

What follows is an non-legal abbreviation, simplification and clarification of the

BELIZE WILDLIFE PROTECTION ACT

CHAPTER 220

REVISED EDITION 2000

SHOWING THE LAW AS AT 31ST DECEMBER, 2000

“dealer” means any person who imports, exports, processes, buys or sells any wildlife of any species or its parts or products (this includes a hunter selling his catch to individuals or businesses, or to restaurants selling bush meat to the public);

“to hunt” means to kill, take or molest by any method - or to **attempt** to kill, take or molest by any method - any species of wildlife (protected or not protected); this applies to everyone engaged in these activities, including children with slingshots.

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

“game warden” and **“ranger”** are terms used in the Act which currently imply the Wildlife Officers of the Belize Forest Department

PART II

CONTROL OF HUNTING

- a) It is **ALWAYS illegal** to kill, remove from the wild, capture, cage, buy, sell or keep by leashing or disabling the following animals: (this list is part of the Wildlife Act Annexe referred to as The Schedule)

Baird's Tapir	Giant Anteater
Morelet's Crocodile	Pygmy Silky Anteater
Spider Monkey	Prehensile-tailed porcupine
Howler Monkey	Salt-water crocodile
Central American Cacomistle	Whales, all species
Kinkajou	Dolphins, all species
Grison	All sea turtles
Striped Hog-nosed Skunk	Caribbean Monk Seal
Central American Otter	Manatee
Jaguar	
Mountain Lion, (Puma, or Cougar)	<u>All birds</u>
Ocelot	With the exception of the following:
Margay	Chachalaca (Cocrico)
Jaguarundi	Crested Guan (<i>protection order pending</i>)
Wolly Opossum	Great Curassow (<i>protection order pending</i>)
Giant Molossus Bat	Black-throated Bobwhite
Black Howler Monkey	Blue-winged Teal
Black Spider Monkey	Lesser Scaup

The following have closed seasons during which time they may not be hunted

Deer: 1st July to 30th September (males) 1st July to 1st February of the next year (female)

Gibnut: 1st December to 1st May of the following year

Armadillo: 1st February to 1st June

Peccary: 1st June to 30th November

Iguanas & Hickatee: 1st February to 30th June

Game birds (guan & curassow): 1st of February to 15th July

A hunting licence is species-specific, it specifies and limits the hunting area, and states the type and number of animals or birds permitted to be taken under each licence

- b) **With a valid hunters licence**, you may hunt any species, **during open season**, detailed in The Schedule (listed here in Part II) including agouti, hickatee, gibnut, deer, iguana, chachalaca (Cocrico), Crested Guan, Great Curassow, Black-throated Bobwhite, Blue-winged Teal, Lesser Scalup.
- c) It is **always illegal** to take eggs or babies, or hunt an adult animal that is pregnant or accompanied by its young
- d) **It is illegal to use** a trap, poison, spring, gun, gin, pitfall, light or electric device or missile containing an explosive, or set a fire to catch an animal, unless the Minister gives special permission (e.g. for nuisance species population control)

Protected areas

4.-(1) Regardless of licence you can NEVER:

- a) hunt in a protected area.
- b) have wildlife (whole or in part) in your possession in a protected area
- c) carry any gun, spear, trap or other means for hunting wildlife in a protected area

4- (2) you can only hunt in a forest reserve with a special licence (this is different from a regular hunters licence)

Protect life & property

5.-(1) You may defend yourself from attack by a species of wildlife

5- (2) If you own land, you can kill or capture wildlife on your property but only if it is causing unsustainable damage to crops or domestic animals.

5- (3) If you do kill anything in this manner, you must report it to the Forest Department and give them the corpse.

Dealing & transporting

6. If you are selling or buying **legally hunted** bush meat, you must have a valid dealers licence, and the animal must have been **hunted within 15 miles of where it is to be consumed**.

7. Anyone dealing in wildlife must have a dealers licence. This includes restaurants or shops selling game meat or a hunter selling his catch.

8 - (a) This Act covers an 11 year period during which time it is illegal to buy, hire or deal for profit in any species of wildlife, apart from the sale of game meat which was hunted under a valid licence not more than 15 miles from the licensed dealer's premises.

8 - (b) 6 months before the end of the 11 year period, the Minister will either review and resubmit the Act or ask the House for an extension on the moratorium.

9 You may not take wildlife out of Belize. You may not bring wildlife into Belize, unless you have a valid permit.

PART III

ADMINISTRATION

10 Game wardens may be appointed, as and when the Minister sees necessary

11. Without updating the Act, **the Minister may**

- a) declare any area in Belize to be a closed area for hunting;
- b) prohibit the hunting and possession of a previously unprotected species;
- c) prohibit or limit an inappropriate hunting method;
- d) prohibit the hunting of specimens under a certain size or age
- e) change the terms, conditions and fees of any licence;
- f) ask for financial compensation for killed or captured wildlife;
- g) limit the number of any species of wildlife that a person may hunt or possess;
- h) make changes to the list of animals you are not permitted to hunt; (this list is called The Schedule)
- i) give permission for unprotected animals to be captured, killed or driven away if they are deemed a threat to health or agriculture, provided this doesn't endanger any species or the ecological balance;
- j) change the parameters for licence issue;
- k) changes the fees and penalties of a particular offence.

12. Any changes or updates to the Act need to go through the House of Representatives for approval

13. The authorised Forest Department Officer can issue resident or non-resident hunting licences and dealer's licences as long as doing so will not cause threat to the survival of the species or to the environment.

14. The Minister may issue a permit (with fee) to hunt or collect particular specimens of any wildlife species for scientific or educational purposes. Hunting or collecting can be authorised for Closed or Protected areas in exceptional cases.

15. With Minister approval, the authorised Forest Department Officer may issue permits (with fee) to import or export specimens of wildlife or parts thereof.

PART IV

GENERAL

16.-(1) The penalties for breaking the laws are as follows:

- First offence - up to \$500Bz
- Second or subsequent offences within a 5 year period: \$1000Bz fine and/or 6 months imprisonment.

16- (2) Upon conviction, any licences or permits may be cancelled. The wildlife, parts or products may be confiscated, and the weapon, traps, cages and even the vehicle used while committing the offence may also be seized.

17. If you possess wildlife illegally, you will be presumed to have committed the offence yourself unless you can prove otherwise.

18.-(1) Any game warden has the power to:

- a) **search a person** or their bags, premises or vehicle if they are suspicious of them committing an offence
- b) **seize wildlife**, parts or products if he thinks an offence has been committed;
- c) **seize any weapon**, ammunition, trap, poison, device, vehicle or anything else he thinks has been used whilst committing a wildlife offence;
- d) **arrest any person** he thinks may have committed a wildlife offence if:
 - the person refuses to give his name and address;
 - gives a name and address may be false;
 - gives reason to believe he will leave the country.

18- (2) Any **live animal** seized at this time may be released, destroyed or retained.

18- (3) **Anything perishable** seized may be sold or otherwise disposed of and any proceeds held until a court decides the outcome.

18- (4) Anything seized and any person arrested will be brought before the nearest magistrate as quickly as possible.

19. A Game Warden is permitted to take statements from a suspect that can be used in court.

20. Fines are due on conviction.

21. Up to 50% of the fine may go to an informant as a reward for the conviction of an offender.

22.-(1) Should the accused admit the offence, he may pay \$300 compensation to the Minister or Ministry and be released without further proceedings.

22- (2) All moneys received under this section shall be paid into the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

23. Any seized wildlife can be disposed of in any way appropriate. Any money made from disposal goes into the Consolidated Revenue Fund

Disclaimers

24. Prosecution under the terms of the Wildlife Act will not prevent any person from being prosecuted under any other Act, or exempt them from paying fines or fees for an offence under any other Act, although they can't be punished twice for the same offence under two different Acts

25. The Act shall in no way obstruct the Government or any person from suing for compensation for damages or injury caused by a wildlife offence.

26. No licence or clause in this Act may be used to exempt anyone from complying with regulations and licence under any other Act e.g. Belize Agricultural Health Authority Act.