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## Community Outreach in Peten Rolls



Melchor de Mencos is the closest Guatemalan municipality to the Cayo District, as a result FCD has focused much attention since 2010 in bridging

partnerships with that municipality. With the support of the ex-alcalde Ricardo Avila, a program of community outreach was activated and the bi-national watershed alliance was propelled to new horizons. This year, however, understanding the petition of the Guatemalan consulate for an improved awareness of the importance of the Chiquibul ecosystem among communities located on the Adjacency Zone in Guatemala, FCD answered the call by hiring an environmental educator.

Mr. Vicente de Jesús Ché Melgar was contracted, with the financial assistance of the British Embassy in Belize, to reach out to ten communities located nearest to the Adjacency Zone in Guatemala. During this period, the educator has visited the ten communities and has directly worked with children and teachers educating them about the importance of the forests and water.

## Documenting Incursions with OAS

Whenever people think of Chiquibul, incursions come to mind and this is true largely due to the many villages dotted across the Chiquibul landscape in Guatemala who live in a dire poverty situation. Belize's Chiquibul have all the resources they need ranging from logs and xate to gold and land, thus there is always an ongoing attempt by Guatemalans to grab these resources illegally.

FCD's job has been primarily to monitor, document and reduce the environmental degradation taking place in the park including the 43.5 km stretch of the Adjacency Line that runs all along the western flank of the park. It is an area commonly monitored also by the Organization of American States.

During the month of March, FCD's Executive Director was invited to join on a helicopter flight with the purpose of showing the forest and land degradation taking place in the Chiquibul Forest. The delegation was comprised of the Secretary General of the OAS, Mr. Luis Almagro, Director of the Special Mission of the OAS Belize-



Guatemala, Mrs. Magdalena Talamas, Interim Director of the OAS Office on the AZ, Mr. Juan Carlos Sagastume and Ambassador of Belize to Washington, Mr. Patrick Andrews. The helicopter flew as far as Caracol and then travelled all along the Vaca plateau region.

## ITAP Director Visits

### Goal:

FCD aims to conserve the natural and cultural resources of the western Chiquibul-Maya Mountains for the sustainable development of Belize.



The US Department of the Interior (USDOI) has been prominent in financially supporting the conservation of scarlet macaws for the last four years in Belize. So, when Mrs. Cynthia Perera, Director of the International Technical Assistance Program (ITAP) of the USDOI informed us of her trip to Belize we were delighted and

had to ensure she would visit the breeding habitat for macaws.

ITAP has been working closely with the Wildlife Conservation Society office in Peten, Guatemala and Asociacion Balam, therefore, the trip to Belize was also comprised of Roan Balas of WCS and Byron Castellanos of Asociacion Balam. The visit held on the 9th of March took the guests to several areas of Chiquibul including Caracol, Las Cuevas Research Station and the Chalillo Lake.

The visit was a memorable experience since our guests were able to observe scarlet macaws, tapir and game birds in the Chiquibul at close range. The spectacular landscape of the Chiquibul also illustrated the true value of the wilderness. Meeting the staff was an additional experience for the guests who encouraged FCD personnel to keep on protecting the integrity of this forest.

## Chiquibul Marathon a Success

The brainchild of the first Chiquibul Challenge Marathon was Dr. Isabelle Durand of the Belize Wildlife and Referral Clinic. At first, FCD was uncertain if the marathon would be a good idea and if FCD would be prepared to handle the number of participants. Entries were slow to come by but as the days got nearer the number of interested participants swelled to over 120 persons.

On the 11th of March the racers started to arrive at Las Cuevas while others stayed at Guacamallo Bridge and at Tapir Camp. Never before had FCD catered and welcomed such a large group of people, mostly Belizeans from various districts. The squawking of the macaws, reminded visitors of the wilderness they were in and the respect for nature that would be required from them.

The event was a huge success, springing interest from participants to return back to Chiquibul with their families for leisure. Thus the event was not only educational but inspiring to the athletes. For FCD this was an opportunity



to raise awareness but also funds. On the 17th of March, Dr. Isabelle presented a cheque of over Bz\$3,200.00 from the proceeds of the marathon to be used for the continuation of scarlet macaw conservation in the Chiquibul. FCD is extremely grateful to Dr. Isabelle and her team for making the event a success. To all athletes we are appreciative of their contributions. The 2nd Chiquibul Marathon Challenge is set for the 17th and 18th of February, 2018!!!

## Resident Family at Las Cuevas



Before FCD took over management and administration of Las Cuevas Research Station, this station was operated by the late friend Nicodemus *Chapal* Bol and his family. It took us some time to get a family back to stay at the station on a full time basis, but this has now been achieved. Rafael Mesh and his wife Angelica Morales who

originally have lived in Orange Walk have cheerfully taken the role of Station Manager and Cook at the station. With a resident family at the station, visitors can now have fresh, warm food and neatly arranged accommodations throughout the year.

Marathoners and other visitors who have been at the station over the last two months have been treated to a diversity of food delicacies in the heart of the Chiquibul. This service is a large improvement and we encourage Belizeans and non-Belizeans to visit the station. A simple call to the FCD office 823-2657 or email: [fcd@btl.net](mailto:fcd@btl.net) is the first step. The office will then inform of the conditions and costs. More importantly the office would inform the gate attendants, that are found at the entrance of the Las Cuevas road, of your arrival.

**Mission:**

FCD pioneers adaptive management of the Chiquibul Forest to improve the ecological and cultural integrity of the western Chiquibul-Maya Mountains.

## Programs Director Hired



Hiring a Programs Director has been on the plan for more than two years but finding the right match for the job was not to be an easy task. FCD today has

over 30 persons on staff and runs more than 8 projects annually. Programs range from sustainable livelihoods and enforcement to karst management and research.

Finally, on the month of April Mrs. Esther Naomi Sanchez Sho, with Board approval, was hired to fill the post. Her tasks are outlined in three areas: Program Coordination, Program Management and Supervision, and Resources Mobilization.

Mrs. Sho had previously been the Managing Director of Tumul K'in Center for Learning, and had served as a Consultant to various institutions including the Central American Agriculture Council, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture and the Central American Indigenous Council. She has a Post Graduate specialization on Intercultural Bilingual Education and a BSc. in Socioeconomic Development and the Environment.

## Scarlet Macaw 2017 Season Underway

For FCD's research team, the month of March already means scarlet macaw season and that signifies putting attention to monitoring and keeping the chicks safe. From whom? Chicks do have natural predators such as hawks and bees but the research team is more concerned of poachers and villagers from Guatemala who are engaged in illegal wildlife trafficking. Over the last two years as a result of an ongoing biological monitoring and enforcement presence, the loss of chicks at the hands of wildlife traffickers have been zero. Our expectation is to keep it this way. But not everything is a success story. We have kept the poachers at bay but in other areas of the Chiquibul, loss of parrots still occurs. Guatemalan counterparts are reporting that macaws are still being sold in Peten, Guatemala and more than likely these birds are derived from Belize.

During the last week of March the Research Team initiated bio-monitoring of scarlet macaws in the area. It is apparent that macaws are late start in their breeding season compared to previous years. During the month of April,



the team dedicated their entire time to biomonitoring and rangers have also been patrolling the area. In June, a review of the illegal wildlife trafficking strategy for the Chiquibul Forest, confirmed the importance of doing bio-monitoring and patrols. In addition the strategy recommends public outreach and expanding the area of conservation efforts.

## New Management Plan for Chiquibul



The first management plan for the Chiquibul National Park was developed, endorsed and put into operation in 2009. This has been the main roadmap for management of the largest protected area in Belize. With over 289,000

acres, it is no wonder that the multi-faceted approach has been complex and hard work. But the achievements, as demonstrated on the assesment conducted after the five years of intensive work, have been phenomenal. However, we could not have done this without the multiple partners and supporters that have joined us over the last many years. But there is much more to do.

With financial support from the Key Biodiversity Project of the World Bank, a new management plan is on the making.

The kick off meeting for development of the CNP Management Plan was held on the 15th of May at the PACT office. The consultants of Praxi 5 have the task of developing several consultations and presenting the new management plan in a period of 7 months.

## Caballo CP Starts Going Up



The announcement made some time ago by the Prime Minister, Right Honourable Dean Barrow, reference

the construction of strategic conservation posts in the Chiquibul is now finally becoming a reality. With support from PACT and the Environmental Management Fund, FCD obtained the finance to construct two conservation posts in the Caballo and Cebada regions. The Caballo Conservation Post is scheduled for completion in July.

Conservation posts have proven to control farmers from denuding the forest cover and helped mobilize patrols more easier into hotspot areas. The first conservation post constructed in 2008 has helped recover over 260 hectares of forest in the area of Rio Blanco and the most recent one established in the Valentin region of the Caracol Archaeological Reserve is helping reduce the agricultural human footprint.

## Forecastle Foundation supports FCD

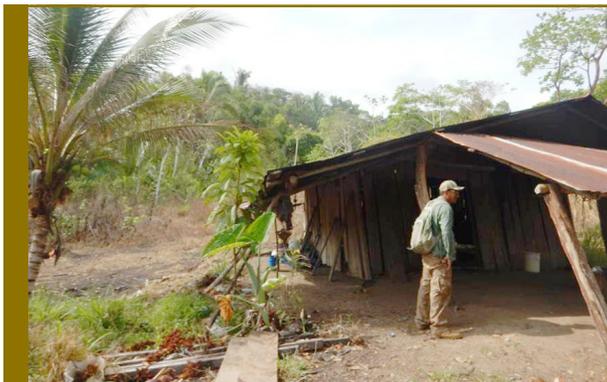
If you spend time with us or travel often to the Mountain Pine Ridge/Caracol road, you will understand why vehicles don't tend to last for too long at FCD. The road is devastating for drivers and maintenance costs are high. No doubt for this reason a tour to Caracol is a nightmare for tour operators. Every two weeks field staff have changeovers, which will take them to Tapir Camp and beyond into the remotest of areas. Vehicles only reach as far and then Rangers and Researchers have to hike into the rugged terrain. FCD vehicles breakdown often.

During the beginning of the year, Forecastle Foundation contacted FCD, through the help of Black Rock Lodge staff to identify how best they could help. Forecastle Foundation has been on the search of the most important key biodiversity areas on the planet and the Chiquibul was on their radar. Jerry Scrogam, Partnership Committee Chairman



felt that one of the most prominent ways to help would be in our mobilization efforts. As a result, FCD has practically used Forecastle funds to fix three Toyota pickups, Mazda pickup and an ATV. FCD is thankful to Forecastle contributors and its staff. To learn more on Forecastle's next fundraising event go to <http://www.forecastlefestival.com/>

## Vaca Program Takes Momentum



FCD is glad that today there is much interest and actions being taken to safeguard the Vaca Forest Reserve under a new model of community participation. Meetings with the Forest Department have reassured

us that the willingness and desire is there to formalize a Community Conservation Agreement with the Friends of the Vaca Forest Reserve. With this in mind, FCD has taken the lead of building the capabilities of the Friends of the Vaca Forest Reserve and followed the landscape management strategy recommendations. With GEF SGP, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the British Embassy funds, a variety of pilot projects have been started ranging from vermi culture to contour farming, and have forged a partnership work with Asociacion de Comunidades Forestales de Peten (ACOFOP).

This ongoing work promises to scale up the work that was started some years ago. With our re-entry in the forest reserve a renewed momentum is underway. Farmers feel blessed with the technical and financial support that they are receiving, and the Forest Department is guiding the process in a proactive manner.

## FCD Programs

Protection &  
EnforcementCommunity  
DevelopmentBi-national  
RelationsEducation  
& Public  
AwarenessKarst  
ManagementResearch &  
MonitoringLandscape  
ManagementMonitoring &  
EvaluationFinancial  
Sustainability

## Toyota Chiquibul Challenge



According to Mr. Pie Marin of Belize Diesel and Equipment Co. Ltd. (BDE), the last time the Toyota Company ran a challenge in the Chiquibul was some ten years ago. This time around they wanted not only to take a fun ride in the forest, but more importantly to learn of the challenges faced in the Chiquibul and how best the private sector could participate in the protection

of this forest. To do this, on the 20th and 21st of May a dozen Toyota vehicles made their way to Chiquibul, accompanied by FCD staff who guided and interpreted the natural wonders of this forest.

Guests had been treated to an introductory presentation the week before and now they were able to see for themselves the magic of the Chiquibul Forest. The route took them to see the home of the park rangers at Tapir Camp, the Caracol monuments, Mountain Cow abandoned railway, Las Cuevas Research Station and the Natural Arch.

At Las Cuevas under a starry night, we chatted about the future of the Chiquibul and agreed that the Toyota Challenge will be an annual event with the aim of getting more people to learn and appreciate the Chiquibul jungles. FCD thanks BDE for organizing this event. Likewise, we are grateful to PACT and all those that participated and who contributed their funds to the Chiquibul cause.

## BECOL donates Raptor

Speaking about vehicles, the Belize Electric Company Limited (BECOL) made a donation of a Ford Raptor vehicle to FCD. BECOL infrastructures are found in both Chiquibul and Vaca and are, therefore, a key stakeholder in the Western Maya Mountains. Over the years FCD has included them on various forums and bodies including the Vaca Forest Reserve Working Group and the Chiquibul Forest Advisory Council.

The Ford Raptor is to serve as a backup transport and to mobilize heavy equipment or supplies to the FCD base in Chiquibul. President and CEO of BECOL, Mr. Lynn Young, who was present at the handing over, noted of their ongoing support and was pleased that the vehicle would be a good asset for the FCD.



The Belize electric company limited (BECOL), a Fortis company has donated a Ford Raptor, 2012, Grey/Black to Friends for Conservation & Development (FCD)

### For more information contact:

Friends for Conservation and Development  
Chi-Hah Street  
San José Succotz  
Cayo District  
Tel: 823-2657  
Email: [fcd@btl.net](mailto:fcd@btl.net)  
website: [www.fcdbelize.org](http://www.fcdbelize.org)

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