

## National Wildlife Strategy

### Vision

*Belize has abundant and widespread wildlife, sustainably managed and appreciated by all for its natural and cultural values*

### **Definitions**

**Wildlife trade** is defined in this strategy as any sale or exchange by people of wild animal resources covered by Belize's Wildlife Protection Act. This can involve live animals for the pet trades, or the trade in a diverse range of wild animal products needed or prized by humans – including skins, medicinal ingredients, tourist curios, and other food products. Timber and fisheries products have been excluded from consideration in this report.

### **Background**

Belize has an enviable record of maintaining its natural resources. Natural vistas and plentiful wildlife, both terrestrial and marine, provide the foundation for a tourism industry that is critical in supporting the national economy. With a high poverty rate, access to game meat as a protein supplement is still important to rural communities. Cultural use of game meat, even in the urban areas, is considered important as part of Belize's cultural identity. As Belize's population increases, the pressures on game species are increasing.

Historically, the internal wildlife trade has also been based on traditional cultural values of wildlife, with primates and parrots being kept as pets in rural households

The increasing rate of land use change is threatening functionality and connectivity of ecosystems and reducing the viability of species. This has significant implications not only for Belize, but also for regional initiatives towards biodiversity protection.

The uncertainty associated with climate change, which is going to have a significant impact on ecosystems and species. Belize is projected to experience an increase in atmospheric and sea temperatures, a rising sea level and changes in rainfall patterns - all of which will impact biodiversity. What is uncertain at this point is the level of impact it will have as climatic conditions change over time. Seed dispersers, in particular, have a key role in ensuring Belize's ecosystems are resilient and can adapt to the changing climate – fruit- and seed-eating birds such as parrots, large, wide-ranging mammalian frugivores (primates, peccary and tapir) are critical in ensuring forests can adapt.

Goal C of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP; GoB, 2016) specifically addresses the strategies required to sustain Belize's wildlife and ecosystems into the long term, and provides the framework for the core activities under the Wildlife Programme Strategy

Under the Wildlife Programme Strategy, strengthening of species-specific strategies is considered critical, particularly for threatened, ecologically and economically important species, with the strengthening of multi-agency enforcement, national species working groups, development and implementation of national Species Conservation Plans and strengthening of the framework for rescue and rehabilitation Programs and captive wildlife. This is addressed under NBSAP Target C3: *Between 2016 and 2030, no species will become functionally extinct in Belize.*

However, it is recognized that the success of strategies for wildlife protection don't rely just only on strengthening of species protection, but also on implementation of strategies under other programmes, with the need for a more holistic approach and strengthen of collaboration between programmes under the Forest Department. There is increasing recognition of the role and importance of the National Protected Areas System (Target C4), of natural ecosystems in the larger landscapes and seascapes (Target C1), the importance of biological corridors (Target C2) and management of invasive species (Target C5) in the long term management of Belize's wildlife to ensure. They should take into account the need to build Belize's climate change resilience to ensure ecosystems and species are able to adapt to the changing climate, the need to retain forest cover and connectivity across the landscape for maintenance of water catchment and other environmental services, and long term ecosystem and species viability.

## **NBSAP GOAL C: PROTECTION**

*Functional ecosystems and viable populations of Belize's biodiversity are maintained and strengthened*

### **TARGETS**

**TARGET C1.** By 2030, Belize's natural landscapes and seascapes are all functional and build biodiversity resilience to climate change.

**TARGET C2.** By 2020, three key corridors identified under the National Protected Areas Policy and System Plan are physically and legally established, and effectively managed.

**TARGET C3.** Between 2016 and 2030, no species will become functionally extinct in Belize.

**TARGET C4.** By 2020, average management effectiveness of the National Protected Areas System has increased to 80%.

**TARGET C5.** By 2020, Belize is implementing a biosafety policy that safeguards against large-scale loss of biological integrity.

The Wildlife Strategy is framed by the National Biodiversity Strategy Goal C, Target C3.

<b>Strategic Action</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<i>C3.1 Update and approve Belize's National Threatened Species List</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Produce updated, prioritised National Threatened Species List and socialise</li> <li>▪ Integration of National Threatened Species List into EIA process, national planning and decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National Threatened Species List (yes / no)</li> <li>▪ Number of species that are considered to have become functionally extinct in Belize over the time frame of the NBSAP</li> <li>▪ Trends in abundance, distribution and level of risk of extinction of priority species (NBMP)</li> </ul>
<i>C3.2 Strengthen enforcement of the Wildlife Protection Act, and prosecution of wildlife crimes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Revise and strengthen the Wildlife Protection Act and other relevant legislation</li> <li>▪ Build capacity of enforcement and prosecution personnel</li> <li>▪ Build collaborative partnerships and capacity of other enforcement agencies in recognition and reporting / enforcement of wildlife legislation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Revised Wildlife Protection Act (yes / no)</li> <li>▪ % of SOPA indicator species considered to be decreasing</li> <li>▪ % of wildlife crimes reported that are responded to successfully</li> <li>▪ % of wildlife crime reports originating from general public</li> <li>▪ % of wildlife crime reports originating from non FD enforcement agencies</li> </ul>
<i>C3.3 Strengthen direct management and conservation of species</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthen national working groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of active working groups (meeting quarterly with quorum)</li> <li>▪ Number of valid recommendations to Gov. from Working Groups</li> <li>▪ Trends in abundance, distribution and extinction risk of selected species (NBMP)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support and strengthen mandated wildlife rehabilitation centres for threatened species</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ % of rehabilitation centres with effective post-release success</li> <li>▪ % of rehabilitation centres meeting site assessment standards and MoU conditions</li> <li>▪ Trends in abundance, distribution and extinction risk of selected species (NBMP)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop and implement national species management / recovery plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of national species recovery plans accepted and being implemented</li> <li>▪ Trends in abundance, distribution and extinction risk of selected species (NBMP)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ratify the Convention on Migratory Species</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ratification of the Convention on Migratory Species</li> </ul>
<i>C3.4 Improve sensitization of the general public to wildlife and the environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Finalize and implement the National Wildlife Awareness Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Finalized and approved National Wildlife Awareness Strategy</li> <li>▪ Trends in awareness and attitudes to biodiversity (NBMP)</li> </ul>

Strategy	Strategic Actions	Activities
<b>1. Strengthen the Wildlife Protection Act, and prosecution of wildlife crime</b>	1.1 Revise the wildlife legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revision of the Wildlife Protection Act and wildlife regulations with realistic fines to provide adequate protection for wildlife in Belize</li> <li>Development of A Wildlife Policy</li> </ul>
	1.2 Update and approve Belize's National Threatened Species List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce updated, prioritised National Threatened Species List, integrate into WPA, and socialise</li> <li>Integrate National Threatened Species List into EIA process, national planning and decision making</li> </ul>
	1.3 Improve knowledge of wildlife crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve collection of data on the level of wildlife crime across Belize and transboundary; drivers, hotspots and recommended strategies</li> </ul>
	1.4 Build capacity of Wildlife Officers to respond to wildlife issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase capacity of the Wildlife Program officers for intelligence-based investigation of wildlife crime</li> <li>Develop a comprehensive compliance strategy for addressing wildlife crime</li> <li>Provide training, clear written protocols and equipment for all FD officers and ranges for recognition of, and addressing wildlife crime</li> <li>Improve capacity of Forest Officers to recognize, track and address incidences of disease in wild animals, and potential for zoonosis</li> <li>Strengthen range incidence reporting on wildlife crime</li> </ul>
	1.5 Strengthen engagement of enforcement partners and build capacity in surveillance and enforcement against wildlife crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen engagement of multi-agency enforcement authorities for recognition of and addressing wildlife crime, supported by formal Memoranda of Understanding</li> <li>Integrate wildlife crime into inter-agency meetings and quarterly work plans</li> <li>Develop and maintain collaborative multi-agency partnerships for monitoring and enforcement of WPA, with effective two-way communication and flow of information</li> <li>Provide cross-agency training for addressing wildlife crime (keeping/selling illegal wildlife pets, illegal hunting, trade in illegal wildlife parts)</li> <li>Develop reference materials for supporting cross-agency actions in addressing wildlife crime, evidence collection and successful prosecution</li> </ul>

Strategy	Strategic Actions	Activities
<b>1. Strengthen the Wildlife Protection Act, and prosecution of wildlife crime (continued)</b>	1.5 Strengthen engagement of enforcement partners and build capacity in surveillance and enforcement against wildlife crime (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthen partnership with the Police Department for incorporation of wildlife crime into district level police workplans (regular, targeted road check points, reporting of illegal pets in the communities etc.)</li> <li>▪ Engage protected area co-managers in recognizing and addressing wildlife crime</li> <li>▪ Identify hotspots for wildlife crime and increase targeted enforcement in these areas</li> </ul>
	1.6 Engage the general public in reporting of wildlife crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthen citizen reporting of wildlife crime - improve socialization of the Wildlife Hotline</li> <li>▪ Investigate potential for use of app-based reporting system for the general Belize public and visitors</li> </ul>
	1.7 Improved management of legal wildlife trade (game meat, skins, teeth etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assess current status of game species and predicted population trends</li> <li>▪ Strengthen Wildlife Protection Act in management of game species, based on sound science and managed through traceability up the market chain, to improve sustainable extraction (species, predicted sustainable harvest, seasons and quotas, definition of commercial vs subsistence hunters)</li> <li>▪ Ensure all subsistence and commercial hunters are aware of the legislation for hunting game meat</li> <li>▪ Collaborate with the Police Department to develop guidelines for issuing of gun licenses for hunting</li> <li>▪ Develop a comprehensive compliance strategy for commercial hunters, dealers and restaurants licensed for legal trade in game meat, with clear market chain to legal hunters, and with effective enforcement of non-compliant outlets</li> <li>▪ Develop clear protocols for response to illegal game meat incidences (e.g. non-licensed hunter in possession of illegal game meat, Public Health officers discovering game meat in restaurants)</li> </ul>

Strategy	Strategic Actions	Activities
<b>1. Strengthen the Wildlife Protection Act, and prosecution of wildlife crime (continued)</b>	1.8 Strengthen transboundary partnerships for addressing wildlife issues and wildlife crime	▪ Lobby for revision of the 2015 Memorandum of Understanding between Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico for wildlife management
		▪ Strengthen bilateral communication and cooperation with Guatemala and Mexico for addressing wildlife and crime as a specific target, supported by clear protocols and workplans
		▪ Develop and strengthen enforcement presence in transboundary hotspots through collaborative partnerships with enforcement agencies and other partners, with clear roles and responsibilities, protocols and training in place
		▪ Strengthen collaboration with enforcement agencies in Guatemala and Mexico for joint enforcement
		▪ Repatriation of Belize wildlife confiscated in border areas
<b>2. Strengthen Belize's ability to address issues of Human-Wildlife Conflict</b>	2.1 Provide range officers with the training and equipment to address wildlife conflict	▪ Build capacity (training and equipment) of range officers and ranges for response to wildlife conflict, with training and equipment for addressing wildlife issues
		▪ Strengthen reporting of incidences of wildlife conflict by all range stations
		▪ Strengthen the Jaguar Working Group
		▪ Develop and implement clear protocols and guidelines for addressing wildlife conflict and placement of confiscated wildlife
		▪ Strengthen communication and collaboration between the Forest and Agriculture Departments for addressing wildlife conflict issues
	2.2 Provide the agricultural sector with information on addressing wildlife conflicts	▪ Develop and implement clear protocols and guidelines for collaborative actions to address wildlife conflict, with clear roles and responsibilities
		▪ Build capacity of agricultural extension officers for understanding and addressing wildlife conflict in their areas
		▪ Ensure the agricultural sector have information on relevant wildlife legislation, and contact information for livestock / wildlife conflicts
		▪ Encourage the agricultural sector to improve animal husbandry towards reducing wildlife conflict

Strategy	Strategic Actions	Activities
<b>2. Strengthen Belize’s ability to address issues of Human-Wildlife Conflict (continued)</b>	2.3 Provide the tourism sector with information on addressing wildlife conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthen the partnership with BTB towards reducing tourism / wildlife conflict</li> </ul>
	2.4 Address issues of wildlife conflicts in towns and villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide clear guidelines to the tourism industry (tour guide associations, tour operators and tour guides) on the Wildlife Protection Act and illegal feeding / interactions with wildlife</li> <li>▪ Strengthen partnership with Institute of Archaeology towards eliminating illegal interactions with wildlife at archaeological sites</li> <li>▪ Identify those species the Forest Department will respond to and develop clear per species protocols / guidelines</li> <li>▪ Build capacity of FD officers to respond to wildlife conflict in towns and villages</li> <li>▪ Partner with the Police Department for identifying and training officers in urban areas for addressing wildlife conflicts (e.g. removal of snakes, crocodiles)</li> <li>▪ Identify, train and certify ‘wildlife responders’ per district – volunteers willing to respond to wildlife issues in their area (e.g. snakes, raccoons, iguanas)</li> <li>▪ Work with partners to inform the public on how to address wildlife issues in urban areas (e.g. owls, snakes etc.)</li> <li>▪ Ensure wide socialization of the Wildlife Hotline numbers / contact details for reporting wildlife conflict in urban areas</li> </ul>
<b>3. Improved conservation of species at risk</b>	3.1 Develop a framework for effective national conservation strategies and actions for species at risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a framework for species conservation planning at national level supported by the revised Wildlife Protection Act</li> <li>▪ Develop and implement national species conservation plans for priority threatened species that address key threats and take into account climate change</li> <li>▪ Identify and implement mechanisms for integrating the national species red lists into the EIA process and national development planning</li> <li>▪ Develop a framework that supports recognised wildlife rehabilitation centres for identified at-risk species, supported by the revised Wildlife Protection Act and strong Memoranda of Understanding</li> </ul>

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<b>3. Improved conservation of species at risk</b>	3.1 Develop a framework for effective national conservation strategies and actions for species at risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure wildlife rehabilitation centres meet minimum national standards / FD guidelines and follow best practices</li> <li>▪ Ensure any reintroductions / releases of rehabilitated animals meet international standards and support national conservation and climate change adaptation goals</li> </ul>	
	<b>4. Strengthened capacity for effective management of permitted wildlife in captivity</b>	4.1 Develop policy recommendations on the keeping of captive wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assess the feasibility of permitting captive wildlife for game ranching, public display or as non-releasable long-term wildlife pets</li> <li>▪ Assess the issue of zoonosis in the issuing of long-term captive wildlife permits</li> <li>▪ Ensure strong policy preventing breeding of captive wildlife for non-conservation purposes</li> </ul>
4.2 Develop and implement the framework for game ranching, based on sound science		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assess cost effectiveness and lessons learnt from game ranching strategies in other Central American countries</li> <li>▪ Assess potential impacts of extracting breeding stock from wild game species populations</li> <li>▪ Develop strict protocols, certification and reporting system to ensure game ranch individuals are captive born</li> <li>▪ Ensure effective tagging and monitoring of game ranching is in place to certify sustainability of the product</li> <li>▪ Ensure game meat facilities meet minimum international standards for animal maintenance and slaughtering, and follow best practices (BAHA)</li> </ul>	
		4.3 Ensure effective monitoring of licensed captive parrots and other wildlife being kept under special permit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop and implement a framework for the management of captive parrots and other non-releasable captive wildlife being kept under special permit</li> <li>▪ Implement effective oversight and monitoring to ensure captive wildlife is maintained in conditions that meet minimum national standards</li> <li>▪ Ensure effective tagging (micro-chipping), monitoring and oversight to ensure captive animals are traceable, and have not been removed illegally from the wild</li> <li>▪ Develop and implement guidelines and best practices for facilities that are permitted to maintain wild animals for public viewing</li> <li>▪ Develop and implement guidelines and best practices for facilities that train wildlife for public display, following international guidelines</li> </ul>



Strategy	Strategic Actions	Activities
<b>4. Strengthen capacity for effective management of permitted wildlife in captivity (continued)</b>	4.3 Ensure effective monitoring of licensed captive parrots and other wildlife being kept under special permit (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure licensed captive wildlife is maintained in conditions that meet minimum international standards</li> </ul>
	4.4 Import of non-native or non-Belize-born captive wildlife species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a framework for the regulation of CITES /threatened regulated species imported into Belize (pet birds and other exotic pets)</li> </ul>
<b>5. Strengthen the framework for management of CITES species</b>	5.1 Ensure enactment of the CITES Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lobby for passing of the CITES Act into legislation</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to ensure that Belize has an effective CITES permit process for import and export of wildlife</li> </ul>
<b>6. Effective management of research permits</b>	6.1 Continue to ensure that Belize has an effective system in place for management of research on wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen the review process for research permits, with peer review / working group review for threatened species</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a national research priorities list</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure repatriation of research reports and off-line / on-line accessibility</li> </ul>
<b>7. Strengthen biosecurity measures against invasive species</b>	7.1 Identify potential invasive species (e.g. red eared slider)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with BAHA to finalize the list of potential invasive species and ensure it is disseminated to relevant agencies, with recommendations for non-importation</li> </ul>
	7.2 Improve surveillance enforcement against potential invasive species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop legislation to restrict the importation of identified high-threat species, in the revised Wildlife Protection Act</li> <li>Training and awareness on invasive species for agencies at points of entry, in collaboration with BAHA</li> </ul>
	7.3 Develop awareness campaign / program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure pet outlets and relevant agencies (Customs, BAHA) are informed of potential invasive species that are not permitted to be imported</li> </ul>
<b>8. Strengthen communication and awareness of wildlife and wildlife issues</b>	8.1 Implement the Forest Department Communication Plan strategies relevant to wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and revise strategies in alignment with and to support the implementation of the revised Wildlife Protection Act</li> </ul>

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<b>8. Strengthen communication and awareness of wildlife and wildlife issues</b>	8.2 Collaborate with wildlife partners to revise and implement the National Wildlife Awareness Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1020 240 1822 310">▪ Revise the National Wildlife Awareness Strategy in collaboration with wildlife partners</li> <li data-bbox="1020 316 1822 386">▪ Develop collaborative workplan for implementation of the Wildlife Awareness Strategy</li> <li data-bbox="1020 393 1822 459">▪ Work with wildlife partners for effective implementation of the Wildlife Awareness Strategy</li> </ul>