Monitoring the Magnificent Scarlet Macaw



♠ pril -June is prime time for viewing nesting Scarlet Macaws in their natural

offers exclusive day trips to their nesting areas, trees and peeking out from nests. On a recent where you can catch rare views of these trip, a visiting group spotted over 30 macaws. glorious yet endangered birds. Monitoring is an essential step in the effort to save the Scarlet Along the way, observe other bird species Macaw from extinction, due to poaching and including the Ornate Hawk Eagle, Kingfishers the illegal pet trade. Expedition fees support and the Exotic Great Blue Heron. Glimpse the FCD's conservation programs.

Ridge Forest Reserve, to Chalillo Lake. Climb swim before returning home. Contact us for aboard a motorized skiff, for a 20 km guided rates and details at ecoquestexpeditions@ habitat, along the upper Macal River in the trip along the Raspaculo and Upper Macal vahoo.com or call 501-823-2657.

Chiquibul National Park. EcoQuest Expeditions rivers. View macaws perching on Quamwood

rare Morelet's crocodile basking on the river bank, surrounded by the towering rainforest. The adventure begins with a 2 hour drive Tapirs are often seen cooling off in the river. across Mayan villages and the Mountain Pine After lunch enjoy a jungle walk with optional

Reap the Benefits of FCD Membership: Join or Renew this May

General Meeting (AGM). Learn what FCD currently a Board member of FCD. has meant to longtime member and current

CD members share a love for conservation to edit a newsletter being distributed amongst and understand their membership the primary schools in Belize. In the course of is helping to build a strong network of editing I saw the many important, interesting conservation advocates. If you are not currently and challenging projects undertaken by FCD. By a member, please consider joining this month. attending annual meetings I realized that FCD is Membership benefits include a free copy of managed in a highly sophisticated manner and I "FCD Tracks", invitation to FCD networking came to believe that FCD is probably one of the events, discounts and recognition at the Annual best managed operations in Belize." Thom is

member several years ago while volunteering back of the newsletter and send it in to FCD with us at fcd@btl.net or phone us at. 823-2657.



your check. If you are currently a member and board member, Thom Moran: "I became a To join FCD, simply complete the form on the are unsure of when you need to renew, contact

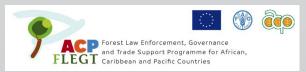
Friends for Conservation and Development Membership Form (Please Print) Address: Enclosed is my fee in the amount of: Student \$5 \quad \text{Individual \$10 \quad Family \$25 \quad \text{Individual \$10 } \quad \text{Family \$25 } \quad \quad \text{Individual \$10 } \quad \text{Family \$25 } \quad \text{Individual \$10 } \quad \text{Family \$25 } \quad \quad \text{Individual \$10 } \quad \text{Family \$25 } \quad \quad \text{Individual \$10 } \quad \qua Corporate \$100 □ Additional Optional Donation: \$ Membership is valid for one year from the date of the signature. Mail this form to FCD, General Delivery, San Jose Succotz, Cayo District, Belize, C.A, or drop it off at our office in Succotz, across from the Mormon Church.

For more information contact:

Friends for Conservation and Development, San José Succotz, Cayo District, Tel: 823-2657, Email: fcd@fcdbelize.org, website: www.fcdbelize.org









The Official Newsletter of Friends for Conservation and Developm

April 2012, Issue #15

Inside Wildlife Bits Lighthawk Soars Over Illegal Farms Farmers Develop 3 Youth Group Frog Deformities 3 in the Chiquibul Scarlet Macaw Benefits of FCD Membership Join FCD

Funding Partners Evaluate FCD's Efforts

fforts to combat illegal logging in the Chiquibul forest are made possible through the financial assistance of the European Union FAO/FLEGT program and PACT. To evaluate the results of the efforts during the month of March a field visit was conducted with Mr. Claus Eckelmann, representative of the FAO/FLEGT program and Ms. Joyce Tun from PACT. The Chiquibul field visit consisted of visiting the illegal logging activity in the Caracol area, and the xate plots by the Cuevas road. Mr. Claus felt that the illegal activity is complex given that the source of the problem is from a Guatemalan origin and that limited support is presently obtained from Guatemalan authorities. Both institutions considered that it will be important to continue the effort beyond the short term since a multi-faceted and robust approach will be necessary.



Assistance from Tennessee

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) traveled to Belize to visit the Chiquibul Cave System and participate in conservation planning workshops for Central America's largest cave system. Their visit to the labyrinth of caves Conservancy for the management of the and the majestic Chiquibul forest absorbed Chiquibul Cave System. The funds are helping them and helped create a linkage between our monitoring and enforcement teams to Belize and Tennessee in the area of karst conduct more systematic studies of the area management and conservation.

In 2009, Tennessee for the next five years, FCD since then has cave and karst been conducting monitoring visits to the cave experts with the aim of understanding more about Alex Wyss and the system and reporting to the Institute of Cory Holliday from Archaeology about the conditions of the cave.

Early this year FCD received a donation from the Wallace Research Foundation through the Tennessee Chapter of The Nature and putting rangers on the ground to conduct patrols and prevent any illegal activities in Thanks to TNC a management plan was the region. FCD hopes to continue forging found in Tennessee, the Tennessee Chapter has and protection of this impressive system number of known caves—some 10,000— cave protection program.



developed a few months later which would this partnership since caves are a common made the preservation of cave ecosystems one of take us to another level for management denominator for both. With America's highest its highest priorities and directs the state's leading



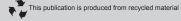
Illegal Xaté extraction in the Chiquibul Forest

Xaté research in the Chiquibul Forest

harvesting. With the financial assistance from how habitat complexity affects Xaté densities stock assessment in the Chiquibul Forest.

Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación and production and v.) provide a baseline data Enseñanza (CATIE) through the on the status of xaté populations to compare with MesoAmerican Agroenvironmental Program later studies the impact of xaté extraction has on (MAP), FCD is actively engaged in a Xaté population mortality and reproductive success.

The objectives of this study are i) to determine With all activities going as scheduled it is expected the xaté population and density within the that the final research document will be completed Chiquibul forest, ii) determine the degree of by September of this year. The research forms impact caused by xaté leaf extraction on the part of FCD's Biodiversity Research, Inventory and dates back from the mid 1970's and has been same populations, iii) calculate the productive Monitoring framework whose aim is to generate identified as an activity having profound impacts capacity of xaté populations (by species) vital information that can guide down to earth on targeted species because of unsustainable within the Chiquibul Forest, iv) determine management and conservation interventions.



Employee of the Quarter

had tracked and hiked the Chiquibul for many Richard!!!

The Orange-breasted Falcon (Falco

deiroleucus) has never been common

anywhere but a nest has been sighted in the

Chiquibul Forest! This raptor of the Neotropics

had a range that historically stretched from

southern Mexico to northern Argentina. This

species is highly specialized ecologically and

they are found in small isolated populations which are prone to declines. They are

unique in hunting primarily above the canopy,

which is a very challenging environment for

bird eating specialists (they are also known

to eat bats). A study conducted by BioOne

attributes the primary causes for the species

historic scarcity to low reproductive rates.

predation by numerous natural predators, and

specialized habitat requirements. The habitat

of this non-migratory bird is primarily mature

forest (tropical lowland evergreen forest),

Richard Harris, who is part of a four man research years and because of his bushcraft knowledge and commitment to conservation he was selected to join year. His father Sir Winston Harris – who received FCD's research team. Richard, who comes from the the title award from the Queen of England for his village of Cristo Rey, is awarded the Employee of more than 20 years of service to the British Army, the Quarter for his enthusiasm, initiative, leadership had been his mentor since an early age. Richard and discipline on the job. Keep up the good work





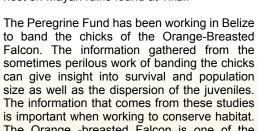
has strong talons that enable it to catch its prey while in flight. This species likely has the largest feet of any falcon relative to its body size. The Orange-breasted Falcon is non-migratory as well as monogamous. It is frequently confused with the smaller Bat Falcon.

along cliffs and near rivers. This predator It is common for these birds to reside near the

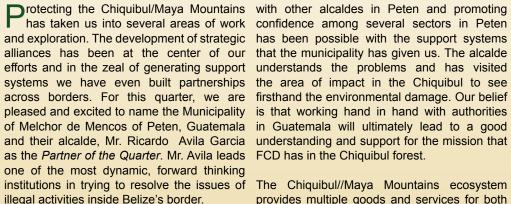
sink holes found in the Chiquibul. The nest that was spotted on March 22nd of this year on a trip to the Chiquibul Cave System was near the main entrance of the Tunkul Cave. In Guatemala they have even been reported to nest on Mayan ruins found at Tikal

to band the chicks of the Orange-Breasted Falcon. The information gathered from the sometimes perilous work of banding the chicks can give insight into survival and population size as well as the dispersion of the juveniles. The information that comes from these studies is important when working to conserve habitat. The Orange -breasted Falcon is one of the numerous examples of why preserving the Chiquibul Forest is of utmost necessity.

Willlife Bits - The Orange-breasted Falcon



Partner's Spotlight - Municipality of Melchor



provides multiple goods and services for both countries and our hopes are that in the future Multiple meetings with local leaders from the a peace park between Belize and Guatemala hotspot communities; coordinating actions can be instituted where efforts from both prevails at FCD.



sides help sustain this forest ecosystem. It is through partnerships like this and with the able leadership of Mr. Avila that a feeling of optimism

Lighthawk Soars Over Illegal Farms



forest fires along the western border. FCD has been following the trend of milpa farming inside Belize's Chiquibul forest for more than 5 years and the problem of incursions continue. With the assistance of Lighthawk, during this dry season, we determined the scale of the impact. FCD's Park Manager, Derric Chan, has described the impacts as 'alarming' and we recommend an urgent need to get high level support to address the slash and burning of the virgin tropical forest of the Chiquibul.

Farmers Develop Nursery

ver the years the Vaca Forest Reserve With this in mind FCD has established two logging activities, and infiltration of illegal farmers to farmers. The first of its kind was established grabbing land everywhere in the periphery and inside the Vaca Forest Reserve by members of clearing land for agricultural purposes. Inside the Friends of the Vaca Forest Reserve – a group the reserve there are more than twenty farmers of concerned stakeholders whose intention is to presently using the land. These diverse activities help protect the reserve. This nursery contains triggered the Forest Department and FCD to 2,500 mahogany and 500 cacao plants. The develop a Landscape Management Strategy second nursery is found in Water Hole and that would help improve the functionality of the contains 1,800 mahogany plants and 200 The development of the nurseries has been

human-induced areas by reforesting particularly the specific areas regarded as critical zones for Environmental Group. in those areas altered near the river and streams. restoration and recovery.

has been transformed due to the ongoing nurseries that will provide mahogany seedlings Cacao plants. Once the seedlings are ready for



possible through the generous financial transplanting, a site visit with Forest Department contribution of CATIE-Mesoterra and with in-The strategy recommends the restoration of personnel is recommended in order to assess kind support from the FCD Succotz Youth

FCD Youth Group Celebrate Anniversary

ollowing the footsteps of its 23 year old predecesor, Youth Environmental Action Group, the FCD Environmental Youth Group continues to take care of the environment through various conservation efforts. The ultimate goal of the FCD youth arm is to promote environmental consciousness among young people. For more than a year these courageous outdoors and conservation enthusiasts have been carrying out outstanding work in the community. The youth group is engaged in activities such as: clean-up activities in the village and along the riverside; reforestation Friends of the Vaca Forest Reserve in finalizing activities; participation in environmental awareness within the community; assisting the recycling project where they produce chains



their nursery; and are presently involved in a

to be used for conservation activities that promote the protection of the Mopan and Macal Rivers. We congratulate them for their outstanding work. Keep it up! All young and enthusiastic people are invited

and bracelets out of bottle stoppers. They are

also currently fundraising to work on an Eco-

to become a member of the youth group by simply filling a membership form. To learn more on this program just send us an e-mail to fcd@btl.net or visit our website at www.

Frog Deformities in the Chiquibul Forest



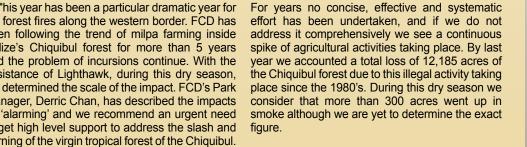
of deformities among wild frog populations and born that way. Most interesting was the fact

wildlife and even to the human population. During where survival is only possible for the fittest. a wildlife survey conducted by FCD's research team during April in the Upper Raspaculo River, an astonishing observation was made. The team managed to record a frog, of the species Rana vaillianti, with deformities. The species is relatively common, growing up to 12.7 cm in length and is of no national or regional conservation concern.

The individual was completely lacking one eye; cientists working around the world have instead, it had a small vestige, indicating that it have raised concerns about the health of the that the individual was lacking an eye but had impact on wild populations.

environment and possible impacts on other managed to survive in a natural environment

This is the first official documentation of a frog deformity in the Chiquibul Forest. Research indicates that frog deformities may be caused by changes in predation species, endoparasitic infestation and disease, ultraviolet radiation, the depletion of mineral such as calcium and magnesium and by the occurrence of high levels of natural or man-made chemical in the environment. With the documentation of this case, it is important Onoted a recent increase in the occurrence had not lost its eye due to an accident but was to continue monitoring frog species in order to determine the abundance of such cases and its



Guatemalan Leaders visit Chiquibul



n the 25th and 26th of February a visit was working session with OAS in order to learn more Conducted by alcaldes from Melchor de Mencos, Poptun, Dolores and San Luis to the Chiguibul forest. Each one of the alcaldes were to arrange meetings with other local leaders accompanied by 2-3 other councilors. The visitors and expose them more to the trans-boundary visited Caracol, an illegal logging site, and a xate problems with the purpose for them to be able trail used by Guatemalan nationals. The visit was to dissuade community members from further coordinated by FCD as part of building awareness destruction of the Chiquibul forest. Overall the of the challenges faced.

The overnight was spent at Las Cuevas. Prior to their communities as they directly benefit from to returning a special session was held with the its conservation due to the water resources being leaders where it was agreed for FCD to arrange a used.

about the Adjacency Zone and the confidence building measures. The leaders also agreed leaders were extremely open to collaboration and agreed that protecting Chiquibul is important