





ANNUAL REPORT

2024

BELIZE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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The 2024 annual report reflects our commitment to transparency and accountability.



PROFILE

OUR HISTORY

The Society was formed in 1969 as a foreign chapter of the Florida Audubon Society and in 1973, became a completely independent Belizean organization. BAS is the longest standing conservation NGO in Belize charged with co-managing seven of Belize's most biologically and topographically diverse protected areas. BAS helped establish Belize's first protected area- Half Moon Caye, and now co-manages seven protected areas in partnership with the Government of Belize.

BAS is a membership organization with an elected Board of Directors. It is a registered NGO under the Non-Governmental Organizations Act of Belize 2000 and the Non-Profit Organization Act of 2023, and is a member of several international and local organizations.

VISION

Belize Audubon Society (BAS), is a resilient and transformative leader in environmental stewardship.

MISSION

Belize Audubon Society (BAS), is dedicated to promoting Belize's natural resources through sound environmental governance, ecological monitoring, stakeholder engagement and partnerships for the benefit of people and the environment.

PROUD MEMBER

BELIZE NETWORK OF NGOs

ASSOCIATION OF PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS
APAMO
The Voice of Belize's Protected Areas

BMPAN
BELIZE MARINE PROTECTED AREAS NETWORK

IUCN | National Committee Belize

BirdLife INTERNATIONAL

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Kevin Geban, President

It is with immense pride and a touch of that Belizean spirit that I present the Belize Audubon Society's (BAS) 2024 Annual Report. This past year has been a remarkable journey of dedication and unwavering commitment of our Board and staff to our core mission: "creating a balance between people and the environment." As your new President, stepping in after being a member since 2016 and a Board Director since 2018, it's a privilege to steward an organization so deeply woven into the fabric of Belizean conservation.

2024 was a year of significant milestones and challenges. We've soared to new heights, most notably with the pre-approval for a transformative 6.5 million BZD Blue Action Fund grant. This five-year project will benefit five co-managers and 10 marine protected areas, with BAS proudly serving as the fiduciary manager and focal point which started in January 2025. This, coupled with secured funding from Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) and a Belize Fund partnership agreement, underscores the confidence our partners have in our vision and capability.

Our protected areas remain the heart of our operations. We welcomed an impressive 72,797 visitors in 2024, with St. Herman's Blue Hole National Park leading as the most visited terrestrial site. To enhance their experience, we completed the renovation of the cabins at Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary (CBWS) and launched an online reservation system for easier booking. Our rangers continue to give their all with active patrols alongside our enforcement agency partners, ensuring the integrity of these vital spaces. We are also forging a new partnership with the Institute of Archaeology for the sustainable management of cave systems within St. Herman's Blue Hole National Park.

Connecting with people is paramount to achieving balance. Our Environmental Education and Community Outreach programs reached over 2,856 individuals nationally through various events and engaged over 13 primary schools. A landmark achievement was the first of its kind Climate Change Vulnerability and Livelihood Assessment conducted with WWF, targeting communities around CBWS. Our longstanding boat-to-boat outreach continued to build trust with fishers, particularly at Lighthouse Reef Atoll. Furthermore, our commitment to local stakeholder participation saw the drafting of an MOU for sustainable fishing and co-management within the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary, a testament to community-driven conservation. Our membership base grew to nearly 200 active members, and we continue to view membership as a priority.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Credible science underpins all our efforts. Our research and monitoring team have been diligently collecting data to inform adaptive management. Highlights include stable Nassau grouper and juvenile conch populations at Lighthouse Reef Atoll (LHRA) and increased bird species richness at terrestrial sites. However, we also noted the unfortunate decrease in live coral cover, a stark reminder of the threats ahead. From monitoring the critically endangered Nassau grouper and seabird nesting surveys to waterbird census and mammal monitoring via camera traps, our scientific rigour is unwavering. A significant accomplishment was the production of a comprehensive five-year scientific technical report for the BAS protected areas.

While we celebrated these achievements, 2024 also marked a significant transition with the departure of our Executive Director of 16 years. We extend gratitude for her long service and welcome the opportunities that this transition brings.

Looking ahead, the strategic path for BAS is clear. We will leverage our assets, our dedicated team, and our passionate members to deepen our impact. My focus, drawing from years in management and tourism, will be on ensuring that every conservation effort is also an opportunity for sustainable development for our communities. It's not just about protecting nature; it's about ensuring people thrive alongside it. After all, managing these national treasures is a bit like managing a resort where the guests (both human and wildlife) expect the best, and it’s our job to sustainably deliver!

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our dedicated staff, our Board of Directors, our members, volunteers, community partners, and funding agencies. Your collective energy and commitment are the bedrock of BAS's success. Together, we will continue to champion a Belize where people and the environment exist in true, sustainable harmony.

Sincerely,
Kevin Geban
President,
Belize Audubon Society

BOD & ADMIN STAFF

16 Taiwan Street,
Belize City, Belize

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT
Kevin Geban

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
Vacant

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
Vacant

FIRST SECRETARY
Rasine Gillett

SECOND SECRETARY
Janelle Chanona

TREASURER
Simon Reardon-Smith

DIRECTORS
Randal Taylor
Mariana Ancona
Francis Canto Jr.
Shajira Martinez
Ishmael Quiroz
Virginia Burns-Perez
Olivia Carballo-Avilez

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Earl Green

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Amanda Acosta

FINANCE DIRECTOR
Jose Luis Lopez

HUMAN RESOURCES Manager
Yael Perera-Bowen

FINANCE & OPPERATIONS COORDINATOR
Estellita Wade

PROJECT FINANCE COORDINATOR
Inga Miguel

RESERVATIONS & GIFT SHOP COORDINATOR
Delia Noble

OFFICE ASSISTANT
Ryan Chan

69%

Staff assigned to protected areas

31%

Administrative and Technical

CREATING A BALANCE BETWEEN PEOPLE & THE ENVIRONMENT

TECHNICAL STAFF

PROTECTED AREAS
Shane Young, Protected Areas Director

TERRESTRIAL
Dwayne Pech, Protected Areas Manager (Cayo Parks)
Roberto Rivero, Protected Areas Manager (CBWS/VPNM)

Guanacaste National Park (GNP):
Edgar Batz, Assistant Site Manager
Alfonso Baptist, Park Ranger

St. Herman's Blue Hole National Park (SHBHNP):

Artexeres Sho, Assistant Site Manager
Steven Coc, Assistant Site Manager
Alex Manzanero, Park Ranger
Brian Kus, Park Ranger
Elmir Gonzalez, Park Ranger
Glenford Coh, Park Ranger
Transito Jimenez, Park Ranger

Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary (CBWS):
Raphael Choc, Assistant Tourism Officer
Sebastian Tush, Conservation Officer
Cayetano Bol, Park Ranger
Isani Cal, Park Ranger
Kelvin Cal, Park Ranger
Kent Smith, Park Ranger
Michael Sabal, Park Ranger
Patricia Pop, Park Ranger
Pedro Bol, Park Ranger
Reynaldo Sho, Park Ranger
Salustino Peck, Park Ranger
Samson Tzub, Park Ranger
Selvin Bol, Park Ranger
Marta Sho, Housekeeper

MARINE
Marty Alvarez, Protected Areas Manager (HMCNM/BHNM/CTWS)

Half Moon Caye Natural Monument & Blue Hole Natural Monuments (HMCNM/BHNM):

Ramon Aguilar, Site Manager
Mordicayo Mis, Assistant Site Manager
Marcello Cal, Park Ranger
Robin Magana, Park Ranger
Alexis Clotter, Park Ranger
Sydney Jimenez, Park Ranger
Wayne Crawford, Park Ranger
Reinaldo Caal, Park Ranger/Boat Captain

Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary (CTWS):

Derick Hendy, Site Manager
Terique Gillett, Park Ranger
Shawn Smith, Park Ranger
Walter Perriot, Park Ranger (January-May)

RESEARCH & MONITORING:

Dominique Lizama, Research & Monitoring Director

Gabriela Ugarte, Marine RM Officer
Reynaldo Ortega, Assistant Marine RM Officer
Chang-Hong Tsao, Terrestrial RM Officer
Victor Novelo, Assistant Terrestrial RM Officer

ENV. EDUCATION & COMMUNICATIONS:

Dareece Chuc, Environmental Education & Communications Director

Adiel Carrillo, Community Liaison Officer
Miguel Sho, Environmental Education Officer
Jose Sanchez, Communications Officer

PROGRAMS

BELIZE AUDUBON SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP



PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT



FINANCE & OPERATIONS



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & COMMUNICATIONS



RESEARCH & MONITORING

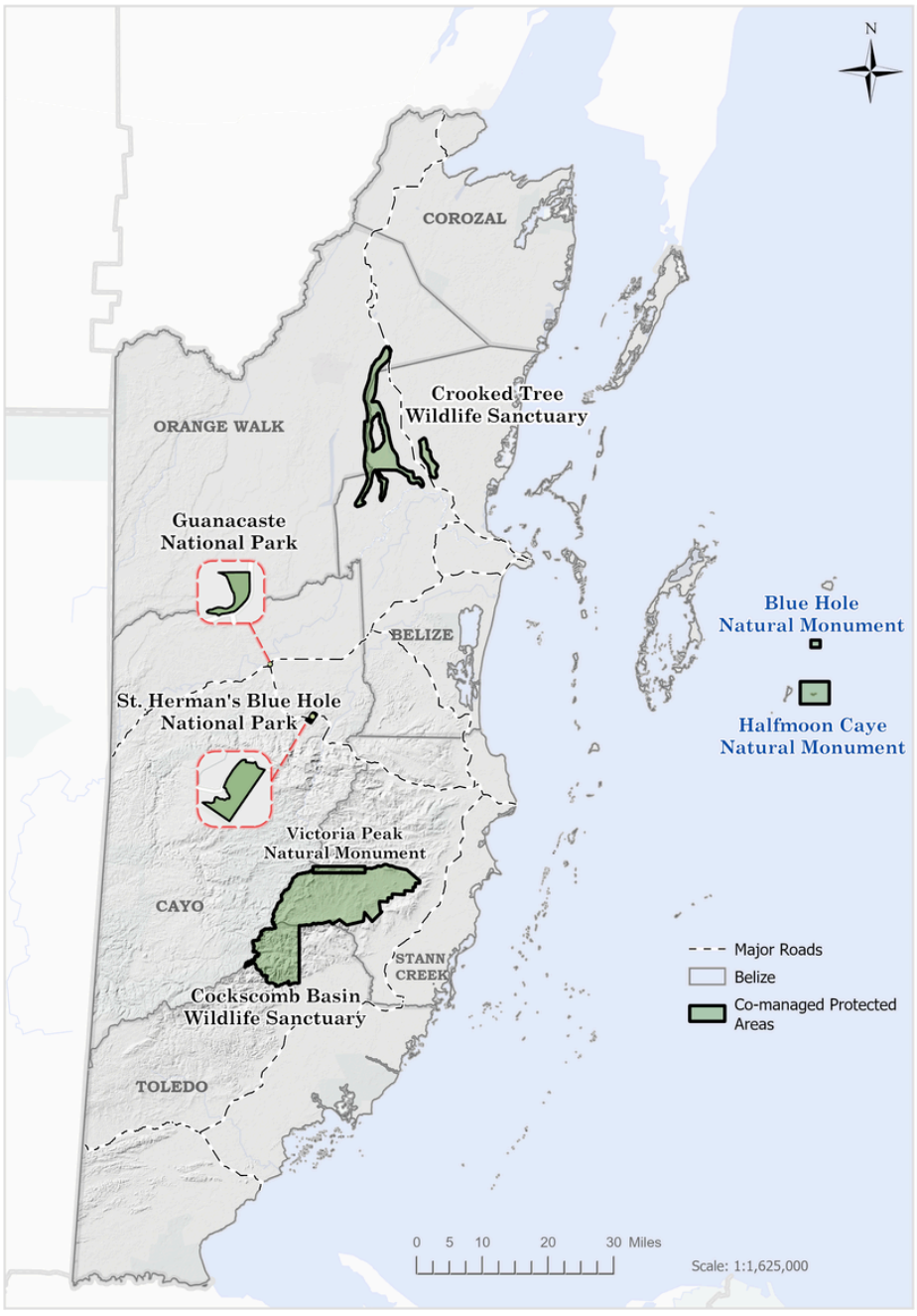
MARINE & TERRESTRIAL



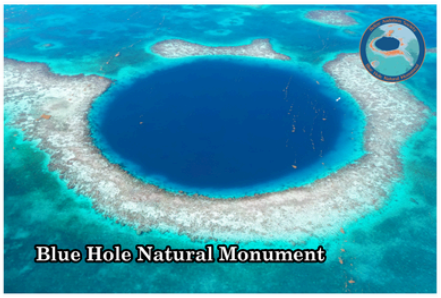
CREATING A BALANCE BETWEEN PEOPLE & THE ENVIRONMENT

LOCATION

BELIZE AUDUBON SOCIETY CO-MANAGED PROTECTED AREAS

















CREATING A BALANCE BETWEEN PEOPLE & THE ENVIRONMENT

PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT

Under the current 5 year interim agreements, BAS is able to demonstrate its conservation principles through the management of seven protected areas under the main objective to maintain the integrity of species, ecosystems and ecosystem services.



CO-MANAGEMENT DUTIES

I. Conduct effective surveillance patrols and enforcement.

II. Maintain tourism infrastructure and visitor safety.

III. Address threats to conservation targets.

IV. Maintain strong partnerships with public management entity, government agencies, and co-managers.

V. Build capacity among community members, enabling them to actively participate in protected areas management.

VI. Provide sound monitoring and research used inform public perceptions and management decisions.

PROTECTED AREAS HIGHLIGHTS

In 2024, rangers from the CBWS launched our first mini greenhouse project as part of the annual BAS 'Greening Across Belize' initiative. This project aimed to protect and nurture saplings before distributing them across Belize. In late 2023, mahogany seeds from a tree planted by Prince Philip in 1988 were collected, marking an important link to Belize's environmental heritage. In January 2024, CBWS rangers planted 500 seedlings and cared for them until April, when they were ready for distribution.

The trees were made available at key locations like the GNP and the BAS Main Office, where they were shared with schools, communities, and organizations as part of our Earth Day campaign. The message was simple: small actions, like planting a tree, can have a lasting impact. All 500 trees found homes in backyards, schoolyards, and farms, where they will grow to benefit the ecosystem. The project's success has laid the groundwork for future efforts. Going forward, we plan to expand the greenhouse, introducing more native species to enhance the local environment and inspire future environmental stewards.









500 MAHOGANY TREE SEEDS PLANTED FOR EARTHDAY 2024

COCKSCOMB A GROWING DESTINATION WHERE CONSERVATION AND TOURISM MEET

The largest accommodation facility at CBWS received a significant upgrade thanks to support from the PACT through its Conservation Investment Strategy (CIS) 'bridge' funds. This investment focused on enhancing the Long Cabin and campground amenities to improve the visitor experience and attract more overnight guests.



Renovated Long Cabin front & side view

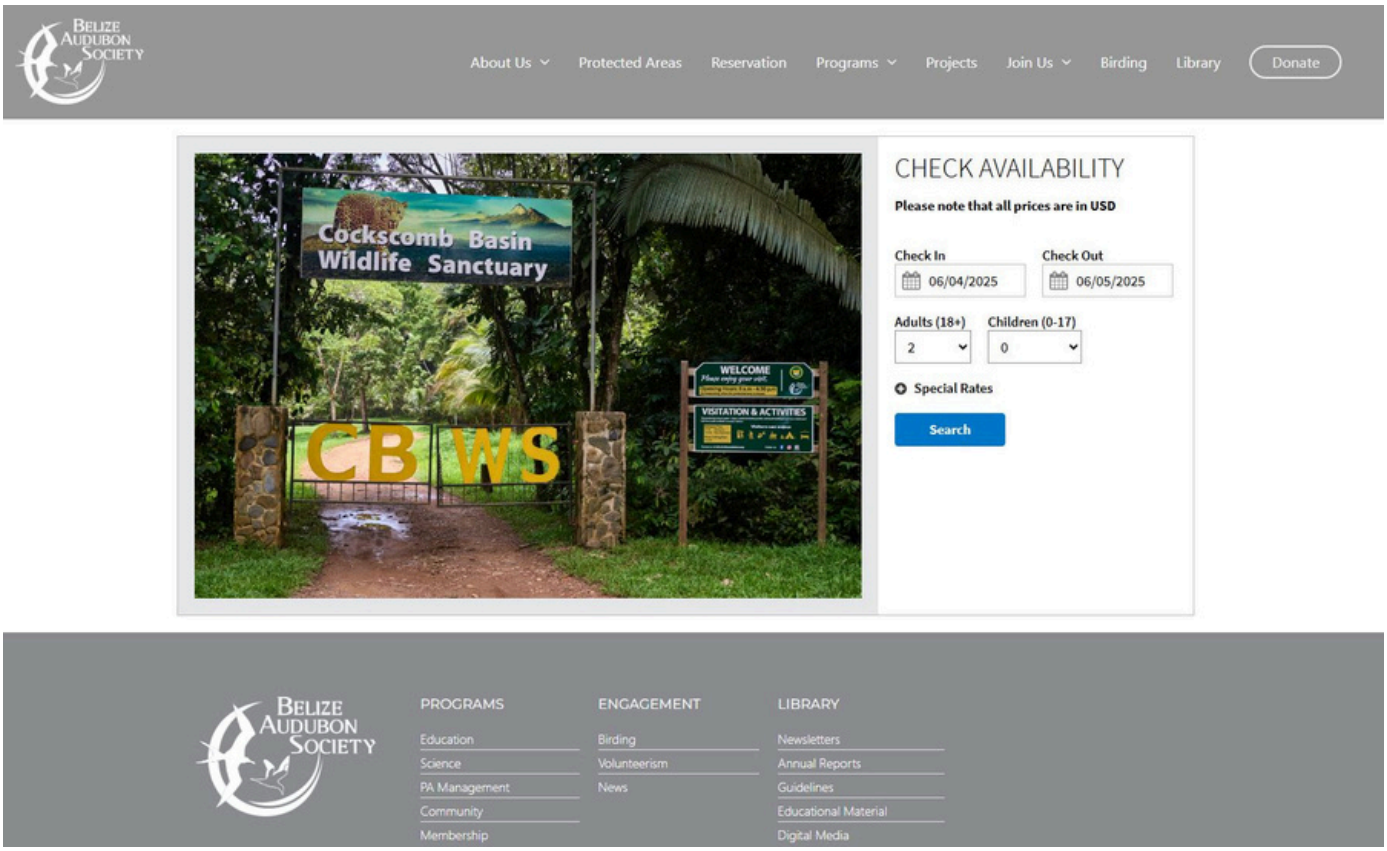
The campground facilities were upgraded to offer better amenities for campers. This included the construction of picnic palapas and a new restroom, ensuring that visitors have access to essential facilities during their stay.



Newly built restroom & camping palapa (sheds)

RESERVATION SOFTWARE LAUNCHED!

In addition to the improvements of the amenities, booking overnight stay at Cockscomb Basin has been made easy with the launch of an online reservation system in July 2024. Accessible via the BAS website, this user-friendly platform allows guests from anywhere in the world to conveniently reserve accommodations with just a few clicks. The online system provides a seamless booking experience, allowing potential guests to select their preferred accommodation and dates. Explore the Reservation link.



The front desk staff from CBWS and the Reservations and Giftshop Coordinator underwent a series of trainings to learn how to use and manage the reservation platform. This initiative introduces a digital platform for managing and retrieving reservation data, effectively replacing the previous manual system.

To bring more visibility and awareness to the online reservation option, the reservation link was prominently featured on BAS' social media to reach a broader audience and encouraging bookings.

WHO VISITED CBWS THIS YEAR?

Non-Belizeans made up majority of the visitors to Cockscomb this year, while 11% of the visitors were Belizeans. Cockscomb remains a popular destination for visitors who want to experience lush natural forests, wildlife sightings, vistas, waterfalls and river recreation.

River tubing was the most popular activity with 2,617 people enjoying the tranquil float down the South Stann Creek river winding through CBWS.



RIVER TUBING =2,617



OVERNIGHT VISITORS = 1,441



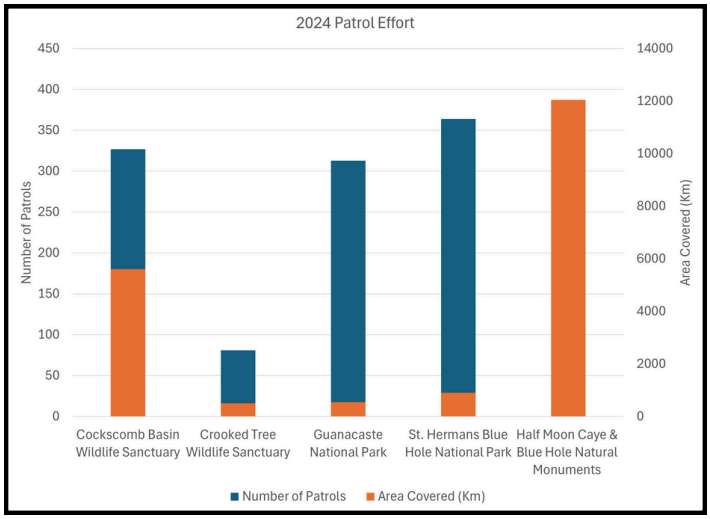
TOTAL VISITORS = 13,684

PATROL REPORT

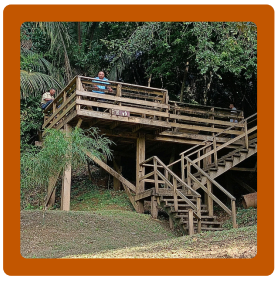


Protected Areas Managers and Enforcement Rangers work collaboratively to plan and execute strategic patrols focused on safeguarding Belize's natural resources. These patrols play a vital role in deterring illegal activities by maintaining a strong, visible presence in the field, directly supporting ongoing conservation efforts. Depending on the area's specific needs, night patrols are also conducted to enhance coverage and enforcement. All patrol activities are systematically recorded using the SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) and categorized into six primary patrol types, ensuring effective monitoring, data-driven decision-making, and adaptive management.

1. **Surveillance patrols** prioritize monitoring and observing activities within the protected area to ensure visitor safety and deter illegal actions.
2. **Research and Monitoring Patrols** are specifically designed to gather data for field-based research and monitor ongoing activities within the protected area, such as bird surveys.
3. **Joint Patrols** are conducted in collaboration with enforcement agencies like the Tourism Police Unit, Belize Defense Force, and Belize Coast Guard.
4. **Clearance Patrols** ensure that pathways, trails, and boundaries within the protected area remain clear and accessible.
5. **Reconnaissance Patrols** is aimed at exploring new areas that have not been previously surveyed.
6. **Search and Rescue Patrols** Carried out with the assistance of search and rescue experts to locate individuals reported missing or in danger within the protected area.



Surveillance and **clearance** were the most frequently recorded types of patrols across all sites. HMCNM and BHNM led in total patrols for the year with 386, followed by SHBHNP with 364, and CBWS with 327. Notably, HMCNM and BHNM are the only sites that conduct night patrols, which are carried out in partnership with the Belize Coast Guard. GNP led in total joint patrols with enforcement partners totaling to 36.







MARINE: HALF MOON CAYE & BLUE HOLE NATURAL MONUMENTS



PUBLIC RESOURCE USE & MANAGEMENT



Lighthouse Reef Atoll is Belize's most remote offshore atoll, famous for its Blue Hole, healthy coral reefs, and Half Moon Caye's beauty. It significantly supports the country's nature-based tourism industry and the livelihoods of its communities. Eight staff members stationed at Half Moon Caye oversee resource management and provide visitor information, ensuring exceptional guest experiences. In their interactions with guests, the staff actively promote environmental stewardship by demonstrating care for the island, its infrastructure, and the surrounding ecosystem. Throughout the year, their responsibilities encompass a wide range of tasks, including:

- Conducting guest briefings
- Collecting Park fees
- Maintaining the area
- Overseeing gift shop sales
- Keeping the island clean
- Ensuring compliance with rules

A total of 11,791 guests visited HMCNM and BHNM, mainly through local tour operators. Ongoing maintenance is focused on the campground, a base for Island Expeditions, a long-term tourism partner of BAS. This year, BAS developed a *Sustainable Tourism Plan* with tourism stakeholders, outlining objectives across four pillars: Economy, Visitor Experience, Environment, and Stakeholder Relations, allowing for flexibility in management to ensure sustainability and resilience.

MARINE: ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement is essential for effectively managing protected areas, ensuring compliance with established rules and regulations. By curbing illegal activities, it helps preserve natural resources and safeguard the ecological and cultural values these areas are meant to protect. Active enforcement is made possible through a partnership with the Belize Coast Guard, which supports BAS Rangers during both day and night patrols, providing essential services in terms of patrol support, protection, and security.



Under sized conch seized by rangers at LHRA

Patrol track for 2024 - LHRA



The BAS enforcement unit collaborated with the Belize Coast Guard and Fisheries Department, to patrol 12,044.13 km this year. They engaged with 293 commercial fishing vessels and 1,407 fisherfolk, resulting in 16 arrests and assisting a distressed vessel at Blue Hole Natural Monument. Six joint patrols with the Fisheries Department aimed to reduce violations ahead of the conch and lobster seasons.

On May 18, 2024, they helped four distressed fishermen, one of whom was unconscious due to diabetes and high blood pressure. The HMC team, led by Reinaldo Caal, stabilized him with oxygen before transferring him to Belize City for further medical care.

PROSECUTION STATS:

Largest fine: $1,700 for the possession of Nassau Grouper (fillet) during the closed season.

PATROLS	AREA COVERED (KILOMETERS)	ILLEGAL ENTRY	JOINT PATROLS
386	12044.13	3	6

# OF ARRESTS	# WARNINGS
16	22

TERRESTRIAL: CROOKED TREE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY



The CTWS is a internationally recognized wetland and an important ecosystem within the Belize River watershed.

Staff on the ground at CTWS are tasked with park maintenance and visitor management. This year staff worked on repairing the board walk damaged by hurricane Lisa and continued to actively carry out educational presentations at schools within the buffer communities. During the period of flooding from Tropical Storm Sara, staff collaborated with local authorities to transport residents and deliver supplies, showcasing strong community cooperation. In addition to managing visitor activities, staff also offered assistance with research, and monitoring, environmental education, and community outreach initiatives.

On May 20, 2024, Minister Orlando Habet of the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Climate Change met with the Crooked Tree Local Advisory Committee (LAC) to discuss challenges facing the CTWS. During the meeting, LAC members highlighted the socio-economic significance of the Crooked Tree lagoon for fishing and tourism. They identified issues such as overfishing, an increase in non-traditional fishers, water flow blockages, vegetation changes, and a decline in bird sightings.



The committee called for the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), reclassification of the CTWS, and the development of guidelines for extractive activities within the lagoon. Minister Habet's visit was timely and welcomed by all members. His presence was seen as a commitment to forging a long-term relationship to address challenges in natural resources management.



SURVEILLANCE DUTIES:

CTWS staff conducted a total of 81 patrols throughout the sanctuary, covering a distance of 499.69 km. During these patrols, 5 human activities were noted, resulting in 1 human encounter. Most interactions were typically with wildlife, including crocodiles, manatees, and tarpon, underscoring the significance of maintaining an active presence within the sanctuary.

TERRESTRIAL:
COCKSCOMB BASIN WILDLIFE SANCTUARY & VICTORIA PEAK NATURAL MONUMENT



CBWS' Assistant Tourism Officer welcoming visitors

To ensure every guest leaves with a memorable experience, the CBWS team takes a hands-on approach to both visitor management and park maintenance. The sanctuary welcomed an impressive 13,684 visitors—both local and international—drawn by its natural beauty and diverse offerings. A highlight for many was river tubing, with 2,616 adventurers peacefully drifting down the South Stann Creek River, uncovering the hidden wonders of the sanctuary along the way. Others explored scenic trails like Ben's Bluff and the breathtaking Tiger Fern Waterfall. These numbers underscore CBWS's growing role as a premier destination and the vital importance of protected areas for recreation and connection with nature.

In addition to managing visitor activities, staff also offered assistance with research, and monitoring, environmental education, and community outreach initiatives.

When team members aren't engaged in welcoming visitors, they are spearheading infrastructure-related projects. This year, numerous initiatives have enhanced the visitor experience and tourism services at Cockscomb. Here are some key highlights:



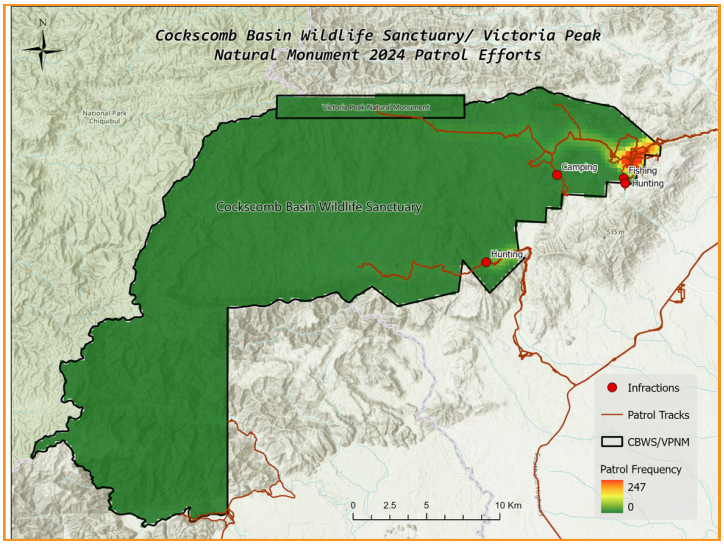
1. Installation of safety rope at the tubing entrance.
2. Upgrading of the Juan Branch access road.
3. Upkeep of the safety ropes on the Tiger Fern trial.
4. Repaired bridges on Victoria Peak Trail.
5. Maintenance of all infrastructures.
6. Maintenance of trails within the tourism zone.
7. Maintenace of river tubing route.



TERRESTRIAL:

ENFORCEMENT

This year the Cockscomb enforcement team conducted 327 patrols, covering a total distance of 5,607.09 km across key areas including Bladen/BFREE, Juan Branch, and the South Stann Creek River within the CBWS. During these patrols, only four signs of illegal hunting and fishing were recorded specifically in the Mexican Branch and Juan Branch areas—a significant drop from 26 incidents in 2023.





CBWS staff preparing for jungle patrol

This decline may be partly attributed to reduced surveillance caused by challenges such as the need for increased Government support to ensure ranger safety, especially since BAS rangers are not permitted to carry firearms on patrol. Collaboration with Government agencies remains vital, resulting in five joint patrols conducted in the area this year. Additionally, daily clearance patrols are carried out on frequently used trails to ensure visitor safety and satisfaction by removing fallen branches or other obstacles.

Significant enhancements at CBWS have resulted from the PACT Conservation Investment 'bridge' funds. Improvements included rehabilitating the Tiger Fern Trail, renovating the Long Cabin, and launching an online reservation system. Infrastructure upgrades at the campground involved constructing an outdoor restroom and two palapas. Additionally, the WWF Project upgraded the Juan Branch Ranger Outpost to enhance ranger welfare and operational capacity with better living quarters.



SUMMARY

Station	No. of Patrols	No. of Days	Distance (km)	Diesel (Gal.)	Gasoline (Gal.)	Human Activity	Human Encounter	Persons Detained
Headquarters	299	332	4,630.562	75.84	73.91	4	0	0
Juan Branch	28	31	976.528	0.09	20.13	0	0	0

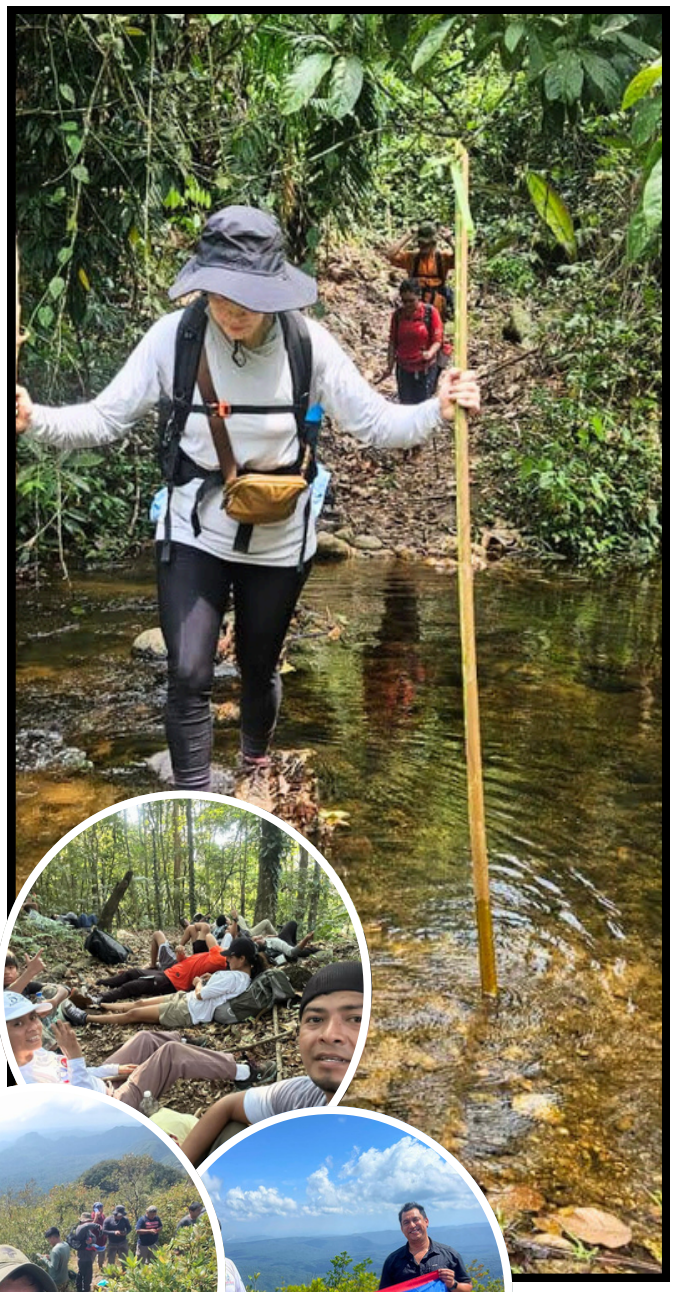
VICTORIA PEAK SEASON

Summiting Victoria Peak, the second-highest point in Belize, is one of the most challenging and rewarding adventure experiences Belize has to offer! This three-day hike pushes adventurers to their limits, testing both physical endurance and mental grit. The effort is more than worth it, though, as the reward is a breathtaking panoramic view of the Maya Mountain Massif. The sore muscles, the shared laughter, and the countless stories that come out of the journey make it an unforgettable adventure.

EXPEDITIONS
13

NUMBER HIKERS
78

NUMBER OF TOUR GUIDES
8

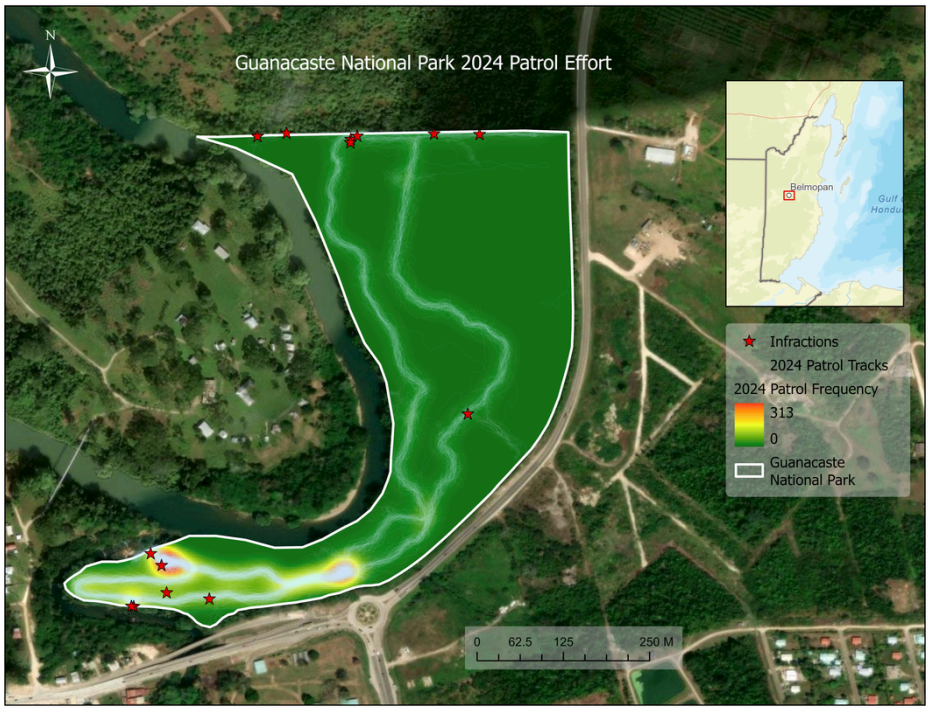


The season opened in March, with the first group setting out on the 4th, eager to conquer the peak. Over the season, 13 expeditions took place, with 78 adventurers joined by 8 expert guides, who shared their knowledge of the rugged terrain.

This challenging hike is for the brave, though many dream of taking it on. The season wrapped up at the end of May with the start of the rainy season, the last group leaving on the 24th. More than just a physical feat, the journey offers an unparalleled connection to nature and memories that last a lifetime.



TERRESTRIAL:
GUANACASTE NATIONAL PARK



GNP location map, showing patrol tracks and human activities.

Human activities range from illegal entry into the park to evidence of foot-trails and hunting/fishing.

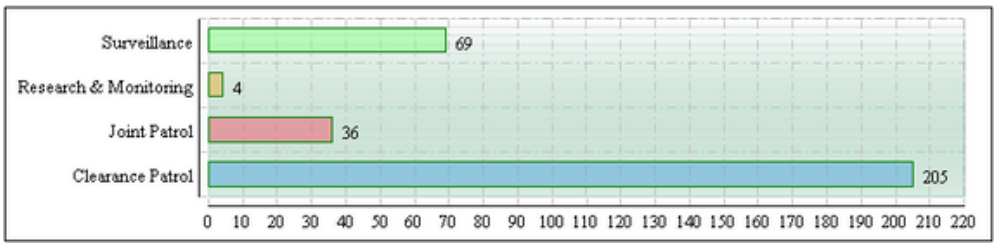
GNP welcomed over 6,518 visitors this year, including locals, international guests, and students, who came to enjoy its scenic nature trails and river views. Strategically located at the entrance of Belmopan City, GNP remains a popular educational green space, especially for primary school students participating in our Nature School Program. The park saw a significant increase in school visits during March and May, with student attendance exceeding 300 in each of those months. Parent participation also surged, peaking at over 200 in May, while teacher involvement remained steady, with a slight increase during the same period.

These trends reflect GNP's growing importance as a hub for conservation education. To support this growing interest, staff remain actively engaged with daily operations such as trail maintenance, guest services, patrols, and assistance with research and monitoring activities.

ENFORCEMENT

A total of 313 patrols were conducted, covering 546.78 km. Most of these were clearance patrols, performed daily to enhance the visitor experience, especially along the popular Guanacaste Trail. This trail loops through the southern section of the park and offers a leisurely walk with scenic overlooks of the Belize River and Roaring Creek from two elevated decks. During these patrols, 15 instances of unauthorized activity were recorded, leading to the apprehension of one individual. Due to GNP's proximity to human settlements, other minor incidents also required staff intervention, with warnings issued where necessary.

Patrols GNP_2024



TERRESTRIAL:

FIRE IMPACTS



GNP serves as a vital green space amid growing urban development and faces ongoing threats, such as illegal hunting, looting, unauthorized fishing, and fire damage. In the month of May, there were two separate fires. The first fire broke out on the 22nd at 5 PM along the Living Cycle Trail. Despite a swift response from teams at both GNP and SBHNP, dry conditions and high fuel loads made the blaze difficult to contain, and firefighting efforts continued until midnight. Preliminary reports suggest the fire may have been sparked by cigarette butts discarded on the nearby highway. A second, less intense fire occurred on the 24th along the Guanacaste Trail. Thanks to easier access to water from the Belize River, this fire was quickly controlled.

In total, 1.39 acres were burned: 1.17 acres on the Living Cycle Trail and 0.22 acres on the Guanacaste Trail.



Fire within GNP

TERRESTRIAL:

ST. HERMAN'S BLUE HOLE NATIONAL PARK







26,975 Visitors

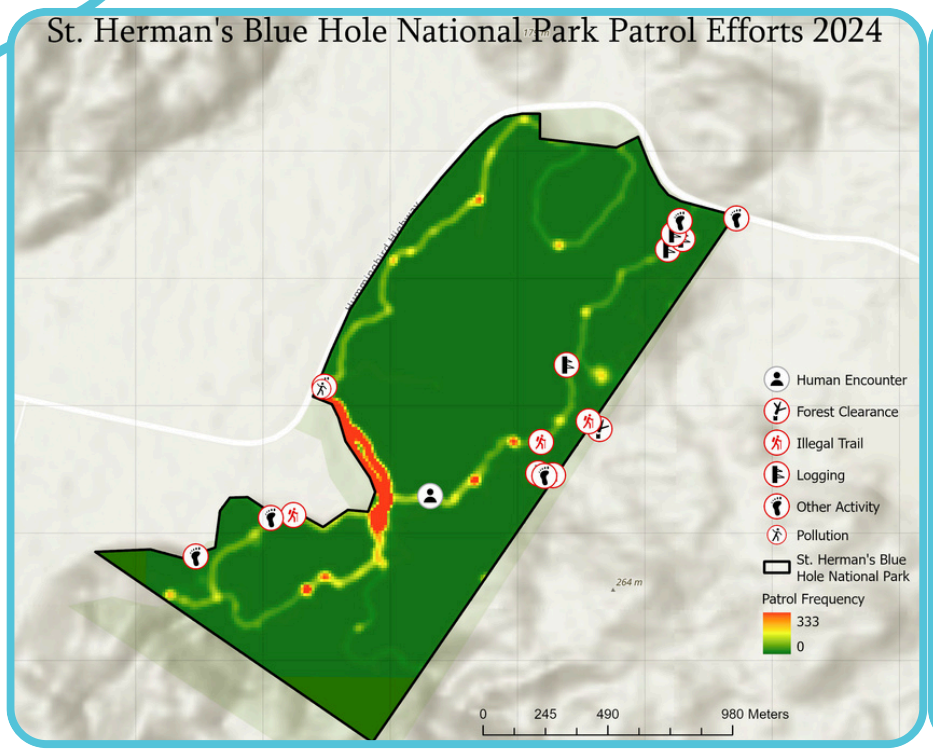
SHBHNP remains the most visited terrestrial protected area under the BAS' management, welcoming 26,975 visitors this year. This diverse group including locals, international tourists, students, and resort guests, reflects the park's wide appeal as a destination for relaxation, adventure, and education.

Known for its striking karst formations, refreshing turquoise Blue Hole, and vibrant nature trails, SHBHNP offers an ideal outdoor escape. Through guided tours, outreach programs, and meet-and-greets, park staff actively educate visitors about the area's natural and cultural significance. Beyond visitor engagement, SHBHNP staff are deeply involved in park maintenance, enforcement, biodiversity protection, and leading nature school tours. Their efforts in research, monitoring, and stakeholder support play a critical role in preserving the park's unique environment for future generations.



TERRESTRIAL:

ENFORCEMENT







SHBHNP staff conducted 364 patrols, covering a total of 901.60 kilometers. These patrols played a vital role in maintaining a strong daytime presence to deter illegal activities and ensure visitor safety. The park also collaborated with the Tourism Police Unit from the Roaring Creek branch, resulting in five joint patrols. Despite these efforts, several illegal activities were documented, particularly at night and along the park's eastern boundary —an area known for its difficult terrain.

Infractions included pollution, illegal hunting, and the logging of mahogany trees, all of which pose serious threats to the park's ecological integrity. Separate surveillance patrols are carried out in St. Herman's Cave and Crystal Cave. These patrols aim to ensure compliance with regulations governing archaeological sites (the caves) and tour guides.

In addition to ongoing patrol efforts, wildfires remain a recurring threat during the dry season with SHBHNP facing a major challenge on June 7 when an uncontrolled farm fire from Ringtail spread into the park, burning 3.8 hectares over three days before being extinguished by rainfall. Illegal logging, particularly of valuable hardwoods like mahogany, also continue to pressure the park's ecosystem. This activity not only threatens biodiversity by removing key wildlife habitats but also undermines the forest's role in carbon storage, alters ecosystem balance, reduces climate resilience, disrupts water cycles an increases land degradation.

RESEARCH & MONITORING

Biodiversity and ecosystem monitoring remain as pivotal conservation tools used to inform protected areas management. Notable highlights include stable populations of Nassau grouper and juvenile conch at LHRA, increased species richness of birds at the terrestrial sites and unfortunately, decreased live coral cover throughout the atoll. Interest from external researchers to conduct studies within the protected areas remained at a high level with three new studies implemented and two long-term monitoring studies with established partners continuing this year.

MARINE

Long-term reef monitoring is important and can provide critical data to help marine protected areas managers, users and policy makers understand the health of the reef, their dependence on its health and well-being, and the economic and social consequences of reef decline. Marine monitoring is conducted within the Lighthouse Reef Atoll (LHRA).

Spawning Aggregation for Nassau Grouper

1

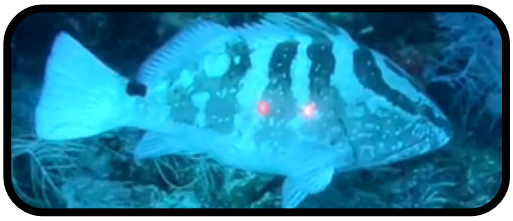
Sandbore continues to be an important spawning aggregation site within the LHRA for the **critically endangered** Nassau Grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*). The site continues to have high observations of individuals and is among the highest across the 13 SPAG sites in the country, thus indicating a stable population. Monitoring at Sandbore is conducted Jan and Feb of each year.

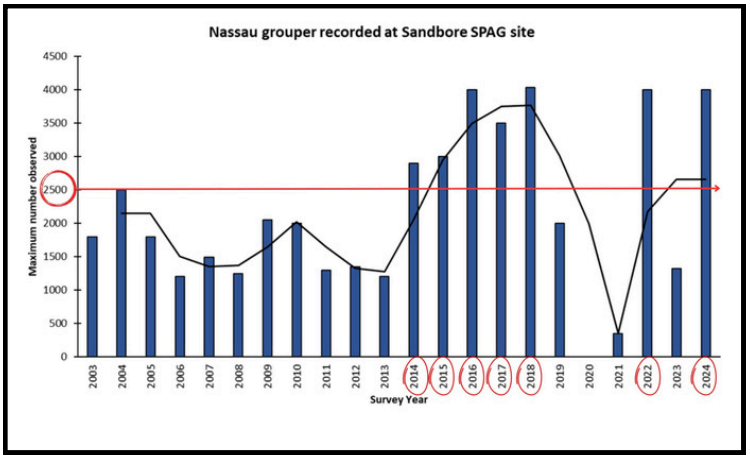
Maximum count and estimated length of individual Nassau Groupers are recorded from the underwater visual census. The season's maximum count observed was in January on a PM dive, 6 days after full moon for a count of 4000. In the last 10 years, there were 7 sightings of more than 2500 Nassau Grouper. Count is recorded for abundance and length for maturity.

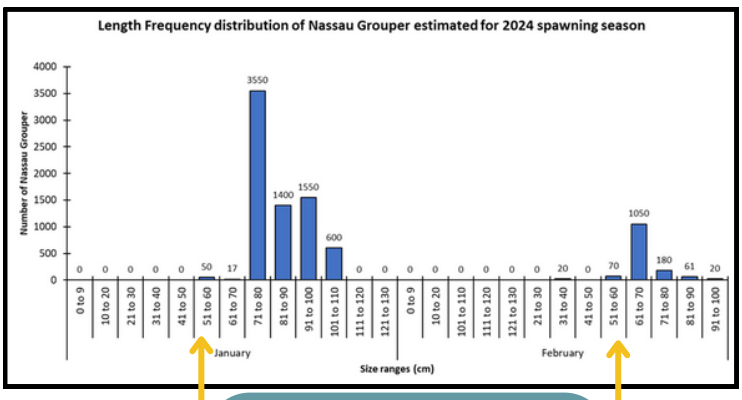


Closed season: December 1 to March 31 of the following year

Sexual maturity is estimated at 50.8cm (4-5 yrs old).







99% were MATURE

Conch density survey

2

Closed season:
July 1st to Sept 30th (closes earlier if quota is met)

LHRA continues to serve as a thriving nursery ground for the Queen Conch (*Aliger gigas*). High demand is still resulting in the illegal extraction of juveniles, thus threatening populations. The 2023-2024's season ended early with the fishing season closing on June 9. The density is estimated at 34 monitoring sites within the RZ and GUZ before and after the close of the fishing season.



Overall, the results show that LHRA largely supports a stable juvenile population of the Queen conch within all habitat types (dense seagrass, sparse seagrass and sandy areas).

Closing of 2023-2024 Fishing Season

1228 individuals observed & measured

Size classes for both GUZ and RZ **except juveniles in the RZ,** had a decrease in density.

The increase in juveniles in RZ is good and is a normal trend, indicating population growth.

Opening of 2024-2025 Fishing Season

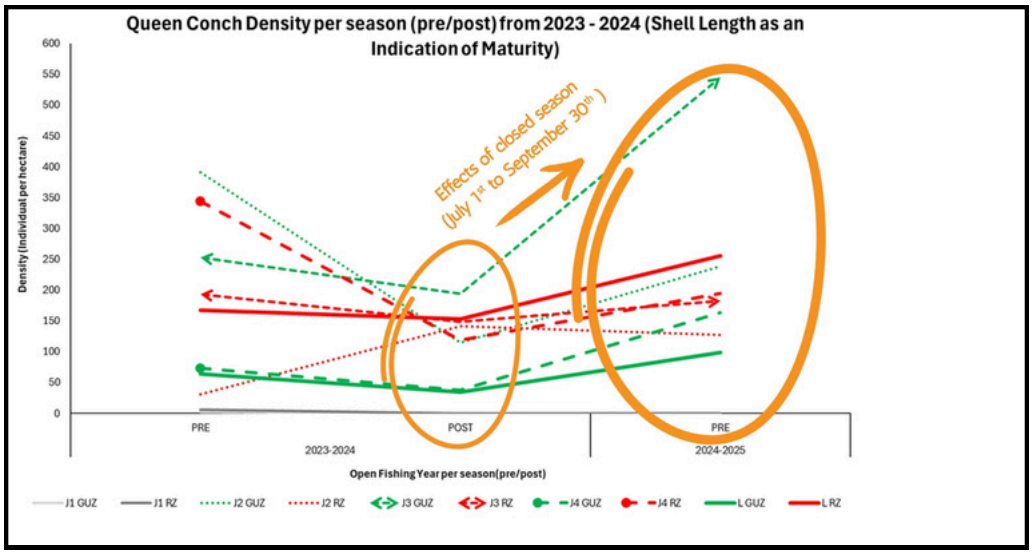
2675 individuals observed & measured

Size classes for both GUZ and RZ **except adults in the RZ** had an increase in density.

Indicates a normal trend which is good, except a decrease in adults in RZ indicates harvesting or migration.

Overall, higher densities of juveniles in GUZ and higher densities of adults in RZ.

Highest conch densities were found in sparse seagrass habitat located within the GUZ and majority were juveniles measuring 0 mm lip thickness (LT) of their shell.



Conch population seems to bounce back with increased densities at opening of season (pre).

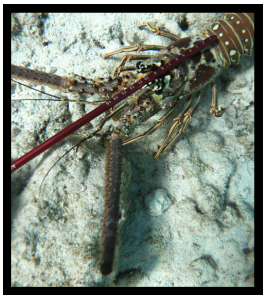
*Replenishment Zone (RZ)=protected zone ; General Use Zone (GUZ)=open to fishing

Lobster survey

3

Marine protected areas help maintain healthy lobster populations by preserving the coral reefs and seagrass beds where lobsters live and breed. Sustainable fishing practices within these zones are key to the long-term success of the lobster fishery.

Surveys are conducted within the RZ and GUZ before season opens and after the season closes. Results show an increase in number of individuals from closing to opening of fishing season.



Closed season:
March 1st to June 30th

Closing of 2023-2024 Fishing Season

24 sites were surveyed- 201 were observed of which **176** individuals measured during the post season lobster survey conducted in March.

carapace length (CL)

(1) Overall, **64%** measured less than the 3 inches legal carapace length, thus making them **juveniles**/ undersized

zone

RZ or GUZ

(2) Overall, more individuals were encountered in the **GUZ** and this accounted for **54%** of the total--**juveniles**

(3) **46%** of total in **RZ** there were more adults than juveniles

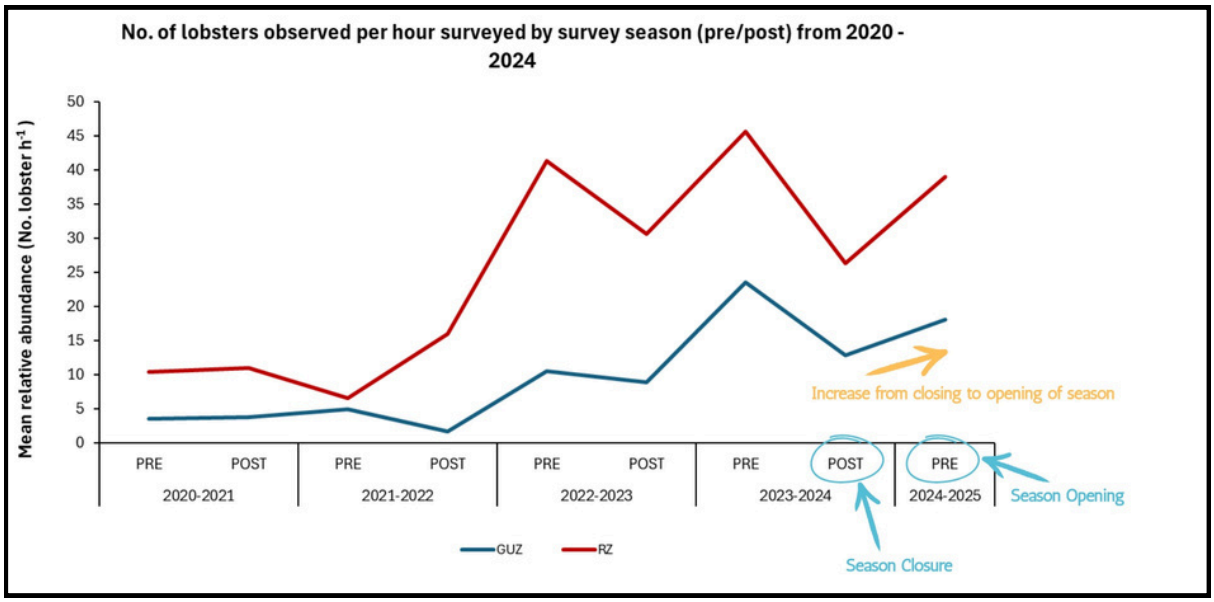
Opening of 2023-2024 Fishing Season

24 sites were surveyed-279 **were observed of which 186** individuals were measured during the pre season lobster survey conducted in June.

(1) overall, **62%** measured more than the 3 inches legal carapace length, thus making them **adults**

(2) overall, more individuals were encountered in the **GUZ** and this accounted for **58%** of the total--adults

(3) the **42%** in the RZ represented more **adults**



**In the last season, the majority of indiv. 6-8 cm CL

**In the last 3 years the mean relative abundance has been higher in RZ!

***Replenishment Zone (RZ)=protected zone ; General Use Zone (GUZ)=open to fishing**

Coral Bleaching

4

Coral reefs face many threats/stressors and coral bleaching, is just one. The zooxanthellae algae is expelled in response to stress and in the case of coral bleaching, it is often triggered by extreme sea surface temperatures. This loss causes the corals to turn white, a phenomenon known as coral bleaching.

At LHRA the most severe bleaching year to date is 2017 with 40% of all corals surveyed exhibiting either partial or whole bleaching. From the 12 monitoring sites, a total of 34 species were identified within the atoll. Notably, the boulder star coral species exhibited the highest mortality rate during both surveys in October (47%) and November (56%).

Additionally, live coral cover has declined across the atoll at the current bleaching sites. Coral bleaching increased from 31.7% in October to 34.9% in November, for an overall combined 33%.

3 most dominant species observed

Mustard Hill Coral
Lettuce-leaf Coral
Boulder Star Coral

Among these, only the Boulder Star Coral is considered a "reef-building" species.



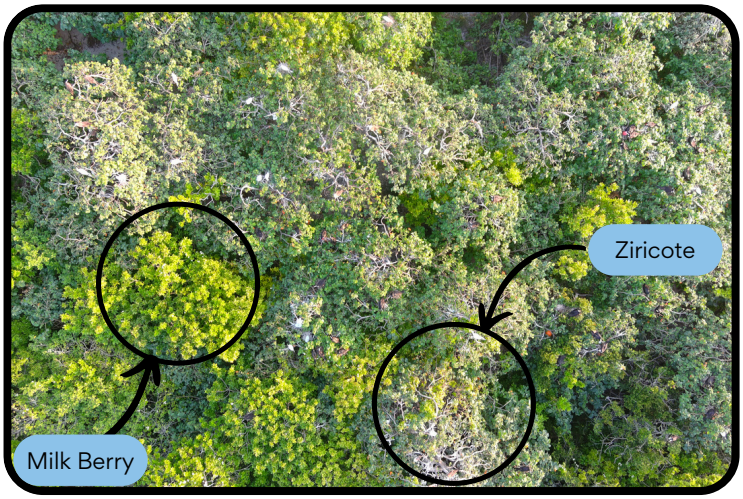
Seabird Census

5

The census on Half Moon Caye for resident sea birds (Red-footed Booby and Magnificent frigatebird) within the littoral was conducted using the drone method.



Seabird monitoring across the Caribbean now uses drone instead of a transect method. Census was done in March during the nesting season to capture both adults and chicks. Additional data on the birds' preference for nesting trees were noted with the Boobies favoring ziricote trees and frigates favoring milk berry trees.



Estimated Population

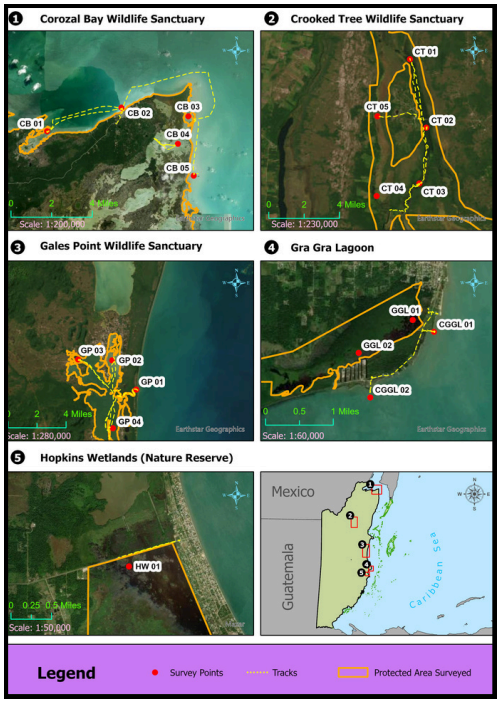
Magnificent Frigatebird	Red-footed Booby
	
n=1433	n=822

TERRESTRIAL

The forest and wetland ecosystems provide many services and functions for both wildlife and humans and as such, the interdependence must be monitored, particularly those areas that are protected. Monitoring within these ecosystems is conducted within the BAS terrestrial protected areas.

Waterbird Census 1

BAS remains as the BirdLife partner in Belize and ensures that the Central American Waterbird Census (CAWC) is conducted annually. The five locations across the country were surveyed and resulted in 50 species and 1777 individual birds being recorded, which is a decrease when compared to last year. Of the 17 waterbird families observed, the top two bird families recorded were Ardeidae (Bitterns, Herons and Egrets) with 12 spp. and Scolopacidae (Sandpipers) with 10 spp.



The **Little Blue Heron** was the most dominant and frequent species across the 5 locations. Corozal Bay had the highest number of individuals (883) recorded from 29 species, while Gales Point Wildlife Sanctuary and Hopkins wetlands has the least number of individuals and species.



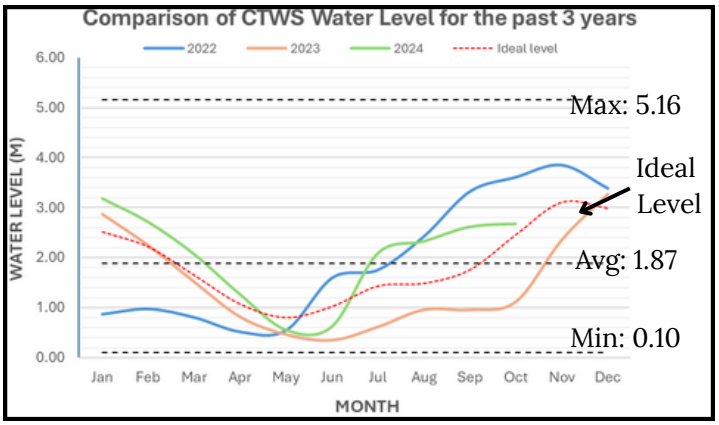
The 'rare bird' alert for this year were the American Oyster Catcher and Yellow-breasted Crake.

Water Level 2

In general, monitoring water levels can have numerous environmental benefits and particularly so for the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary, which serves as sponge for excess water overflowing from the Belize River during flood events. The Metrology Office along with our rangers continue to monitor the water levels on a daily basis.

2024 started with higher water levels compared to 2022 and 2023 having less fluctuations. Lowest was 0.4 m in June; however, TS Sarah caused drastic increase in water levels peaking in Nov at 4.3m.

2023 exhibited a more gradual increase in June reaching its peak in Nov around the ideal.



2022 exhibited the most significant fluctuations, peaking at the end of Oct, surpassing both the average and ideal.

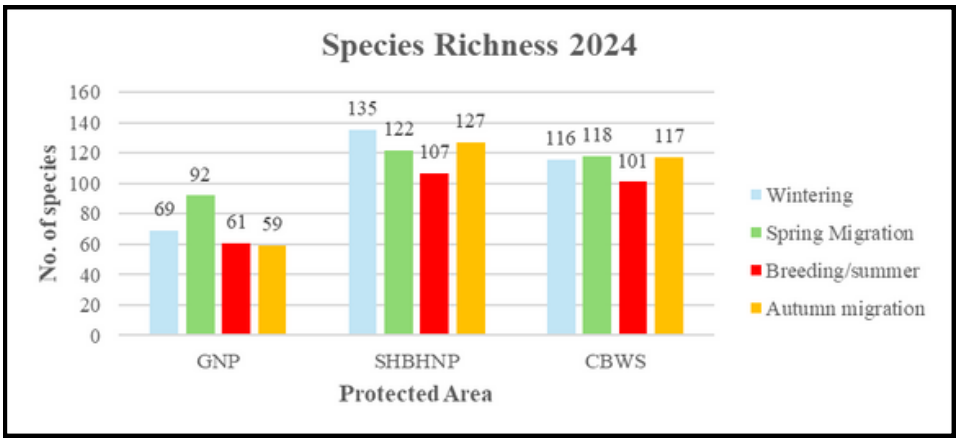
Sept 2019 holds the record for lowest water level and **2020** for the highest in the last 10 years. Dry seasons correlates in higher species richness for waterbirds.

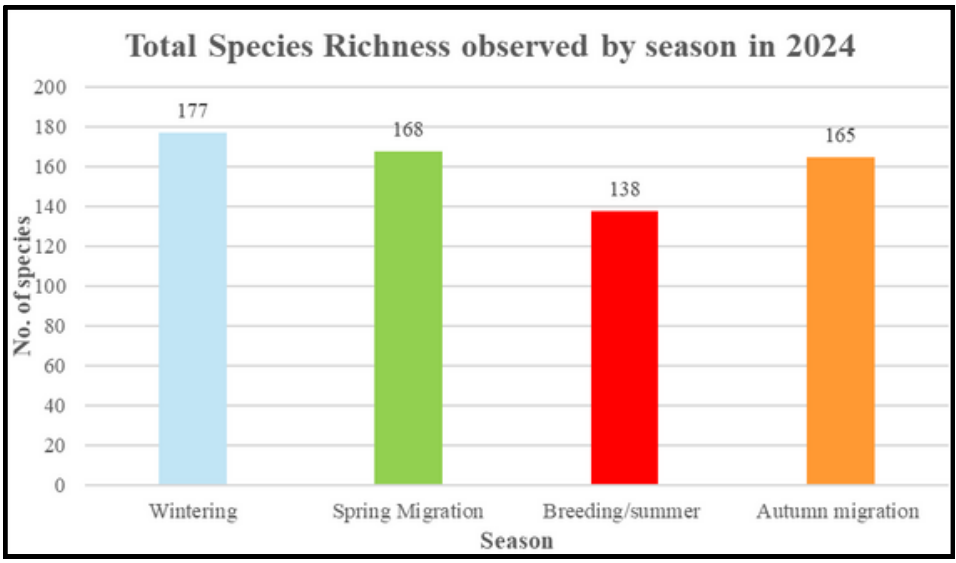
Forest Birds Surveys

3

Birds serve as key indicators of environmental health-- it's an indication of the health of our protected areas—the forest, wetlands and waterways.

PROALAS PROTOCOL





SHBHNP had the highest species richness across all seasons.

SHBHNP's diverse habitats secondary growth forest, edge, scrubland, and fallow land is a well-suited foraging site for certain species of birds such as Warblers, Gnatcathers, Grosbeaks and Seedeaters.

The transition between Autumn Migration to Wintering Season shows a similar species richness. However, the diversity decreases after Spring Migration when the migratory birds leave Belize.

Kentucky Warbler was the most dominant species.

MOSI PROTOCOL

The monitoring season led by UBERI using the MOSI protocol (bird banding) ran from November 2023 to March 2024.



This protocol focuses on monitoring the survival of migrant species during their wintering season. The team observes and records general health including fat content, feather condition, weight and determines age and sex.

Many birds exhibit site fidelity to CBWS indicating the forest is healthy and serves as a suitable "wintering ground".



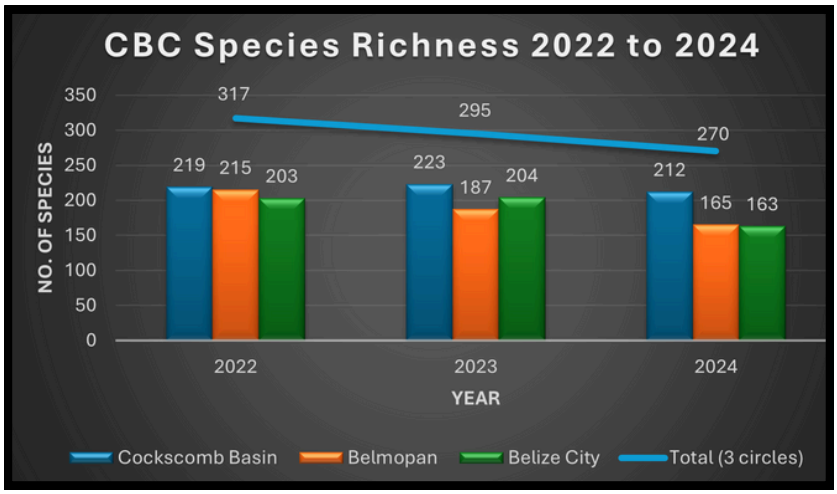
Total birds captured for this season was 423 species and 107 banded. Recaptures: 37 were migrants and 2 residents. Most of the species caught between Nov to Jan were insectivores and frugivores and then shifted to more nectarivores, and granivores in February and March.

Christmas Bird Count

6

Annually between Dec 15 and Jan 5, we participate in the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count. We lead three count circles namely, Belize City, Belmopan and Cockscomb Basin. The staff also participate in counting birds at other circles across the country.

72 participants (57 males and 15 females) recorded **270 species** across the 3 circles!





Species richness was slightly lower, primarily due to rain before the count in Cockscomb Basin and Belize City, and rainfall during the survey in Belmopan. Additionally, it was noted that the overall species richness across the three sites declined each year. This suggests a possible shift in species distribution and diversity, potentially linked to climate change or other factors.

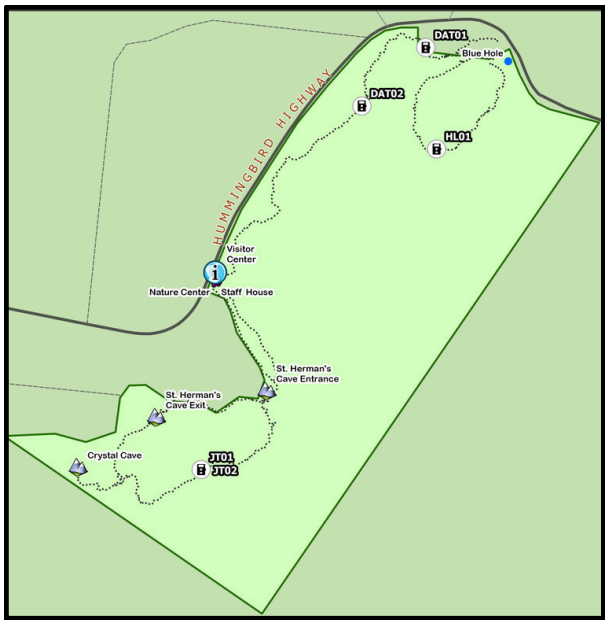
Mammals

5

Mammals play an important role in ecosystems by providing/maintaining essential services and functions. Mammal monitoring was conducted at SHBHNP by the staff.

Data collection Jan to Oct from 5 cameras detected 16 mammal species including collared peccary, central american agouti, white-nosed coati and other notable species like coyote, striped hog-nosed skunk and great curassow.

The puma was most dominant species in SHBHNP.









ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & COMMUNICATIONS



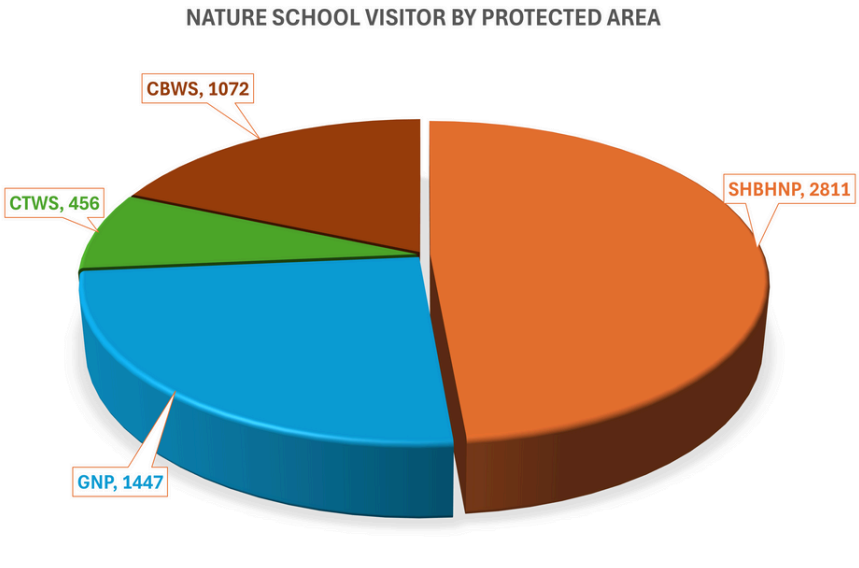
Students on tour at SHBHNP

NATURE SCHOOL AT OUR PARKS

SHBHNP, CBWS, GNP, and CTWS, four of our terrestrial parks, continue to serve as outdoor classrooms, welcoming students from across Belize to explore nature and learn about conservation. In 2024, park rangers hosted over 5,786 visitors, from as far as Corozal Town to Bella Vista Government School in the south, offering guided tours that highlight the unique ecosystems of and the importance of protected areas.

The nature school season runs from February to May, peaking in May, with SHBHNP receiving the highest number of visits. SHBHNP led with 35 tours for 2,811 students, parents, and teachers, followed by GNP with 1,447 visitors. In total, 4,709 students and 1,416 parents visited our co-managed sites this year, reinforcing the importance of protected areas in environmental education through hands-on learning experiences.


Students on tour at CBWS



Park rangers from SHBHNP, CBWS, GNP, and CTWS are dedicated to improving the nature school program, aiming to inspire the next generation of environmental stewards.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



WORLD WETLANDS DAY

In February, outreach activities for World Wetlands Day were held at Crooked Tree Government School and high schools such as Nazarene and Ladyville Technical. These events engaged students through interactive games and cleanup activities, highlighting the importance of wetlands for human well-being. The theme “Wetlands and Human Well-being” resonated with the students as they sorted plastics and planted trees, learning practical ways to protect their ecosystems.

CELEBRATING REEF WEEK

In March, Reef Week outreach involved students from Copper Bank RC and Chunox SDA schools, promoting coral reef conservation through interactive sessions. Hands-on activities deepened their understanding of coral ecosystems and sparked curiosity. The sessions aimed to foster appreciation for coral reefs' role in marine biodiversity and the economy. Many students showed enthusiasm and interest in pursuing marine biology. We hope to inspire future conservationists to protect Belize’s marine environments.



Photo above: Students from the northern communities are learning the importance of coral reefs.

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

In October, the World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) outreach program, themed “Protect Insects, Protect Birds,” engaged with four schools surrounding the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary (CTWS). Students explored their local environments for insects and created bird-themed artwork, gaining a deeper understanding of the delicate balance within ecosystems. These hands-on experiences made a lasting impression, inspiring students to view themselves as stewards of their environment.



Photo above: Students from Carmelita Government School partaking in WMBD activities

GREENING ACROSS BELIZE

During the Greening Across Belize initiative, 500 hardwood trees and 100 ornamental plants were distributed to schools, community groups, and the general public, particularly in areas near protected zones. The trees were given away in April at the Belize City office and Guanacaste National Park. Special planting activities were held with 6 schools and two youth groups, Red Bank Scarlet Youth Empowerment Organization and Santa Rosa Youth Group, who also continue to care for the trees within their communities. Together, they planted 20 mahogany trees with local support. Additionally, the environmental education team implemented GIS technology through Survey 123 dashboards to digitally track and record tree distribution. A total of 467 trees were successfully recorded and planted during this year's campaign.



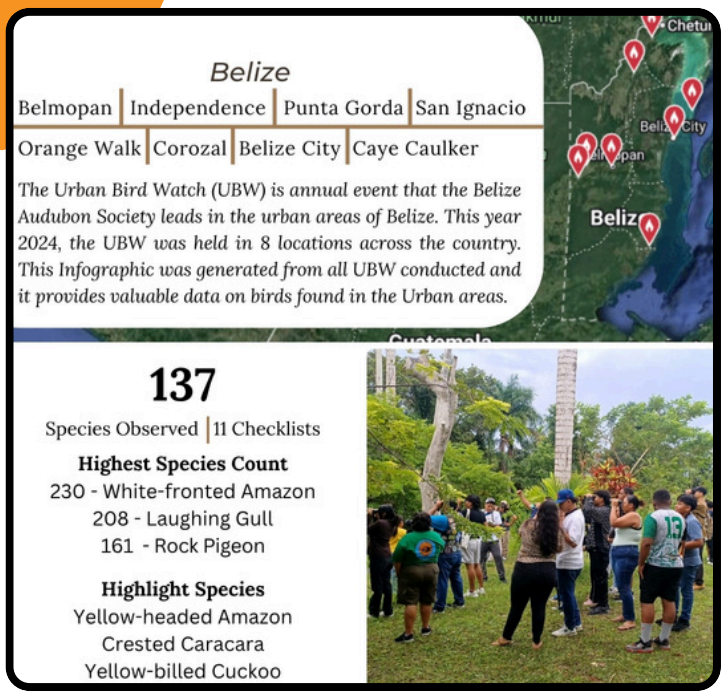
Students planting trees for Earth Day



CLICK HERE FOR DASHBOARD

BIRD CONSERVATION & AWARENESS

With their stunning colors and migratory paths, birds are central to our efforts. The year ended with birdwatching events celebrating Belize's rich bird diversity and involving communities in citizen science initiatives.



URBAN BIRD WATCH

The **Urban Bird Watch (UBW),** conducted at nine locations from Corozal to Punta Gorda in October and November, stood out as a key event. Despite occasional weather obstacles, **217 participants** met with BAS staff to spot **137 bird species**, featuring remarkable sightings such as the *White-tailed Kite*, known for its distinctive hovering hunting technique, the *Cape May Warbler,* with its striking yellow and black plumage, and the *Ringed Kingfisher,* a large, colorful bird often seen near water. These unique sightings added to the excitement of the event.

In Spanish Lookout, we encountered an unexpected turnout of over **100 participants**, far exceeding our initial expectations of 50. This challenge was transformed into a learning opportunity. The participants were divided into smaller groups and led by experienced birders. This approach ensured that everyone could learn about and connect with the birds in their local environment, despite the larger-than-anticipated crowd.



GLOBAL BIG DAY

The Global Big Day on May 11th was a resounding success, bringing youths from four communities: Maya Mopan, Red Bank, Georgetown, and Santa Rosa to the CBWS and Hopkins Wetland for an enriching bird watching experience. Despite the mid-morning heat, the group's enthusiasm remained high as they learned about bird and insect interconnections and recorded species like the Orchard Oriole and White-fronted Parrot.

This event was a testament to our collective dedication to environmental education and conservation.



Photo: Youths from Southern Communities partaking in Global Big Day

As a continuation of this initiative, workshops in August at CBWS for the southern communities and CTWS for youths in Crooked Tree village further honed participants' bird identification skills. At Crooked Tree, a boat tour of the lagoon left youths in awe of their local ecosystem, many experiencing it for the first time. These activities weren't just about spotting birds but sparking a lifelong appreciation for nature.

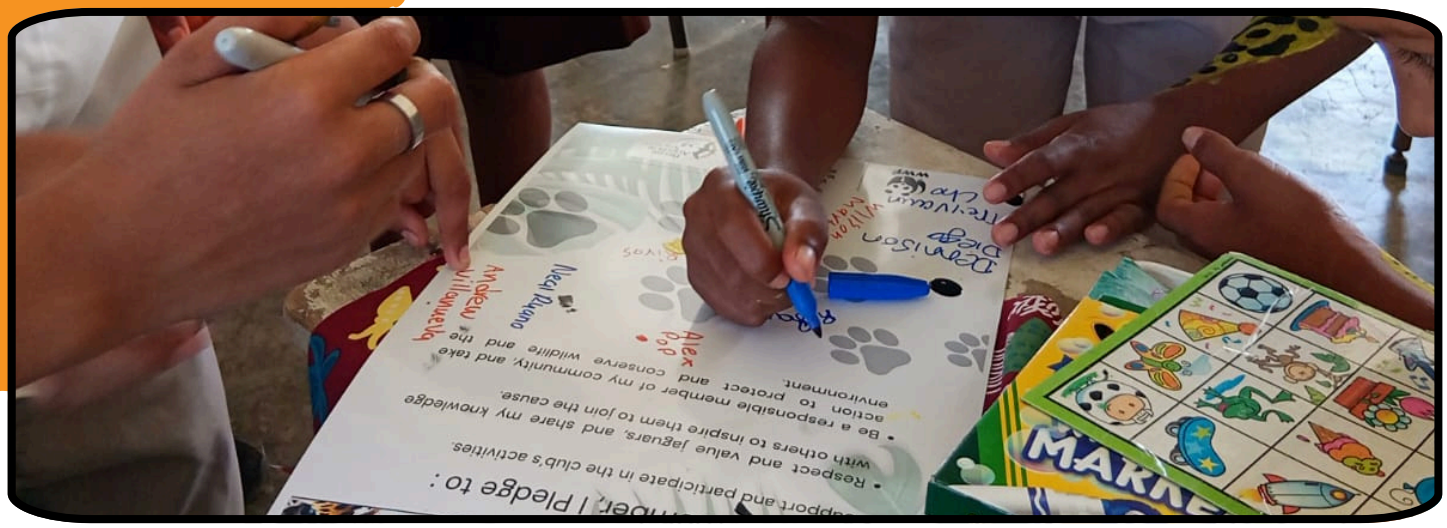


Photo: Youths from Crooked Tree village on the birding tour in the lagoon

SUMMER CAMPS

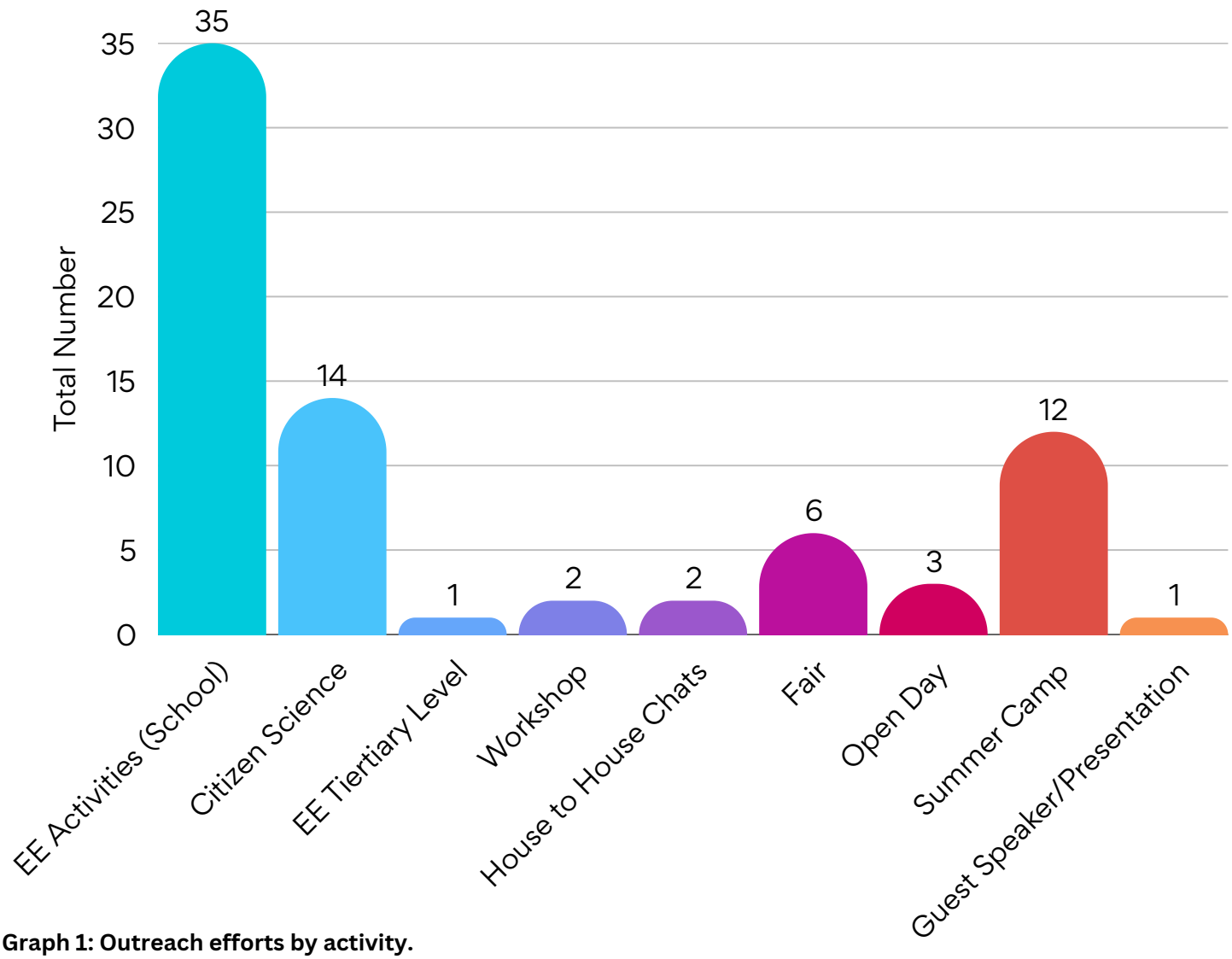
Summer camps were a key part of our outreach efforts. In July, we partnered with organizations such as Clearwater Marine Camp, Leo Bradley Library, and Turton Library to engage over 100 children. Participants explored Belize's biodiversity and the significance of protected areas through skits, animal cutouts, and plant giveaways. At the Sandy Hunter Library in Orange Walk, animal masks brought the lessons to life. Meanwhile, Port Loyola Summer Camp participants left with plants to care for, symbolizing their commitment to a greener future.

SCHOOL OUTREACH



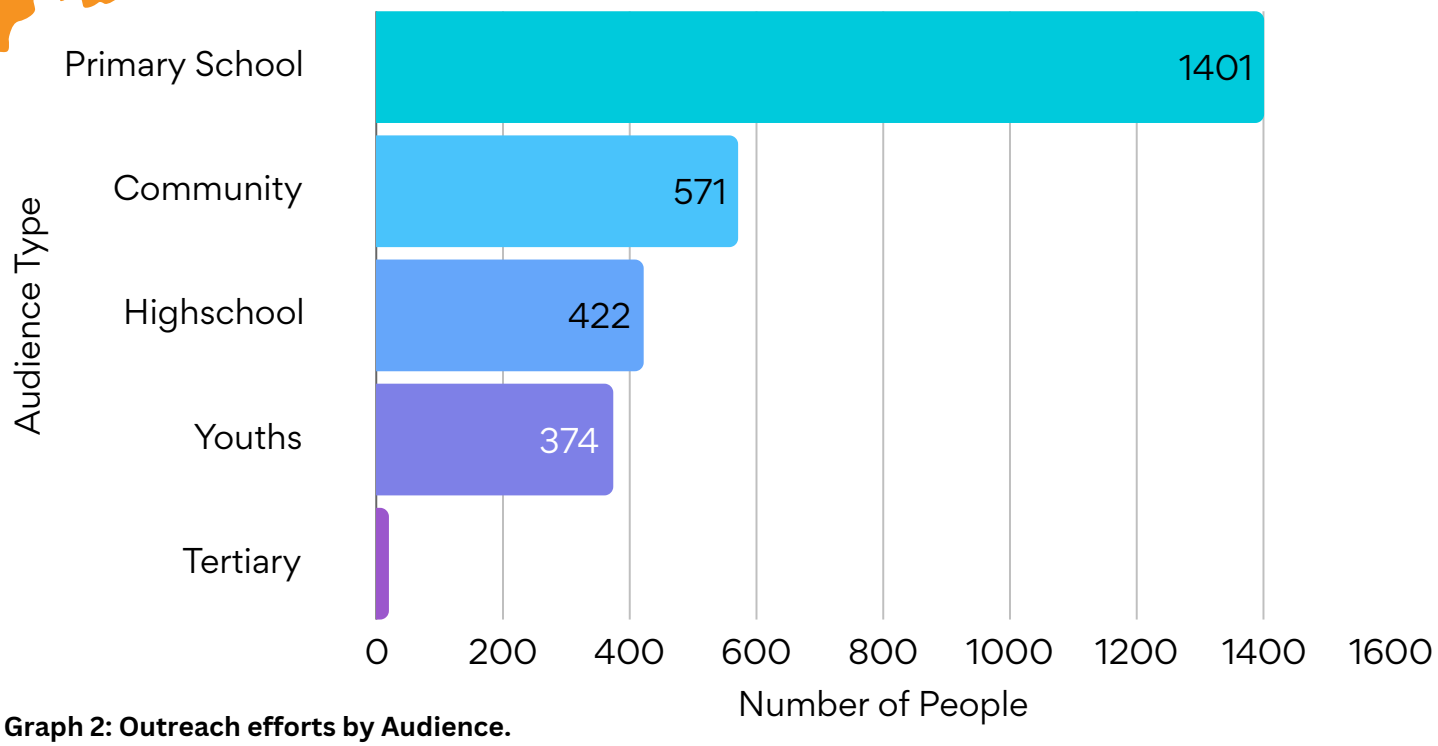
PLANTING SEEDS OF ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Throughout 2024, our school outreach initiatives engaged students from Infant 1 through high school, fostering curiosity and a sense of responsibility for the environment. The Environmental Education Officer traveled to schools throughout Belize, from Crooked Tree to Red Bank, providing presentations on biodiversity, wetlands, and conservation. Our outreach efforts resulted in 76 activities, reaching diverse age groups, as illustrated in the charts below.



Graph 1: Outreach efforts by activity.

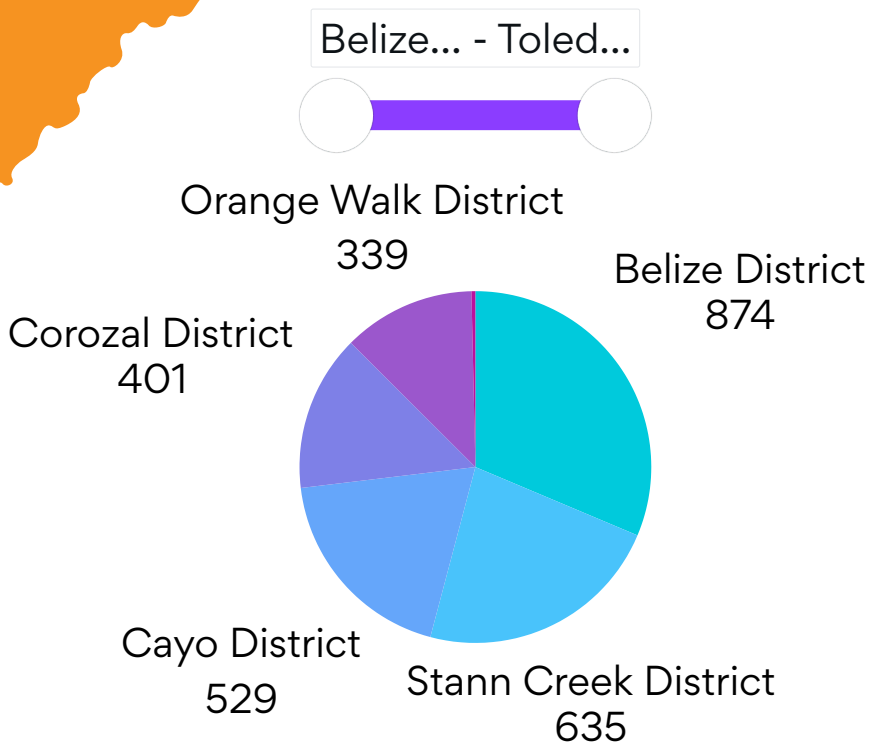
Out of the 76 activities conducted, **EE Activities (School)** and **Citizen Science** led in the number of events held throughout the year, as shown in *Chart 1*. The EE Activities includes internationally recognized days such as **World Wetlands Day**, **Earth Day**, and **World Migratory Bird Day**, among others. During these events, the Environmental Education Unit prepares lessons and raises awareness about the observed environmental days. Although most bird clubs were paused due to COVID-19, we successfully re engaged two school in communities surrounding SHBHNP.



Graph 2: Outreach efforts by Audience.

The Environmental Education Unit engaged various audiences across all ages through various activities with this year significantly enhancing outreach in primary schools. The initiatives planned for the year not only focus on students at various levels but also aim to involve community members, as illustrated above in Graph 2.





Graph 3: Outreach efforts by district

Our outreach efforts were successful across Belize, with the Belize District recording the highest number of visits. Following closely behind is the Stann Creek District, where we were concluding a campaign on water conservation and the continuation of the Jaguar Club. Most visits in each district targeted primary schools, as reflected in Grapht 2, and this is further supported by Graph 1, which shows that Environmental Education Days had the highest count.

TOTAL NUMBERS ON OUTREACH EFFORTS

2,856K	67	468	475
PEOPLE	TEACHERS/GUARDIANS	MALES	FEMALES
Total number of People engaged in the activities carried out.	Participated in several activities conducted.	Mostly from schools that were engaged in Education Outreach	Mostly from schools that were engaged in Education Outreach

At the end of the year, our outreach efforts successfully engaged 2,856 individuals across Belize, ranging from primary school students to community members. These initiatives fostered a sense of environmental responsibility and inspired the next generation of environmentalists. Additionally, 67 teachers participated in various activities at their schools. Through events held, such as World Wetlands Day and the World Migratory Bird Day, as well as through the bird and jaguar clubs, individuals were encouraged to change their perspectives and become environmental stewards.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION, AWARENESS & STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS



Under the BIOPAMA project a comprehensive case study was completed on BAS' community outreach and engagement projects, implemented over the past 15 years in 10 communities adjacent to its co-managed protected areas. This case study offers valuable insights into the effectiveness of these initiatives, highlighting best practices, lessons learned, and challenges encountered.

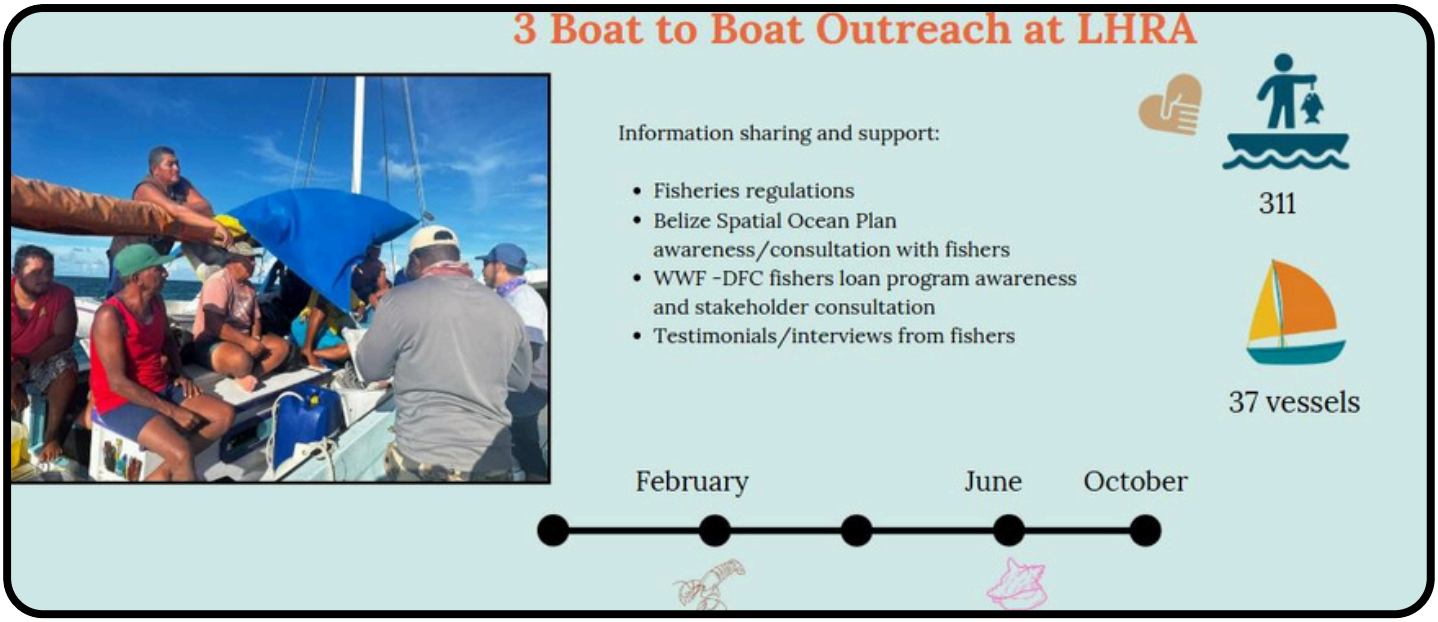
The report provides actionable recommendations for the design and implementation of similar community-based projects, drawing from BAS's extensive experience in fostering community involvement in conservation efforts.

It emphasizes the importance of participatory approaches, capacity building, and sustained community engagement to achieve long-term environmental and social outcomes.

The Boat-to-Boat outreach at LLHRA continued in 2024, strengthening communication and collaboration with fishers directly at sea. These informal but valuable interactions allow us to share important updates, listen to fishers' concerns, and gather insights to improve fisheries management.

2024 Boat to Boat Highlights

Three outreach sessions conducted in February, July and October. 311 fishers from 37 fishing vessels were engaged, with majority of fishers originating from Chunox, Copper Bank, Sarteneja and Belize City.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Four active Local Advisory Committees (LACs) in 2024



The four established LACs met on a quarterly basis. The Community Liaison Officer and the protected areas unit continue to work closely with the four active committees, which serve as platforms for dialogue and collaboration between community members, conservation partners, and government departments. The meetings create a safe space where members share information and jointly work on addressing protected areas management challenges, and strengthen collaboration for the protection of shared resources within the landscape and seascape of our comanaged protected areas.



CBWS/VP protected areas manager presenting at LAC meeting

In addition, the LAC serves as the bridge to improve relationships between BAS and buffer communities while ensuring that local voices are heard in the management of protected areas.



Fishermen from Crooked Tee at meeting with BAS staff

Starting mid-2024, the Protected Areas Manager and the Community Liaison Officer worked closely with key leaders and stakeholders of Crooked Tree village to build trust and raise awareness about the need to reclassify the sanctuary to a Wildlife Sanctuary II. This reclassification would allow for the sustainable extraction of resources within the protected area. The current designation, established in the 1980s, prohibits any extraction, leading to long-standing conflicts between BAS and the primary beneficiary community of Crooked Tree.

The active engagement through the LAC has created a more amenable environment for constructive dialogue between BAS and the community.

COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECT FEATURE:

Working together to improve sustainable livelihoods in the Maya Forest

CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITY & LIVELIHOOD ASSESSMENT

In July 2024, in partnership with WWF Belize, we secured funding to implement the project titled **"Empowering People, Improving Livelihoods, and Conserving Forests in the Maya Forest Landscape."** This 18-month initiative aims to enhance the livelihoods of communities adjacent to the CBWS, which is part of the broader Maya Forest.

The project commenced with the hiring of a consultant to collaborate with us in conducting a Climate Change Vulnerability & Livelihoods Assessment (CCVLA) for seven priority communities within the CBWS landscape: Maya Center, Santa Rosa, San Roman, Santa Cruz, Red Bank, Maya Mopan, and Georgetown. This assessment is the first of its kind for these communities. The assessment framework included a literature review and analysis of primary data collected through household surveys and community focus group discussions.

Between November and December 2024, data collection activities were carried out:

- 541 individuals participated in household surveys.
- 77 participants engaged in focus group sessions, representing a diverse demographic including women, youth, and the elderly.

Discussions centered on the impacts of climate change and potential sustainable livelihood opportunities. Key climate hazards and environmental changes were identified and documented. Through a participatory approach, the communities proposed a list of sustainable livelihood initiatives.

This initiative seeks to support communities in adapting to climate change while promoting long-term economic stability. The assessment is slated for completion in January 2025.



Focus group meeting Georgetown Village



Focus group meeting Red Bank village

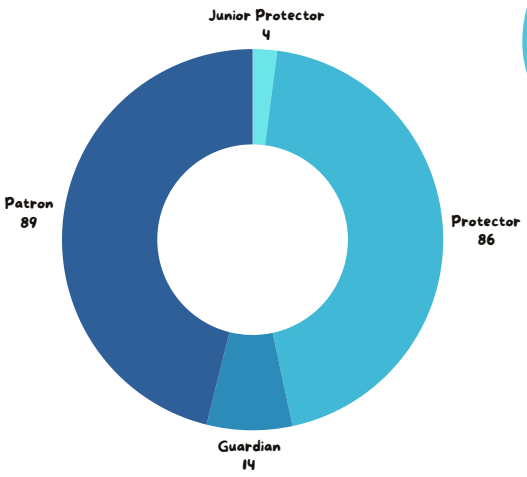
MEMBERSHIP & PUBLICITY

MEMBERSHIP STATUS

At the start of 2024 the count for active members stood at 193. The active members (in good standing) at end of December 2024 dropped to 134. This year we welcomed 30 new members and 63 members renewed their membership, while 59 members lapsed (fees delinquent for more than 6 months). Majority of the current members are within the Patron and Protector categories.

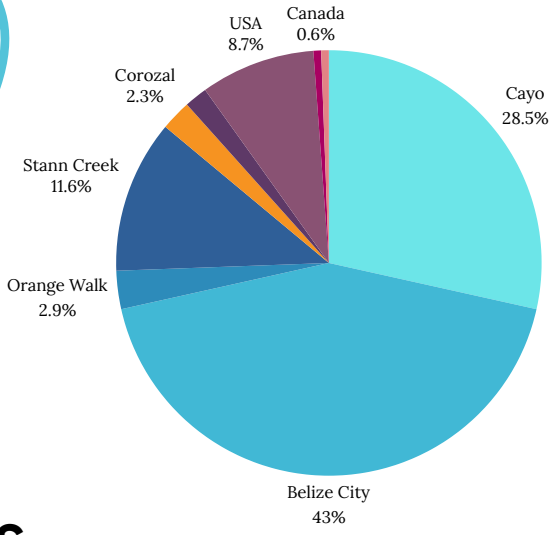
Communication to members was done through email and quarterly e-news shared with members, partners and donors. Social media was also used to promote membership and events.

MEMBERS BY CATEGORY



Members are: 88% Belizean; 9% North American (Canada & USA) and; 1% from India.

MEMBERS BY LOCATION



EXPLORING BAS' PROTECTED AREAS

Members and potential members were targeted over the summer months through two planned activities--bird watching and nature walks at GNP in the month of August and two, day trips to HMC and BH Natural Monuments. Four 1 year-free membership and bird field guide were raffled to participants as an incentive to become more actively involved in membership and support BAS' conservation work.



40 participants came out in August for birdwatching at GNP





151 people got to experience the beauty of HMC & BH on these July excursions.

MEMBERSHIP & PUBLICITY

COMMUNICATION

The Communications Unit oversees the organization's presence across multiple social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube. In addition to managing these channels, the team is responsible for creating and disseminating a variety of content, such as videos, photographs, advertisements, and vacancy announcements. They also issue public alerts regarding sub-optimal conditions at protected areas, ensuring that the public is informed about current status and safety considerations.

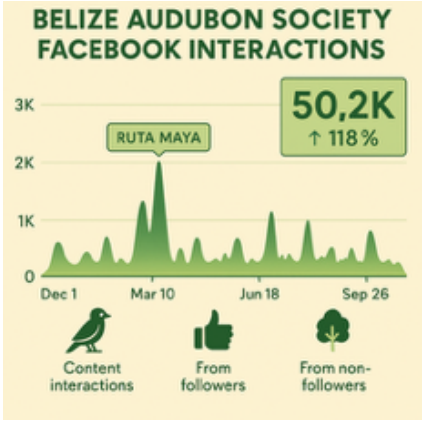
SOCIAL MEDIA STATS :

The combination of our social media accounts reached over 2,000,000 accounts and generated views of over 900,000. This includes videos and photos and text in various combinations as posts, stories and reels. Facebook continues to be the dominant social media platform to reach people with 20,413 followers. Instagram tends to reach a younger audience that is more visual. The YouTube platform is an online archive that captures specific events in the year, 29 videos were archived this year.

Several of our posts on Facebook were picked up and shared by other social media news outlets such as Breaking Belize News, Hot Off the Press, Channel 7 and 5 news, giving us a wider reach than expected.

TOP FEATURES AND STORIES:

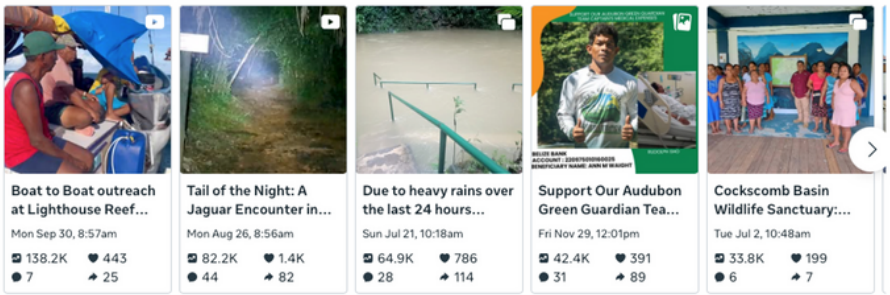
Various productions covered key events and milestones throughout the year, including BAS being awarded the conservation investment partner of the year award by PACT, the annual Christmas Bird Count, and World Wetlands Day activities —featuring children's greetings and outreach efforts from Crooked Tree, as well as cleanup activities and community messages from local businesses like Bird's Eye View Lodge. The Audubon Green Guardian's coverage during the four day La Ruta Maya Belize River Challenge drew a lot of attention to the Facebook page, showing spikes in the month of March for reach and engagement.



Our 55th anniversary was highlighted with a special video on legacy was shared on social media. Local media coverage also featured the James A. Waight Award, the Central American Waterbird Census, and a youth birding trip to Hopkins Wetlands, which aired on local news. Our support in the San Antonio (Cayo) fire response was also covered by local media. Promotional videos for the Belize Birding Festival and a Strategic Enforcement Plan developed with three partner NGOs were released.

A total of 10 stories featuring our work appearing in local news segments.

BAS was mentioned in 40 online articles, news stories, and blogs.



MEMBERSHIP & PUBLICITY

38TH JAMES A. WAIGHT CONSERVATION AWARD HONORS THE LEGACY OF MATTHEW MILLER (AWARDED POSTHUMOUSLY)



Miller family alongside members of the Waight Family at the award ceremony

James A. Waight CONSERVATION AWARD

"Though Matthew is no longer with us, his legacy lives on through the impact he made on Belize's conservation movement. This Conservation Award serves as a fitting tribute to his remarkable contributions and influence".

The James A. Waight Award, an esteemed recognition within the conservation community, commemorates the memory of Mr. James A. Waight, a founding member and first president of BAS. It celebrates individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to the conservation and enhancement of Belize's natural environment.

Matthew Miller's dedication to conservation and his profound impact on Belize's biodiversity earned him this prestigious honor. Nominated by his son Eli, Managing Director of Monkey Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, Matthew's enduring legacy was celebrated by members of the BAS board and staff, alongside members, and friends at the award ceremony held at the O.U.R.S Cafe in Belize City, on the evening of February 16th.

GETTING TO KNOW MATTHEW & THE LEGACY HE LEFT BEHIND



Arriving in Belize in 1987 as a Peace Corps volunteer, Matthew's passion for the country's people and environment led him to call Belize his lifelong home. Matthew's most notable achievement was the establishment of the Monkey Bay Wildlife Sanctuary in 1990. This 1000-acre private protected area, born from his collaboration with a landowner in Central Belize, became a example of conservation excellence. Under Matthew's astute leadership, Monkey Bay Wildlife Sanctuary flourished, pioneering environmental education and study abroad programs that continue to support conservation efforts.

Inspired by the success of Monkey Bay, Matthew founded the Tobacco Caye Marine Station in 2008, furthering marine conservation and education within the South Water Caye Marine Reserve. His initiatives, hosting approximately 1600 international students annually, not only promote environmental stewardship but also benefit rural communities and various stakeholders.

Matthew's multifaceted contributions extended beyond sanctuary management. His roles as Country Coordinator for LightHawk, assistant Country Director for the US Peace Corps in Belize, and leadership within the Sibun Watershed Association underscore his dedication to conservation and community development.

MEMBERSHIP & PUBLICITY

55TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



The 55th Annual General Meeting was held at the Jaguar Creek Lodge on the Hummingbird highway on May 25th, 2025. The event proved to be a significant milestone for the BAS as members gathered to celebrate the achievements of 2023 and reflect on the Society's accomplishments. The highlight of the meeting was the presentation of the BAS Annual Report, providing a comprehensive overview of the Society's achievements throughout the past year. During the meeting outgoing and longstanding president Mr. Earl Green was presented with a special recognition award for his years of dedicated service on the board.



Demonstrating commitment to inclusivity, we employed a combination of electronic mail and an in-person membership meeting to ensure widespread participation. As part of the proceedings, elections were held for Officers and Directors of the Board.



Following the Society's established nomination process, the positions of President, 2nd Secretary, Treasurer and three Directors were presented for a 2-year term through electronic voting with closed the first week of June. The post of 1st and 2nd Vice President remains vacant. Notably, Kevin Geban was elected as BAS' new President, and Janelle Chanona as 2nd Secretary, Simon Reardon-Smith as Treasurer. Additionally, the following individuals were re-elected as Directors: Mariana Ancona, Olivia Carballo-Avilez, and Shajira Martinez.



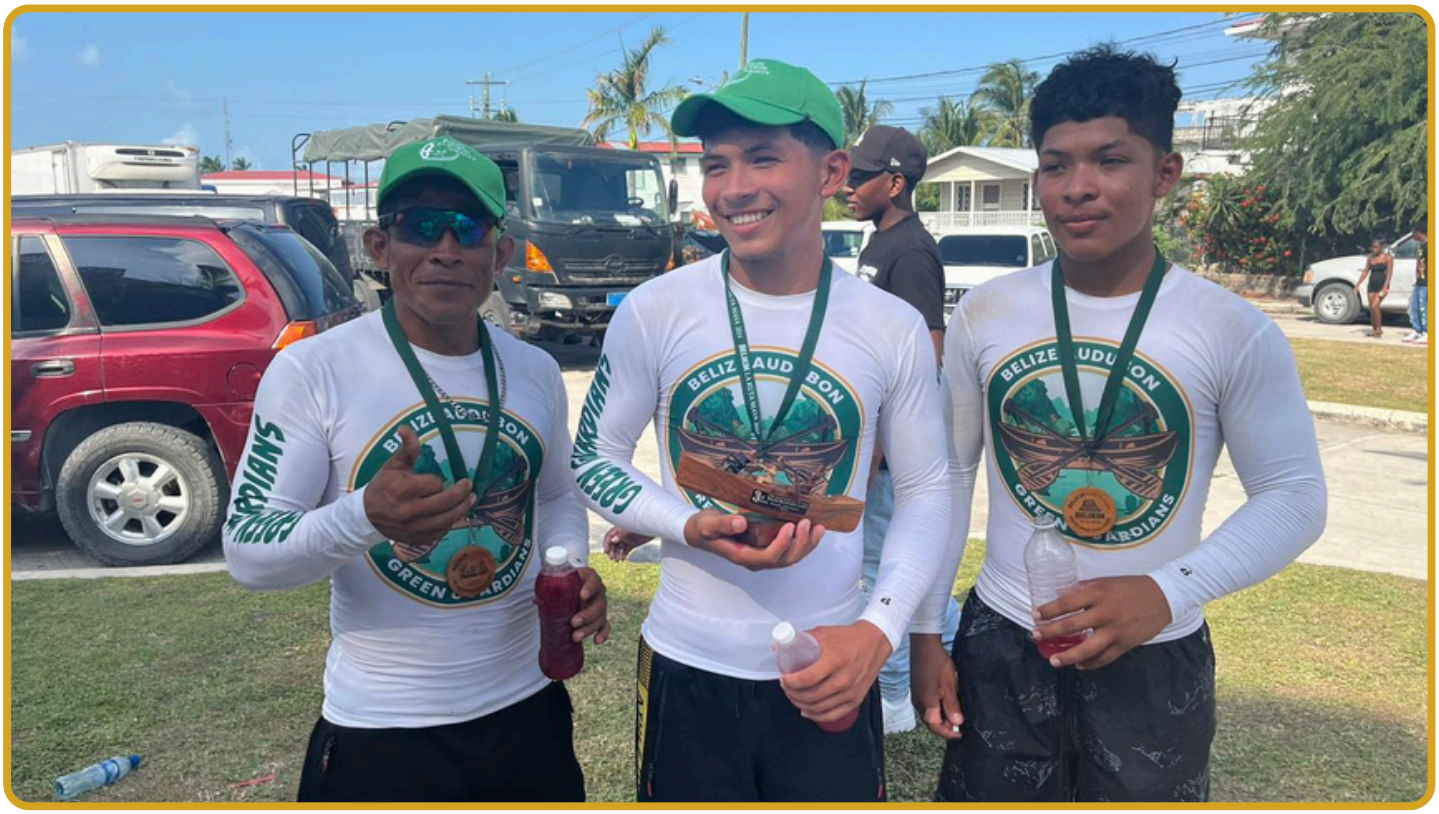
The elected officials will join the existing Board members from the 2023-2024 term, forming a diverse and dynamic team of individuals dedicated to the preservation and conservation of Belize's natural heritage. The current Board members include Kevin Geban, Simon Reardon-Smith, Janelle Chanona, Shajira Martinez, Olivia Carballo-Avilez, Mariana Ancona, Rasine Gillett, Ishmael Quiroz, Virginia Burns-Perez, Francis Canto Jr., Randal Taylor and Earl Green (Immediate Past President).

MEMBERSHIP & PUBLICITY

Audubon Green Guardians Spotlight!

The Sho family—led by Rudolph Sho and his sons Rhuan and Roel—proudly represented BAS in the popular Belikin La Ruta Maya Belize River Challenge, racing under the Audubon Green Guardians banner. BAS provided full sponsorship (with contribution from APAMO) for the team, covering uniforms, registration, and support services throughout the grueling four-day race. The BAS brand received widespread visibility, with race commentators consistently highlighting the organization's name, promoting environmental messages, and emphasizing BAS's vital role in conservation and the management of protected areas. The team's participation not only showcased athletic dedication but also served as a powerful platform to raise awareness for environmental stewardship across Belize.

The Audubon Green Guardians made a strong impression by securing 3rd place in the Family Adventure category of the Belikin La Ruta Maya Belize River Challenge!









BELIZE BIRDING FESTIVAL

The 4th Belize Birding Festival (BBF) was held on October 5th, 2024, at Countryside Park in Spanish Lookout, Cayo. The event kicked off with a special Urban Bird Watch, where over 100 birders explored the local area, celebrating Belize's rich bird diversity. The opening ceremony and panel discussion were moderated by Mr. Kevin Geban, President of the BAS Board. A warm welcome address was delivered by Mrs. Canto, Executive Director of the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA), with closing remarks shared by Dareece Chuc of BAS.



Marketing for the event was driven primarily through social media (Facebook), radio and TV appearances, and the official launch of the BBF website. Savings from the 2023 festival were strategically used to hire a web developer to create *belizebirdingfestival.org*, a dedicated platform designed to streamline event marketing, participant registration, and provide key information for attendees.



Matt Strimas-Mackey, Guest Speaker

This year's guest speaker was Matt Strimas-Mackey, a Data Scientist based in Seattle, Washington, and a member of the eBird Status and Trends team at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Matt uses data contributed by the global birding community through eBird to model bird species' distribution, abundance, and population trends. Passionate about turning science into action, he also develops tools and training materials that help conservation practitioners easily access and apply these models to real-world conservation efforts.

At the festival, Matt not only shared his knowledge on how to use eBird for marketing of guides and bird tourism businesses, but also as a tool to better understand bird status and trends. He facilitated one of two workshops on the topics "Using eBird data in Bird Tourism".

Francis Canto Jr., an avid birder and naturalist, led the second workshop which focused on tips to identify those sometimes challenging 'Terns and Gulls'. Mr. Canto served as one of the BBF 2024 bird experts. Francis is an eBird reviewer and locally one of Belize's renown birders, researcher and tour guide.



BELIZE BIRD FESTIVAL



Urban Bird Watch participants kicking off the BBF

The Urban Birdwatch (UBW) organized by BAS, is an annual activity taking place at the peak wintering migration period across urban spaces in Belize. To enhance participation in the BBF a special edition of the Urban birdwatch was organized to kick-off the event. The route took over a 100 participants over 2.2 miles around the beautiful community of Spanish Lookout for 2 hours, where bird guides and BAS staff lead tour and pointing out important relationships between birds and their habitats.

Highlights

- 150 participants
- 27 exhibitor booths
- 6 food vendors
- 100+ Urban Bird Watch participants
- 2 workshops
- 1 Panel discussion

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DAY INCLUDED A PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel was guided by the theme: "Local bird conservation efforts"

All three panelist brought much value and contribution to the discussion based on their experience and passion for conservation and bird-based tourism. The conversation brought to light the importance of collaboration among private sector, conservation NGO's and Government of Belize towards bird conservation, value for tourism and using bird conservation awareness to encourage community support and participation.



Panelist Vladimir Freddy Rodriguez, Victoria Chi and Roni Martinez (L-R)



Several prizes were donated by exhibitors (lodges/resorts, conservation NGO's) contributing to the attractiveness of the event. The prizes were raffled throughout the day.

BBF PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS

EXHIBITOR'S SEGMENT TO PROMOTE BIRD CONSERVATION AND TOURISM



















PROJECT FEATURE

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Regional Conservation Forum convened in Mexico City from April 16 to 19, 2024, drawing environmental leaders and stakeholders from across the globe. Among the attendees was Amanda Acosta, the Executive Director, who participated in various discussions and sessions aimed at advancing conservation efforts in the region. The forum, spanning four days, was structured into knowledge days and a members assembly, providing a platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration among IUCN members and partners.

During the 'Knowledge Days' segment, participants delved into a range of conservation topics, sharing insights, experiences, and challenges. BAS took center stage on the first day, hosting a session titled "*The Role of NGOs in Improving Management and Governance of Protected and Conserved Areas in the Caribbean*." The session spotlighted BAS's BIOPAMA project implemented over a three year period 2021-2024.



STAFF TRAINING HIGHLIGHTS

Staff training is a continuous and essential process. As technology evolves and strategic priorities shift, ongoing training ensures employees are equipped with the latest skills and knowledge to stay aligned with these changes. Training needs are typically identified during annual performance reviews, serving as a valuable tool for addressing skill gaps or areas requiring development. Regular, targeted training plays a key role in overcoming workplace challenges, strengthening capabilities, and promoting professional growth.


SMART Training

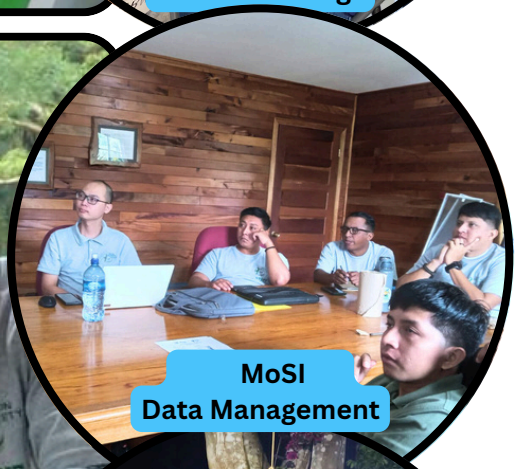

SOCMON Training



Special Constable Training


Wilderness First Aid Training


MoSI Bird Banding Training


MoSI Data Management


Fisheries Regulations Training


Wilderness First Aid and Swift Water Rescue Training

Effective training programs significantly boost employee morale, ensures accurate data collection and that they remain adaptable, confident, and equipped leading to increased productivity, enhanced performance, and greater efficiency across the workplace.

TRAINING LIST 2024

1. Adaptive Management Workshop
2. Wilderness First Aid and Swift Water Rescue Training – Certificate Course
3. Monitoreo de Sobrevivencia Invernal (MoSI) Data Management
4. Emotional Intelligence Training
5. Central American Waterbird Census
6. North American Banding Council (NABC) Training – Certificate Course
7. GPS & Map Reading
8. Special Constable Training - Certificate Course
9. Hospitality Management Training
10. Wilderness First Aid Training – Certificate Course
11. Spatial Monitoring and Report Tool (SMART) Training
12. Fire Management – Certificate Course
13. Fisheries Regulations – Certificate – Course
14. Vessel Handling – Certificate Course
15. Marine Fish ID
16. Socioeconomic Monitoring (SOCMON) – Certificate Course
17. Specialized Boat Captain Training for Spawning Aggregation Monitoring
18. Empathy for Wildlife – Certificate Course
19. RARE Community Engagement and Behavioral Change in Conservation
20. Monitoreo de Sobrevivencia Invernal (MoSI) Birding Banding (UB-ERI)
21. National Landcover Mapping/Geographic Information System
22. Identification of Insects and Pests Endangering Forests
23. Belize Peatlands Workshop
24. BirdsCaribbean 24th International Conference

NUMBER OF TRAININGS
24

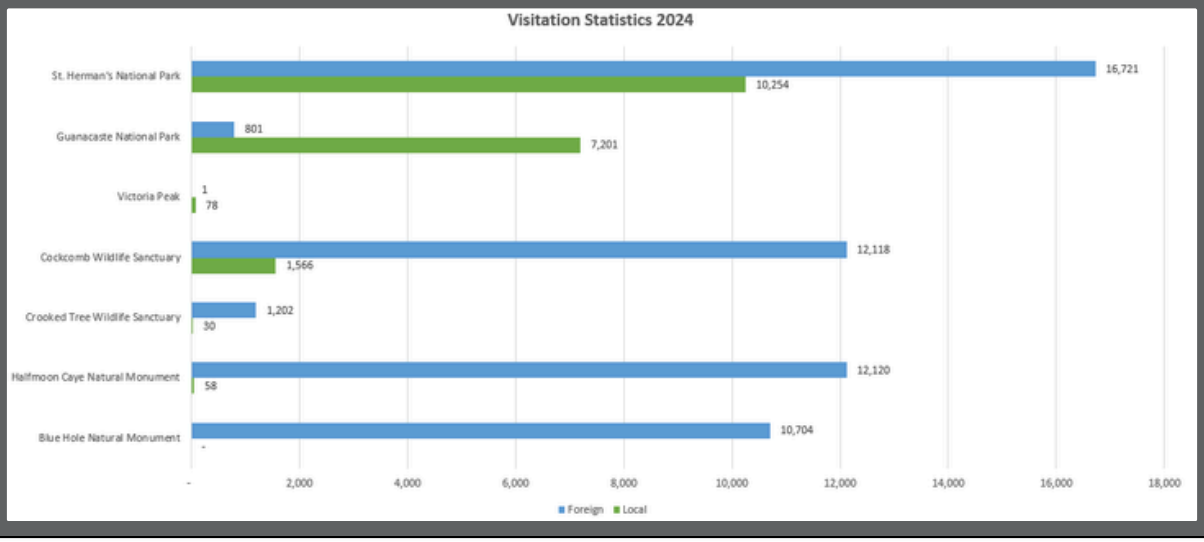
Number of staff trained
43

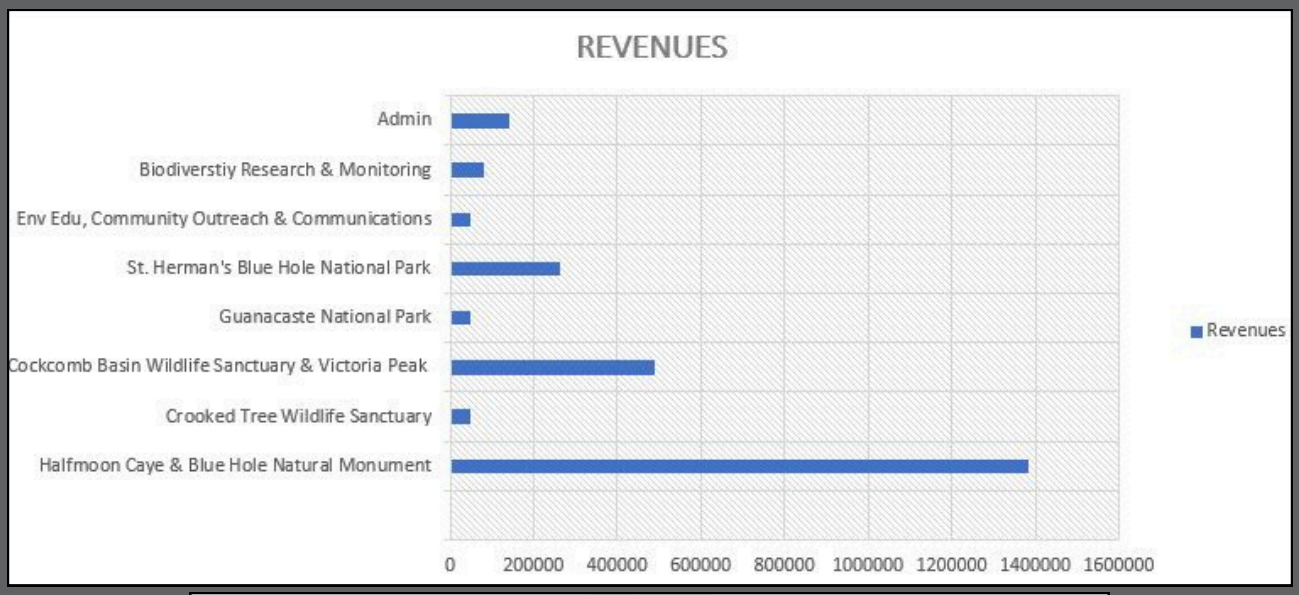
In house
3

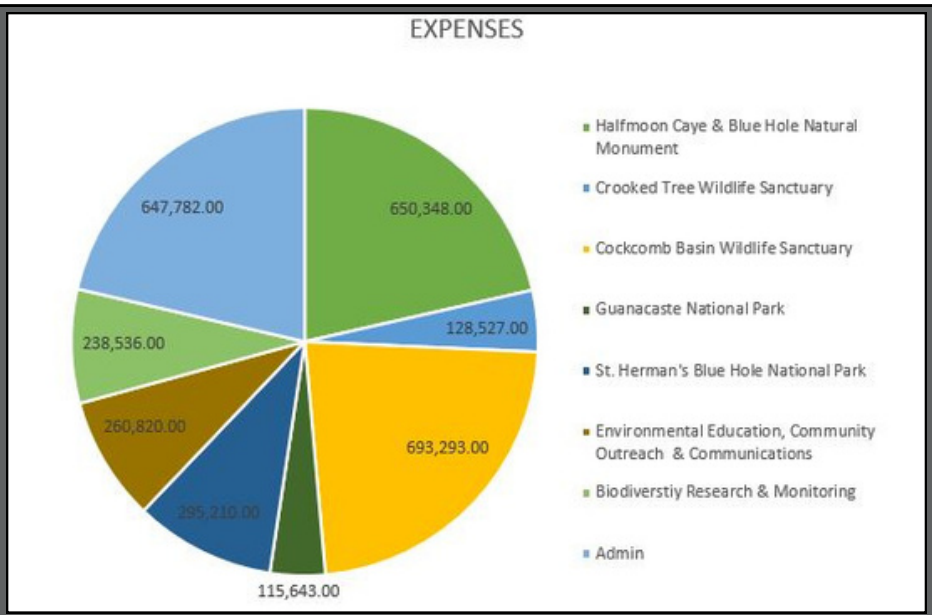
External training
21

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The auditing firm ***Crowe Horwath Belize Limited*** was retained, but at the time of publishing this report, an opinion has not yet been obtained on the auditing process for 2024. The draft audit report will be presented at the AGM in 2025, and when approved, the final report will be uploaded to the BAS website thereafter. The charts presented below summarize protected areas visitation statistics, as well as income and expenditures. Visitation numbers are reflected since entrance fees have traditionally been a significant income source for the Belize Audubon Society.







Note: At the time of publishing, these figures were not verified by our auditing firm.

DONORS & PARTNERS

NETWORKING ENTITIES

Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations (APAMO)
Belize World Heritage Advisory Committee
Belize Sea Turtle Conservation Network
Belize Coalition to Save our Natural Heritage
Belize Network of NGOs (BNN)
Belize Nature Conservation Fund (BNCF)
BirdCaribbean
Debt for Nature Swap Oversight Committee
National Coral Reef Monitoring Network
Mesoamerican Reef Fund-Belize (MARFund)
Spawning Aggregation Working Group

PARTNERS

Belize Bird Rescue
Belize Defense Force (BDF)
Belize Fisheries Department
Belize Forest Department
Belize Metrology Department
Belize Marine Protected Areas Network (BMPAN)
Belize National Coast Guard
Belize Hotel Association
Belize National Fire Service
Belize Nature Conservation Fund
Belize Port Authority
Belize Tourism Board (BTB)
Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA)
Belize Police Department (Special Patrol and Tourism Police Units)
BirdLife International
Buffer Communities of BAS co-protected areas
Chunox Fishermen Association
Copper Bank Fishermen Association
Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI)
Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute (CZMAI)
Department of Environment (DOE)
Maralliance
National Biodiversity Office (NBIO)
Scouts Association of Belize
Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI)
Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development (SACD)
Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE)
Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association (TASA)
Sothern Environmental Association (SEA)
University of Belize, Faculty of Science and Technology
University of Belize--Environmental Research Institute (UB-ERI)
Wlidtracks
Ya'axche Conservation Trust

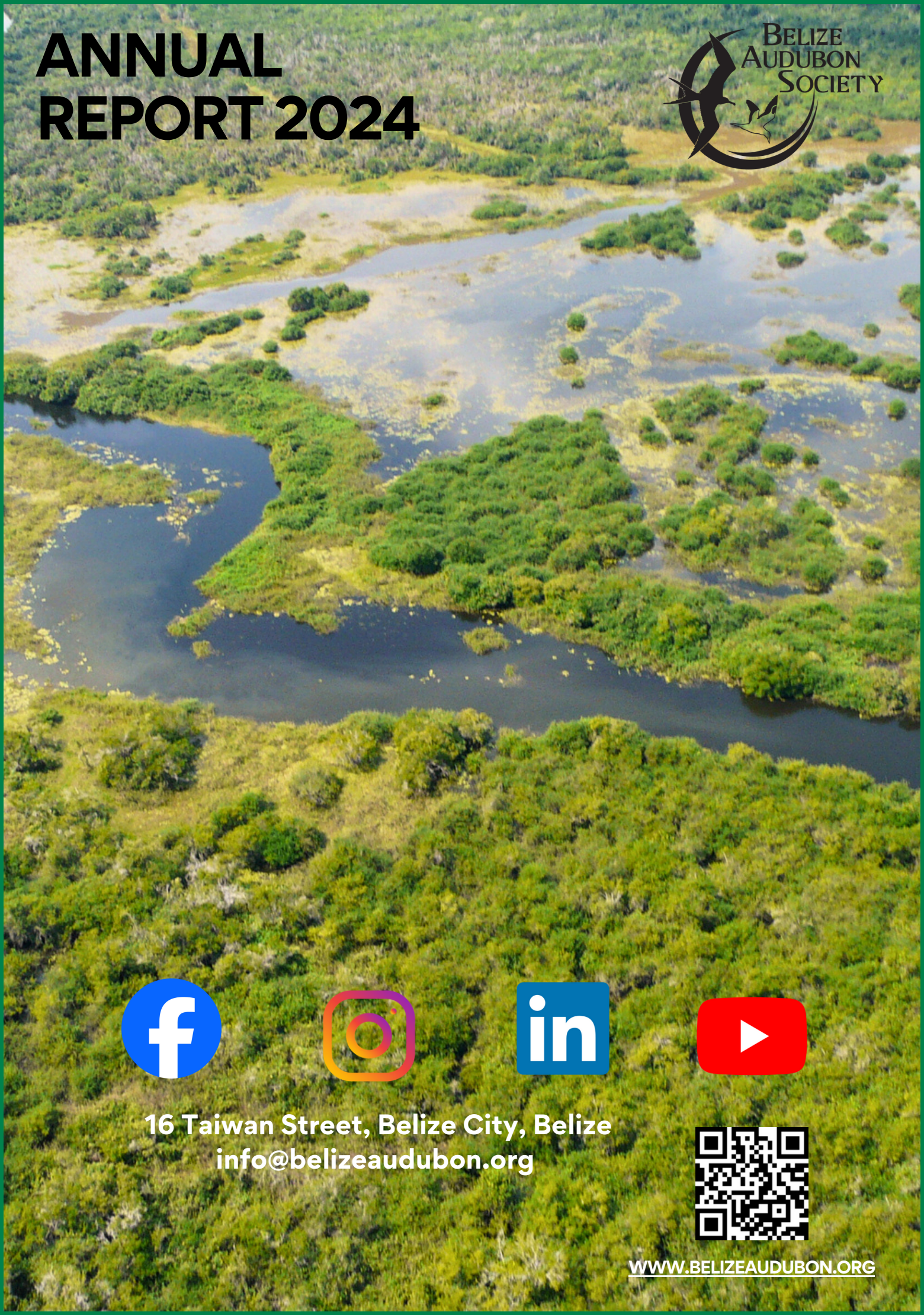
DONORS

Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future (BFSF)
Debt for Nature Swap (Tropical Forest Conservation Agreement)
European Union and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States through the Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA) Programme
European Union
Gulf and Caribbean Institute
Manomet
National Audubon Society – Audubon Americas Program
Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT)
Rhode Island Zoological Society (RIZS) and Association of Aquarium and Zoos (AZA)
World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

Photography:

All other photos not captioned, ©Belize Audubon Society
Front Cover: Cockscomb Range, bird monitoring at CBWS, Jaguar awareness & conch survey at HMC
Back Cover: Black Creek merging into the Crooked Tree Wetlands- CTWS

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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