



Photo by Lauren Whittle

Promoting Core Conservation

Taiwan Hands Over Funds

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For the second year, the International Conservation Fund from the Council of Agriculture and Forestry of Taiwan through the Embassy of Taiwan in Belize has provided financial assistance to the FCD. Last year the funds helped to construct two cabañas for a laboratory that would house the scarlet macaws being hand reared in the Chiquibul, while the other was to house the caretakers and research team. This year's finance, which was presented by Ambassador Benjamin Ho at his office

on the 8th of July in Belize City will help furnish and equip the laboratory as well as the research quarters.

Scarlet macaw conservation has been ongoing in Chiquibul for the last 8 years. The population of macaws is known to be a little over 100 pairs, and the major threat has been illegal wildlife trafficking. The Wildlife Conservation Society has been providing FCD with technical assistance while with funds from the US Department of the Interior and UKAid DFID a more pronounced effort of biological monitoring and enforcement has been underway. Thanks to the ongoing support, this year, none of the chicks were lost to poaching and the number of scarlet macaws making it to the wild has been extraordinary.

FCD's Biologist, Boris Arevalo, acknowledges that the funds have enabled for the team to undertake the hand rearing activity in a more spacious and clean facility while the research quarters constructed nearby the laboratory gives easy access for caretaking and security of the birds.

Game Poaching Report Finalized

The FCD research team centres its efforts in addressing the conservation targets recommended on the Biodiversity Research, Inventory and Monitoring Framework (BRIM). The key targets include, scarlet macaw, xate, timber species and game communities. This year the second study on the impacts of poaching on game species communities was conducted. A total of 384 km (128 km per stratification) of standard line transects were surveyed. A total of 1,022 individuals representing 24 species (14 mammal and 10 bird species) were recorded during the 2013 surveys, while in 2016 a total of 1,184 individuals representing 25 game species (16 mammal and 9 bird species) were recorded. All but five (5) game species (4 mammal and 1 bird species) recorded in 2013 were also registered in 2016.

The 2016 results indicate that overall game species mean abundance was not significantly different from that of 2013, but mean abundance of large bodied game species was significantly greater in 2016 than in 2013, while there was no significant difference between the two periods in mean abundance of medium and small



game species. But some species such as the Baird's Tapir and White-lipped Peccary were recorded more frequently during the 2016 surveys. In fact, the White-lipped Peccary was not recorded at all in 2013. The first recording of the species since 2006 in the Chiquibul Forest was made until 2014. A more interesting finding was the significant difference on mean abundance of large bodied game species which was greater in 2016 than in 2013.

The full report is now found on FCD's website. This research was made possible through the Protected Areas Conservation Trust.

Goal and Mission as follows:

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

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

Toyota-Chiquibul Expedition Launched



In the quest for diversifying partnerships and support programs, FCD is once more engaged on an innovative fundraising drive. This time, Toyota Company has come to our doors with the concept of a **Toyota Chiquibul Expedition**. In previous years, Toyota owners have had a fun drive across the country, but this time we are adding new ingredients to the adventure. The idea is to have

Toyota owners immerse themselves in the Chiquibul landscape and see on their own the challenges faced along the western border. Toyota drivers will then stay overnight at Las Cuevas Research Station and subsequently drive to the Natural Arch. The pitch is for every Toyota owner to finance the purchase of a Toyota 4x4 vehicle for the ranger team. The vehicle acquired will enable for the field staff to effectively mobilize themselves in the Chiquibul Forest.

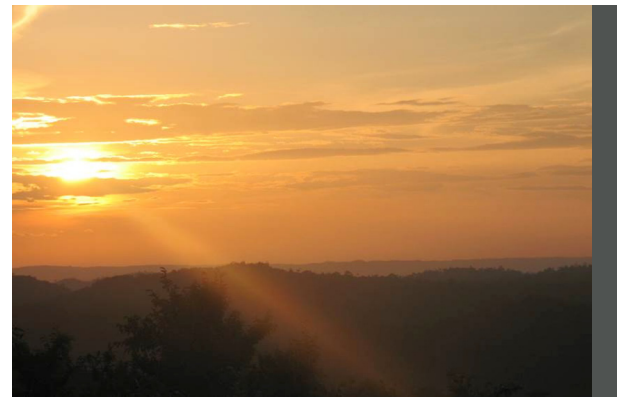
The event is scheduled to take place in February 2017, but as from now the promotional materials will be launched. Toyota's country representative, Mr. Marin believes that in the quest for corporate involvement, the Toyota Company sees itself becoming an active participant in saving the Chiquibul Forest through learning and financing the conservation effort.

For all Toyota owners: We have your materials available. Join us. **Be Bold, Go Places**. Contact us.

FCD'S Strategic Plan unveiled

Even though FCD has been growing in major leaps, there had not been a comprehensive plan of how to advance into its next stage. That was so until now, thanks to the Protected Areas Conservation Trust. With PACT financial support FCD was able to hire Praxi 5 to develop FCD's Strategic Plan 2016-2020. The plan sets ambitious goals and positions the organization with an aim to conserve the natural and cultural resources of the western Chiquibul-Maya Mountains for the sustainable development of Belize. The two programmatic areas for strategic advance were identified as advocacy and protected areas management while three institutional Key Result Areas to support achievements in the key programmatic areas were defined, namely; Governance & Decision-Making, Resource Mobilization for Mission Achievement, and Management of People, Resources & Assets.

The Strategic Plan was developed through major stakeholder involvement including FCD field staff, program managers, Board members, FCD beneficiaries and FCD members. The exercise was exhaustive, counting with many hours of



consultations and verifications. The resulting document not only identifies for us the mission and vision but likewise specifies all the actions needed to attain the goal. It is anticipated that by 2020 FCD will have been instrumental in the sustainable development of the western Maya Mountains.

At FCD we are thrilled with the roadmap defined and we will vibrantly go into the next level of growth. We are certain there are various challenges but yet there are a number of opportunities and possibilities for getting new partners.

Tourism – In Chiquibul



During this quarter much effort was put in planning and reviewing materials with stakeholders. Apart from the development of a Strategic Plan, FCD was also fully engaged with other consultants in the development of a Tourism Enterprise Development Plan (TEDP). The consultancy contracted out to Mr. Neil Rogers and Jan Meerman was concluded in September with a five-section output: Tourism Development Plan, Marketing Plan, Business Plan, Visitor Impact Monitoring Framework and Priority Actions.

After the conclusion of this document, FCD has taken several steps forward, gearing up towards the activation of a vibrant tourism program. First, Mr. Gliss Penados was hired to lead the Tourism Management Unit; subsequently the staff at Las Cuevas Research Station was trained on visitor satisfaction and tourism partnerships were sought for cross learning and testing the tourism potential.

Tourism in the Chiquibul has generated lots of interests and concerns over the years. At FCD we consider that tourism can be one of those ways to expose the beauty and importance of the Chiquibul and yet help generate finances for its own protection. But we have to be down to earth, namely on the type of tourism that can be accommodated and the way to monitor and control impact over time. The TEDP clearly recommends for FCD to encourage stakeholder involvement on all its various steps and to put in place regulations of safety, quality and environmental protection throughout the program. To learn more of this program contact Gliss Penados at fcd@bt1.net or visit the website: www.ecoquestexpeditions.org

CFII Launched

An unprecedented announcement was made by Minister Dr. Omar Figueroa and his CEO Dr. Colin Young on the 23rd of August announcing the launching of the Chiquibul Forest Investment Initiative (CFII). The investment consists of nearly Bz\$2.5 million to be provided to the Belize Defence Force, the Forest Department, FCD and the Ya'axche Conservation Trust. The funds should see an improved management of the Chiquibul Forest, Vaca Forest Reserve, Bladen Nature Reserve and the Columbia River Forest Reserve. Other complementary funds, that are part of the CFII consist of ongoing projects presently underway in the Mountain Pine Ridge/Chiquibul Forest Complex such as the IDB Sustainable Tourism Phase II Project, the Key Biodiversity (KBA) Program and UNDP counter-parting.

The CFII will support FCD in four main components, namely construction of two conservation posts in the Chiquibul National Park; contracting of park rangers for two years; mobilizing and equipping park



rangers; and instituting a landscape management program in the Vaca Forest Reserve.

With this support, we expect that there will be a more pronounced presence across the Chiquibul landscape; reduce environmental degradation and continue reclaiming the integrity of the Chiquibul Forest. However, this will only be made possible if all the pertinent institutions “pull their weight” together; a condition that is easier said than done.

FCD Programs

Protection & Enforcement

Community Development

Bi-national Relations

Education & Public Awareness

Karst Management

Research & Monitoring

Landscape Management

Monitoring & Evaluation

Financial Sustainability

Returning to Vaca F.R.



After 18 months of absence in the Vaca Forest Reserve (VFR), due to financial constraints, FCD is once more returning back to the reserve. This come back has been possible at the request and endorsement from the Ministry responsible for Protected Areas. The VFR remains an area of interest for FCD due to the southern boundary that it shares with the Chiquibul Forest and the impending challenges we will face in the future if left unchecked. The work there, unlike in the Chiquibul, however, will not be on law enforcement and instead it will centre efforts in working with

farmers on how best to use the Vaca plateau in a way that does not continue to alter the landscape.

Landscape Management concepts had been promoted in the area until 2014 through the work of FCD's Extension Technician, but this time around FCD will be hiring a Landscape Manager whose primary job will be to foster Climate Smart Innovative Agroecological practices.

This time, FCD is bringing together new partners too with the aim of strengthening the capabilities of the Friends of the Vaca Forest Reserve. The British Embassy will be supporting exchange programs with local community forest users across borders; the US Fish and Wildlife will support the farmers in developing pilot programs; and the University of Tennessee will promote north-south exchange of knowledge among farming practitioners. The main beneficiaries of this renewed work in the VFR will be the Friends of the Vaca Forest Reserve, consisting of 22 farmers from the communities of San Jose Succotz, Benque Viejo del Carmen and Arenal.

Ties in Washington

Two years ago, FCD's Executive Director, Rafael Manzanero visited Washington D.C. as part of a Guatemalan delegation organized by the US Department of the Interior. This time, during the last week of October, a three-day visit was made possible with the coordination and support provided by the Embassy of Belize in Washington Ukaid/DFID. The trip had the intention of highlighting the challenges faced in the Chiquibul as well as to seek financial and technical support for the protection of the Chiquibul and the species such as the scarlet macaw.

With the US elections around the corner and with a sudden decrease of temperatures, this did not stop the Executive Director from visiting and meeting representatives from the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S Department of the Interior, U.S Aid, Rare, the OAS and Conservation International. The meetings were very productive in sensitizing



conservation organizations about the challenges faced in the Chiquibul Forest and of our urgent needs. For the USFWS and USDO, the visit served to update on the successes achieved as a result of their financial support. There were several expressions of interest and the goal is now to follow up on those discussions.

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