



Amazona

Belize Bird Rescue Newsletter

August 2011 to January 2012

1/2012

Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2012

I can't believe it's already 6 months since the last newsletter. My ambitious declaration to produce them quarterly has fallen at the first hurdle. Nonetheless, this issue will bring you up to speed with the happenings at our little rehab centre.



This last few months we have taken in 8 parrots, 7 raptors, 1 toucan, released 6 parrots and an owl, paraded for Parrot Independence, built an aviary, taken on a fabulous full-time Bird Person, met a wonderful group of parrot enthusiasts and celebrated a victory for Belize as our wildlife vet Dr Isabelle wins funds for her new clinic.

Who says nothing ever happens around here?

Nikki Buxton

A new recruit

Introducing Miss Celisha Guy (fanfare please)

October 6th 2010 Celisha joined the BBR team (yes, there's two of us now)

She's a Natural Resources Management graduate of the University of Belize and is overqualified and under-paid, but please don't tell her that.

Her ever-growing list of jobs makes me wonder how I coped without her—and then I realise she's doing things I never bothered to do which is embarrassing to admit, but then I never said I was perfect. At least not in this newsletter...



Land of the Free (but what about me)

Independence Parade 21 September 2010

This was our second year parading in Belmopan, and we decided to upgrade our advertising.

Kevin and Sam painted the plywood roof-banner and we churned out a bunch of pin-up poster parrots. With two extra parrot suits this year, we were certainly a popular entry, even though the judges didn't like us enough to give us a prize.



Parrot Files

Maya

19th August: Poor Maya was a death's door when she came to us. We had just collected our new volunteer Sarah from Chetumal, and drove straight into Belmopan to collect this tiny, starving and obviously very sick little white-front baby. Sarah and Hayley nursed Maya for weeks until she was strong enough to feed



herself. Her weight leaped from 128g to 196g and Maya is now also known as 'Maya The Hog Pig'. It was an amazing recovery due entirely to dedication from the girls. One lucky parrot.

Lori

8th October: Maya got herself a boyfriend! Lori came to us via a family in Belmopan who had been given this baby bird and then realised that their home was no place for a parrot. Lori settled in very quickly and after a couple of territorial scraps, he and Maya became friends and cage-mates.



Hermes

19 October: Hermes was a pet of 7 years but not surprisingly, this sexually mature male white-front was becoming aggressive and clearly wanted his freedom. Although he was fully flighted, he had never had the opportunity to fly and did an impressive brick impression on take-off. We put him together with Maya and Lori into one of the pre-flights to give him time to work on those flight muscles and allow Lori and Maya chance to grow some wing feathers before upgrading to the flight aviary..



Parrot Files

New home for the Yellow heads

21 August—1st September

In case you didn't hear the cheers, we finally managed to get the yellow-head aviary built. A wonderful group of guys and gals from the volunteer organisation Trekforce Expeditions put together a mighty fine aviary and although the yellowheads enjoyed the freedom at first, they rapidly returned to their snarling, biting, monstrous selves. Still, we had a week of contentment from them.

Even though the aviary is designed to hold up to 20 birds, we have only managed to put 5 in there: Norman the Animal, Sombrero the Slayer, Pyjamas the Annoying, Bella-Bella-Bella

and of course Patty the Adorable. Norman and Sombrero are the guardians of the cage and will not let anyone or anything within its walls: hence there are only 5 birds in there. We have two more in other enclosures eagerly awaiting their chance to fly in the new aviary. I'm still trying to work out how to deal with that one, but everything comes back to removing Norman and Sombrero, and to be quite honest, I'm a little bit scared. Procrastination prevails...

If you want to know more about these adorable creatures read the [BBR blog entry](#)



Topper

Topper is a tricky fellow. We have tried everything: isolation, integration, release... he has absolutely no idea he is a bird and he hates any other parrot with a passion and believes they all must die.

With this cheery thought in mind, and with the blessing of the Forest Department, we found a foster home for Topper. It could be permanent—we are waiting to see how he gets on with his new life of pampering and human attention: so far so good, it seems. Good luck Topper, and good luck to his foster family!



Parrot Files

Ernie (and Peg Leg update)



Remember Peg Leg from the last Newsletter? Well he got himself a friend. Ernie came to us on 8 September with a broken 'wrist'. He just dropped from the sky at the feet of a wonderful couple in Hillview (Cayo) who called us right away. Dr Isabelle attended to poor Ernie's injuries, wrapped his wing and prescribed cage rest and various other potions. We suspect he was the victim of a predator attack or possibly a sling-shot: apparently kids in the Hillview area enjoy their target practice...

After a month of rest he joined Peg Leg in the pre-flight aviary. They became quite good friends, which made us think they were both female, or yearlings, or both. On October 14 we made the decision to release them. Pegleg was unlikely to regain use of that fused leg, but had been getting around the aviary well enough to give him a chance at a wild life. As of January 2012 they had been seen in the BBR area many times: another success story and a triumph against disability for Peg Leg.



One-Eye the Red Lored



18 September: Another story of a triumph over disability comes from another one-eyed bird. An un-banded red lored Amazon was spotted at the feeders with a

horribly swollen eye. We managed to sneak up on his blind side and capture him for Dr Isabelle to check. It's possible he was a BBR release before the days of our banding policy, but he was certainly wild now. We were nearly deaf by the time we had finished ministering to this angry, noisy little bird. It seems he had run into a stick, or possibly sustained a claw injury in a fight with another bird: whatever the cause, we were unable to save the eye.

We re-released the bird, not least because we wanted our hearing to remain healthy, but because he was so miserable in a cage. He is alive and kicking and still comes to feeders occasional (although he will not let us get anywhere close to him!)

So if someone asks 'can one-eyed parrots survive in the wild?' the answer is a categorical yes.

Harry & Pepperito Update



These two are our resident house-birds. They own us: and without a licence, I'll bet.

Everyone loves Harry - Pepper is a bit more of an acquired taste, but they both sleep inside at night and fly free during the day.

Neither stray very far which is a blessing as not everyone in Belize is content to see a free-flying parrot: clipping and caging seems to be more satisfying to many.

I guess every crazy parrot person should have their own crazy parrot, and Harry and Pepper fill that slot nicely. Maybe one day they'll take off and join a wild flock, but we are not holding our breath.



Parrot Files

Nest Boxes

Thanks to Lynn and Zoltan, I took delivery of a prototype nesting box, which my wonderful right-hand-man set to work duplicating. The yellow-heads now have two of them, and a week after taking delivery they are busy making the holes the correct size. Either that or they are systematically dismantling them.

Lots of other BBR guests received shiny new wooden houses too. Most of them are just playing in and around them, but it's a great learning experience for the real world.



Jack

Hot on the heels of one-eye's success, we decided to give Jack a shot at freedom. He has moved into the flight aviary with the other release candidates and is flying and integrating really well. He's still a little chunky, but the flight training is certainly going to trim that waistline.



Releases

January 12 was earmarked to begin the release process for some lucky red loreds. We managed to catch 7 and took them to the release site half way down the Coastal Road. This did not go well: we had to recall all but two after outbreaks of fighting and bullying within the confines of the smaller pre-release enclosure. The two released: Bella and Westar, are still flying happily around the locality, popping in for breakfast at the feeders and attracting a lot of attention from the wild red loreds who are now wising up to the fact that sometimes, there is such a thing as a free lunch.

We have had reports that Bella and Westar are behaving an awful lot like a couple: throwing up for one another and cuddling together at nap time: it would be incredible if they did actually manage to breed...

For the next batch of releases, we are going to pick the candidates more carefully and test their compatibility in a small cage here at BBR before taking them out to the release site. Nothing worth doing is ever simple, is it?



The Raptor Files



Solitary Eagle

6 December: We had a real celebrity drop by. Introducing *Harpyhaliaetus solitarius* or Solitary Eagle. One of the rarest and little-known raptors in the world. Unfortunately this juvenile had been shot by a farmer who suspected him of eyeing up his chickens. This was quite unlikely but the damage was already done.

Trying to feed him and treat him was a challenge: he had a 6-foot wing span and stood over 2-feet tall: this was one formidable baby raptor and he caused quite a stir in the birding community.

Dr Isabelle struggled for 13 days but we didn't manage to save him. The autopsy revealed acute peritonitis: the stomach wall had been compromised, probably on impact with the ground, and sadly, he was pretty much doomed from the get-go.



The worst moment for me was when I learned that there was only one known Solitary nest in the 700,000km² species range - and this baby was not from it... meaning we had proven the existence of only the second known nest in the world. Amazingly, both of the nests are isright here in Belize: we just need to find the second one! He was shot in Alta Vista village, near the Dangriga end of the Hummingbird Highway, so if you're ever in that area and see two very large birds circling the sky, look very carefully: it may be mum and dad.

[Solitary Eagle at BBR. Documentary by Daniel Valasquez](#)



The Raptor Files

Mottled Owl Number 1



22 November:
A family living
in Belmopan
found this
beautiful owl
on the
roadside near
Caves Branch
on the

Hummingbird Highway. It appeared dazed and had a swelling on his head: very likely struck by a vehicle.

We thought we were going to lose this one - he refused to eat, was lethargic and unresponsive, and needed force-feeding for 7 days. We treated him for the head injury and gave him cage rest and plenty of peace and quiet. After a week of force-feeding, he suddenly decided he would eat by himself. On day 9 he killed for himself (albeit a rather stupid domestic mouse) and on December 2nd after a successful flight test and a supper of 3 mice, he was released by the same family exactly where they found him.

Not so successful...

As well as the Solitary Eagle, we've had quite a few raptors come through the doors that haven't been as fortunate as the mottled owls.

An osprey from Caye Caulker who flew into a coconut tree and irreparably shattered his own shoulder.

A barn owl had been stoned by kids in Belize City resulting in an open fracture to the wing. Dr Isabelle pinned the bone, and for a while he showed tremendous promise, but after 2 months of trying, he developed an infection which compromised the bone and had to be put down.

A 2nd-year juvenile grey hawk came to us from a family on the Hummingbird Highway: weak and emaciated but with no signs of injury. He killed and ate his own prey, but refused to fly. Despite our best efforts, he died after a month of treatments. The autopsy revealed a massively enlarged and diseased liver: mycobacterium. Even if we had access to the diagnostics necessary to find this, it's unlikely he could have been saved.

As discouraging as this all is, if we didn't keep trying we would never have the successes stories.

Mottled Owl Number 2

24 January: yet another mottled owl. The driver of a vehicle thought he had hit something but didn't realise until he reached home that it was an owl and the poor thing was still stuck in the grill of his car. He removed it and brought it straight to BBR: none of us held out much hope for this fellow. We provided water and food and left him alone to de-stress for a few hours. Later that night he was perching and looking rather displeased with his situation. By morning he had eaten the dead mice, the next evening he dispatched and consumed some live mice and after a quick flight test and it was obvious he was good to go: lightning recovery!



He was released right back where he first hitched a ride on the grill. It was a bit of a shaky start, but after a minor scuffle with the fence, he was off.



Rescues & Releases

Frequent Visitors



We still have a group of released birds visiting from time to time. There are four red loreds and three white-fronts. We can't get close enough to read the bands, but one is definitely Nigel and one is definitely the un-banded one-eyed red lored that we treated, so we obviously didn't upset him that much.

We think one red lored is Katy, a release from February 2010. But it's now becoming apparent that she is more likely to be a Keith than a Katy.

Two of the red loreds have formed a pair - this picture is their early morning cuddles. And two of the white-fronts are males that hang around together: they must be up to no good!

It's great to know that they all know where home is if they ever need our help.



Amy



24 July.

We got a call from a couple in Bullet Tree: they had found a baby toucan with a wing injury. The call came the day after the death of Amy Winehouse, so naturally this rather sad-looking, large-beaked critter became her namesake.

Amy had neurological damage on one side of her body: her leg was out of her control and it would flail wildly. She would dig her own claws into the underside of her wing causing alarming bleeding and injuries. Dr Isabelle strapped her feet together to prevent her from harming herself further, and wrapped the wing injury in a toucan-burrito. What followed was a long process of healing, physiotherapy, trial and error.

Amy is still with us today: she has full control of her limbs now, but the damage to the wing was permanent and she will never fly. She performs some pretty impressive hops though!



Heska's Gift to Belize

This little corner of the newsletter goes to Dr Isabelle Paquet-Durant and her incredible win of \$25,000US in the Heska Inspiration in Action competition. This money will get her well on the way to opening the Wildlife and Referral Clinic she has always dreamed of for Belize. For once, all animals in Belize will have access to the best of medical equipment and facilities.

Before this amazing prize became a reality, Isabelle would work wherever she could, as in this photograph of her examining a baby howler in the back of a pick-up truck. She's even performed surgery on a bird on a picnic bench in a jungle eco-resort.

The clinic will be in Central Farms in the Cayo district and Dr Isabelle is hoping to have it open sometime before Easter.

I'm sure Isabelle would want me to thank each and every person who voted for her in this competition: without you she would certainly not have won. I personally want to thank Dr Isabelle for everything she does for the wildlife and especially the birds of Belize: without her BBR would lose an awful lot of patients!



To find out more about the Belize Wildlife and Referral Clinic, or to become a member of the Belize Wildlife Conservation Network (BWCN), visit their website: www.wildlifebelize.com



World Parrot Trust Parrot Lovers Cruise


3 November 2011 we were fortunate to be visited by a wonderful group of 50 parrot enthusiasts. They were all passengers on the World Parrot Trust Parrot Lovers Cruise. We gave a lightening tour of the facilities, followed by an all too rapid lunch in the salubrious surroundings of our garage. I then subjected our poor guests to a presentation detailing how we accidentally but rapidly went from being 'normal people' to 'parrot people'. I could have talked for longer of course, but they had some lame excuse about having a boat to catch, and before I got chance to meet half of the cruisers, they had left for the port in Belize City.




What they left behind was an extremely generous donation which we have put to use producing leaflets which outline the laws of Belize relating to parrots and explain what Belize Bird Rescue actually do, and why. We have

also produced this information poster, a copy of which is destined for every school in Belize, plus some choice locations such as doctors, dentists, hospitals, post offices, bus stations etc. It will be out just in time for the 2012 breeding season and we hope that as a result at least one or two people think twice before buying or poaching a wild parrot. The remainder of the donation will go toward the refurbishment of our flight aviary for the non-releasable parrots.


Less than 20 years ago, parrots flew over Belize in huge numbers.... But today, few remain




Mealy (Blue Head) Parrot
Amazona delonix
Lifespan 70-80 years




Scarlet Macaw
(Lara macaw)
Lifespan 70-90 years



White Fronted Parrot
(Amazona albifrons)
Lifespan 40-50 years



Brown Hooded Parrot
(Pyrilia leucotis)
Lifespan 30-35 years




Belize Bird Rescue
Cayo District, Belize
822 1145 / 610 0400
belizebirdrescue@gmail.com
www.belizebirdrescue.com

What are poachers?
Poachers are thieves. Wildlife belongs to all Belizeans so when a poacher takes a bird from the wild, he is stealing from everyone. Anyone buying baby parrots is not only breaking the law, they are also buying "stolen goods" and encouraging the thief to go and steal more parrots.


Protect your natural heritage for future generations: don't encourage the trade in wild-caught parrots by buying baby birds

What do wild parrots do for Belize?
Parrots are nature's gardeners: they crack open hard seeds and spread them through the forests, propagating many trees. The Belize yellow headed parrot is in danger of extinction. This subspecies is only found in Belize and it is our duty as custodians of this amazing bird to preserve it in the wild. Parrots and other wildlife attract tourists to Belize, generating millions of dollars. If the wildlife disappears, then so will the tourists.


If we stop taking birds from the wild, our skies will once more be filled with parrots




Aztec Parakeet
(Aratinga mana)
Lifespan 15-30 years



Red Lored Parrot
(Amazona autumnalis)
Lifespan 70-80 years



White Capped Parrot
(Pionus senilis)
Lifespan 25 years



Yellow Lored Parrot
(Amazona xanilloides)
Lifespan 40-50 years

Report poachers to The Belize Forest Department
Forest Drive, Belmopan
802 1524
fbsecretary@minreci.gov.bz

Please don't put us in cages

It is illegal to keep parrots in cages, or to hunt, catch, buy or sell them, and yet thousands of Parrots are stolen from the wild by poachers every single year

What if we don't stop the poaching?
Parrots mate for life, but if they constantly have their babies taken, eventually they stop trying to reproduce. Often poachers chop the nest hole or cut down the tree, leaving the parrots with nowhere to lay their eggs. A caged parrot is unable to breed. **If there are no new parrots being born, there will soon be no parrots left in Belize**

What about parrots in cages now?
Caged parrots rarely live past 5 years. Parrots require a precise and varied diet with plenty of exercise, otherwise they become sick and miserable with poorly conditioned feathers and muscles. Parrots are highly intelligent, social birds. They need constant companionship and stimulation. A chatty, funny parrot in a cage is actually a lonely bird going slowly crazy. Most people do not have the knowledge or the time to care for a captive parrot. **Parrots do not need people to look after them: they just need to be left alone in the wild**

If you have a captive parrot consider surrendering him to the Forest Department for rehabilitation and eventual return to the wild. Please do not just let him go - he will not survive

World Parrot Trust 2011 Cruisers, thank you. You should be proud of yourselves! [Download this poster](#)

Photo of the Month



“Excuse me - I’m taking a shower!”

Born to be wild in Belize

It’s Parrot Breeding Season

If you have an injured or orphaned parrot, PLEASE call us. All birds are incredibly delicate and require experienced handling.

- Baby parrots require a specialised diet and feeding regime.
- Giving the wrong foods or an imbalance of foods can cause death or physiological problems in later life
- Incorrect housing or caging can lead to physical disabilities or psychological trauma
- Inept feeding methods cause aspiration of food, which will kill the bird
- Broken limbs require immediate and expert attention
- Excessive handling of a wild parrot can make release impossible
- Incorrect release procedures can lead to death for the bird through predation or starvation
- Please don’t play with a bird’s life. Parrots are not toys. Call 610 0400 and we will come and get him.

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!



belizebirdrescue.blogspot.com



Belize Wildlife Conservation Network
www.wildlifebelize.com



www.facebook.com/groups/26192304377



*We are proud to be a
World Parrot Trust
Project Partner*

www.parrots.org/index.php/blog_buxton/

Belize Bird Rescue is supported in part by
Hibiscus Hotel, Town Centre, Belmopan.
(between Belize Bank and First Caribbean Bank)

www.hibiscusbelize.com

info@hibiscusbelize.com

Telephone (+501) 822 0400 or 610 0400



Belize Bird Rescue. PO Box 219 Belmopan, Belize, Central America

Telephone (+501) 822 1145 / 610 0400

email: info@belizebirdrescue.com or belizebirdrescue@gmail.com Website: www.belizebirdrescue.com

*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*