end of November. He will be preparing funding proposals and planning documents for several conservation projects.” (BAS Bulletin October 1984)

An Environmental Agenda for the 21st Century

Valdemar Andrade

Under its Advocacy initiative, BAS has launched a document entitled “An Environmental Agenda for the 21st Century.” This document outlines BAS’ position on the main issues affecting our natural environment, some of which are:

- People and the Environment
- Tourism
- Environmental Education
- Fisheries and the Coastal Zone
- Waste Management
- Forestry and Protected Areas
- Water Resources
- Land Ownership and Development
- Agriculture

The document gives the current status, points out the challenges/concerns and offers proposals for action. The preparation of this document involved several months of preparation and consultation with Belize professionals in their relevant fields. The Agenda was officially launched on the 23rd of June, 1998, to the media, politicians, NGO’s, development organizations, government department, and the general public.

The strengthened advocacy arm of the BAS also embarked on the second phase of the program in which the Advocacy Coordinator and the Executive Director met with political parties in Belize to deliver copies of the environmental agenda for key party officials.

The current trend toward an equitable stewardship of the natural environment is converging on Belize from two primary directions - a traditional social value and a growing awareness by the population at large of the importance of proper environmental management practices in the interest of future generations.

A traditional and prolonged respect for the natural environment has been an underlying ethic of Belizean peoples. The best example of this has been the coexistence of the Maya with the tropical marine, coastal, and rainforest ecosystems for the past three thousand years. We are all beneficiaries of this in the cumulative awareness and use of food, medicine, shelter and all the prerequisites of daily life originating from what nature provides.

On the other hand, the growing environmental awareness partially influenced by the experiences of the developed countries has led to greater conservation efforts by developing countries to ensure greater viability in an increasingly more fragile global environment. The unique capability of Belize to tip the balance toward a renewed environmental morality - despite the overwhelming demands of migration, industrialization, and urbanization - places it far ahead of other developing countries and in the path of realizing the need for prudently linking development with the dictates of the environment.

Within this seemingly contradictory path toward development which we are faced with on the eve of the twenty-first century, we have prepared the following document entitled "An Environmental Agenda for the 21st Century." This document reflects our position on the status of the natural environment, the concerns, and proposals for action.

While it is hoped that the political parties fielding candidates for the upcoming general elections will pay close attention to this document, we emphasize that it is also directed to members of the private sector, the civil society, NGOs and, indeed, all Belizeans.

We feel proud that our mission of promoting "the sustainable use and preservation of our natural resources in order to maintain a balance between people and the environment, " is consistent with the unending efforts to find this delicate balance between development and the environment.

As the oldest and one of the leading environmental organizations in this country, we hereby pledge to work closely with the private sector, civil society and the Government of Belize to ensure that the proposals for action herein presented are taken into serious consideration and acted upon. (Preface by Jose "Pepe" Garcia, BAS President, May 26, 1998)

BAS Advocacy Programme

The goal of the BAS Advocacy Programme is to take action to ensure that policies set forth by the Government of Belize, especially with regard to land and water, are environmentally sound and take the best interest of the Belizean people into consideration. This program is funded by a one-year grant from the Humanitarian Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (HIVOS) beginning in September, 1998.

Major objectives of the program are:

- To establish an expanded grassroots base for the BAS,
- To advocate for policies and enforceable regulations that take into account sound environmental behaviours amongst specific targeted groups,
- To establish an information and research system to complement and add to the Conservation and Environmental Data System,
- To take a leading role in steering the Belize Alliance of Conservation Non-Governmental Organizations (BACONGO) and participate actively in the Association of National Development Agencies, and
- To demonstrate successful approaches to sound environmental behaviour.

Chapter 4

Environmental Education

From its inception the Belize Audubon Society has been committed to environmental education, both of youth and the general public. The Youth Education Committee was established at its formation and members quickly got to work. Copies of the *BAS Bulletin* were provided to all secondary schools.

At the monthly meetings of the Society there were talks, lectures, slide presentations and movies by members and others sharing their expertise. Business meetings usually followed the feature, which was advertised as being open to the public. The following talks were given in the first year.

March 7	Dora Weyer	<i>Birds of Belize City</i>
April 17	Magnus Halcrow	<i>Orchids of Belize</i>
May 22	W. Ford Young	<i>Physical Geography and Geology of Belize</i>
June 19	Meg Craig	<i>Tropical Plants</i>
July 24	Louis Lindo	<i>Forest Environment</i>
August 21	Peter Hill	<i>Movies of Wasps, Butterflies and Snakes</i>
September 12	Dr. Andre Clewell	<i>Use of Fire in Forest Management</i>
September 18	Gil Rosado	<i>Our Fishery Problems</i>
October 23	Dora Weyer	<i>Snakes of Belize (with live specimens)</i>
November 20	Peter Hill	<i>Movies of Birds, Mammals, and Insects</i>

Our December meeting was cancelled as a mark of respect for Russell Waters, Chief Forest Officer and BAS member, who was killed in a plane crash on December 8, 1969. He had been scheduled to speak at the January 22, 1970, meeting. Instead Magnus Halcrow spoke on “Conservation in West Africa.”

BAS Bulletin

The first *Belize Audubon Society Bulletin* was produced in March 1969 by W. Ford Young and his wife, Callie. In September Norman Staines succeeded them and then the Secretary took on the task by the end of that first year. The *BAS Bulletin* was faithfully produced every month for the first eighteen years until August of 1987 when it was succeeded by the quarterly *BAS Newsletter*.

BAS Library

The first BAS library was housed at Ford Young’s Office and was comprised of his books, which he donated. Additional books were donated by Colonel Hastings and other members and friends. The library was moved to the BAS office on the Foreshore when it was opened in 1985. Mrs. Catherine Meekin, a Peace Corps Volunteer, spent a few months cataloguing the books and made a card index for the *BAS Bulletin*.

Publications

An important aspect of BAS’ environmental education has been the publication of educational materials. In the early years materials were prepared for the Radio Spots and reprinted by mimeograph. They were distributed free of charge to the schools, at exhibitions and upon request. BAS contributed fauna and flora maps for the *Atlas of Belize* produced by Cubola Press.

The first **Checklist of the Birds of Belize** was completed by D.H. (Don) Baldwin of Toronto, Canada. He led a tour of the Canadian Audubon Society to Belize (then British Honduras) in March 1970. At a joint meeting Baldwin made a presentation of 2,000 copies of the checklist to the Belize Audubon Society. The first page of the booklet is a picture of a scarlet macaw that Dr. David Pendergast of the Royal Ontario Museum discovered drawn on a pottery vase at Altun Ha.

BAS founding members Ford Young and Dora Weyer enlarged and updated the checklist in 1977. Published by Russ Mason’s Flying Carpet Tours, this version had a Jabiru on the cover and recorded 67 bird families with 518 species. A few additions were made in 1983 and the checklist was reprinted by International Expeditions featuring the Keel-billed Toucan, our national bird.

A revised checklist was written by D. Scott Wood, Robert C. Leberman, and Dora Weyer and published in 1986 by the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Belize was divided into six geographic areas and the abundance of each bird species was given for each area. This checklist also featured our national bird.

In 1998 a new checklist was released with a magnificent frigatebird on the cover. It was compiled by Bruce and Carolyn Miller and published by the Belize Audubon Society. [more detail]

Two books were produced in 1986 by Janet Gibson and the Reef Preservation Committee in cooperation with the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education. *The Coral Reef* provides basic information about corals and the coral ecosystem. *My Reef Colouring Book* makes learning about the reef enjoyable for students. Both were published with funds from the Reef Preservation Fund raised by the Captain Ted Martin's Swim for the Reef.

A to Z of Belizean Wildlife was first published by the BAS under a grant for environmental education from the World Wildlife Fund International in 1986. This handbook written for students provided information and illustrations on some of the reptiles, birds and mammals commonly found in Belize. It was mimeographed by the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education for use in the schools.

The improved second edition with a lovely colour painting on the cover was produced by BAS Environmental Education Coordinator Clara Cuellar in 1995. It was sponsored by the British High Commission and printed by BRC Printing of Benque Viejo, Belize.

The Community Baboon Sanctuary: A Guide Book was written by Robert Horwich and Jonathon Lyon in and published by Orang-utan Press. The book tells the history of the Community Baboon Sanctuary and describes the black howler monkeys, along the rainforest, flora and fauna of the Sanctuary. This book was expanded and republished in 1990 under the title *A Belizean Rainforest*.

Snakes of Belize, written by herpetologist Dora Weyer and illustrated by Ellen McCrae, was published by the Belize Audubon Society, thanks to financial support from the World Wildlife Fund, was released in September of 1990. This handbook of the snakes of Belize is intended primarily as educational material for schools, but it is of interest to anyone interested in identifying the species of snakes found in Belize.

Personal Snakebite Experience

Dora Weyer

In February of 1981 I was bitten by a Yellow-jawed Tommygoff of Fer-de-Lance (Bothrops asper) at the Yaxchilan ruins in southeast Chiapas, Mexico. This was almost exactly 30 years after seeing my first wild specimen of this famous species in Costa Rica. In the meantime I had walked many miles in tennis shoes in poisonous-snake-inhabited tropical rainforest: had once accidentally stepped within a few inches of the nose of a Gabon Viper in West Africa, had unknowingly stood beside another Yellow-jawed Tommygoff in Belize, and had twice had a Coral Snake glide across my tennis, one of them twice encircling my ankles – but had never been bitten. Poisonous snakes generally do not bite unless molested. In this case I had not molested the snake, but was working my way along a small animal trail through thick riverside bamboo and brush. The tommygoff was coiled under a low spreading plant waiting for its dinner to come walking down that trail and apparently it mistook my foot for an agouti or some such small animal and struck. The fangs entered (a bit over an inch apart) about an inch behind my fourth toe, just in front of the start of the arch. The tommygoff was about 51/2 feet long, and the fangs long enough to strike through the tennis and the main foot almost to the sole. The snake immediately withdrew so that I did not see it when I looked down and I picked up a stick and poked into the plant to see what kind of viper it was. This was an unusually gray fer-de-lance. The one I had first seen in Costa Rica was velvety black and those in Belize were varying shades of brown. There is a considerable colour variation in most species of snakes.

Pain did not start appreciably for four or five minutes, then became more and more severe so that an hour later, as I flew back to San Cristobal de las Casas, pain was excruciating. Within a few minutes after the bite I grew dizzy and first needed a friend's arm to help me walk out and then had to sit down, unable to stand upright. Soon I was too dizzy to sit and lay down. I became thirsty – very thirsty after about 15 minutes so that had I been alone I think would have tried to drag myself down to the riverside. The Indian in charge insisted I should not drink – I don't know the truth of this. By this time I was nauseated and beginning to get cold. All these effects are results of the action of the venom, this information comes from a long-time doctor at Gorgus Memorial Hospital in Panama where they have dealt with many cases.

A doctor in the group of tourists I was guiding insisted on putting a tourniquet at mid-leg. I allowed it, thinking it wouldn't do any good, but it shouldn't do much harm. In this I was wrong. A tourniquet should not be used. Experiments have shown that a tourniquet does keep the venom concentrated in an extremity such as the foot or lower leg. It was first thought this was advantageous, to keep it from the heart and brain. But concentrated in one small area it does more damage to the blood vessels and muscles in that area than is necessary. Also deaths have been reported when the tourniquet is released and a

large amount of venom and partially digested blood is suddenly swept into the systematic circulation. I didn't die when the tourniquet was released, but the large amount of tissue rot I suffered may have been caused by the concentration of venom in the foot and lower leg during the first two hours before we got to the hospital. The doctor with me also incised cuts across the fang marks to release blood heavily loaded with venom and a friend on the tour sucked blood and venom out – he was a brave man because had he had a small open sore of any kind in his mouth he could have been envenomated also. This, if done soon after the bite as it was, and if done by a doctor who will know not to cut important nerves or blood vessels and tendons, is helpful in removing venom. If you are bitten, do not allow this to be done by anyone but a doctor.

Fortunately for me the Indian in charge of the site came running with a vial of antivenin. The government of Mexico very widely keeps antivenin at all archeological sites. I wanted this injected intravenously, which is the way it should be done. Tests have shown that nearly 85% of the antivenin is active at the site of the bits if injected intravenously, whereas only 1.5% moves to the area where it is needed if the injection is intramuscular. We were taught years ago to inject antivenin intramuscularly, but this is now known to be a mistake. Antivenin for pit vipers is made from horse serum from horses that have developed a strong immunity to viper venom. Horse serum is dangerous to give a human if the person is allergic to it as many people are. And do, although I thought I was not allergic to it, the doctor did not want to give it intravenously where the allergic shock might be severe enough to cause death. I finally wrote a not relieving the doctor of responsibility and the doctor did give the injection intravenously. I then asked the Indian if he had another vial. He did, but it was one from the previous ear. I knew from long experience with dogs that had been bitten that the viper antivenins are remarkably durable even in the heat of the tropics, so I took the second vial. I believe that having those two vials of antivenin injected intravenously so soon after the bite saved my life.

The Indians then made a litter and carried me the half mile to the airfield. By this time I was in great pain and retching, although I had nothing in my stomach to come up. This lasted, although to a lesser degree, for five days, as did the dizziness. We had come to Yaxchilan in three small ????? (the only access then to Yaxchilan was by plane), so I sent the rest of the group and their picnic lunches on to their next stop, Bonampak, and asked the doctor and one of the group who spoke fluent Spanish to return with me to San Cristobal. The flight took nearly two hours, during which I was nauseated, very cold and in considerable pain. Everyone in San Cristobal was very helpful and they took me to a private clinic where I was given two more vials of antivenin intravenously. By the time I reached the hospital I was beyond questioning what the doctors did, but I found out later that that was all they had. I should have received 10 or more vials because of the severity of envenomation. And should have asked to be flown on to Tuxtla Gutierrez or Mixico City, or had more antivenin flown in to me. On the 6th day, as rotting of the flesh around the bite progressed, I flew to Miami (I would have gone to Mexico City, but the lanes were full and I already had tickets and a place to Miami. There the rotten flesh, now including all the right side and middle of my foot and three-fourths of the muscle on the right and back sides of my lower leg, was cut away, including the destroyed nerves, blood vessels and small tendons. Nothing was left of the right side of my foot save the sole itself and the bare bones and major tendons. A third of my lower leg was cut away, the Achilles tendon and the main tendon up from the ankle bone were scraped bare and the tissue removed down to the bone. My surgeon did an excellent job and I was kept under heavy antibiotic treatment. Surprisingly, the tissues grew back, including the blood vessels and some nerves. I was walking within 8 weeks, albeit cautiously and with help. Today I walk normally although I do not have control over the two outer toes and so find balancing a bit difficult. The scar is now only about a third of its original size, and in the scar area itself I can feel pressure but do not feel cuts or insect bites (all to the good) or heat or cold.

I didn't die after a severe bite by a tommygoff, but my doctors are convinced I would have without the use of antivenin. I can walk again because of excellent medical care. The important thing in case of snakebite is to get the patient to a doctor as soon as possible. Antivenin is very important, but it must be given with knowledge because of the danger of severe allergic shock or even death from the horse serum. Do NOT use a tourniquet. Do NOT cut the wound open – only a doctor can do that safely. Do NOT give alcohol which actually exaggerates the effect of the venom. See that the doctor gives enough antivenin, and gives it intravenously, after checking for allergy. The Belize City Hospital has not lost a patient from snakebite.

Tropical Forests and their Conservation: An Education Manual for Standards IV, V, VI was written and illustrated by volunteer Kerrien Redington from Cornwall, England. Kerry spent two months in the CBWS working on her book, which was published for the BAS by *Producciones de la Hamaca* and printed by The Angelus Ltd. The manual provides an introduction to the basic science and conservation issues of tropical forests in terms that children can understand. *Tropical Forests* was first released in the Spring of 1993. The second printing in 1996 had a more colourful cover.

The Life History of the NASSAU Grouper in Belize by Jacque Carter and Greg Marrow was produced in 1994 jointly by Belize Fisheries Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Belize Audubon Society with financial support from the World Wildlife Fund. Printed in Belize by The Angelus Press Limited, this handbook contains helpful illustrations to explain the life of a Nassau Grouper.

Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve and Tropical Forest Conservation Education Manual was also launched in 1996. It was written by Peace Corps volunteer Amy E. Smith, illustrated by Mike Mauricio and printed by BRC Printing, Benque Viejo, Belize, sponsored by the Nature Conservancy. This educational manual is full of information and illustrations on what can be found in tropical forests in general and the Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve in particular.

Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary: A Guide to the History, Flora, and Fauna of the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary for Visitors, Teachers and Scientists was launched on January 29, 1997. This 350-page book was the work of 23 contributors, authors and artists, edited by Judy Lumb, and published for BAS jointly by *Producciones de la Hamaca* of Caye Caulker and Orang-utan Press of Gays Mill, Wisconsin, USA. Descriptions of the history, flora and fauna of the Cockscomb Basin are included along with maps and guides to the trails of the CBWS and an extensive environmental education section.

Coastal Treasures of Belize, also launched on January 29, 1997, was prepared by Lisel Alamilla and Anna Hoare under a grant from Coral Caye Conservation under the European Union Fund Project and printed in full colour by The Angelus Press Limited. It is an ideal source of information for teachers and students alike, or anyone interest in learning about the marvels and significance of Belize's coastal zone and related ecosystems.

100 Birds of Belize, published in 1995, features the most common, rare and interesting birds of Belize with beautiful colour photographs, maps and text by ornithologist and photographer Carolyn M. Miller, along with 14 other artists. The birds are described in detail including their habitat, nesting habits, and other notable behaviours. Sponsors included Wildlife Conservation Society, American Bird Conservancy, Virio, Birdlife International, Massachusetts Audubon Society, Terra Foundation, Tropical Flora and Fauna Preservation Society, U. S. Fish and Wildlife, World Wildlife Fund.

Mammals of Belize: A Checklist was compiled by Timothy J. McCarthy with illustrations by Eustorgio Mendez. It was edited by Lydia Waight and Judy Lumb, published in 1998 for the BAS by *Producciones de la Hamaca*, Caye Caulker, Belize, and printed by BRC Printing, Benque Viejo, Belize. It provides a checklist with detailed illustrations useful in the identification of mammals in Belize.

Posters and Brochures

BAS' first brochure was produced in 1982. It included sections on what BAS is, the work of the Society, and the following section.

Why You Should Join

We in Belize have the unique opportunity of learning from the mistakes of other countries which have allowed unplanned industrial development, incorrect disposal of waste, and inadequate protection of rare and endangered plants and animals to destroy much of their natural heritage. We can, and must, maintain our environmental integrity for the enjoyment and benefit not only of ourselves, but for generations to come. Our magnificent coral reefs and islands, spectacular wild areas, and great diversity of wildlife are fast becoming a not too well kept secret in the world of international tourism. They all need to be protected now, and it will take much care and work in the years ahead to ensure that they are all preserved and used wisely. The Belize Audubon Society is committed to the cause of conservation, but the support of the Belizean people is necessary. Government, business organizations, institutions whether dealing specifically with environmental matters or not, and individuals, all need to be concerned in preserving what is good in the environment, and in developing it in such a way as to maintain, and if possible to improve, the quality of life for themselves and for future generations. The Belize Audubon Society would welcome as members all who are concerned with preserving our natural heritage. (April 1982 brochure)

Brochures

During his time as Executive Director, Mickey Craig produced brochures for each of the parks that BAS managed at that time and a brochure for the Reef Preservation Committee on the three species of marine turtles found in Belize. These brochures were still in use more than ten years later.

Reef Preservation Poster

The Reef Preservation Committee of the BAS, in conjunction with the Caye Caulker Branch of the Belize Tourism Industry Association, produced a poster emphasizing the need to protect the Belize Barrier Reef and its attendant lagoon ecosystems including mangroves, sea grass beds and caves.

In 1990 the BAS produced the brochure, *A Guide to Belize and Its Wildlife*, with support from Programme for Belize. The guide gave a brief description of Belize's history, culture, geography and the major sectors of agriculture, forestry and fisheries. It focussed on the country's ecosystems, flora, insects and mammals, with a guide to Belize's protected areas. The brochure opened out to form a colourful poster on the Birds of Belize.

[Esso Guatemala posters (set of four?) Jabiru poster? Jaguar poster – RARE]

Radio Programmes

BAS radio programmes began in July of 1969. They were written and presented by members as a part of the Scout Programme on Radio Belize. Board member Norman Staines was in charge of the Scout Radio Programme and arranged for BAS to include scripts on natural history prepared by the Society. Subsequently Radio Belize donated airtime for "Audubon Weekly" read on Mondays. These radio scripts were printed by BAS for distribution to schools and other interested parties. Visitors were interviewed and on one programme student members participated in a panel discussion.

Summer Programme in Tropical Biology

In 1970 a group of U.S. mid-western universities formed the Associated Universities for International Education and established a Tropical Research Center at St. John's College. Courses in marine and terrestrial ecology were offered from 1972 through 1977. The marine course was held at Glover's Reef and the terrestrial course at various locations on the Belize mainland. Mrs. Weyer was on the faculty and scholarships were offered to Belizean students. BAS took the opportunity of sponsoring public lectures by faculty members at the Bliss Institute on a wide variety of subjects.

Goshen College Programme

From 1974 until 1979 the BAS conducted a cooperative Environmental Education project with Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana. These students came to Belize for their Study/Service Trimester. Some students worked in protected areas and others presented the BAS Nature Study Programme to schools. BAS members prepared slide presentations with taped narrative and the Goshen students took them to the schools in Belize City and in the Districts. The first year, 1975, more than 3,700 Belizean students saw the two presentations, "The Coastal Edge – Sand Beach" and "The Coastal Mangrove Edge." In 1978 6,900 students in 70 showings were shown the 72-slide presentation on "Hardwood Forests."

Obtaining equipment for these projects was always a challenge. The Goshen students brought the first slide projector, which was purchased with BAS funds. Then an offer came for another donation from Centro Agronomico Tropical de Investigacion y Ensenanza (CATIE).

"During my visit to Belize in January, I was very impressed with many of the things I saw and learned in the country, including the enthusiasm of the Belize Audubon Society for the conservation cause, which I would very much like to support.

"I understand from your letter that your society has already bought a slide projector and are now in need of a tape recorder and a screen.

"I believe we may be able to supply you with this." (Letter from Dr. Arne Dalfelt of CATIE 8th March 1977)

Exhibitions

Agricultural Show

In April 1973 BAS was allowed to have a free booth at the National Agriculture and Trade Show held in the show grounds near Belmopan. Board members Ford Young, Dora Weyer, Shelly Matus, Bill and Diane Hasse prepared a display of photographs and pictures of native fauna which attracted a great deal of attention. There were handouts of information on BAS and conservation topics and copies of the radio scripts. The booth at the Agriculture Show was carried on for several years.

Although BAS was not able to have a booth in later years, they were represented. For example, the first BAS brochure was distributed in 1982 by the Chamber of Commerce, United States Embassy, Fisheries and Forestry booths. In 1983 our brochures and posters were displayed in the Fisheries booth.

World of Audubon

The first BAS exhibition was held at the Bliss Institute on Saturday, February 24th, 1990. The exhibition of posters and photographs of the protected areas and other BAS conservation projects was opened by Hon. Florencio Marin,

Minister of Industry and Natural Resources. A programme of video and slide presentations included “Birds of Belize” by Philip Balderamos, “Mammals of Belize” by Ernesto Saqui and “Trade in Wildlife” by Dr. Victor Gonzalez.

Feathers 'N Fins

“Feathers 'N Fins,” a photo exhibition featuring the work of BAS member James Beveridge was held November 4 – 9, 1991 at the Belisle Art Gallery. His images from the forests, lagoons, reefs and cayes capture Belize’s wildlife on film. Twenty percent of the sales were donated to the BAS.

Mangroves: Our Coastal Resource

“Mangroves: Our Coastal Resource” was the theme of the Coastal Zone Management exhibition held at the Bliss Institute from March 5 – 7, 1992. The purpose of the exhibition was to inform the public of the importance of our mangroves. Coastal Zone Management/BAS Environmental Educator June Neal and Assistant Fisheries Officer Lawrence Lewis were responsible for coordinating the exhibit. It attracted a large number of visitors including hundreds of school children. Poster and essay competitions also involved students furthering their education about mangroves.

Belize in Natural History

“Belize in Natural History,” was a photographic exhibition that presented the work of Luz Hunter, Demi Mejia, Ellen McRae and Tony Rath at the Belisle Art Gallery November 2 – 6, 1992. The excellent photographs of birds and animal life, as well as underwater scenes were viewed by hundreds of school children and many adults.

Eco-Fest

Eco-Fest was held at the Holy Redeemer Parish Hall February 6 – 8, 1994, in association with the Silver Anniversary Celebrations, showcasing environmental programmes of the thirteen different environmental organizations and agencies. The Central Bank of Belize and the Philatelic Bureau of the General Post Office exhibited their coins and stamps featuring the wildlife of Belize. The Cayo Parks, Cockscomb Basin and Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuaries each had prominent displays with park staff in attendance.

Hike and Bike for the Rainforest

On the last weekend of October, 1994, Hike and Bike for the Rainforest was held in Cayo to benefit conservation non-governmental organizations and the Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve. An Environmental Exhibition was displayed at the San Ignacio Hotel. Fund-raising included a dinner and sporting events.

Turtle Week

In an effort to promote sea turtle awareness in Belize, BAS sponsored a Turtle Week Exhibition at the Bliss Institute in Belize City from September 24 – 27, 1996. The event featured informative and interactive displays, videos, slide shows and talks. The purpose was to educate the general public about the importance of sea turtles in Belize and the rest of the world and why it is vital that they be protected.

BAS Awareness Week

Beginning November 4, 1996, a number of activities took place geared towards educating the Belizean public about the BAS, sensitizing people about who we are and what we do. There were Press Conferences, radio and television talk shows and interviews, advertising in the newspapers, and slide presentations in the tertiary educational institutions throughout the country.

Manatee Week

In an effort to promote manatee awareness and conservation in Belize, the BAS, Coastal Zone Management Project, Natural Resources Ministry, and Fisheries Department engaged in activities highlighting the manatee from March 23 to 27, 1998. Activities at the Bliss Institute included a poster competition, slide shows, talks, videos and a host of exhibits and displays. Many school students and teachers, as well as members of the general public were present at the exhibition.

Manatee researchers tell us that in the 1800’s Belize’s coastal waters, rivers and lagoons were teeming with manatees, so much so that they were hunted in great abundance. This mass hunting in turn led to the animal’s near extinction. Today the manatee is considered threatened and endangered throughout its natural range.

The manatee species that occurs in Belize, the West Indian manatee, has its highest concentration for Central America in Belize, but they probably number less than 700 countrywide. Manatees are offered protection in Belize under the Wildlife Protection Act.

Coral Reef Exhibition

“Our Reefs: Caribbean Connection,” was an information-packed bilingual traveling exhibition developed by marine scientists and educators of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. This exhibit was delayed by two hurricanes in the fall of 1998. It was originally scheduled to be moved to Belize from Puerto Rico in early October, but Hurricane Georges caused complications with transportation and it was delayed until the last week in October. But that was the week that Hurricane Mitch was passing through Central America, so it was further delayed. Finally in November the display was set up in Belize City at St. John’s College Gymnasium and then in Belmopan and Corozal before leaving Belize in February of 1999. Not only did the exhibition provide an introduction to the basic biology of the animals and plants that together make up the coral reef ecosystem, but also drew particular attention to the human threat to reef survival. Pollution, over-fishing, run-offs from poor land-use practices, all threaten the delicate balance of reef ecology.

Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Project

Valdemar Andrade, 1993

Beginning in March of 1990, a BAS staff member was responsible for the Environmental Education component of the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Project under the Fisheries Department in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

It was recognized that the country needed to adopt a multi-sectoral approach in developing a long-term strategy for coastal resources management and conservation, which would complement the rapidly expanding economic development of the country. The major focus of the CZM project was the preservation and sustainable use of the Belize Barrier Reef, the longest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere. The variety of reef formations occurring within the territorial limits of Belize is unparalleled elsewhere in the Caribbean. The task of managing this system on a sustainable basis is an enormous challenge and one that warrants extraordinary measures. A strong emphasis was placed on education, at all levels, on coastal issues. June Neal was the first Environmental Educator under this programme followed by Valdemar Andrade in 1992.

RARE Programme

The RARE (Rare Animal Relief Effort) Programme was an environmental education project carried out by the Forestry Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources to promote public awareness. Beginning in the Spring of 1993, BAS assisted with Belize City schools where the RARE programme was presented by the CZM Environmental Educator and BAS Staff. In one month they visited some 43 schools and met over 10,000 students. A variety of educational techniques was used including mass media and puppet shows including one with a human-sized Rainbow the Toucan. The programme was a hit with students because it made learning about the environment entertaining as well as educational.

Environmental Conservation Carnival

Two traveling environmental carnivals used Rainbow the Toucan and other innovative techniques to bring environmental education to students of Belize’s outlying districts. Environmental educators from the Belize Audubon/Coastal Zone Management Unit, the Belize Center for Environmental Studies and the Belize Zoo presented the Environmental Conservation Carnival to all the primary schools in the Toledo District in the spring of 1995. In the Fall, the carnival was taken to all the schools in the Corozal District. In October the presenters took time out to make a special appearance at schools in the villages near Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve in the Cayo District. This ambitious project was funded by a flock of agencies including World Wildlife Fund, the Forestry Planning and Management Project and NARMAP.

Training Programmes

Training for Teachers

BAS members were invited to present lectures at a number of different organizations including the Trade Union Seminar for Worker’s Education, the National 4-H Camp at Gracie Rock, and the Curriculum Development Unit’s Infant Schools Science and Social Studies Seminar.

“Besides being very interesting and informative, your lecture did much to enhance the learning that occurred. We feel strongly that the ripple effect (from lecturer to teachers to students) will be felt because of your role in the programme.”
(Letter to Mrs. Lydia Waight from Carolyn Leacock, Curriculum Development Unit, Ministry of Education, January 29, 1986)

Coastal Zone Management

In August of 1981, Nova University’s “Marine Sciences Under Sail” came to Belize and offered a workshop in Coastal Zone Management. Eight BAS members participated in the workshop.

Environmental Education Workshop

The World Wildlife Fund – U.S. supported a workshop on Environmental Education November 26-27, 1984, led by Dr. Augusto Medina.

Tour Guide Training

In November of 1987 the BAS assisted the Belize Tourism Industry Association with a seminar designed to provide local tour guides with knowledge of the natural history of Belize. Mr. and Mrs. James Waight presented a slide show that depicted the major ecological zones of the country and the flora and fauna associated with these areas. Dr. Victor Gonzalez spoke on conservation and its international dimensions.

Training for Wardens

Over the years many training programmes have been held for the wardens of the BAS-managed parks. Wardens were trained at the Police Training School in Belmopan and sworn in as Special Constables.

In June of 1991 a course entitled “Protected Area Personnel Training Course” was held at the Douglas D’Silva Center in the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve, organized by the Forest Department and Colorado State University. CBWS Park Director Ernesto Saqui and Protected Areas Manager Osmany Salas were Assistant Facilitators.

In August of 1992 a training program in wildlife management was held at the Belize Zoo and Tropical Education Center, taught by Dr. Jack Meyer, biology instructor at the University College of Belize.

A minicourse on Photogrammetry and Rapid Ecological Assessment (REA) was given to three wardens at the Pelican Beach Resort in Dangriga in February of 1993. The next month the information was quickly used in a REA of the Bladen Branch Nature Reserve conducted by Pio Saqui, Eugenio Ah, and Donald Tillett.

A Warden Training Workshop was held February 1 – 3, 1996, at Shipstern Nature Reserve. In addition to wardens from all of the BAS-managed parks, Claudia Saqui and Dora Pau attended representing the May Center Women’s Group. The main objective of the workshop was to improved services offered in the parks.

An intensive six-week training course in Forestry Skills for Belize was held at the end of 1996 at the Douglas D’Silva Forest Station in the Mountain Pine Ridge. BAS senior staff were the trainers and two wardens completed the course.

Economics of Natural Resources

“Economics of Natural Resources” was the subject of a Seminar coordinated by BAS and sponsored by the National Resources Management Programme of USAID (NARMAP), World Wildlife Fund, the MacArthur Foundation and the *Universidad de Concepcion* of Chile. Dr. Arcadio Cerda of the *Universidad de Concepcion* of Chile was the main facilitator. Topics included national accounts and environmental commodities; relationships among population, resource use, technology, environmental degradation and pollution; and economic theory and measurement of environmental benefits. The Seminar was held at the Radisson/Villa Hotel in Belize City October 13 and 14, 1993.

Conservation and Management Training

BAS received a grant from the Small Grants Programme of the Global Environmental Facility of the United Nations Development Programme for the training of protected area managers and local community leaders. The first workshop, “Conservation and Management Training for Protected Areas Managers and Local Community Leaders,” was held April 10 – 16, 1994, with fieldwork in GNP. The fourteen participants represented six protected areas and four buffer zone communities. Two follow-up workshops were held with the same group later in the year.

Gender and Development

In cooperation with the World Conservation Union (IUCN) BAS hosted a workshop entitled “Gender and Development” at the Pelican Beach Resort in Dangriga from November 8 to 11, 1994. Lorena Aguilar Revelo from IUCN’s Costa Rica office did a fantastic job facilitating the workshop. The workshop was designed to look at the role of gender in development, specifically to increase the awareness of societal attitudes and values concerning gender and how these attitudes change over time, to show experiences and case studies, and to show how to integrate gender and development in an organization. Participants included representatives of women’s organizations, environmental organizations, buffer zone community groups, and BAS protected areas staff.

Environmental Youth Camps

Belize Youth Conservation Corps

In the summer of 1991, the Belize Youth Conservation Corps (BYCC) held two summer camps at the CBWS. They worked on a number of conservation projects. Several bridges were built or repaired, steps were constructed on steep hillsides, new trails were cut, and a garbage pit was dug.

From November 29 to December 2, 1993, twelve young ladies were at the GNP participating in BYCC-sponsored conservation activities. They built nesting boxes for birds, roosting boxes for bats, and made hanging baskets for orchids. In October of 1994 BYCC youth were back at GNP constructing a self-guided trail, upgrading the orchid display and repairing the steps leading down to the Belize River Recreation Center.

In June of 1995 an energetic team from BYCC cleaned the beach and cleared trails on Half Moon Caye.

Youth Enhancement Service Discovery Camp

In the summer of 1996, 20 inner city youths along with their leaders, spent 6 days in CBWS. The objective was to use the outdoors as a practical classroom while examining and learning about the individual and group dynamics that arise as the kids worked through environmental activities together.

YWCA Camp at CTWS

About 100 youths participated in the Young Women’s Christian Association’s Environmental Education and Awareness Summer Camp at Crooked Tree Village.

The camp, which lasted for three weeks in July of 1997, engaged the young people in meaningful environmental activities designed to help them become more involved in the sound use and management of Belize’s natural resources.

Environmental Education Coordinator, Michael Somerville lectured to the groups on the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary and its important wildlife species, including the jabiru and the native fish species.

Belize Council for the Visually Impaired Summer Camp

A residential Summer Camp for blind and visually impaired children was held at the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary from July 26 through August 5, 1997. The camp was organized and run by the BAS and the Belize Council for the Visually Impaired (BCVI) with funding from the British High Commission.

The 21 blind and low vision children, along with six of their brothers and sisters, got involved in a range of activities which were designed to increase independence and confidence and to develop skills for daily living, education and mobility. Activities included arts and crafts, sports and games, jungle treks and day trips. For many of the children this was their first experience of a long trip away from home.

Coming from villages countrywide, most of the children are in regular primary schools receiving support from BCVI. This summer camp was the first of its kind for Belize.

Environmental Leadership Camp at CBWS

Members of the Youth Department joined efforts with the BAS to hold a week-long Environmental Leadership Summer Camp at the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary from August 11 to 15, 1997.

This camp was the second of its kind and was coordinated in part by youths from the previous year’s group. Fifteen youths ranging in age from 14 to 17 years, including coordinators participated.

The object of the camp was to bring together a diverse group of youths from many social, cultural and economic backgrounds to spend a week camping and taking part in a wide variety of conservation-related activities.

YMCA Camp at CBWS

The Young Men's Christian Association, in collaboration with the BAS, held a week-long Summer Camp at the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary from August 18 to 22, 1997.

Twenty-four chosen participants, primarily from the Belize City area, learned about the history of the Sanctuary, the medicinal values of plants, identification of common birds and insects, food chains and the biology of the jaguar and the black howler monkey.

Environmental Education Programme

Michael Somerville, 1998

[Mike, I took this from your current programme, changed tenses and put it in narrative form as history. Please check it for accuracy, correct and expand on it.]

A variety of Environmental Education efforts are underway in Belize by both the public and private sectors. Programmes are working to increase the school children's awareness and understanding of environmental problems, developing resource materials for teachers, and increasing public awareness about various conservation and environmental issues.

A recent baseline study was conducted in an effort to develop an environmental education strategy for the country. It was concluded that the most important audiences for addressing and resolving environmental problems are educators, NGOs, natural resource managers, community leaders, government officials, farming communities, environmental specialists, children, and media personnel.

While past environmental education programmes proved effective to some extent, most if not all of them have been confined to short-term periods, mainly as a result of the lack of adequate financial resources and personnel. BAS recognizes that in order for any environmental education programme to be truly effective, it must be continuous.

An increased effort in environmental education at BAS was made possible by the creation of a full-time Environmental Education Coordinator position in August of 1995. Clare Cuellar was the first to fill this position followed by Michael Somerville a year later. The extensive Environmental Education Programme is aimed at all levels of the general population on the premise that educating people about the environment and conservation will reciprocally lead to a better way of life for now and for generations to come.

The 5-year Strategic Plan for the BAS, developed in 1995, defines future directions for BAS by determining areas where it has the greatest strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for success. From this plan an Environmental Education Action Plan was produced in 1996. General objectives include educating Belizeans about the environment, getting environmental education into the school curricula at all levels and developing protected areas as environmental education centers.

Protected Areas as Education Centers

Wardens have been assessed and trained to function as field educators. An Interpretive Trail Guide was produced for the Blue Hole National Park. The second edition of the *A to Z of Belizean Wildlife Manual* was revised and launched and a slide show about the Belize Audubon Society was developed. Wardens have been trained to promote environmentally sound practices to children and adults that visit protected areas.

Our goal is to have a system of interesting self-interpretive trails in place in all six of its managed protected areas. Interpretive trail guides have been developed and improved for CBWS and GNP. Three self-guided trail guides have been developed for CTWS, along with interpretive signs for elevated boardwalk. Bird checklists are now available for GNP, BHNP, and CTWS.

The visitor centers for CTWS, GNP, BHNP, CBWS, and HMCNM have all been upgraded and an Orchid Trail developed at CTWS.

Public Environmental Awareness Campaign

A national environmental public awareness campaign sponsored by a grant from PACT is being conducted to address the most significant environmental problems that Belize faces. Six video TV spots have been prepared and are being broadcast on local television stations. Similar information has been prepared for radio and newspapers throughout the country.

Brochures to target owners of large portions of land in Belize and for immigrants about Belize's conservation laws have been developed.

On-the-road Exhibits

On-the-road exhibits have been developed to reach residents of buffer zone communities and the general public, to educate them about Belize's protected areas, the overall environment, and good conservation practices.

Environmental Summer Camps

Curriculum guides are being developed for the Environmental Summer Camps to educate students or other interested groups about nature, and environmental and conservation concepts.

School Visitation System

[any data on how many schools visited, students reached?]

Environmental Education in School Curricula

It is our goal to incorporate environmental education in school curricula at all levels. We organize school visits to parks and conduct appropriate environmental training workshops and materials for educators. [any details?]

Environmental Clubs

[any new clubs or details on recent activities ?]

Belize Barrier Reef Awareness Day

[Is this scheduled? Or is it past]

Chapter 5

Protected Areas

Half Moon Caye

In 1820 the first lighthouse was built on Half Moon Caye at Lighthouse Reef. The caye is divided into two very distinct ecosystems, a coconut grove on the eastern end and a littoral forest on the western end. For over a hundred years the 45-acre caye has supported a nesting colony of red-footed boobies. The boobies coexist with their pirate neighbors, the magnificent frigate birds. Some 98 other birds have been recorded on the caye, of which 77 are migrants.

On the first of September, 1928, the western end of Half Moon Caye was made a Crown Reserve with these words:

"It is hereby notified that the following reservation is made under section 6 of the Crown Lands Ordinance - Chapter 83 of the Consolidated Laws, 1924: That portion of Crown Land at the Western end of Half Moon Caye containing 14 acres 2 rods 30 poles which was formerly leased to George Young by Lease No. 112 of 1918. S. G. 110 - 22"

BAS' first project was management of Half Moon Caye.

Our Society is very much concerned about the information we have received that the colony of Red-footed Boobies on Half Moon Caye is being preyed upon by rats. This could be a serious threat to the survival of this unique nesting site, which has been in existence for over a hundred years, if allowed to go unchecked. Already the number of birds nesting there has been greatly reduced. It would never do to allow this important tourist attraction to be eliminated.

Our Society would like to request your permission to attempt to get rid of the rats on the Caye by the use of a rat poison called "Warfarin," which we have procured.

This poison, which must be mixed with rice bran in the proportion of 1 pound to 20 pounds, has a cumulative effect and has to be eaten continuously over a period of time. It should not harm the frigate birds and boobies who live on the Caye since they are fish-eaters.

If this matter meets with your approval, we would also appreciate your asking the co-operation and help of the Customs Department in our efforts to preserve the nesting colony of Red-footed Boobies on Half Moon Caye.

(Letter to the Chief Game Warden, August 18, 1969)

RAT POISONING CAMPAIGN ON HALF MOON CAYE

At 6:30 a.m. Thursday, October 9, 3 members of the Society, Meg Craig, Jim Parker and Dora Weyer, accompanied by Customs Controller J. J. Robateau, boarded the Lolette for Half Moon Caye. The Lolette was taking our personnel and supplies for the Public Works Department, who are working on the Caye repairing damage caused by (Hurricane) Francelia. Jim Robateau had kindly offered to let us go along on this trip so we could start the Society's Rat Poisoning Project.

This project - discussed at the BAS meeting on September 20th - was started because of repeated reports that rats on the Caye (presumably introduced accidentally by boats long ago) were raiding the booby nests, eating the eggs and possibly even killing and eating newly hatched chicks. Verner, in his study of the colony, mentioned this as a major problem for these birds as long ago as 1959. Since then Hurricane Hattie decimated the colony. It has slowly been building back up in numbers since 1963, but so far as we can tell (because no actual nest count studies have been possible), the colony is just barely holding its own at this point. Pre-1963 accurate count records indicated that the colony was very much larger than it is today. It seems wise to do all we can to help these birds. Another severe hurricane might finish them off, whereas if the colony can build up to normal strength, it should be able to at least partially weather another such catastrophe.

At the suggestion of the Sanctuary Committee, and after discussion by the Board of Directors, Jim Waight, as President of the BAS, sent a letter to Chief Game Warden Lindo outlining the problem and requesting permission for the Society to undertake a rat poisoning program. He pointed out that we would use warfarin, a poison that would not hurt the birds if they somehow got hold of it, nor would it be dangerous for children or domestic animals for the people living on the Caye. The Forestry Department contacted the Controller of Customs Mr. J. J. Robateau, who reported back that, on questioning, his men out there verified the reports of rat depredation on the booby nests. And so permission was given.

Ford Young bought pure warfarin, 3 lbs., for us on a trip to Miami, Jim Waight bought a bag of cracked rice to use for bait, and we waited for a day when the Lolette was scheduled for Half Moon Caye and might have room for us.

We hoped to get out to poison the rats during September, October, or November. The last of the booby's young are leaving the island, able to fly on their own, in September. October is one month of the year when the boobies are not nesting at

all, and only a few birds start the new nesting season in November. Therefore, we felt we would disturb the birds least by working at this time.

When the day came, it turned out that even with frantic attempts to adjust their schedules, it was impossible for any of the men on the Board of Directors to leave town. We two women were the only ones free and we felt we needed help. We saw Jim Parker on the street and roped him in on it as a strong, able-bodied young man. At the last moment, fortunately, J. J. Robateau was able to make the trip, too. He had originally planned to go on this trip of the Lolette to make an inspection of the lighthouse and the repairs to Francelia's damage, but his schedule was so heavy he had thought it impossible for a bit. He was a tremendous help to us, making arrangements with Mr. Garbutt, the lighthouse keeper, to check and refill baits, and carrying the heavy and awkward load of bait and tin bait cans himself through the dense bush of the island all afternoon - no small job on a very hot day! Our most especial "thank-yous" go out to him.

The 9th dawned wonderfully clear and calm and we made the first trip out there we have ever made without getting at least a touch of seasickness! Mrs. Garbutt and her children were on board returning to the Caye. She told us the rats were terrible there! They ate all her young vegetable plants as soon as the seed sprouted; they gnawed the family's shoes; and they ruined the coconuts. The Garbutts have had to buy rat poison themselves and wage war on the rats constantly in order to survive.

The Lolette moored off the Caye at noon. We had eaten our sandwiches earlier in order to utilize every possible moment at the Caye and off we started. Mr. and Mrs. Garbutt came with us, both of them enthusiastic about the program and hoping that we could, indeed, completely eliminate rats from Half Moon Caye. They told us that the rats at this time of year lived entirely in the coconut trees, eating the coconuts, because there were no bird eggs. This proved to be true. We checked over the booby colony where only a few birds remained and saw no sign of rats being present. They were nesting in the center of the crown of the trees, raiding the coconuts. They gnaw a hole right through the thick fibrous outer covering of the nut, then through the thinner hard shell, and finally clean out every bit of coconut meat. They attack every nut on the tree they live on, from small ones only 3 to 4 inches long to big full ones. Only when they've finished all do they move on to the next tree. This makes it easy for the Garbutts to know when the rats are all killed. They gather coconuts for their own use, of course, and know each tree as an individual, and know which ones the rats are attacking.

We set 22 poison baits out, 20 nailed on the trunks of the trees where rats were living at the moment, one in a shed where the Garbutts were having trouble with rats eating their supplies, and one in a shed where the fish were laid out for drying and the rats were gnawing the dried fish. In some cases the bait was placed in tins in such a way that rain could not get to it, but rats running up and down the trunk had easy access. In other cases, at Mrs. Garbutt's suggestion, because this was the way they had been doing it, we used halves of coconut husks and fastened them under the big coconut fronds so that the rain was kept out but it all looked quite natural. This last really seems the best way, and is certainly the easiest. The 20 trees chosen were all that were rat-infested in the SW quarter of the Caye and all along the West Side. By this time it was 5:00 p.m. and we still had a 6-hour return trip to Belize ahead of us. The Garbutts offered to check out and set baits on the remaining plantation on the east side the next day. They will also check all bait sets every two days, refilling where necessary and, in the event the rats have dirtied the bait, cleaning it out and putting in fresh. Rats will not continue to eat out of dirtied baits. A great deal depends on their continued help, and if in the end we are able to get rid of the rats on Half Moon Caye the Society - and the boobies - will owe the Garbutts a great deal.

At the time of going to press, a report had been received from Mr. Garbutt that the rats were eating the bait well and were now dying. He is coming into town shortly and at that time J. J. Robateau and Lydia Waight will see that he gets more bait to take back with him. At the moment we have enough, but we may well run out before the project is finished. However, the Public Health Department now starting a big campaign against the rats in Belize had offered to help us out and friends in the U.S. have offered to send more warfarin if necessary.

We hope to be able to go out on the Lolette again soon. At that time we will be able to see for ourselves how the project is progressing. (from the BAS Bulletin, October, 1969)

Expansion of Half Moon Caye Natural Monument

In 1971 Mr. Vivian Grey-Wilson asked Mr. Ford Young, a real estate agent and BAS Vice President, to sell five lots on Half Moon Caye. Mr. Grey-Wilson's father had been the collector of Customs and either purchased or was given for his services these lots on Half Moon Caye. Mr. Young brought this information to the BAS Board, who requested that Government acquire the remaining private lots adjoining the Reserve on Half Moon Caye.

Dr. MacFarland of *Centro Agronomico Tropical de Investigacion y Ensenanza* (CATIE) had visited Belize and was interested in Half Moon Caye. He got conservation societies to donate money to buy the lots. Out of these funds the sum of \$3,750 U.S. was paid to the Government of Belize, this being half the purchase price for the lots. Government contributed the other half and canceled several leases, so there were several Gazette notices, including the one on 20 October 1979 that expanded the Crown Reserve to include the entire Caye and part of the surrounding reef.

Establishment of Half Moon Caye Natural Monument

Half Moon Natural Monument was established as Belize's first protected area under the National Parks System Act.

"The order cited as the NATURAL MONUMENT RESERVATION (HALF MOON CAYE) ORDER 1982 (Statutory Instrument No. 30 of 1982), signed the 4th day of March, 1982, by the Minister of Natural Resources in exercise of the powers conferred upon him by section 3 (1) of the National Parks System Act 1981 (No. 5 of 1981), declared the area specified in the Schedule to the Order to be a Natural Monument. The schedule reads:

"ALL that piece or parcel of land and sea lying and being part of Lighthouse Reef and the Caribbean Sea and containing Half Moon Caye in the country of Belize and bounded on the North by another portion of Lighthouse Reef and the Caribbean Sea, on the East by the Caribbean Sea, on the South by the Caribbean Sea, on the West by the said Caribbean Sea, and another portion of Lighthouse Reef and containing approximately 9,700 acres and being more particularly described as follows:

"Commencing at a point having the geographic coordinates North Latitude 17° 11' and West Longitude 87° 30'; thence due north along the Eastern boundary for a distance of 5550 metres more or less to a point having the geographic coordinates North Latitude 17° 14' and West Longitude 87° 30'; thence due West along the Northern boundary for a distance of 7072 metres more or less to a point having the geographic coordinates North Latitude 17° 14' and West Longitude 87° 34'; thence due East along the Southern boundary for a distance of 7072 metres more or less to the point of commencement." (Gazette 20 March 1982)

International Media Coverage

The new Natural Monument attracted writers and became the subject of magazine articles. Dr. Anne LaBastille of West of the Wind Publications first came to Belize in April of 1980 when she was writing an article on the National Parks of Central America for National Geographic magazine. She wanted to include Half Moon Caye Natural Monument but that depended on the passing of the National Parks Ordinance into law by October of 1980. After the National Parks System Act was passed, Dr. LaBastille wrote "Paradise Gained: A New Country Creates Its First National Park," which appeared in *Animal Kingdom*, the magazine of the New York Zoological Society.

"On March 20, 1982, shortly after my second visit there, Belize declared an area of offshore reefs, islands, mangrove keys, and sandbars the Half Moon Caye Natural Monument. It is the first unit in Belize's fledgling national park system and the only marine reserve among Central America's 26 national parks. . .

"One side of the island looks like a vacationer's postcard: white-sand beaches dotted with graceful palms. The other half is covered with a dense growth of Cordia and gumbo limbo trees, vines and bromeliads, which support a thriving seabird rookery. . .

"This nesting area is one of only two spots in the Caribbean where adult red-footed boobies sport elegant white-gold-and-black plumage rather than the usual dingy brown. (Trinidad's boobies also exhibit this flashy color phase.) . .

"[From the observation post] I could see dozens of fuzzy white baby boobies and gangly black young frigates crouching timidly among the orange blossoms of the Cordia trees.

"Some of the chicks lay prostrate in the sun, seeming to pant; others were shaded by siblings or branches and sat alertly, awaiting delivery of their meals. Overhead the parents nervously flew about, carrying food. Higher still, a few male frigates in breeding plumage soared on slender wings, their red throat pouches ballooning beneath them. A noisy, busy, yet attractive nursery. . . it is remarkable that a new nation has designated its first national park so soon after achieving independence." (Animal Kingdom, Aug-Sept 1982)

Diane Weyer wrote an article entitled "Half Moon Caye: Central America's First Marine Park."

"Half Moon Caye looks pretty much as it has for the last thousand years. Hurricanes have blown down the trees from time to time but they've grown back. About 150 years ago someone added a lighthouse. It's still there. So are the coconut palms and the white sand. And the birds! The red-footed booby birds, the reason this particular island is the nucleus of the first marine park in Central America. . .

"Once you've seen a couple of thousand booby birds crowding every available tree and shrub on the western side of the island with their haphazard nests, it's hard to think of the island as belonging to anyone else, but legally Half Moon Caye is part of Belize, a small, newly independent country which lies 60 miles to the west, across miles of open ocean and behind the second-longest barrier reef in the world. . .

"Though Half Moon Caye would never have become Central America's first marine park without its boobies, it is much more than a bird colony. The caye itself is home to a host of other creatures including an endemic species of anole lizard (Anolis allisoni)... And stretching away from the caye to the east and south are miles of atoll reef where elkhorn, brain and staghorn corals create a background for one of the the richest ecosystems in the world... To list all the creatures that dwell within the confines of Half Moon Caye Natural Monument would fill many pages. In this instance it is best to just be glad it exists and is protected, now and, hopefully, forever." (Parks, Vol. 7, Oct-Dec, 1982)

Management of Half Moon Caye

Trips to Half Moon Caye for the management of that reserve were accomplished through the generosity of Customs or the Fisheries Department.

“On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Belize Audubon Society, I should like to thank you for inviting us to participate in your Department’s visit to Half Moon Caye in April last. Four of our Directors went on the trip and it was a wonderful experience.

“Our Society is greatly concerned about the reports we have received of raids on the Red-footed Booby nesting reserve. We are also concerned about the effects uncontrolled tourism could have on the caye and the reef.

“In an effort to “put our heads together”, we cordially invite you to come to our next Directors’ meeting . . . We could then talk about Half Moon Caye and decide what we can do to try to help preserve it in its natural state.” (Letter to Mr. G. W. Miller 27th June 1978)

The effects of Hurricane Greta on Half Moon Caye are described in this letter to D. K. Ness written October 19, 1978.

“... You missed all the excitement of hurricane Greta. We are still trying to clean up the mud in our yard.

“The Lands Department sent out some of their staff to Half Moon Caye early in the week to assess the damage done and Jim was invited to go with them. He reports that many coconut trees have been blown down and huge boulders have been washed up on the caye. The base of the lighthouse is damaged and the water in the “crescent” is much deeper. He could not get very far into the booby reserve because of the tangled undergrowth, but he saw a few dead birds and some young ones that had evidently fallen out of their nests, so the colony must have suffered some losses. He took out some warfarin and asked the lighthouse keepers to put it out on the coconut trees.

“The fall migrants are arriving. Today we saw a pair of Summer Tanagers and they were beautiful. Jim saw lots of warblers on the Caye.”

Additional funds from CATIE were given for the management of the Natural Monument, US\$1500 in 1979 and over US\$4,000 in 1984. Under the direction of the Reef Preservation Committee, trails were cleared, an observation tower was constructed in the bird rookery, and picnic tables and a barbecue grill were built for the visitor area in the coconut grove. David Craig and Lascelle Arnold built the ladder for the new observation tower. Four large signs showing maps of the Caye and several other signs were donated by the New York Zoological Society.

A short-term management plan for the Half Moon Caye Natural Monument, based on the draft prepared by David Lovell, a consultant from CATIE, was sent to Government in May of 1985.

In March of 1986, the Royal Engineers Dive Team of British Forces stationed in Belize, put down markers on the northern and western boundaries of the HMCNM.

For several years maintenance on Half Moon Caye was accomplished periodically by groups of volunteers from the BAS and the Fisheries Department. Participants were transported out to the Caye on the Fisheries boat *the Lutjanus*. Frank Bunting donated ten large buoys, which were placed to mark the boundaries and the permanent anchorages by a volunteer group of ten participants in the summer of 1990. Twenty-four bags of garbage were removed at that time. Then the next April 51 bags of garbage were removed, the Visitor’s Center was painted, the observation tower was braced, the picnic tables were repaired and the trail cleared.

The tenth anniversary clean-up was held the 24th and 25th of May, 1992. Sixteen adults and two children participated and gathered 43 bags of garbage. The 1993 volunteer group netted 33 bags of garbage, repaired picnic tables, cut 150 feet of new trails, put up new warning signs, and set up out poisoned bait to cut down the rat population that preys upon the booby eggs.

A record 36 people were involved in the October, 1994, expedition to Half Moon Caye. In addition to the usual beach cleanup, they dug a freshwater well, installed a hand pump, put up new signs, and laid the concrete foundation for the new Visitor Center. In 1995 Belize Youth Conservation Corps volunteers cleaned the beach, cleared the trails, and worked on the interpretive signs. Though the groups worked hard there was always time for some recreational snorkeling.

A new Visitor Center and warden headquarters were built in 1995 by volunteers from a United Kingdom group, Raleigh International, which also involved Belizean volunteers. Funds for this project were provided by the Coastal Zone Management Project.

In August of 1997 another group from the United Kingdom, Trekforce Expeditions, constructed a new pier. More than 20 of the troopers, along with personnel from the Belize Audubon Society, worked for two weeks until the pier was finished. Besides providing much of the labour needed to build the pier, Trekforce Expeditions also contributed greatly to the cost of the materials.

The Belize Tourist Board made a donation of \$5,000.00 toward the purchase in 1997 of a 26-foot fiberglass boat from Belize Fiberglass Products. Appropriately, the name given to the boat is the “*Sula sula*,” the scientific name for the red-footed booby. The Coastal Zone Management Project provided funds to purchase equipment needed such as the outboard engine for the *Sula sula* and dive gear.

Volunteers Abril Esquivel of Mexico and Gabor Vereczi of Hungary created an exhibit in the Visitor Center. Starting with the natural and cultural history of the Half Moon Caye Natural Monument, the visitor is led through colorful displays of flora and fauna, including the interaction between the nesting red-footed boobies and the magnificent frigatebird, followed by a reef model depicting corals and fishing resources, and impacts on coral reefs. They also documented tourist and visitation statistics, developed trail signs, assessed snorkeling areas and made recommendations for the management of the HMCNM.

But management of protected areas requires constant vigilance. In 1997 someone began building a house on Half Moon Caye. Part of the Caye had originally been leased to Joseph and Austin Miller and they planted coconuts, but they never paid their lease, so the Government canceled the lease. One of their heirs saw an article in the Amandala and suddenly realized he might have a claim to land on Half Moon Caye. He went to the Survey Department and renewed the lease. The people in the Lands and Survey Department took his money without checking, so he thought things were fine and started building his house. The staff of BAS looked up all the old correspondence and the Gazettes to prove the leases were canceled and the matter was eventually settled.

The current management plan was written by Diana Williams in 1995. Beginning in 1996 wardens were hired . . .
[where did the money come for the current warden salary?]

World Heritage Site

The United National World Heritage Committee formally adopted seven protected areas along the Belize Barrier Reef and its adjacent atolls as a World Heritage Site under UNESCO at their meeting in Merida, Mexico on December 4, 1996. HMCNM is included as part of this prestigious World Heritage Site.

Red-footed Booby Studies

Goshen College students conducted studies of the Red-footed Boobies on Half Moon Caye for several years. No study had been done on Half Moon Caye since the one by Jared Verner in 1958 in which he estimated 3,500 boobies and counted 1,389 nests. Considerable damage had been done by Hurricane Hattie on Half Moon Caye in 1961 and the BAS wanted to know if the colony had been restored to its previous levels. In November of 1974, Goshen students estimated 3,700 birds, one-sixth of which were immature. The next March 1,285 nests were counted and in 1977 there were 1,431 nests.

GOSHEN STUDENTS DO RESEARCH ON BOOBY NESTING COLONY

“Two students of Goshen University, Goshen, Indiana, Ned Nafziger and Dave Bretz, carried out the annual count of red-footed booby nests on Half Moon Caye during the period February 23rd to March 8th. This was done as a project of their Study/ Service Trimester in Belize.

“A final estimate of 1,329 nests was reached. This figure indicates a decline from the previous year that may possibly be a result of increased raids on the nesting colony. There are reliable reports that local fishermen land on the caye to collect eggs and kill the young birds. The boobies are so passive that it is easy to raid their nests.

“This predation is strictly illegal. The area where the birds nest was made a Crown Reserve in 1928 and the red-footed booby was added to the list of protected animals by Statutory Instrument in 1950. Should this raiding of nests continue, the survival of the nesting colony would be seriously threatened. Red-footed boobies have nested on Half Moon Caye for over a hundred years and they should be allowed to continue to do so.

“The task of counting nests was slow, tedious and difficult. The reserve is a tangled mass of vegetation on which the boobies nest, and most of the time the only way the counters could get about was by crawling under the low growing trees. Ned and Dave are to be commended for the fine job they did under trying circumstances, and the Society would like to record its thanks and appreciation for their contribution to its work of conservation.” (BAS Bulletin, April 1978)

During the Christmas holidays of 1991 William E. Cross of Environmental Research Associates in Ontario, Canada, did another study of the nesting colony on Half Moon Caye.

In all, I counted 1325 red-footed booby nests, a number very close to those recorded in 1959, 1978, and 1981, and considerably higher than that recorded in 1988-89. Booby nests, viewed from below, are not much more than round piles of twigs about 1.5 - 15 m from the ground. It was easy to tell whether nests were occupied (virtually all were) because the inhabitants of lower nests peered at me over the edge of the nest, seemingly with curiosity, and those in higher nests were obvious by white tail feathers extending beyond the nest's edge. It has been observed that once nest construction begins, one

pair member must guard the nest constantly against stick thievery by other boobies and frigatebirds, which can result in the dismantling of a nest in as little as a half hour. I didn't check for eggs, but most boobies were likely incubating, based on their behaviour and what is known of their breeding ecology. I also counted nesting magnificent frigatebirds, of which there were 71, about three and a half times previous counts; iguanas (the true iguana, Iguana iguana rhinolopha, and the wish willy, Ctenosaura similis), which were present in about every fourth tree; and roosting birds. (from the report of William E. Cross to the BAS, August, 1992)

Crown Reserve Bird Sanctuaries

In 1975 the Government of Belize reserved Bird Caye in Northern Lagoon (Manatee – not to be confused with the Northern Lagoon which is at Crooked Tree). In April of that year a BAS field trip group went to put signs up alerting the public to the Reserve status of the caye.

The BAS continued their vigilance over this Reserve as in the following letter to Officer Commanding Her Majesty's Forces, Airport Camp dated 10th June 1977.

"At a recent meeting of the Board of Directors of the BAS, it was reported to the Board that an army helicopter was seen performing exercises very near to Bird Caye, the more southern of two small mangrove cayes along the eastern shore of Northern Lagoon, Manatee.

"We are sure you are not aware that this caye has been reserved by Government, at the request of our Society, as a bird sanctuary and nesting rookery. Large numbers of water birds (herons, egrets and ibises) nest and roost there and, in an effort to prevent them being disturbed, our Society has erected signs warning that no one should land on the caye.

"Our Society would like to request that future army exercises be undertaken, if possible, in some other area, rather than in the vicinity of Bird Caye, so as to avoid affecting the birds that occupy the caye.

Response from John Head, Commander, British Forces Belize dated 27 June 1977:

"Thank you for your letter concerning the Bird Caye reservation. We were not aware of this information and I will ensure that our aircraft keep as clear as possible from the area. . ."

In order to inform the public (and the British Forces), Shelley Matus painted signs designating this area as a Bird Sanctuary and against hunting, landing on caye, no shooting." Signs were first put in place by Bert Forman in October of 1979. Later the signs were replaced after they had washed away.

At that time BAS had no authority to appoint wardens. This phone message generated an investigation about wardens.

Dora Weyer called. She went to Bird Caye and met a man by the name of Lionel Heredia who goes to Bird Caye every week. Mr. Heredia told Mrs. Weyer that hunters are shooting the Egrets. He tried on two occasions to stop the hunters, but they only laughed at him and told him he had no authority to stop them. Mr. Heredia is very much concerned about this (he is a local tourist guide) and is willing to help prevent any more birds from being shot. The Ibis are just coming in and both Mr. Heredia and Mrs. Weyer feel that hunters will also start to shoot them. Mrs. Weyer would like you to call an emergency meeting, as early as possible, to explain the situation to the Directors of the BAS and ask Mrs. Waight to write a letter making Mr. Heredia a Warden for the BAS giving him authority to stop these men from killing the birds. She feels this is a serious problem and something should be done promptly. (Phone message dated 7 April 1978)

"At our last Directors' meeting, the subject of appointing wardens for the nesting reserves entrusted to the care of the Society was brought up. After some discussion, it was suggested that we write to you, asking for guidance in this matter, as you are undoubtedly familiar with the work of wardens in the National Audubon Society's sanctuaries and reserves.

"As you probably read in our September 1977 Bulletin (you are on our mailing list), seven mangrove cayes that are nesting rookeries were reserved at our request "for the establishment of bird sanctuaries" under our Society's control.

"We would like to know what authority these wardens have, whether they are paid and what they are furnished with. Any information you may be able to give us on this matter will be greatly appreciated. (Letter to Alexander Sprunt IV, 9th May 1978)

"We develop a separate operations manual for each sanctuary to fit the natural resources and other features. We protect rookeries on islands by hiring seasonal wardens who patrol them during the nesting season. Our wardens try to maintain close contact with state and federal game wardens. Sometimes they get deputy game warden commission without pay. Our uniforms are simply khaki with a shoulder patch with our emblem and AUDUBON WILDLIFE WARDEN written on it. Only under very special circumstances do our wardens carry guns. The situation may be different in Belize. We vary the time of day and day of the week for patrols so potential poachers cannot anticipate them. . . Sincerely yours, John W. Anderson

To whom it may concern:

Mr. Lionel "Chocolate" Heredia is hereby appointed Honorary Warden of Bird Caye, Northern Lagoon.,
The public in general is requested to co-operate fully with him in the preservation of this bird sanctuary.
(Signed by James Waight, President of BAS, June 21st 1982)

The BAS lobbied for several years to get protection for other bird rookeries in Belize. Finally, in the Gazette of September 17th 1977 (No. 39), seven cayes, including Bird Caye, were reserved that were rookeries for wood storks, great, cattle, and reddish egrets, boat-billed and tri-coloured herons, white ibis, frigatebirds, anhingas and other birds.

Columbia Forest Wildlife Refuge

Dora Weyer had the idea of reserving part of the Columbia Forest in the Toledo District as a wildlife refuge. Even before the formation of the Belize Audubon Society, she arranged an agreement between the Government of Belize and the Florida Audubon Society along with Florida State University for the use of that area for research and education. The Government agreed to declare 6,000 acres as a wildlife refuge. This letter from Ronald Clark reiterates the Government's agreement and makes arrangement for the boundary demarcation.

I am please to inform you that Government has already agreed to declare this area as a wildlife sanctuary and nature reserve in which there will be no exploitation of the flora nor of the fauna. In view of the initiative and interest being shown in the project by members of the Florida Audubon Society, the Government has agreed to the following:

To redevelop the area surrounding the Columbia Forest Station and to provide basic facilities in an effort to attract tourists and other visitors to that part of the country.

To give preferential treatment to members of the Florida Audubon Society for use of the facility and

To provide equipment and demarcate the area for the formation of an access road in the area provided your society meets the running costs, labor, fuel and oil for the equipment. (date?)

Through the good offices of Dora Weyer, members and friends of the Society generously contributed toward the cost of the opening of these boundaries. By 1972 the work had been completed and the signs erected, but the wildlife refuge was never declared. A rice cultivation project in that area seemed to take precedence.

Guanacaste National Park

It was through the good offices of founding member Magnus Halcrow that the Society's request for reserving the 55-acre parcel of land at the junction of the Western Highway and Roaring Creek was granted. The Society applied to Government asking to purchase it, but Mr. Halcrow did some lobbying. BAS did not have to buy the land because in 1973 they were given a Conditional Free Grant on Guanacaste Park on condition that it be used only for a bird sanctuary or national park.

The area is located between the confluence of the Belize River and Roaring Creek, and the Western Highway, and was named Guanacaste Park for the very large, old guanacaste or tubroos tree (*Enterolobium cyclocarpum*) growing there and supporting a large variety of epiphytes. The area also has numerous species of trees and plants, all of which are preserved in their natural state.

Guanacaste Park was managed by volunteer labor and donated materials. In 1974, Goshen College students cleared the first paths and made fences. Ford Young organized and conducted several birding trips there. On one trip the participants erected warning signs. In 1978 Hurricane Greta did considerable damage in Guanacaste Park, so clean-up required a big effort by BAS volunteer work groups.

Field Trip to Guanacaste Park

Meg Craig

The long-planned working field trip to clear the trails at Guanacaste Park got off at last on Sunday, September 23rd, 1979, when seven adults and two students in one Land Rover, armed with machetes and files, left the Bliss Institute at 9:30 a.m., hoping the day would turn out fine.

Though no stops were made on the way to the park, a number of birds were observed. Belted Kingfishers, our only migrant of the five species recorded here (the other four – Ringed, Green, Amazon and Pygmy – are resident), had come in and total of eleven were counted perched on wires along the road. A number of Snowy Egrets were also seen and these were also probably migrants.

On reaching the park, three of the party proceeded in the vehicle along the Hummingbird Highway to pick up some madre-de-cacao posts to be used for fencing, while the others paired off and set to work, leaving one student to guard the lunches and other belongings. As planned, all the workers met under the big Guanacaste tree just about noon, having completed the clearing of trails up to that spot. About the same time the post-collecting party returned without the posts. There had been some misunderstanding. It was then decided that a lunch break would be most appropriate.

After lunch, the clearing of the trails west of the big tree was completed and then the workers clamoured for a swim as a reward for their labour. But Roaring Creek was in flood and the supply of fuel in the vehicle was low. Rather than face a mutiny, the field trip organizer decided to try to get some gas in Belmopan. He managed to do so, though not without some difficulty, and the party then drove on to the Blue Hole, where a refreshing swim was enjoyed.

It was disturbing to find the iron pipes for the handrail of the steps leading down to the Blue Hole, which had been broken off for some time, were gone, and a part of the steps had been eroded, no doubt due to the recent flooding. This has been reported to the Ministry of Trade and Industry and it is hoped that the damage will soon be repaired, to prevent the possibility of further disintegration.

In spite of the fact that the outing was mainly a working trip, during the course of the day, a total of 59 species was identified, a list of which is given below. A sighting of interest was a pair of Scarlet-rumped Tanagers, the dark, olive-brown female a marked contrast to the velvety black and bright red male. The distinctive call of the Ivory-billed Woodcreeper (described as a rapid whistled series running down the scale) was heard, but the mainly brown, tree-climbing bird was not seen.

The large, orange-yellow flower, with reddish brown veins, of a vine growing in the park attracted much attraction. Called locally "guaco" or "duck," and used medicinally, the vine is a species of Aristolachia. The Aristolachia (Birthwort family) is a genus of twining climbers, with woody stems and extraordinarily shaped. One species, often called Pelican flower, produces probably the largest flower of any American plant. Another species, Aristolachia trilobata, is called locally "contribo" and is used as a remedy for fevers.

After an unsuccessful search for "wood roses," the dried calicos of Ipomoea tuberosa prized for flower arrangements, the party decided it was high time to start on the homeward journey, after a very enjoyable day.

In April of 1989 BAS sought the assistance of the Youth Environment Action Group of San Jose Succotz to conduct tours of the GNP during the Agriculture and Trade Show, which was held on the nearby National Show Grounds. A small thatched hut was built using funds from the MacArthur Foundation to provide shelter and an office for the wardens.

[Who was the first warden hired? In November of 1989 four are listed, Martin Ack, Juan Chock and Heraldo Ack. Peace Corps volunteer Robert Habeck was assigned to the BAS and worked in Guanacaste and Blue Hole National Parks. when? MacArthur Foundation?]

Guanacaste Park became Guanacaste National Park on April 22, 1990, under the National Parks System Act. Soon afterward construction commenced on a new Visitor Center which was completed in July of 1990. An educational display was prepared by Peace Corps volunteers Bonnie Gestring and Rebecca Nealey. The Guanacaste Education Center was officially opened on March 18, 1994, and dedicated to Peace Corps Service in Belize in recognition of their assistance to BAS' Protected Areas Management and Environmental Education Programmes.

Villagers from nearby Roaring Creek participated in a Community Workshop in GNP in October of 1992. They formed the "Friends of Guanacaste" support group and provided valuable input into the management plan for the GNP.

An interpretive booklet for the nature trail at GNP was developed by Michael Somerville, BAS Environmental Education Coordinator, assisted by Steven Creamer, a volunteer working in the BAS office during the Spring of 1997.

Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary

Mrs. Dora Weyer had visited Crooked Tree Lagoon for many years because it was always a place that had a lot of birds. In March 1970 BAS made a river trip to Crooked Tree Lagoon along with a visiting tour of the Canadian Audubon Society. The causeway had not yet been built and all traffic was by boat. The tour participants drove 16 miles up the northern highway to Double Run, where the water treatment plant is located, and boarded a flat-bottomed tunnel boat that took them to Crooked Tree Lagoon. The next year a similar trip was planned with a group from Florida.

CROOKED TREE OR BUST

This could perhaps be titled "Crooked Tree or Bust!" When the Tropical Audubon Society of Miami, Florida, recently scheduled a bird watching trip to Belize, they were kind enough to invite the local Society to accompany them on a boat trip up the Belize River and Black Creek to Crooked Tree (Northern) Lagoon. Plans were made accordingly and a group of 29, 12 from Florida and 17 from the Belize Audubon Society, gathered at the Bellevue Hotel at 8 o'clock Saturday, February 20th. The trip by car to Double Run on the bank of the Belize River was made in good order and the party embarked in a semi-covered barge at about 9:30 and took off upstream.

The weather was perfect and the trip up the river on the slow-moving barge was very pleasant indeed. Among the birds seen of particular interest to the visitors were three of the five local kingfishers (Ringed, Belted and Green), the little Sungrebe and the Cedar Waxwing, which is very rarely seen in this country. Everything went according to schedule until Little Falls was reached. The level of the water had dropped considerably since it was checked about a week before and while the towboat was able to pull the barge through the lower run of Little Falls with some difficulty, it was immediately obvious that it

was not going to be possible to get through the second and more difficult run. Reluctantly, the decision was made to turn back downstream and the party disembarked at Double Run at about 1 pm after enjoying a pleasant lunch on board.

Since the group was still anxious to visit Crooked Tree Lagoon, it was decided to go by road. Recent reports from residents of Crooked Tree Village who had been going in and out by truck indicated that the road was "much improved." Apparently what they meant to say was that the road had dried out. After 16 miles of fighting sun-baked ruts made by freight trucks in the muddy Crooked Tree road, the four Land Rover drivers and their well-shook up passengers breathed a concerted sigh of relief on finally sighting the lagoon. (We'll omit the gory details of the return trip.) At the lagoon edge the telescopes were set up and the visitors were rewarded with good views of several birds rather unfamiliar to them such as the Everglade Kite, Least and Pied-billed Grebes, Limpkin, White-tailed Hawk and what appeared to be a couple of Yellow Rails, which had not previously been recorded from here. There were so far away that identification was difficult, but members of the group from Miami who knew the bird felt that it was the small Yellow Rail.

During the late afternoon, the group drove in to Salt Creek Estate where they saw a number of hummingbirds, including the Plain-capped Starthroat, which had not been previously reported from this country, and also the Rose-throated Becard, which was new to the visitors, as well as the lovely little Hooded Warbler.

All in all, it was felt that the day was a very successful, if somewhat arduous, one and a total of 84 species was identified during the trip. (BAS Bulletin of February 1971)

In 1971 Alexander Sprunt IV, Head of the U.S. National Audubon Society Field Office, along with Roland C. Clement and Mrs. Bradley Fisk, did an aerial survey of nesting sites for wading birds all the way from Florida along the coast of Mexico to Belize. Along with BAS Vice President Dora Weyer, they visited Crooked Tree Lagoon in which they were particularly interested because of its many water birds. At the request of the BAS and with the approval of Government, Dr. Sprunt came back in March of 1972 to assess Crooked Tree and make recommendations about its creation as a wading bird reserve. In July he submitted his report and proposal for the establishment of a Natural Area Reserve at Crooked Tree Lagoon. Copies were sent to the Premier, the Minister of Trade and Industry, who was responsible for national parks, and the Chief Forest Officer who was also the Chief Game Warden. A Goshen College student **named Fisk** worked at Crooked Tree for six weeks [**when? name?**].

Establishment of the Sanctuary

Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary, the first wildlife sanctuary declared by the Government of Belize, was gazetted on 8 December, 1984, (S.I. No. 95). The areas specified in the Schedule are:

- I. *The Crooked Tree Lagoon Area, which is described as: All that land in the Belize District comprising strips 300 feet wide measured inland from both shores or banks of Calabash Pond, Revenge Lagoon, the creek which connects Revenge Lagoon to Crooked Tree (Northern) Lagoon, Western Lagoon, Poor Hall Creek, Spanish Creek Lagoon, Southern Lagoon and Black Creek, and a strip 300 feet wide measured inland from the eastern shore of Crooked Tree(Northern) Lagoon, as well as all the submerged lands beneath each of the waterways listed above. Also included are approximately 600 acres of land between Western Lagoon and Crooked Tree (Northern) Lagoon, and approximately 2300 acres of land lying between Crooked Tree (Northern) Lagoon, and Black Creek on the south side of the junction of these two waterways.*
- II. *The Mexico and Jones Lagoons Area, described as: All that land in the Belize District comprising strips 300 feet wide measured inland from both the eastern and western shores of Mexico and Jones Lagoons and also the submerged lands beneath these waterways.*
- III. *All lands leased or granted, which lie within both the areas described, are excluded.*

The Sanctuary is a critical habitat for water birds and other migratory and resident wildlife dependent on water, especially during the breeding season and during the dry season. There is considerable historic value to the area and its logwood forests, and the Sanctuary will protect a gene pool for the logwood tree (*Haematoxylum campechianum*).

The 22,000-hectare wetland area encompasses eight lagoons and Black Creek, which drains into the Belize River. The sanctuary is a subtropical moist zone and includes open water area, lagoons and ponds with typical floating plants and high biodiversity, especially birds and aquatic communities. This was made possible by a grant from the Wild Wings Foundation, which continues to provide support for its maintenance.

Management of the Sanctuary

In February of 1985 the first tentative operational plan for the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary, drafted by David Lovell, was presented to the Minister of Natural Resources through his Permanent Secretary. From April to June of 1986, "Operation Raleigh," an organization of British young people, worked at Crooked Tree as volunteers. With funds provided by the Wild Wings Foundation they constructed a Visitor's Center and marked the boundaries of the reserve. The area around the Center was fenced, signs were erected, the center was furnished and educational displays constructed.

From 1986 through 1988 Peace Corps Volunteer Jennifer Ellsworth Sanchez was stationed at the Center. Steve Tillett was appointed as the first warden in 1987.

The Visitor Center was built on land leased from John Jex for ten years. His property is at the entrance to the village at the end of the causeway. When that lease ran out in 1996, the Visitor Center was moved to the other end of the causeway and the displays were improved.

Community Public Awareness Forum

On February 11, 1995, a Community Public Awareness Forum was held in Crooked Tree Village to forge a closer working relationship between the Sanctuary, the BAS and the people of Crooked Tree Village. Over 50 villagers attended the Forum.

Causeway

From the time the Ministry of Works constructed a causeway across the Crooked Tree Lagoon connecting the village with the Northern Highway in 1983, BAS expressed concern that the natural flow of water through the lagoon had been interrupted. A field trip to investigate the matter was taken in August of 1983. Some villagers were requesting that culverts be installed to allow free flow of the water in the lagoon. In late 1986 an especially severe storm with strong northerly winds caused three-foot high wave against the causeway, causing water to flow over at low spots and severe erosion damage to the road shoulders. Again the request for culverts was raised. Finally, in the fall of 1992 two 20-foot wide cuts in the causeway with bridges were constructed, allowing the natural flow of water to return to Crooked Tree Lagoon.

Water Testing Projects

Peace Corps Volunteer Tom Meekin conducted a water quality testing project for Crooked Tree Lagoon in 1985. Equipment was provided to the Sanctuary and personnel were trained in its use. FAVA conducted another water testing project in ? [I don't remember the details here, but I have a picture. Donald?]

Wetlands Research Project

Researchers from the University of California at Davis studied wetland communities in northern Belize. They analyzed plant, water and soil samples. They found that the dominant plant species are cattails (*Typha domingensis*), sawgrass (*Cladium jamaicense*), and rushes (*Eleocharis cellosa* and *E. interstincta*).

Boardwalk

On September 15, 1997, the Belize Audubon Society and the British High Commission inaugurated a new Interpretive Boardwalk for the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary (CTWS). Situated north of the village of Crooked Tree, the boardwalk, the first of its kind in the entire country of Belize, extends for some three quarters of a mile through the lush lowland sub-tropical forest of this area, alongside the beautiful Crooked Tree Lagoon.

The boardwalk is accessible by small boats during the rainy season, and by vehicular traffic during the dry. This facility is a valuable tool for the Belize Audubon Society's Environmental Education Programme, and for the CTWS wardens to patrol and monitor this area, thereby ensuring the integrity of its flora and fauna. The boardwalk was built through the kind volunteering efforts of Raleigh International, CTWS park personnel, and locals from the Crooked Tree Village. Funding was provided by the British High Commission.

Observation Tower

On Friday, March 13, 1998, the Belize Audubon Society and a volunteer group known as Trekforce Expeditions of the United Kingdom, officially opened a 25-foot Bird Observation Tower just a few miles south of the populated heart of the Crooked Tree Village. It offers anyone fond of the great outdoors, a spectacular view of the Crooked Tree wetland complex, home to myriads of migratory and resident water birds, and other fascinating wildlife. The Observation Tower also offers the observer a pleasant view of the enchanted Chau Hiix Mayan Site, and makes it an ideal area for education and recreation.

RAMSAR International Wetland

The RAMSAR convention is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for international cooperation in the wise utilization of wetland habitats. The Convention entered into force in 1975 and presently has 96 contracting parties that have so far designated 858 areas, totaling 55 million hectares, as "Wetlands of International Importance."

On February 26th, 1998, the Minister of Foreign Affairs signed the Instrument of Accession to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, the RAMSAR Convention. Government designated Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary as the first RAMSAR site in Belize.

Blue Hole National Park

The Blue Hole on the Hummingbird Highway was a favorite destination for field trips organized by Vice President Ford Young. In addition to the opportunity of taking a refreshing dip in the pool, there was good birding. The Blue Hole is a sinkhole in the limestone and has a small stream emerging from a siphon on one side and disappearing into a cave on the other side.

“On a recent field trip to the Blue Hole, members of our Society were pleasantly surprised to find that neat concrete steps with a good, solid handrail had been built from the highway down to the bottom of the sink hole. They were also very pleased to note that the surrounding vegetation had not been destroyed.

“Our Society would like to commend your Ministry for doing an excellent job of providing safe and easy access to this attractive spot.” (Letter to the Minister of Trade and Industry, March 21st, 1972)

“Just a note to assure you that your Bulletin and Field Trip Reports are read and the contents carefully noted by the officers concerned with National Parks and Conservation here at the Ministry.

“We were particularly flattered by the generous reference to the Ministry’s little effort at the St. Herman’s Blue Hole in the March Bulletin (Vol. 4, No. 1). More is to follow there and we hope this, also, will add to the enjoyment of visits to the area.” (Letter from Ronald Clark for the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry, April 27th, 1972)

Ten years later the steps needed attention.

“On a recent visit to the Blue Hole on the Hummingbird Highway, it was noted that, on account of erosion that has been going on, the concrete steps have fallen into the Blue Hole.

“Our Society would like to request that the steps be replaced and efforts be made to arrest the erosion. The Blue Hole is one of our best tourist attractions and is well patronized. The steps and railings added greatly to its accessibility.

“We trust our request will be favourably considered and something done about it.” (Letter to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry, November 12th, 1982)

The Blue Hole National Park has been managed by the Belize Audubon Society since 1986, and includes other attractions such as the sapphire-collared natural swimming spring, and the almost half-mile long St. Herman’s Cave. In 1988 funds from the MacArthur Foundation were used to construct a retaining wall to prevent erosion around the concrete stairway. A trail was cleared from the Blue Hole to the opening of St. Herman’s Cave. **[Wardens?]**

Guard Post at Blue Hole National Park

The guard post at Blue Hole National Park, constructed with funds from NARMAP, was handed over to the Forest Department on July 28, 1994. The Belize Audubon Society was asked by Forestry to man the post.

Adjacent Private Reserve

An agreement was signed on November 15, 1994 between the Christian Environmental Association (CEA) with national headquarters in San Jose, California and the Belize Audubon Society to permanently conserve land adjacent to the Blue Hole National Park.

Under this agreement, CEA purchased 4,000 acres from Caribbean Investment Ltd., which they conveyed to BAS. BAS conserves and manages the property under guidelines consistent with the management plan developed for BHNP.

New Visitor Center

The new Visitor Center was completed and opened on May 8, 1996.

RARE Trail at BHNP

On Thursday, November 27th, 1997, the Belize Audubon Society officially inaugurated the uniquely designed RARE Trail, which was named for the funding agency which made its construction possible. The trail extends for some two miles over rugged landscapes, and through lush tropical forests of this 575-acre protected paradise. The RARE Trail features several campsites, a spectacular observation platform, and an array of beautifully painted interpretive signs. Majestic mahogany trees tower above the path and enchanted wildlife capture attention as one traverses the midst of

unique geological limestone rock formations, spectacular cave complex, and ‘sites’ believed to have been once occupied by the Ancient Maya.

Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary

Establishment of the Sanctuary

In the early 1980’s concern for the jaguars of Belize was raised from two different places. James Hyde, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Natural Resources, had been approached by a citrus farmer who had encountered jaguars in his orchard. Mr. Hyde asked the BAS for a study of jaguars. At the same time, Archie Carr III, Assistant Director of the International Division of the New York Zoological Society, ran across references to jaguars in Belize in hunting magazines. He was in contact with Dora Weyer and asked if BAS would like a study of the jaguars of Belize.

Dr. Alan Rabinowitz was assigned to this task and supported by the New York Zoological Society (Wildlife Conservation International). He first did a country-wide study of jaguars and chose the Cockscomb Basin for his two-year study. At the end of his study in 1984, Dr. Rabinowitz, with the help of Dr. Carr and members of the BAS, persuaded the Government of Belize to establish the Cockscomb Basin Forest Reserve and declare it a “no hunting” area (S.I. Nos. 93 and 94 gazetted 24 November 1984).

The World Wildlife Fund wanted to support this project, but they were concerned that the Forest Reserve was not enough protection. When BAS learned that 1,456 hectares had been excluded from the timber concession in the Forest Reserve, they were supported by WWF, CATIE and the New York Zoological Society in their request that this area was designated as a wildlife sanctuary.

Hon. Dean Lindo signed the Statutory Instrument declaring the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary on February 26, 1986 (No. 32 of 1986). This gave that area complete protection and paved the way for funding from World Wildlife Fund-U.S.

Management of the Sanctuary

A five-year management plan for the Cockscomb Basin was requested by the Minister. To accomplish this the Cockscomb Basin Management Planning Workshop was held at the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary from March 24th to April 5th, 1986. The workshop was sponsored by World Wildlife Fund-U.S. and facilitated by Alan Moore, Wildlands Planner.

Objectives:

To initiate resource protection within the Cockscomb Basin Forest Reserve, the first area to be designated specifically for the protection of the jaguar.

To facilitate tourism based on the natural resources of the Cockscomb Basin, which will ultimately provide an economic basis for the areas of protection.

To demonstrate the compatibility of nature-based tourism and scientific research with controlled resource extraction.

To develop and carry out environmental education activities in the area.

To enlist the support of the local communities and involve them in the development and operation of the preserve.

To assist the Ministry of Natural Resources in any way possible in the development of wildlands management programs.

Implementation:

The Belize Audubon Society is prepared to undertake the financial administration and oversight of the project with the assistance of NYZS, WWF-US and CATIE. WWF-US has already contributed \$5,000 US for the making and erection of signs and gates, establishing trails, and hiring men to monitor traffic in and out of the reserve. . .

To aid in resource protection a minimum staff of one chief ranger and two assistant rangers will be recruited. . . .

Signs have been constructed and will be placed strategically to help promote awareness of and visitation to the reserve. An entrance station will be built in Maya Center, where information (brochures, etc.) can be distributed and artisans will be able to display and sell their work. The access road will be improved in cooperation with the concessionaire. A thatched visitor’s center will be constructed where exhibits can be displayed. Thatched and screened sleeping huts for up to thirty people will be built and also a kitchen/dining room/lecture hall. A potable water system will be installed. All facilities will be built by local laborers and will use locally available materials. Guides will be recruited and trained from the local populace.

The Cockscomb project will be used as a focal point of an environmental education program which will be presented to Mayan communities surrounding the reserve, Dangriga and nationwide. (From the “Short Term Management Proposal” for the CBWS)

Ignacio Pop and his son, Pedro, were hired as the first Wardens. Peace Corps Volunteer Dan Taylor, a specialist in wildlife management, was assigned to the CBWS 1986 - 1987. Ernesto Saqui was hired as Park Director in May of 1987 and the staff has continued to grow.

Expansion of Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary

The success of any protected area is integrally dependent upon the actions of the people and communities that live around and within it. It for this reason alone, the November 6th ceremony at Maya Center marking the expansion of the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary from 3,600 to 102,000 acres was a definite success.

Plans started going awry the day before when continuous rains closed the entrance road to all but four-wheel drive vehicles. Alternate plans were quickly made to hold the signing ceremony at the primary school in Maya Center Village. We were set to begin at 9 am and by 8:30 there was an impressive audience including the Minister of Natural Resources, the Hon. Florencio Marin, Senator Conrad Lewis from Hopkins Village, Representative Stanley Usher from Toldeo, Chairmen of all the neighbouring Village Councils, representatives from the two citrus factories, large and small nearby farmers, BTIA representatives and the entire population of Maya Center Village.

Bad weather in Belmopan finally cancelled the departure of a helicopter carrying the President of the World Wildlife Fund-U.S., Kathryn Fuller, BAS President, Janet Gibson, BAS Acting Executive Director, Dolores Godfrey and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Natural Resources, David Gibson, who was carrying the papers to be signed. . .

Legal documents were not signed that morning in Maya Center, but anyone who was there will tell you that there was no better way to mark this historic occasion than by having all sectors of the community sitting in a crowded one-room schoolhouse in support of such a momentous event.

By 4 pm Minister Marin had made the trip by road back to Belmopan and a small group gathered in his office to witness the historic event . . . Mr. Marin then signed into law Statutory Instrument No. 127 of 1990, Wildlife Sanctuary Declaration (Cockscomb Basin)(Amendment) Order, which was gazetted on November 17, 1990.

In her brief address to the gathering BAS President Janet Gibson congratulated Mr. Marin and the Government of Belize for having foresight and an enlightened attitude in the protection of Belize's natural patrimony. She concluded by accepting the challenge to manage the expanded CBWS to the best of our ability. (BAS Newsletter Vol. 22, No. 3)

It is not often that a country takes a step as important for conservation as Belize takes today under your leadership. Through the expansion of the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary to encompass 100,000 acres, protection of an extraordinary area rich in plants and animals and critical as a watershed will be multiplied thirty times over. . . You are setting an example for the entire world to emulate and you have my warmest and most enthusiastic congratulations. (Letter to Hon. Florencio Marin from Katherine S. Fuller, President, World Wildlife Fund, November 6, 1990)

CBWS Visitor Center

On March 29, 1993, the new Visitor Center in the CBWS was opened. The center was built by villagers of Maya Center and the excellent displays were the work of Peace Corps Volunteer Bonnie Gestring, who followed the plan designed by artist Deidre Hyde of WWF Costa Rica. BAS Executive Director Virginia Vasquez presented awards to the winners of the poster contest held at the Maya Center School. Music by the local marimba enlivened the ceremony.

New Tourism Facilities

Through a grant from NARMAP, the CBWS developed a new, environmentally-friendly tourism area. The new dormitory accommodates 24 persons with composting toilets, and solar-generated electricity and water systems. Another new building has a central kitchen and dining room. A private cabin was built by Raleigh International volunteers with support from the British High Commission. The new facilities were inaugurated on September , 1997.

Advisory Community for CBWS

As a result of a village meeting held at the end of October in Maya Center in the Stann Creek District, an 11-member advisory committee was formed. The meeting brought together about 50 villagers, as well as representatives from the BAS, and the Forest and Police Department. The meeting was called to address concerns presented by the villagers of Maya Center in regard to their relations with BAS and the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary.

The advisory committee was chosen as follows: eight leaders from Maya Center, two BAS representatives and a representative from the Forest Department. The eight Maya center members represent the Village Council, the Women's Group, the two religious denominations, the local school, and the tour guides. At their inaugural meeting on November 7th, members of the Advisory Committee elected Ernesto Saqui as Chairman, Margarito Bolon as Vice Chairman, and Osmany Salas as Secretary.

The following were accepted as the Purposes and Objectives of the Committee, called the Cockscomb-Maya Center Advisory Committee:

- To bring together the major stakeholders of the Sanctuary to work together, consult and advise for the betterment of the Sanctuary
- To meet every three months, or more frequently as the need arises, to discuss 1) Sanctuary-related plans, issues, developments and activities, as well as 2) Sanctuary-related problems, concerns, complaints and grievances, to seek to arrive at solutions together
- To advise the BAS in the employment of people from the buffer zone communities to work in the Sanctuary.

Ably led by Ernesto Saqui, the former manager of the Sanctuary, the Committee members met weekly during the month of November to address the most outstanding and pressing issues, namely: 1- staff issues, 2) entry fee tickets, 3) entrance fee exemption for Maya Center, and 4) Sanctuary management issues.

Research in the Cockscomb Basin

For many years, even before the Sanctuary was established, the Cockscomb Basin has held a great attraction for explorers and scientists. The first expedition was conducted by then Governor Roger T. Goldsworthy in 1888 and others followed in 1927 and 1928, all looking for the highest point in Belize, Victoria Peak. The first zoological study was done by the Carnegie Institute in 1935. Stephen Russell collected birds in the late 1950's; Alan Rabinowitz, Ben Nottingham, and Michael Konecny studied jaguars and other cats in the early 1980's; Daniel Taylor studied reptiles and bats; Jan Meerman and Tineke Boomsma studied butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies; and Philip Elliot netted and banded birds; to name a few.

The most ambitious project was the reintroduction of black howler monkeys spear-headed by Fred Koontz, Robert Horwich, and Ernesto Saqui. From 1992 through 1994 62 monkeys were translocated from the Community Baboon Sanctuary to the CBWS. Nearly all survived and the population is expanding at a rapid rate. Several troops took up residence near the Park Headquarters and are regularly seen and heard by visitors.

Two graduate projects, James Kamstra's ecological survey of the Cockscomb and Kate Emmons' environmental education work, along with chapters written by Robert Horwich formed the basis of a major book about the CBWS. Twenty other authors and artists contributed to this 1996 book, which was edited by Judy Lumb.

Community Baboon Sanctuary

The Community Baboon Sanctuary was established in 1985 to protect one of the few healthy Black Howler Monkey (*Alouatta pigra*) populations in Central America. The sanctuary is a completely voluntary grassroots conservation program. BAS worked closely with the CBS Management Committee, composed of landowners from the eight Belize District villages included in the project.

"The villagers of Bermudian Landing have taken an important step in protecting our natural heritage. They have pledged to support a Community Baboon Sanctuary by using their lands in accordance with a management plan which will benefit the Black Howler Monkey, known locally as "baboon", and all wildlife, as well as the river and its forests.

"They will not cut down trees, such as figs, roseapple, trumpet, bokut, hogplum, sapodilla, and bay cedar, which provide food for the baboons. They will leave strips of forest on either side of waterways, between property boundaries, and around plantations, in which the baboons can travel and feed. The programme will benefit landowners directly by reducing erosion and conserving the water table.

"The Black Howler Monkey is an endangered species with a very limited range, which includes Belize, southern Mexico and northern Guatemala." (Press Release March 15, 1987)

In January of 1987 funds were received from the World Wildlife Fund for the CBS administered by the BAS. Fallett Young was hired as the Sanctuary Manager. In December of 1987, an additional grant of \$50,000 was awarded by the Milwaukee Zoological Society to the CBS to make loans to persons in the Sanctuary desiring to develop small tourist accommodations on their property. The new museum was opened in the Visitor's Center on April 8, 1989. In 1990 the BAS ended its period of oversight of the Community Baboon Sanctuary and the CBS has operated independently ever since.

Society Hall Nature Reserve

"Statutory Instrument No. 108 of 1986, gazetted 6th December 1986, cited as the Nature Reserve Reservation (Society Hall) Order, 1986, declared the area specified in the schedule to be a Nature Reserve. This area was donated to Belize by the owner, Mrs. Svea Dietrich Ward. Mrs. Dietrich-Ward came to BAS Board Directors meeting on February 12, 1987. She told the meeting that the area was an old mahogany claim, a little less than 7,000 acres between Roaring

Creek and Barton Creek, five to ten miles south of the Western Highway and just north of the Mountain Pine Ridge. Mrs. Dietrich-Ward explained that when they bought the land in 1974, there was no National Parks System Act on the books. So they put the land down as a Nature Reserve which they gave to Government, except for 300 acres they had sold and 50 acres which they kept for themselves. Society Hall Nature Reserve was included among the protected areas the BAS manages. The lease was transferred into the name of the BAS in August of 1990. The name was changed to Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve (TMNR) on July 16, 1994.

Peace Corps volunteer Amy Smith focussed her work on the TMNR during 1994 - 1996. During that time support was obtained from the Nature Conservancy to allow a staff to be hired, a motorcycle was donated to the TMNR staff by International Conservation, and a guidebook was published by the BAS.

The biological survey of TMNR that was completed in December of 1994 recorded 129 species of migratory and resident birds, ten mammals, 160 species of plants, 21 species of damselflies and dragonflies, 96 species of butterflies and moths, three species of fish, one amphibian specie, and 12 species of reptiles.

Hike and Bike for the Rainforest, sponsored by Coca Cola, was a fund-raising program in October of 1994 that raised money for TMNR. A motorcycle was also donated to TMNR by International Conservation Relief, the organization behind "Hike and Bike."

The Friends of Tapir Mountain Programme was organized at a TMNR Community Workshop and Interpretative Field Trip on September 3, 1995, at Pook's Hill Lodge near the northeast corner of the Reserve. Village leaders, school teachers, students, and community health workers from seven nearby villages participated, 17 in all.

A Community Resource Center was built for Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve by Raleigh International with support from the Canada Fund Project in Belize. The Center was opened on May 5, 1997, in the presence of representatives of the buffer zone communities, Blackman Eddy, Roaring River, Ontario, Unitedville, Georgeville, Teakettle, San Antonio and Upper and Lower Barton Creek.

Bladen Branch Nature Reserve

Statutory Instrument No. 66, cited as "The Nature Reserve Reservation (Bladen Branch) Order 1990" was gazetted on June 9th, 1990. This 97,000-acre reserve is situated in the Toledo District along the Main Divide of the Maya Mountains, including the Central River, Bladen Branch and Richardson Creek.

A Rapid Ecological Assessment of the Bladen Branch Nature Reserve was carried out in March of 1993 by Pio Saqui, Eugenio Ah, and Donald Tillet from the other BAS-managed protected areas.

The BAS was the manager of the Bladen Branch Nature Reserve until 1995 when it was included in a continuous corridor of reserves from the Maya Mountains to the sea that are now managed by TIDE, the successor to the Belize Center for Environment Studies. Continuous corridors of protected areas are important for the maintenance of genetic diversity in the wildlife populations. The continuous corridor managed by TIDE was connected to the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary in the Stann Creek District when some 40,000 acres were added to the Sanctuary's southern boundary.

Shipstern Nature Reserve

Shipstern Wildlife Reserve and Butterfly Farm was established in 1987. The area of some 22,000 acres in the Corozal District, includes northern hardwood forest, saline lagoon systems and mangrove shoreline.

On July 1, 1994, the International Tropical Conservation Foundation (ICTF) of Neuchatel, Switzerland, and the Belize Audubon Society signed a one-year contract for the management of the privately-owned Shipstern Nature Reserve. Under the contract, BAS managed the reserve with the ICTF providing the funds. This arrangement continued until ???

Green Reef-Belize

Green Reef-Belize is a private, non-profit membership organization dedicated to the promotion of sustainable use and conservation of Belize's marine and coastal resources. Green Reef was founded in June, 1996, by a group of concerned citizens and residents of San Pedro, Ambergris Caye, who are very much aware of the environmental and social problems affecting the community. In April, 1998, BAS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Green Reef-Belize for the management of two bird sanctuaries located near Ambergris Caye. BAS facilitated the production of Green Reef's Strategic Plan, assisted with development of funding proposals, and co-sponsored the application of a volunteer from the Peace Corps.

Chapter 6

BAS Awards

James A. Waight Award

First Ceremony - 1987

“The Belize Audubon Society held a short Conservation Award ceremony at the Chateau Caribbean on Friday evening, April 10th, 1987. This was in conjunction with the closing of the Cockscomb Basin Management Planning Workshop, organized by World Wildlife Fund-U.S., which took place at the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary from March 24th to April 5th.

“Vice-president Janet Gibson introduced the president of the Belize Audubon Society, Dr. Victor Gonzalez, who gave the history of the award, named the James A. Waight Conservation Award in honour of the Society’s first president, and presented the first award to Mr. Waight.

“In expressing his thanks and appreciation of the honour, Mr. Waight paid tribute to Mrs. Dora Weyer, who founded the Belize Audubon Society, and to the founder members who are still actively participating in the work of the Society. Mr. Waight then presented the award to Squadron Leader Richard Charles Atkinson, who during his stay in Belize has provided invaluable assistance to the Belize Audubon Society in demarcating the boundaries of the Half Moon Caye Natural Monument and promoting the Reef Preservation Fund. In turn, Squadron Leader Atkinson presented an Royal Air Force wall shield to the Belize Audubon Society.

1988

Mr. Ford Young is one of the founding members of the BAS. He has contributed a lot of time and effort in advancing the conservation of the natural heritage of Belize. He served for many years as the Vice President of the Society. He was generally in charge of the monthly field trips that the Society supported. Mr. Young coordinated the Christmas Bird Counts and assisted with aerial surveys in keeping track of the jabiru nesting habits and sites in the country of Belize. These are but a few of the many activities that Mr. Young was involved in during his years on the Board of Directors of the BAS. The Society is grateful to Mr. Young for his past services and looks forward to a continuing fruitful relationship.

Over three years ago, nearly all the landowners in a eighteen square mile area near the Belize River agreed to voluntarily sign pledges that committed them to protect the habitat of the black howler monkey in that region. They agreed to protect the forest along the river banks, leaving food trees when clearing land and maintaining corridors of forested areas around their farms. Their commitment made possible the establishment of the Community Baboon Sanctuary in 1985. The project reflects the conservation ethic that exists within the people of rural Belize and is truly a grassroots conservation programme. The communities involved in this project include: Bermudian Landing, Big Falls, Double Head Cabbage, Flowers Bank, Isabella Bank, St. Paul’s and Willow’s Bank. The BAS takes great pride in presenting to these communities their conservation award. . . The BAS plays an active role in the management of the sanctuary and works in close cooperation with the Sanctuary Manager, Mr. Fallett Young. Dr. Robert Horwich was a key player in the establishment of the Sanctuary. (BAS Newsletter, April, 1988).

1989

Mrs. Dora Weyer was recognized for her services to the Society. She is a founding member of the BAS and served on its Board of Directors until 1987. She was an active member of the Board and was instrumental in bringing about the establishment of the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. Numerous other projects have been made possible through her untiring efforts.

1990

Dr. Victor Gonzalez was a member of the BAS Board from 1971 through 1973. In 1981 he was again elected, becoming President in 1986. He held that position until 1990 when he resigned to become Chief Environmental Officer in the Ministry of Tourism and the Environment. Dr. Gonzalez served on various committees and represented the Society at international meetings.

Alice M. (Meg) Craig served on the BAS Board as Vice President from 1970 to 1987 and was a member of the Cockscomb and Education Committees. She participated in all the Society’s field trips, acting as recorder, and also took part in the Christmas Bird Counts. Mrs. Crain is particularly interest in youth education.

1992

Janet Gibson, former BAS President, was honoured for her work as Chairperson of the Reef Preservation/Half Moon Caye Committee and Coordinator of the Coastal Zone Management Project.

Gregory Smith received the award for his work in marine turtle conservation. He has organized volunteer patrols of turtle nesting beaches on Ambergris Caye.

1994

Silver Anniversary Awards [add text]

Hon. Florencio Marin, former Minister of Natural Resources

Dean R. Lindo, former Minister of Natural Resources

Rudolph I. Castillo, former Secretary to the Cabinet

James V. Hyde, former Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources

Robert Leslie, former Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

1995

G. Winston Miller was a founding member of the BAS as Fisheries Administrator. He directed manatee and sea turtle protection projects. Mr. Miller assisted greatly with the development and management of the Half Moon Caye Natural Monument by providing transportation for the Society's various projects on Half Moon Caye.

1996

Mrs. Lou Nicolait was given the award in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the cause of conservation in Belize. She elected to the BAS Board 1984 and was an active member through 1987. She founded the Belize Center for Environmental Studies and worked closely with BAS. The *Belize Country Environmental Profile* was prepared by "Miss Lou" and her associates.

1998

The former manager of the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, Ernesto Saqui, was presented with Belize Audubon Society's most distinguished conservation award on February 16, 1998. The Award was presented to Mr. Saqui on Mr. James Waight's birthday, February 16, by his wife, Mrs. Lydia Waight, at the Belize Marine Terminal and Museum in Belize City, which was packed with invited guests.

The Award was granted to Mr. Saqui, an outstanding leader in his own right, particularly because of his invaluable contributions in changing the attitudes of the villagers of Maya Center who, in the beginning, saw conservation as a foreign idea. The award also recognized his outstanding and steadfast contributions to develop the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary into one of Belize's most popular and internationally renowned protected areas.

World Wildlife Fund Award

On February 6th, 1988, HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, present Mr. Ignacio Pop, Senior Warden at the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary with an award for his work at the Sanctuary. Mr. Pop was first a Forest Ranger and then became a Warden when the Sanctuary was declared.

Conservation of Primates Award

The American Society of Primatologists, an organization devoted to research and conservation of primates throughout the world, awarded their 1988 Conservation Award to Fallett Young, Sanctuary Manager of the Community Baboon Sanctuary, administered by the BAS. Mr. Young was selected from a worldwide field of candidates for his work in helping to conserve the black howler monkey, locally called "baboon."

Goldman Environmental Prize

The Goldman Environment Prize was established in 1990 by an international committee. It has the prestige of a Nobel Prize and is awarded to "men and women of vision and courage, who take great risks for the environment." It is a great honor and recognition to receive this award.

One of the six "grassroots heroes" from around the world who was honored in San Francisco on Earth Day 1990 was BAS Vice President, Janet Gibson.

Mrs. Gibson was chosen for her work in establishing the Hol Chan Marine Reserve, the first of its kind in Central America.

Belize National Award

On December 12, 1990 the Honourable Florencio Marin, Minister of Natural Resources, presented awards to founding members W. Ford Young, Dora Weyer, Alice M. Craig, James A. Waight and Lydia Waight. Mr. Marin commended BAS for "lobbying over the years for the conservation of Belize's natural heritage."

Knight of the Golden Ark

In November, 1996, His Royal Highness Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands honored BAS founding member and Secretary Mrs. Lydia Waight with the award of the "Knight of the Order of the Golden Ark."

Mrs. Waight was granted the award because of her years of seemingly tireless effort towards conservation. For 27 years she has been the driving force behind the Belize Audubon Society. "Mrs. Lydia," as she is affectionately known, more than deserved this honor. Her example of sincere volunteer service serves as a guiding example to the entire conservation community in Belize and throughout the world.

Wardens of the Year

Ignacio Pop and Steve Tillett were the recipients of BAS' first Warden of the Year Awards, presented to them at BAS' 29th Annual General Meeting on May 26th, 1998. The awards were given in recognition of their outstanding performance during their 14 years of service with the Society.

Ignacio Pop was one of the first wardens hired to work at the CBWS, even before the Society became officially involved in its management in 1986. He has worked continuously at this Sanctuary since that time.

Ever since he was hired in the formative years of the CTWS, Steve Tillett has performed with dedication. He has participated in numerous specialized wildlife conservation training sessions and is one of the most lively and knowledgeable staff naturalists.

Chapter 7

In Appreciation of Our Partners

We hope that all our members and friends are constantly aware of our deep appreciation for the support we have received through the present time. It is appropriate at the time of our 30th Anniversary to say "thank you" to all who have helped make the Society what it is today. The efforts of local members and organizations have made major contributions to BAS' success. We have been able to triple the impact of these efforts using the technical and financial assistance of our international partners. While it is our intention to give recognition to all those who have contributed, we apologize to anyone we have inadvertently omitted.

For 15 years the Belize Audubon Society was the only environmental organization in Belize. By the end of the 1980's, BAS had the pleasure of endorsing the formation of the Belize Center for Environmental Studies, the Belize Zoo and Tropical Education Center, and Programme for Belize, which form the basis of Belize's cohesive environmental community.

Belize Center for Environmental Studies

In the fall of 1984 the *Belize Environmental Country Profile* was released. It had been prepared by Robert Nicolait and Associates under a contract from the United States Agency for International Development. This contract formed the basis for the formation of the Belize Center for Environmental Studies (BCES) under the direction of Lou Nicolait. For the next twelve years the BCES worked closely with the BAS and other organizations in Belize on a variety of environmental studies. Most notable of these studies was their focus in the Toledo District on a large area of contiguous protected areas from the ridge of the Maya Mountains to the sea. When the BCES closed its doors in 1997, responsibility for this important work was taken over by a new non-governmental organization, the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE), headed by Wil Mejia.

Belize Zoo

The Belize Zoo, developed by Sharon Matola, has always been committed to conservation. Early BAS support of the Belize Zoo is well expressed in this letter.

"Every board member from the Belize Audubon Society has visited the Belize Zoo. We are all proud of our local zoo, and because of the quality care and maintenance that the animals receive, we officially wrote a letter of support for the zoo and are encouraging its development. Many of our country's school children have visited the Belize Zoo through organized school tours, and many of these children are responsible for bringing their parents to the zoo on weekends. Because of the Belize Zoo, conservation education in this country has accelerated in the past three years." (Letter to the Director of the Denver Zoological Gardens, October 11, 1985)

The Belize Zoo has developed into the Belize Zoo and Tropical Education Center which makes many contributions to conservation in Belize, especially in the training of Tour Guides. They have collaborated with the BAS on several projects, including the highly successful Toledo and Corozal Environmental Carnivals, which also involved Programme for Belize.

Programme for Belize

Programme for Belize was born out of a desire by a number of "Friends of Belize" from the United States to make an impact upon the development of Belize.

"Today there is an unusual opportunity in Belize to make real progress in planning and managing the country's abundant natural resources. Unlike in all other countries of Central America, it is possible in Belize to conserve and manage most of the country's forests and biological resources while moving ahead with orderly economic development.

"Outside interest in Belize, and therefore possibilities for funding development projects, are greater than ever --- and are eager to take advantage of these opportunities. There are persons available, both Belizeans and expatriates, to work on a number of activities leading to systematic conservation and development of Belize's natural resources.

"Several factors of history, geography and culture have resulted in this unusual historical opportunity in Belize today. This favorable mix includes:

1. *A relatively undisturbed natural resource base, including a large public and private forest estate; most of it has not been severely damaged and has been allowed to remain more or less intact through years of exploitation for logwood, mahogany, and pine;*

2. Soils, climate and rainfall patterns that are favorable for a variety of agriculture crops, including sugar cane, citrus and bananas;
3. A natural landscape, coast and barrier reef that are a great attraction for tourists and investors;
4. The usual develop pressure which, although beginning to grow rapidly, are not yet overwhelming;
5. A small (170,000), literate (over 93%), well-educated, conservation-minded populace that is concerned about Belize's future;
6. A government that recognizes the dangers of unplanned and unregulated development and that is taking steps to control and channel new development to benefit all Belizeans while maintaining Belize's valuable natural resource base;
7. English is widely spoken in addition to Spanish and Creole, allowing for easier communication and cultural exchange with Commonwealth countries and the United States;
8. Geographic proximity to the United States and other nations in the Caribbean --- a huge potential source of development investment and a large potential market for Belize's exports.

"This unusual mix of conditions creates equally unusual development opportunities to "do it right from the beginning." Belize's small size and population make it possible to plan and manage natural resources in a relatively more systematic or holistic manner --- something that is difficult or impossible in other countries, especially those in Central America. . ." (Letter from F. William Burley of the World Resource Institute to Inter-Agency Contact Group on Belize dated June 26th, 1987)

Programme for Belize was officially announced by the Massachusetts Audubon Society the next December.

"The MAS of the US has recently started a Programme for Belize. The Programme is intended to be an 'umbrella' effort to help raise much greater financial and technical assistance for a variety of conservation and development work in Belize.

"The Programme will launch a major fundraising campaign over the next five years to be able to identify and designate new parks and multi-use reserves; provide professional level training in forestry, fisheries, wildlife biology and conservation; conduct forest and wildlife inventories and research projects to assist planning and natural resources management in Belize; and to carry out public education and media development.

"The Director of Planning for the Programme, William Burley, is in the process of setting up an operation centre in Belize. He invites advice and collaboration from interested organizations here." (Press Release from Massachusetts Audubon Society, December, 1987)

Programme for Belize manages the 255,000-acre Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area and other environmental conservation projects. "Wings of the Americas" is a Nature Conservancy-supported bird conservation program for the protection resident and migratory birds in cooperation with the Edge of Appalachia Preserve in Ohio. Programme for Belize has cooperated with BAS on a number of environmental projects, especially during environmental crises such as the killing of scarlet macaws in Red Bank Village.

Belize Association of Conservation Non-government Organizations (BACONGO)

International Organizations

REDES

BAS hosted the first general assembly of the regional network of environmental and non-governmental organizations working together for the sustainable development of Central America (REDES-Centroamerica), held in Belize at the St. Catherine Academy from August 24-27, 1988. Each of the Central American countries was represented by ten delegates from their NGOs. Representatives of other international environmental organizations were also in attendance.

The Hon. Dean Lindo, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, delivered the key address. In his address, the Minister stated that our region has the ability to attain sustainable development through the prudent management of our natural resources. He noted that sustainable development is not a fixed state of harmony but a dynamic process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional changes are made which are consistent with future as well as present needs. The Minister acknowledged that non-governmental organizations have a role to play in the achievement of sustainable development.

During the closing ceremonies, an award was made to the Belize Audubon Society in recognition of its past efforts in the conservation of the natural patrimony of Belize.[Was this award from the GOB or REDES?] The closing address was made by Mr. Perdomo, Secretary of the Cabinet of the Government of Belize. In his remarks, Mr. Perdomo noted that sustainable development requires that societies meet human needs by increasing productivity and by ensuring an equitable distribution of the rewards of this productivity. He mentioned also that the concept of sustainable development required that alternative uses to the development of our resources be considered. (BAS Newsletter August, 1988)

Caribbean Conservation Association

In May of 1973 BAS became an Associate member of the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA) an umbrella organization of West Indian and Middle American conservation societies. CCA was formed in 1969 with headquarters in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Their purpose is

“to coordinate the needs of trust and conservation agencies, develop guidelines for resource management, find solutions to environmental problems, provide information on relevant material in the natural and social sciences development and research, assistance to developing countries in order to accelerate and develop sound conservation practices.(CCA Charter)”

Earth Summit

In preparation for the Earth Summit held in Brazil in June, 1992, BAS coordinated the Belize Summit on Environment and Development. Eight priorities were discussed in concurrent workshops: regional cooperation and institutional aspects; information, communication, education and training; research, creation and transfer of technology; planning and management of the environmental, general policies, economic and financial aspects; and control of pollution and legislation. Belize joined the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD) in their effort to arrive at a Central American position with respect to the mode of development that is most appropriate for the region.

BAS hosts IUCN Meeting

The second annual meeting of Regional Mesoamerican Committees of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) was held in Belize on October 20 to 23, 1994. As one of the two Belizean non-governmental organization members, BAS was responsible for planning the program of events.

Attending the meeting were national committee presidents of Mesoamerican region (Mexico to Panama), IUCN Regional Director Enrique Lahmann and Dr. A. Cerda, lecturer in natural resource economics, University of Concepcion, Chile. Among matters discussed was developing a closer relationship with the IUCN Commissions.

Granting Agencies

MacArthur Grant

In October of 1984, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation of Chicago approved a grant of \$20,000 U.S. yearly for three years to the Belize Audubon Society through the New York Zoological Society. For the second and third year of the grant period, BAS was to provide matching funds.

The grant was to be used for the management, development and, if necessary, the acquisition of parks and protected areas in Belize. The first project was the development of the Blue Hole Natural Monument. Some of the money was spent on Guanacaste Park and a small sum was allocated to the proposed Hol Chan Marine Reserve near Ambergris Caye.

Wild Wings Foundation

The Wild Wings has provided support for the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary since it was declared and continues to support the Sanctuary today. Since 1990 they have provided institutional support to the BAS for the management of protected areas.

World Wildlife Fund

The World Wildlife Fund of the United States (WWF-U.S.) first supported the environmental education efforts of the BAS and then took up the support of the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary. A World Wildlife Fund grant supported manatee and sea turtle research in the Gales Point area. The World Wildlife Fund personnel administered and supported the NARMAP program funded largely by USAID.

Wildlife Conservation International

Wildlife Conservation International (formerly the New York Zoological Society) provided the funds for the jaguar study that led to the establishment of the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary and for the reintroduction of black howler monkeys into that Sanctuary. They have also provided support for the Community Baboon Sanctuary.

Zoological Society of Milwaukee County

The Zoological Society of Milwaukee County provided initial support of the establishment of the Community Baboon Sanctuary, including funds to allow residents to develop bed and breakfast operations for overnight visitors.

Audubon Alliance

The Massachusetts Audubon Society organized the Audubon Alliance, which was composed of several other Audubon Societies in the United States, to provide the first institutional development support to the BAS beginning in 1985.

Earthquest Belize

Earthquest Belize supported the sea turtle patrols for the summer of 1990.

United Nations Development Programme

The Global Environmental Facilities Small Grants Project awarded a grant to the BAS in 1994 to conduct a series of training workshops for protected areas personnel and to establish educational centers in the BAS-managed protected areas.

Weeden Foundation

The Weeden Foundation has contributed \$200,000 to the BAS Endowment Fund.

British High Commission

In late 1994 the British High Commission donated \$5,000 to support the development of TMNR. In 1996 they provided the materials needed for Raleigh International to build a private cabin at the CBWS.

NARMAP

The Natural Resources Management Programme (NARMAP) of the US Agency for International Development and the World Wildlife Fund-US made a number of contributions to the BAS. In October, 1993, they sponsored a seminar entitled "Economics of Natural Resources."

"Belize as a country, although not facing major resource problems relative to its neighbouring countries, needs to nevertheless equip itself in as many ways as possible with methods for the efficient management of its natural resources. Three of its major industries depend entirely on its resource potential – fishing, tourism and agriculture."

Under its Institutional Building Component, NARMAP provided the BAS with three new computer units in March 1994. In November 1994 BAS received a grant from NARMAP to upgrade infrastructure and develop revenue-generating activities at Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary and Guanacaste and Blue Hole National Parks. The grant also facilitated bringing students groups to the area and conducting public awareness programmes. In 1996 NARMAP funds were granted to develop new facilities at CBWS including a kitchen and dining room, a bunkhouse accommodating 24 persons, composting toilets, and a solar electrical system for lights and showers.

The Nature Conservancy

Support for the initial development of Half Moon Caye Natural Monument was obtained from The Nature Conservancy, which has also provided funds for management of the Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve through the Maya Forest Small Grants Program, which was funded by USAID.

HIVOS Funds for BAS Advocacy Programme

The Humanitarian Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (HIVOS) provided a grant to fund the BAS Advocacy Programme for a year beginning in September, 1998. The goal of the program is to take action to ensure that policies set forth by the Government of Belize, especially with regard to land, air or water, are environmentally sound and take the best interest of the Belizean people into consideration.

Protected Areas Conservation Trust

A grant from the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) supported BAS' Public Education Campaign begun in June 1998. The programme involves media spots aimed at educating the public about protected areas in Belize, with the intent that more Belizeans will visit these natural areas and develop a stronger appreciation for their country's natural resources.

Volunteer Agencies

Raleigh International

Operation Raleigh, a British youth development charity, built a Visitor's Center in Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary in June of 1986. After an absence of ten years Operation Raleigh, renamed Raleigh International, returned to Belize in 1995. Raleigh venturers, including Belizeans, worked on a new trail through St. Herman's Cave, Blue National Park. At Cockscomb they constructed a trail to the Outlier and built new bridges. They also worked on Half Moon Caye, building a Visitor Center and repairing the observation deck in the rookery. Back again in 1996, Raleigh constructed a warden post at Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve. At Cockscomb they opened a trail to Victoria Peak and built a cabana.

Swim for the Reef

In 1985 and again in 1990 Captain Ted Martin, a British soldier swam from St. George's Caye to Belize City as a fund-raising event of the Reef Preservation Fund. In 1991 the Environmental Youth Club, assisted by the British Forces Belize, continued this tradition and swam the eleven and a half mile distance in 8 hours in relay fashion with the five older children taking 40 minute laps and the 2 younger children taking 10 minute laps.

Longacre Expeditions

Youths from Longacre Expeditions came to Belize in the summer of 1991. Joined by Belizean youths from Hattieville, organized by James Sanker, they built 18 picnic tables for protected areas of Belize.

Lighthawk

Lighthawk is a New Mexico-based conservation airwing. Since 1989 they have come to Belize in the Spring to fly over critical areas to give passengers a view of existing pressures from population, agriculture and development on protected terrestrial and marine areas. These passengers often include government ministers or their representatives and municipal leaders.

In 1994 settlement was observed very near to the southern boundary of CBWS. Land clearing was observed within the boundary of the Bladen Branch Nature Reserve and dispersed settlements were noted not too far from the eastern boundary of the BBNR. The experience of seeing first-hand the expanse of lush forest vegetation, interrupted by its meandering rivers, was awesome and indeed educational. Even more impressive was the viewing of Victoria Peak from an arm's length distance.

Women on Top

From August 18 – 21, 1992, the Women on Top Expedition, four representatives of conservation organizations in Belize, climbed to the top of Victoria Peak. Funds raised (\$4,000) were donated to the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary.

FAVA

Florida Association of Volunteer Agencies (FAVA) provided volunteer Woodard Miley, an Environmental Administrator at Florida's Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve in the Spring of 1994 to train CTW personnel in water quality testing and recording of recreational and commercial fish catch.

Hike and Bike for the Rainforest

International Conservation Relief, a US non-governmental organization, and Coca Cola sponsored fund-raising activities to support the Belize Zoo and Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve the last weekend of October, 1994.

Belize Youth Conservation Corps

From 1991 through 1995 Belize Youth Conservation Corps (BYCC) worked in on projects in several protected areas. In CBWS they built or repaired several bridges, improved trails, cut new trails, and dug a garbage pit. At GNP they built nesting boxes for birds, roosting boxes for bats, made hanging baskets for orchids, constructed a self-guided trail, cleaned in preparation for the opening of the Visitor Center, and repaired the steps leading down to the Belize River Recreation Center. At HMCNM they cleaned the beach and the cleared trails.

Environmental Youth Groups

Youth Environmental Action Group (YEAP) was formed in San Jose, Succotz. They assisted the BAS with tours of the Guanacaste National Park during the 1989 Agricultural Fair in Belmopan. BAS sponsored a workshop for YEAP in

August of 1989 on “The Role of NGO’s in Environmental Conservation Education.” YEAP takes field trips to various protected areas in Belize. April 9 – 17, 1996, found them climbing to the highest point in Belize, which is not Victoria Peak as originally thought, but Doyle’s Delight on the Main Divide of the Maya Mountains 35 miles southwest of Victoria Peak.

The Naturalist Club from Orange Walk.

The Belmopan Comprehensive School Conservation Club is called Students Encouraging Environmental Development (SEED) March 19, 1994, 21 club members conducted a cleaning campaign at Guanacaste National Park. They also painted signs for Half Moon Caye Natural Monument.

Corporate Sponsorship

A campaign to gain corporate sponsorship was begun in 1990 when the following letter was sent to Belize’s foremost corporations.

Dear Corporate Friends,

From its humble origin nearly twenty years ago, the Belize Audubon Society has grown into a giant among conservation organizations in Belize today. The founding members of the Society, some of whom are still active, have seen BAS evolve from a small membership club dedicated to the preservation of Belize’s rich natural heritage to an internationally-known force and role model for several Latin American non-governmental organizations concerned with environmental issues.

In 1984, BAS was deputized by the Government of Belize to work along with the Forestry Department to develop and operated protected areas designated under the National Parks System Act of 1981. Since that time BAS has capably served as interim managers of Belize’s ever-growing number of protected areas. We presently have 14 people engaged in the protection of six parks.

The Government has made it quite clear that they are not yet able to inject any operational funds into these parks. Fortunately, BAS has managed to successfully secure funds from overseas conservation organizations, among the World Wildlife Fund and the MacArthur, Wild Wings and Underhill Foundations. The monies received from these groups are invested directly into the parks for the benefit of all Belizeans and BAS derives no financial benefits from these arrangements.

In late 1984 BAS was able to secure funds for institutional development that allowed us to establish an office in Belize City with a nucleus staff of four paid personnel, two of whom are part-time. Regrettably, this source of funding has dried up and we will no longer be able to maintain our staff and office without continued financial assistance. Moreover, the Government of Belize is still not ready to take on the management of our national parks.

With a most noticeable increase in the number of nature-loving tourists, it is not in Belize’s best interest to have the park infrastructure, developed so far, destroyed. Without financial support we will also be unable to continue our environmental education programmes for all Belizeans, maintain the BAS library and provide the information on wild animals and plants that the increasing number of visitors, both local and foreign, to our office has been requesting. BAS is therefore appealing to you to contribute as a gold donor to a special fund we have established to cover our administrative costs. We estimate we need \$50,000 per annum. Your contribution will be tax deductible. (Letter to corporations from Victor Gonzalez, BAS President, 1990)

As a result of this appeal, ten sponsors were obtained:

Gold Donors

Belize Bank Ltd.
Sidney Turton

Silver Donor

Esso Standard Oil Ltd.

Bronze Donor

Ayuso & Sons Ltd.

Patrons

The Angelus Press Ltd.
Barclays Bank PLC

Hofius Ltd.
G.A. Roe & Sons (Insurance Services Ltd)
Augusto Quan & Company
G. & G. Young

For the past ten years the BAS has continued to recruit corporate sponsors and currently has several corporate sponsors who have been very generous in their support of conservation in Belize.

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The Friends to the Parks program was started in 1995, developed by VSO Volunteer Diane Houtzager. It allows members of BAS to directly support one or all of the BAS-managed parks.

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Mr. & Mrs. W. Ford Young

Thanks to our Board Members

On the occasion of our 30th anniversary, we would like to record our thanks to the following members who served on our Board of Directors. As volunteers, they helped tremendously in making BAS what it is today.

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Michael Jenkins
Dr. Mary Pearl
Dean Roches
Osmany Salas
Jean Shaw

A Gallery of BAS Leaders [a series of pictures]

Presidents

James A. Waight (1969-1986)
Dr. Victor Gonzalez (1986-1990)
Janet Gibson (1990-91)
Philip Balderamos (1991-1992)
Therese Rath (1992-1995)
Jose Garcia (1995-present)

Executive Directors

Walter (Mickey) Craig (1985-1989)
Dolores Godfrey (1990-1993)
Virginia Vasquez (1993-1995)
Theodore Castillo (1995-1997)
Osmany Salas (1997-present)

Chapter 8

Timeline of Events

February	1969	Belize Audubon Society
March		BAS Bulletin published
August		First BAS protected area management project on Half Moon Caye
January	1970	First BAS Christmas Bird Count (Belize City area)
February		First Annual General Meeting
March		Visit of Canadian Audubon Society, First Checklist of the Birds of Belize
May	1971	First research in Crooked Tree
June		First radio spot (Audubon Weekly)
February	1973	Guanacaste Park declared a Crown Reserve
April		Belize Audubon becomes an independent Society
July		Jabiru added to Wildlife Protection Ordinance
December	1975	Second BAS Christmas Bird Count area (Belmopan)
September	1977	Seven mangrove cayes made Crown Reserve Bird Sanctuaries
November	1981	Wildlife Protection Act enacted National Parks Systems Acts enacted
March	1982	Half Moon Caye Natural Monument (HMCNM) established
July	1983	David Craig attends International Whaling Commission
November	1984	Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary (CTWS) established Wild Wings/Underhill Foundation funds CTWS Cockscomb Basin made a Forest Reserve and "no hunting" area BAS authorized to manage GOB reserves Crane Game Ranch proposed
January	1985	BAS opens office funded by Massachusetts Audubon Society
February		Community Baboon Sanctuary (CBS) established
March		First Peace Corps Volunteer in BAS Office
April		World Wildlife Fund (US Mission) visits Cockscomb
June		Operation Raleigh in Crooked Tree Village
August		Ted Martin swims for the reef, opens Reef Preservation Fund
January	1986	MacArthur Foundation grant supports protected areas
February		Belize National Conservation Conference Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary (CBWS) established
April		BAS becomes member of IUCN
November		Society Hall Nature Reserve established
December		Blue Hole National Park (BHNP) established
May	1987	Hol Chan Marine Reserve (HCMR) established
October		Funding received from WWF-US for CBWS
December		Zoological Society of Milwaukee County funds CBS

February	1988	Prince Phillip visits CBWS
August		Lighthawk "Wings of Conservation" fly over reserves BAS hosts first General Assembly of Central American Conservation NGO's
April	1989	Opening of Community Baboon Sanctuary Museum
March	1990	BAS Office moves to 29 Regent Street
April		Guanacaste Park receives National Park status
June		Bladen Nature Reserve established
August		Osmany Salas joins BAS staff as Protected Areas Manager
November		Visit of Mrs. Kathryn Fuller, President WWF-US CBWS expanded to 102,000 acres Cayo Audubon chapter formed
April	1991	June Neal appointed first Environmental Educator appointed
July		BAS attends National Audubon Society's Biennial Convention, Estes Park, Colorado
November		BAS coordinates Belize Summit on Environment and Development
February	1992	Protected Areas Manager attends World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas
March		Tenth anniversary of the Half Moon Caye Natural Monument
May		Howler Monkey translocation from CBS to CBWS initiated
June		United Nations Conference on the Environment (Earth Summit) Virginia Vasquez appointed Executive Director
March	1993	WWF-US President, Chairman and Board members visit CBWS New Visitor Center opened at CBWS
April		Visit of Mrs. Adele Simmons, President, MacArthur Foundation Valdemar Andrade appointed Environmental Educator
May		BAS Office moves to 12 Fort Street
June		First National Symposium on the State of the Belize Environment
September		BAS accepts Regional Vice-Chair for Central America IUCN Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas
October		Seminar on Economics of Natural Resources
January	1994	Placencia Chapter formed
February		Opening of Silver Anniversary Celebrations Eco-Fest
March		Educational Center opened at Guanacaste National Park
May		25th Annual General Meeting
July		BAS new manager of Shipstern Nature Reserve Society Hall renamed Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve BAS mans guard post at BHNP
October		IUCN Regional Mesoamerican Committee meets in Belize
November		BAS signs agreement with Christian Environmental Association
January	1995	Toledo Environmental Conservation Carnival initiated Friend to the Parks program initiated
March		Entry fees instituted for BAS-managed protected areas
April		Raleigh International venturers work at BHNP, HMCNM, CBWS
July		Ted Castillo appointed Executive Director
August		Clara Cuellar appointed first Environmental Education Coordinator
September		Environmental Conservation Carnival to Corozal Protected Areas Conservation Trust established

October		Environmental Conservation Carnival to Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve
November		Government, Forest Department and BAS sign historic agreement
January	1996	A to Z of Belizean Wildlife 2nd edition launched
		Raleigh venturers at Tapir Mountain & CBWS
April		CTWS Visitor Center opened
May		BHNP Visitor Center opened
August		Michael Somerville appointed Environmental Education Coordinator
September		Turtle Week Exhibition
		Inauguration of new CBWS facilities
October		BAS represented at IUCN Congress in Canada
November		BAS Awareness Week
		BAS secretary Lydia Waight honored
		100 Birds of Belize and TMNR Manual launched
December		Belize Barrier Reef Declared World Heritage Site
January	1997	Coastal Treasures of Belize launched
		Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary book launched
May		TMNR Community Resource Center opened
August		Lamanai Room Declaration
		Trekforce builds new pier for HMCNM
September		CTWS Interpretive Boardwalk opened
October		Osmany Salas returns as Executive Director
November		BHNP RARE Trail opened
February	1998	CTWS designated RAMSAR wetland
March		CTWS Observation Tower opened
May		Valdemar Andrade returns as first Advocacy Coordinator
June		BAS Agenda for the 21 st Century launched
		Public Education Campaign launched