



Amazona

Belize Bird Rescue Newsletter

April-July 2011

1/2011

Welcome to the first Belize Bird Rescue Newsletter

It's been a busy few months although not as busy as we would have liked given that it is parrot nesting season. I hear many tales of so-and-so's 'new' parrot, knowing full well that the new parrot they got last year died a few months ago.



Highlights of the quarter were our Night Out for the Birds Fundraiser, the comings and going of volunteers, new birds, successful releases, completion of the bush flight aviary, establishing a new release site and the opening of the Hibiscus Hotel to support the conservation efforts here at the centre.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter and it helps bring you up to date with the goings-on at Belize Bird Rescue.

Nikki Buxton

Never Volunteer

March 24 and Belize Bird Rescue's first ever volunteer was born. Amanda Barber spent four very productive and hopefully happy months with the birds and animals and occasional human. In her stint at Bird Rescue, she handled nice parrots and mean parrots, aracari, hawks, owls, doves, robins, ducks, chickens, cockatoos, lorikeets, turtles and an armadillo. She also had



time for a side-trip to play with the monkeys, and she even went to the zoo with 34 hyperactive boys from our education programme. I think it was at this point that she wondered what on earth she was doing here. July 19 she headed north for a well deserved rest and to quite literally a chill-out, and will hopefully return once her relatives have remembered what she looks like.

Also giving me and the birds a helping hand are Kevin & Hayley. Poor them, they only came to Belize on holiday and we have dragged them into chopping vegetables, manhandling crazy parrots, scrubbing out poopy cages and murdering mice to feed to our carnivores. Here is Kevin the Brave evicting a snake from the premises (yes, that is a bite on his hand) Thank you guys!



Our Favourite Kind of Rescue

We were called to a store in Belmopan to collect 2 nestling flycatchers found in the car park after an overnight storm. It turned out that the nest was accessible, the parents were hovering nearby and all it took was for an athletic chap to put the little guys back where they belonged. Within seconds the parents were dive-bombing the good Samaritan and moments later were back into the feeding routine with their babies.

A great story and thanks to the workers at Special Effects Autoparts & Accessories on Constitution Drive, Belmopan.



Parrot Files



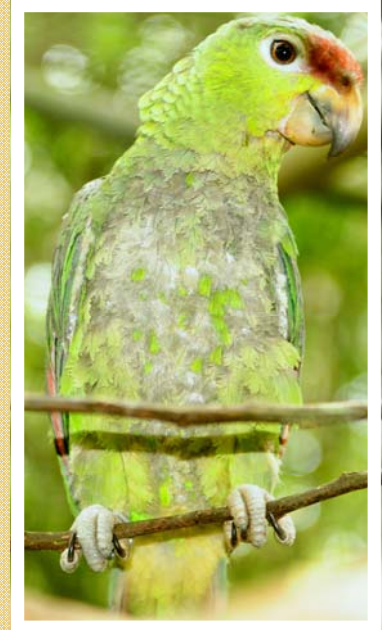
Escapee

Mid April, Somewhere in Belize City, a red lored made a bid for freedom. He escaped from a cage and ended up in the backyard of someone

wonderful, who caught him and called the Forestry Department. He was brought to Belmopan by a Ministry Of Finance vehicle. We met them at Westar Gas Station and collected this rather cheeky, overweight and noisy parrot called – Westar. What else?

Along the River Bank...

31 May Tuba joined the gang. He is a mystery bird – found along the river by some people tubing (hence Tuba) and unable to fly. He has the classic tattered-feather signs of having spent his life in a cage, but was miles from any humans. I guess he was just good at walking...?



Fluent Spanish Speakers

30 June we received two more yellow heads via the Forestry Department – the result of the closure of another animal facility. We now have 5 in the crazy gang, and all but two are mean and nasty! We named the new twosome Tate & Lyle before we realised they only spoke Spanish, the majority of which sounds like “Sombrero” and “Pyjamas” and something unrepeatable that would make a sailor blush.

So we now have ‘Sombrero Tate’ and Lyle Pyjamas’.



Peg Leg

19 June We drove out to Barton Creek to pick up PegLeg, a very badly broken Aztec parakeet who had found his way into someone’s garden. This little guy had a large chunk missing from the top of his head, a club foot and a broken leg. He was terrible at flying, but we now know that was due to starvation or long-term poor nutrition. How he got the other injuries is just guesswork. He has been caged for a while – it’s also possible he is one of this year’s nestlings. Whatever his story, he is unlikely to be releasable without the use of the foot as he would have a very hard time feeding himself, but time will tell.



Parrot Files

Harry

He is totally adorable – a yearling pionus (white-crowned) who has no idea he’s a parrot. No-one can bring themselves to put him in a cage with the real parrots and we have no idea what else we can do with him – so I guess he’ll just hang out in the big house, helping himself to pasta and rice and leaping on everyone’s head for a cuddle. One more fruit-loop with a craving for pasta won’t make that much difference.



Broken Wing

16 June we took delivery of a crippled red lored. At some point his wing had been broken and the bone is now fused and immobile. This poor bird will never fly again. He’s busy getting to know one-eyed Captain Jack and poor Tuba who is also a non-flyer but will hopefully one day recover that ability. Birds like Broken Wing will require a permanent super-home at Belize Bird Rescue which we hope to start building in August.

There be babies!

20 May Our first baby of the season and Amanda’s first encounter with one of the little darlings. Her words were: “if you had these all the time I would *never* leave”

She’s quite right, they are terribly cute, which is their biggest downfall. This little guy was given to us by someone who confiscated him from poachers: he was near death’s door and was given up readily by the thieves, although unfortunately they kept his brothers. The bird flourished, and in early June showed her true colours of a white-fronted female. Mid-June and lucky for her she was joined by two males of similar age. The three of them live together happily in a pre-flight and are shaping up to be great release candidates for 2012.



The Raptor Files



Mr Angry

9 April brought us a broken winged pygmy owl, and was he ever mad about it! After a month of fighting over who was boss at BBR and who was *not* going to keep his wing-wrap on, he was released on site, fully recovered, fit and well.



Doomed Forest Falcon

9 June Forestry Department brought us 5 baby pygmy owls and a barred forest falcon. The falcon had cataracts and was close to starvation. We did our best with the little guy, but he was always miserable, he always needed force-feeding and he was never going to make it in the wild... A sad end for a very beautiful bird.

Five Little Pygmies

The pygmy owls that came in with the forest falcon however, went from strong to stronger. Once released, we continued to feed them like the good mothers we are. I don't think the local hummingbird population were too pleased to see them, but we think they are extremely cute.



The Raptor Files

Out with the rat traps again

1 June After a nice break from the carnivores the Forestry Department delivered three barn owls.

These were about 5 minutes off fledged but the owner of the roof they were living in insisted that they be removed. They were relocated straight to our barn where they started their flight practice almost immediately. As of mid-July they still occasionally pop back for an easy lunch.



There are still those who fear of the 'Devil Bird'

23 June we received another barn owl from Belize City. He had been stoned by 5 children in their yard, and an elderly neighbour leaped in to rescue the poor bird. He had a nasty open fracture in the upper wing. We drove him way out near the Guatemalan border where Dr Isabelle Paquet-Durant, Belize's wildlife vet, along with a group of her students were out on a field trip. Working out of a make-shift 'bush' hospital, Dr Isabelle pinned and stitched the wing and we settled in for the long haul.

As of mid-July, the wrap and pin are off and he is eating subdued prey and undergoing physiotherapy. Fingers crossed for his complete recovery.



Not A Toy

4 June We collected a roadside hawk which had been confiscated from kids who were "only playing" with him. He was underweight and unable to fly. After a couple of weeks of food and rest he was ready for release: flying well and catching and killing his own dinner- even if it is just a slow-witted domestic mouse. On the big day, we got bored of waiting for him to notice the open door, so Amanda coaxed him out on a stick: it wasn't hard to see who was most worried about that situation (take a look at the Photo of the Month on page 9).



Rescues & Releases



That's not a bird

Introducing Arnold the Armadillo. He was less than a week old when his mother became lunch for a family near Cockscomb Basin and Arnie became a living toy for the local kids.

He is doing incredibly well living in the shower tub and eating worms, dog food and what passes for armadillo milk in our house (yoghurt, egg, and condensed milk). Special thanks to Ms Faye and the Ministry of Agriculture at Central Farms for the wonderful worms and thanks to Juan from Monkey Bay for confiscating Arnie and giving him a chance at a real life.

Oi, Big Nose

In addition to parrots and raptors, we received a fledgling aracari that was found by the side of the Hummingbird Highway by some tourists. It's possible the mother was nearby, but they were reluctant to take that chance. Sinatra (old Blue Eyes) is doing really well and currently living with his surrogate mother Elmo, our long-stay non-flighted aracari.



Releases

27 May we released 6 red loreds and 2 white-fronts. One of the red loreds and 3 white-fronts (one from a previous batch) are coming back regularly. We have seen the others a couple of times since, calling in for sunflower seeds like we're a drive-through McDonalds, but they don't hang around long. Perfect rehab birds.

New Pre-release & Finished Aviary

New Pre-Release

We are very excited about our new pre-release site. The owners of this fabulous, remote spot have built a wonderful pre-release cage and Bibi & Daphne are test-driving it right now.

A huge thank you for all your help so far and hopefully long into the future (you know who you are).



Re-wiring

At long last the new flight aviary in the bush is finally ready. The aviary had already been 'finished' once, but after a week or so, half the wire had rusted and 2 months later there were holes appearing everywhere. Unfortunately Belize is the home of 'caveat emptor' so obtaining a refund was unlikely.

But, thanks to the success of the fundraiser (page 8) we managed to replace the rusty new wire with some newer, shiny wire. Dr Isabelle brought her student vets along to perform health checks on all the release candidates and help catch and relocate them into their spacious new home. This group of 12 red loreds will hopefully be ready for release sometime toward the end of the year.



A Night Out for the Birds



On 13 May we had a wonderful fundraiser, courtesy of the British High Commission in Belmopan. Ticket sales, silent auction and bar sales netted a very respectable \$6000BZ for Belize Bird Rescue projects.

Special thanks to the British High Commissioner H.E Pat Ashworth for the venue, Deputy High Commissioner Mrs Jackie Brown and her husband Nigel Brown for the idea, the inspiration and invaluable assistance. And of course a huge thank you to all who turned out to support us, donated items for the auction and helped to make A Night Out for the Birds exactly that!



Photo of the Month



"Please, please, please don't hurt me"

Born to be wild in Belize

Don't play at rehab

If you find an injured or orphaned bird, PLEASE call us. Birds are incredibly delicate and require experienced handling.

- A bad diet as a nestling can affect a birds' long-term development: it may look fat, but so would you if you only ate French fries
- Inept feeding methods can lead to aspiration of food, which effectively drowns the bird
- Every bird has its own specialised diet: the wrong food for that species can be immediately poisonous or give long-term health problems
- Birds don't eat 'human' food
- A poorly set break can result in permanent handicap
- Excessive handling can lead to fixation, making release impossible
- Inexperience on release can lead to death through predation or starvation

Parrots are not just ours for the taking

- Owning an unlicensed parrot is illegal
- Pet parrots require unlimited amounts of care and attention, a balanced diet and huge amounts of space to live in
- With the right care, a captive parrot can live between 45-90 years depending on the species. 5 years is NOT an old parrot
- Numbers of wild birds in Belize are fast declining. Please do not support the illegal trade in wild-caught parrots
- For further information on how to licence your bird, how to surrender your bird for rehabilitation, how to report poachers, and how to care for your captive, licensed pet, visit: www.belizebirdrescue.com



Your support is greatly appreciated

Thank you!



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*Belize Bird Rescue is a private organisation founded, managed and funded by Nikki Buxton & Jerry Larder
All activities are monitored and sanctioned by the Wildlife Department of the Belize Forestry Department*