

# Survival Wisdom Assess Rangers

It is well known that the Chiquibul deserves a highly trained unit of rangers, as distinct from regular park wardens. This is due to the challenges, sensitivity and dangerous nature of the situations faced along the western flank of the park. FCD has developed ongoing training for rangers and it is always seeking new partnerships to build our capabilities. This is where Richard Pyshorn, Managing Director of Survival Wisdom joins our enforcement efforts. Richard lives in Cornwall, South Wales of England and is an Ex Royal Air Force Regiment Protection Specialist in survival and training of British military personnel and assets throughout the world.

During the month of February he visited the Chiquibul primarily to see the capabilities of our ranger force and to identify areas for further training. Joining him was cameraman and award winning film producer Simon Werry. FCD is pleased to have met and opened their interests for the Chiquibul, and looks forward to a solid training for our rangers, moving them to another level of professionalism.



# FCD Youth Arm Install Bins

The FCD Environmental Youth Group (FCDYEG) continues working in the community of Succotz, just as its predecessor FCD did in the late 80's. Thanks to the British Embassy funds the FCDYEG installed eight garbage bins with the support of the Village Council. The insides of the drum were painted with an oil based paint and the logos were sprayed. The installation of the garbage bins was done on February 15th which was meant to compliment the cleanup campaigns. Two cleanup campaigns were done along the riverside and the George Price Highway in Succotz. The first cleanup campaign was done



in December of 2013 and the second in March of 2014 with the support of Std. V students from San Jose Succotz R.C. School. T-shirts were also obtained as part of the project for the members of FCDEYEG.

All the activities were planned by members and there was full participation and support from them throughout the project titled, *Promoting Bi-national Community Participation through Environmental Education Effort.*

Congratulations for a job well done FCDYEG!!!

# Training for Livestock Farmers

With support from the GIZ Selva Maya Project, FCD started since November an entire new set of training activities for farmers in the Vaca Forest Reserve. The training was established to enable them to better improve their products while reducing the effects of wanton deforestation.

During the month of February, the first livestock workshop on "Establishment and Management of Pasture & Basic Animal Health" was facilitated to livestock farmers in the Vaca Area.

FCD's Extension Technician, Mr. Arnoldo Melendez welcomed the 9 participants while Mr. David Tzul taught the techniques and systems for the establishment of a pasture, protein bank, live fences and the identification and control of disease.

The Workshop ended by presenting and explaining a list of medications used in basic health management. A practical exercise was done on a 400 pound calf, where vitamins and a de-wormer were applied. This training forms part of the landscape management strategy for the Vaca Forest Reserve.

For more information contact:

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Promoting Core Conservation

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# Internationalizing Chiquibul

Clearly to obtain support for the conservation of the Chiquibul Forest, people must know of the actual situation. With this in mind, FCD's executive director joined Minister Lisel Alamilla and Belize's Ambassador to Guatemala, Alfredo Martinez, on a four day trip to London and Belgium during the month of October, 2013. The meetings held with members of the European Commission, Food and Agriculture Organization, IUCN, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, House of Commons, and the UK/Belize Association helped galvanize interest and support for the protection of Belize's natural resources. The presentations were centered on describing, "The Environmental Approach to the Belize-Guatemala Dispute."



Mr. Oudora Souvannavong, Forester Principal of FAO noted, "The important needs that were identified would justify a broad, comprehensive project, addressing issues with an integrated and cross-border approach. The very good experience obtained with the support of ACP-FLEGT/EU-FAO FLEGT Programme would be valuable in developing such a proposal. FAO would be willing to continue to support Belize in this regard, should its assistance be requested. Congratulations again for the achievements in Chiquibul

Forest. I hope that you will be successful in gathering the support needed to sustainably fulfill objectives in the long term."

Indeed, our aim is to fulfill objectives in the long term. After the visit FCD efforts have been ongoing in exploring further collaborations and support with the European Commission, FAO and IUCN.

# BRIDGING with IUCN

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has found something in common with FCD. This relates to their BRIDGE initiative whose acronym stands for Building River Dialogue and Governance. With the aim of sharing experiences in river conservation across borders, FCD hosted Mrs. Rocio Cordoba on a three-day tour during the month of February. The familiarization trip took her to visit the Mountain Pine Ridge, the Chiquibul, Melchor de Mencos and the community of Los Encuentros in Peten,



Guatemala. During this trip she also met with community leaders from both Belize and Guatemala who are a part of the bi-national watershed alliance for the protection of the Chiquibul-Mopan-Macal Rivers. She came out highly impressed by the work being done by community leaders and felt that there are many lessons learnt that FCD can share with the BRIDGE initiative. FCD has been participating in BRIDGE forums through the involvement of the two FCD educators, Veronica Avila and Elica Chan.

# Wildlife Monitoring in Vaca

The Vaca Dam is located on the Macal River downstream of the existing Mollejon Hydroelectric Facility and the Chalillo Dam



in the Cayo District. The Vaca Dam was commissioned in late 2010. As part of the Vaca Hydroelectric Project environmental compliance plan (ECP) approved by the Government of Belize, the Belize Electricity Company Limited (BECOL) has been required to conduct surveys of wildlife in the area impacted. The objective is to examine and evaluate any change over time in present wildlife populations and to document the alteration and adjustment of existing habitats and ecosystems.

years. Having concluded the dry season survey, FCD team used geo-referenced transects and pre-determined monitoring sites to document birds and mammals. River and creek transects were used to adequately sample reptiles and amphibians. Nocturnal surveys on the river and creeks were made to study the morelets crocodile and amphibian species, and cast net sampling methodology was used to monitor for fish species.

FCD has had its research team engaged on this field work for a fifth time over the last six

Final results of the third overall study will be submitted to BECOL, the Forest Department and the Department of the Environment by January 2015.

## Employee of The Quarter



Mrs. Amparito Balan Itza has been at FCD from 2007, since the time when we first started our program of core conservation in the Chiquibul/Maya Mountains. She has worked closely with the Executive Director (ED) as the Administrative Assistant and has also served as the Human Resource Manager, and a strong shoulder to the ED in difficult times. Over her tenure Amparito has conducted her work with diligence and open mind to learning and personal growth. Her character has helped build a strong team of managers at FCD.

Unfortunately, she relocated with her family further away from the Office, thus limiting her to remain full time at FCD. Presently she serves as the Accountant at FCD on a part time basis. It has been difficult for us to let her go and eventhough her time is limited we still very much consider her an integral part of FCD. She is selected as the *Employee of the Quarter* due to her commitment to the organization and enthusiasm to spare time to FCD even under strenuous circumstances. FCD is where we are thanks to Amparito's diligence and honesty. We are extremely thankful.

## Field Notes from the Board

Miss Nidia Panti has been serving at the FCD Board since 2013. Her primary role at FCD is to strengthen the FCD Youth Environmental Group which is comprised of over 23 young boys and girls, primarily from the village of San Jose Succotz.

During the first week of April, Nidia participated on a study tour organized with the Projecto TAMAR team at Praia do Forte, Bahia, Brazil. She joined other Belizean organizations such as PACT, TIDE, and BTB who were exposed to different strategies on how to partially subsidize their annual budgets and take a step further in becoming more self-reliant.

Projecto TAMAR, centers their work on Brazilian Sea Turtle Conservation. This Community Based Organization (CBO) promotes marine



conservation in Brazilian coasts and has identified five flagship species for protection. Projecto TAMAR works in conjunction with the government and the bordering communities and has developed strategic agreements for the wise use and protection of these marine organisms.

On her back to office report, Miss Panti provided several recommendations to FCD, including the need for Belizean NGOs to diversify their alternatives for captivating people's interest and considered that capacity building strategies should be developed. FCD thanks Oak Foundation for financing her trip to Brazil.



FCD is proud to name Sewanee: The University of the South as the Partner of the Quarter due to its confidence and support given to FCD's effort.

## Partner's Spotlight - SEWANEE THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

Sewanee, is a private, coeducational liberal arts college located in Sewanee, Tennessee, United States. It is owned by 28 southern dioceses of the Episcopal Church, and its School of Theology is an official seminary of the church. The campus consists of 13,000 acres of scenic mountain property atop the Cumberland Plateau.

As a class project in Professor Jonathan Evans' Conservation Biology course this semester, students are studying how the demand for palm leaves by churches on Palm Sunday has

created a market for illegally harvested palm leaves from the rain forests of Belize. The class was also involved on a successful fundraising event that will enable FCD to improve its infrastructure at Las Cuevas Research Station, support outreach education and help farmers in the Vaca Forest Reserve. FCD is extremely grateful for the support given and welcome students from Sewanee to visit us and join us on the multifaceted efforts ongoing in the Chiquibul/Maya Mountains.

## Review of Environmental Law

On a daily basis there are a steady number of illegal activities taking place in the areas that FCD operates. Our field rangers have the duty to detain those abusing the environmental laws, however, only a small percentage of those caught eventually are successfully prosecuted. But with such small fines ranging from \$500 to a \$1,000, those prosecuted in most cases can readily pay and leave the court. At FCD, we consider that the environmental law must be more stringent so as to help deter people from continuously committing the same offences such as illegal logging, gold panning and poaching in the Chiquibul.

To address and explore a way forward, FCD convened a session with Mrs. Cheryl Ann Vidal, Director of Public Prosecution; Mr. Godfrey Smith, Attorney at Law; Mrs. Anne Marie Smith, Chief Magistrate; Ms. Griffith, Magistrate of San Ignacio and Mr. George Gomez, Prosecutor of San Ignacio Court. The group considered that a review of the National Park Systems Act would need to be explored and recommendations made for strengthening the penalties. FCD through the EC FAO/FLEGT programme support will continue pursuing this action.



## Visitor Center Launched

Earthday was celebrated on the 22nd of April around the world, but for FCD the big event was held on the 23rd on the occasion of the inauguration of the Chiquibul National Park Visitor Center. Thanks to the financial support from the Global Environmental Facility-United Nations Development Programme (GEF UNDP), Bull Ridge Company Limited and the National Protected Areas Secretariat, FCD was able to construct and make operational the Visitor Center.



This new development comes at a time when the park management plan recommends the activation of public use in the area. With this infrastructure we are beginning a new

program of visitation services in the area with the objective of promoting the importance of the Chiquibul forest, and setting in place a financial generating mechanism inside the park.

The opening address was provided by Miss Giselle Martinez of the Cayo Tour Guide Association, while the objectives were described by Mr. Daniel Alemu of the GEF UNDP Office. Representing Honourable Lisel Alamilla, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development was her Acting CEO in the Ministry, Mr. Alfredo Cruz, who gave the official remarks and inaugurated the building. In his speech he said, "I am committed to encouraging our partners and our Government to continue to make significant investments into the Chiquibul to ensure that we manage this area for the benefit of the people."

## Sewanee Fundraising Drive

Last year FCD's Executive Director visited Sewanee, University of the South in Tennessee and met with Dr. Jonathan Evans, Assistant Provost for environmental stewardship and sustainability. Since then FCD has embarked with Dr. Evans on various ideas that can potentially solidify a partnership between both institutions. An avid researcher and naturalist himself, Dr. Evan had been following the stories of Chiquibul over the last few years and understood the challenges and opportunities of the Chiquibul.

In January, 2014 Dr. Evans visited Las Cuevas Research Station and on his return back home, started a fundraising drive with his students from Sewanee. Using the INDIEGOGO mechanism the students developed a compilation of incredible short video footage that gives a comprehensive idea of FCD's challenges and interventions. You can watch these on the link: <http://sustain.sewanee.edu/belize> FCD takes this opportunity to thank Dr. Evans, the University of the South and his students who coordinated the fundraising event. A big thank you also goes to all those that made donations and made the event a success.



## Adventure Racing in The Maya Mountains



It took two years in the planning and finally it came to happen. Over 45 athletes from

the United States, Denmark and Ecuador competed in the Maya Mountain Adventure Race and experienced the beauty of the Chiquibul/Maya Mountains. Doug Crytzer, Director of the American Adventure Sport tagged with FCD to raise awareness of this beautiful area west of the Maya Mountains and by doing so brought these mountains close to home to many sport enthusiasts.

The race took place from the 12th to 16th of February. Seventeen groups registered for the race including FCD's team *Chiquibul Grisons* comprised of Chief Ranger Jose Sierra and Ranger Hilberto Rash, who came in first on

the two person team category, whilst the overall champion was the four person team *Yoga Slackers / Gear Junkies* who finished the race at an impressive 53 hours 42 minutes. To do this mark, the team traversed the jungle at day and night and barely slept. The racers hiked, biked, canoed and rappelled through several protected areas including the Chiquibul National Park, Caracol and Mountain Pine Ridge. You can learn about the entire race by visiting the website: [www.mayamountainadventurechallenge.com](http://www.mayamountainadventurechallenge.com) Athletes are now getting ready for the second Maya Mountains Adventure Race scheduled for 2016.

## Visit Us at Las Cuevas Research Station

Las Cuevas Research Station (LCRS) is located in the heart of the Chiquibul Forest in the Maya Mountains of Belize. We support research and education, and welcome visitors wishing to experience this remote and important part of the world. Towering trees, spectacular jungle streams, amazing underground caves and encounters with numerous endangered animals such as Jaguars and Scarlet Macaws will make your visit to LCRS a fascinating and life long experience. This is a true gem for conducting

studies in Tropical Forest Ecology, Protected Areas Management, Tropical Forest Field Methods, Botany, Birdlife Biology and Conservation.

In 2013, LCRS welcomed over 100 international students who spent between 3 and 21 days, studying the rich biological biodiversity and cultural history of the Chiquibul Forest. We invite you to come and experience wilderness at its best. Write us at [fcd.lcrs@gmail.com](mailto:fcd.lcrs@gmail.com) or [fcd@btl.net](mailto:fcd@btl.net)

