



Wildtracks



Introducing Wildtracks....Who we are....What we do

BELIZE



Wildtracks



BELIZE....a Central American biodiversity hotspot with rich tropical forests and vibrant tropical reefs

...under threat from increasingly unsustainable development and at high risk from climate change impacts

If we don't act now.....we will lose the opportunity to build ecosystem-based resilience to climate change and balanced economic, social and environmental development

Wildtracks is a well established conservation organization working towards the sustainable future of the natural resources of Belize, through conservation of ecosystems and species, building engagement and strengthening capacity towards effective environmental stewardship at all levels.

Wildtracks was established in 1990, and registered as a Belize non-profit organization in 1996. It is now poised to expand the scope of its activities for increased conservation success at both local and national levels.

Protected landscapes/ Seascapes....Species Conservation....Outreach

Introducing Wildtracks...

Wildtracks was established in 1990, and registered as a Belize non-profit organization in 1996. It is now poised to expand the scope of its activities for increased conservation success at both local and national levels.

What does Wildtracks do?

Wildtracks has been focused on increasing conservation success in Belize since 1990, through...

- Technical input into national, system and site level conservation planning, ensuring strong, high-quality, planning outputs for maximum impact with participation and input at all levels - from communities to Government
- Strategic rehabilitation and reintroduction of endangered species – with a focus on primates (Yucatan black howler monkey and Central American spider monkey) and Antillean manatees, three at-high-risk, threatened species
- Strengthening protected areas management and management effectiveness, at local, landscape and national levels
- Facilitating and nurturing resilient partnerships over seascapes and landscapes, and all levels of society, to improve conservation outcomes

Key Wildtracks outputs at national level include:

- Belize's National Protected Areas Management Planning Framework (2005)
- Belize's National Protected Area Management Effectiveness Assessments 2006 and 2010
- Rationalization Plan for Belize's National Protected Areas System (2012)
- 5th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2015)
- National Communication Strategy on Wildlife Issues (Draft)
- Belize's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (current)
- Conservation Action Plans for the Maya Mountains Massif, Southern Belize Reef Complex, and Northern Belize Coastal Complex



The Belize Context

Belize can be proud of its conservation record to date. Its National Protected Areas System provides the critical ecosystem service of water catchment to supply the national need for clean water, provides protection against storm impacts, is representative of the majority of the ecosystems present in the country, actively supports livelihoods in both the marine and terrestrial environments, and makes Belize a leader in the region in biodiversity conservation.

Belize leads the way in several important conservation fields such as:

- the national roll-out of managed area, rights-based fisheries,
- effective integration of community participation in protected area management
- strong co-management partnerships between the Belize Government and the NGO conservation community for management of national protected areas
- aquaculture stewardship certification of shrimp farms

The forests and coral reef of Belize still support healthy biodiversity and provide critical ecosystem services for the health and well-being of the Belizean people.

However, as the development footprint increases and climate change impacts become more prevalent, Belize is struggling to maintain this balance.

Key Biodiversity Facts

- Belize is famous for its barrier reef, stretching parallel to the shore, with its rich marine life – corals, invertebrates and fish – bringing critical tourism dollars to the economy, and supporting an important traditional, low-technology fishing industry.
- The tropical forests of Belize provide important ecosystem services to the people – clean water, protection from natural disasters, timber and non-timber forest products.
- Belize currently has 35.8% of its terrestrial area protected.
- 19.8% of territorial waters are under marine protective management.
- Of the 68 natural ecosystems in Belize, 90% meet the 10% global target representational protection within the National Protected Areas System.
- Belize's wildlife populations have some of the highest viability in the region – species needing healthy forests and reefs, and landscape and seascape connectivity – such as jaguars, tapir, white-lipped peccary and sharks – are still prevalent.

Key Threats to Biodiversity in Belize

- Land use change - increasing rate of deforestation, clearance of mangroves.
- Climate change – increasing drought, rising sea levels, increasing sea surface temperatures.
- Unsustainable exploitation of natural resources - fishing, logging / non-timber forest products, hunting.
- Illegal wildlife trade.
- Pollution in the watersheds (agrochemicals, industrial / urban effluent, solid waste, sewage, sedimentation)

Belize's 5th National Report to the
Convention on Biological Diversity

What has Wildtracks achieved?

In collaboration with its partners, Wildtracks has made critical contributions towards conservation in Belize, and has demonstrated high cost effectiveness, effective project and strategy implementation, with built-in evaluation, and with a demonstrable, consistent success record.

This includes:

- Conservation Action Plans at landscape and seascape level, with multi-sectoral input, strengthening communication, and collaboration between key stakeholders
- Building climate change resilience in marine protected areas and vulnerable coastal communities,
- Partnering to address wildlife trafficking in Belize,
- Strengthening communication and collaboration in protected area networks,
- Management of Fireburn, a private protected area, as an important component of the national biological corridors

Wildtracks (Belize) has reached a point where it is being constrained through limited finances and is seeking seed funding and investment in infrastructure and capacity to be able to achieve the next set of significant conservation deliverables for the organization, contributing towards Belize's national conservation and development goals.

*Be a part of making the difference
– join us in achieving our strategic,
achievable goals and objectives,
changing outcomes on a local,
national and global level.*

Why is Wildtracks different?

- Wildtracks is well established, with a 15+ year track record of conservation planning and biodiversity conservation in Belize, and well established partnerships with the Belize Government, NGOs, and community based organizations
- Wildtracks is recognised at national level for its conservation successes, has a highly motivated team, and an international following of dedicated supporters
- Wildtracks focuses on effective partnerships to build capacity in communities for improved environmental stewardship.
- Wildtracks has two endangered species programs that focus on effective rehabilitation and release as part of integrated species conservation strategies. Both have the highest success rates in the region, with strategic reintroductions to strengthen species viability
- Wildtracks offers consultancy services in conservation planning as a way of providing technical assistance and facilitation to conservation efforts on a local and national level whilst also providing a financial sustainability mechanism for support of Wildtracks activities
- Wildtracks is very focused - its programs and program strategies are designed to support national and global goals and address critical gaps.

With its proven track record and well established partnerships within Belize, Wildtracks provides the opportunity to invest in achieving tangible, lasting conservation.

These are the Global Goals we focus on, every day, at Wildtracks...these frame our thoughts, our strategies and our outputs...



...and these are the primary Aichi Targets we strive to contribute towards at both local and national level....



Wildtracks operates through four Program Areas:

- Biodiversity Conservation
- Sustainable Development
- Education and Outreach
- Support

Wildtracks works with its partners to achieve outputs in the following program areas:

Protected Landscapes / Seascapes

Goal 1: By 2020, Wildtracks is contributing towards the goals of the National Protected Areas System through the establishment and effective management of the North East Biological Corridor

Goal 2: By the end of 2020, Wildtracks has facilitated improved management effectiveness of the protected areas of the Northern Belize Reef Complex through technical support of the Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development

Species Conservation

Goal 1: By 2020, Wildtracks has contributed effectively to the increased viability of the two globally endangered primate species in Belize

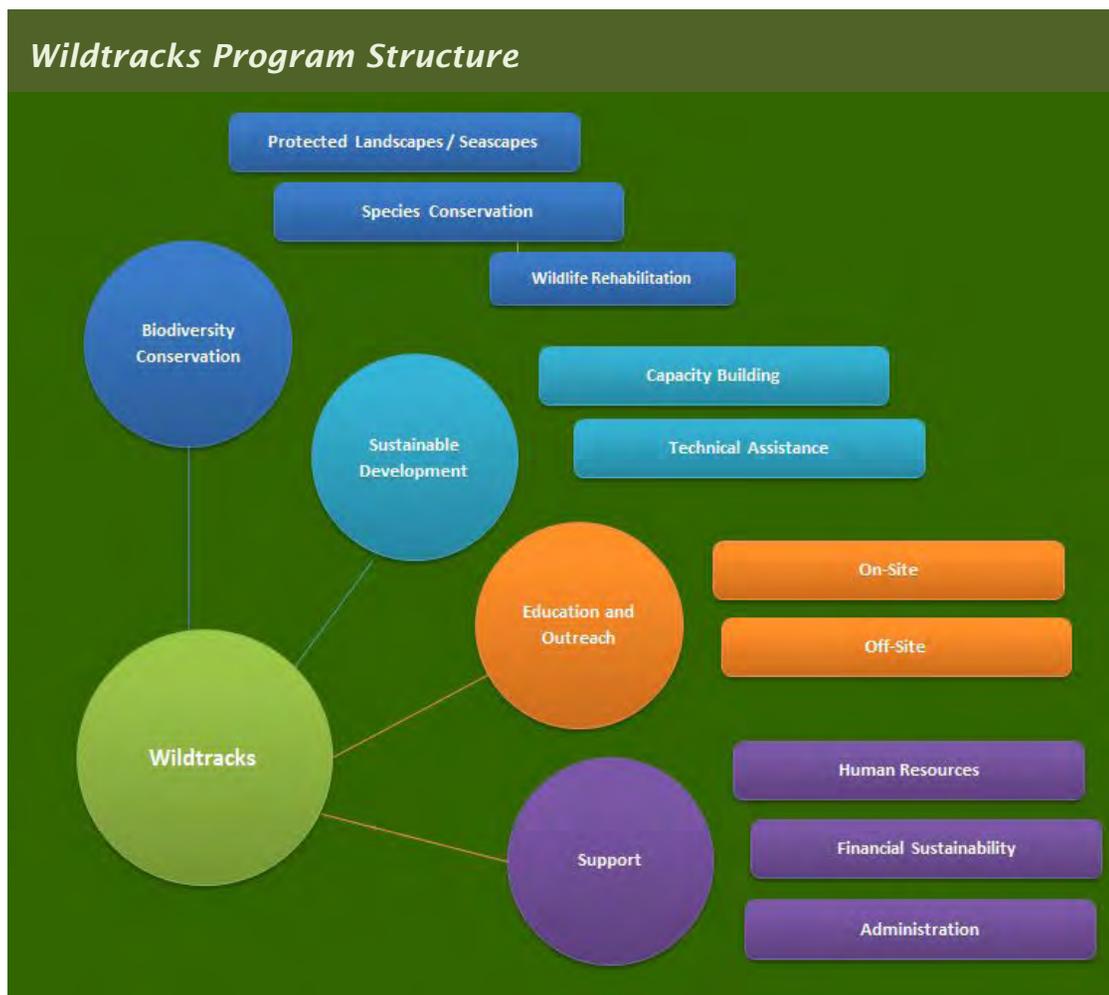
Goal 2: By 2020, Wildtracks has contributed effectively to the increased viability of the Antillean Manatee in Belize
Goal 3: By the end of 2020, Wildtracks has strengthened its two wildlife rehabilitation programs

Education and Outreach

Goal 1: By 2020, Wildtracks has engaged and inspired both the local and national community towards improved awareness and active stewardship of their natural resources

Support

Goal 1: By 2020, Wildtracks has the necessary infrastructure, human resources and investment, resulting in effective expansion, achievement of its strategic goals and outputs, and long term stability.



Species Conservation: Primates



Belize is home to two globally endangered primate species – the Yucatán black howler monkey (*Alouatta pigra*) and Geoffroy’s spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*).

Belize’s primate populations are being pressured by increasing tropical forest clearance, forest fragmentation and capture of young animals for the illegal wildlife trade. Wildtracks and the Belize Forest Department are collaborating under a Memorandum of Understanding to end the illegal trade in primates in Belize, and ensuring that, where possible, all confiscated animals are returned to the wild as cohesive troops – as part of a reintroduction initiative in the North East Corridor.

In 2015, the first nine wild babies were born to five of the reintroduced troops, and successfully reared through their first year.

Over the last five years, Belize has made great strides in addressing the internal illegal trade in primates. There is increasing awareness of the legal protection of primates in Belize under the Wildlife Protection Act, with fewer illegal pets reported each year. In collaboration with the Belize Government, the Primate Rehabilitation Centre accepts all rescued and confiscated primates, ensuring there is no barrier to confiscation in national efforts to end the trade in these two endangered species. It also accepts translocation primates – those marginalized in small forest fragments by increasing forest clearance for agriculture, and those that are pushed into urban areas as adjacent forests are cleared.

Goal: Increased viability of globally endangered primate species through national conservation collaborations, addressing threats and strengthening rehabilitation and release back into the forests of Belize

- *By the end of 2020, Wildtracks has contributed effectively to the increased viability of the two endangered primate species in Belize*
- *By the end of 2020, Wildtracks has maintained and strengthened national and site level conservation strategies for increased viability*
- *By the end of 2018, Wildtracks has maintained and strengthened the success rate of primate rehabilitation and release, contributing towards viable, sustainable wild populations*



(c) Tony Rath

Partnerships to address the illegal trade in primates in Belize

In the last five years:

88 primates have entered the Wildtracks Rehabilitation Centre

40 Yucatan black howler monkeys have been successfully released back into the wild, with a further 21 in care pending their release dates in 2016 and 2017

9 Yucatan black howler monkey babies have been born in the wild in 2015 to the reintroduced troops – and are thriving. The first for over 80 years.

19 Geoffroy’s spider monkeys have entered the Wildtracks Rehabilitation Centre, forming three cohesive troops. The first releases being planned for 2016

Species Conservation: Manatees



Belize is home to the Antillean manatee (*Trichechus manatus manatus*), a sub-species of the West Indian manatee.

The Antillean manatee is considered globally endangered, and in Belize, is being pressured by watercraft collisions and the increasing threats to their environment. Over the last five years, Belize has seen a marked increase in the number of manatee strandings, with 37 deaths recorded in the first 6 months of 2015, and five manatees currently in the Manatee Rehabilitation Centre at Wildtracks. This rate of loss, linked primarily to tourism watercraft use in the Belize River, is not sustainable. With the development of two further cruise ship terminals in Belize, both in key manatee areas, the threat to the national viability of this species is increasing.

Wildtracks operates the Manatee Rehabilitation Centre under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Belize Forest Department. It collaborates with other stakeholders as Secretary of the National Manatee Working Group and a member of the Marine Mammal Stranding Network, both of which are hosted under the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute.

Wildtracks also partners with the Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development, providing this community-based protected area co-management organization with technical support for manatee conservation in one of Belize's key manatee areas – Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary - building community capacity, strengthened protocols and data analysis for aerial surveys, water quality monitoring and monitoring of seagrass and coastal development.

Goal: By 2018, Wildtracks has contributed effectively to the increased viability of Antillean Manatees in Belize

- By the end of 2020, Wildtracks has contributed towards strengthened local and national strategies to increase the long-term viability of Antillean manatees in Belize
- By the end of 2016, Wildtracks has expanded its facilities to effectively meet the predicted increasing demand for manatee rehabilitation in Belize
- By the end of 2018, through the Manatee Rehabilitation Centre, Wildtracks is in a position to positively influence effective rehabilitation and release of manatees regionally and globally

In the last sixteen years:

17 manatees have entered the Wildtracks Rehabilitation Centre

5 manatees have been successfully released back into the wild, with a further 5 in care pending their release dates in 2016 and 2017

Since 2008, Wildtracks has had a 100% success rate in rearing orphaned manatee calves beyond their second year – 7 out of 7.



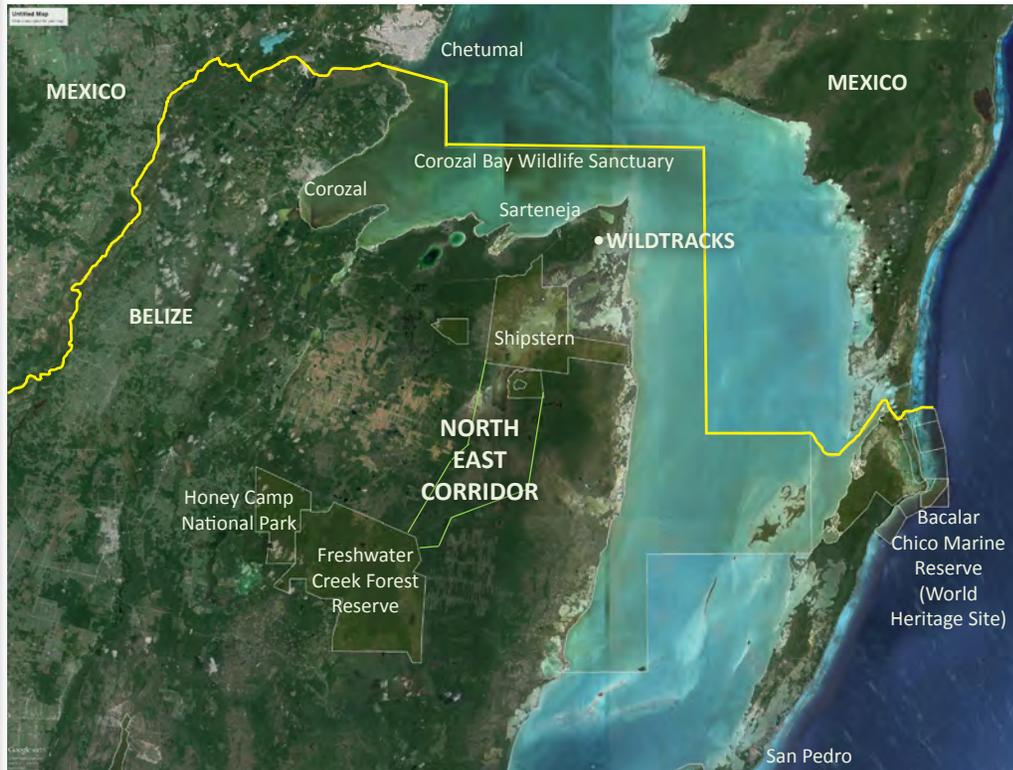
Protected Landscapes / Seascapes



An opportunity exists for the successful accomplishment of a significant national conservation goal - the establishment of Belize's North East Biological Corridor.



The North East Biological Corridor is one of three high priority national corridors, identified as important in building Belize's resilience to predicted climate change impacts. There is currently a window of opportunity to establish this corridor with few if any negative socio-economic impacts, providing worthwhile socio-economic benefits and development in an area with increasing poverty, and identified at highest national risk from climate change impacts.



The forest of the North East Corridor has been recognized as:

- an important contribution for the maintenance of sufficient lowland forest in the flat northern plain for provision of ecosystem services - highlighted as an area of national concern
- critical for water catchment in northern Belize – maintenance of the forest cover is important for resilience to predicted climate change impacts (particularly reduced rainfall), for replenishment of the aquifer, and for the continued viability of extensive agricultural areas to the west
- critical for facilitating migration of Yucatan dry forest elements southwards for adaptation of Belize's forests to changing rainfall patterns and increasing drought
- providing increased protection for Tropical evergreen seasonal broad-leaved lowland swamp forest, tall variant, an under-represented ecosystem within the National Protected Areas System, contributing towards national ecosystem protection goals

The establishment of the forest corridor also contributes towards addressing a number of national priorities and commitments, including:

- Belize's Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy
- Horizon 2030 – Belize's National Development Framework
- Belize's commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity

The establishment of the North East Corridor aligns with and supports the objectives of Belize's:

- National Land Use Policy and Integrated Land Use Planning Framework
- National Protected Areas Policy and System Plan and recommendations of the National Protected Areas System Rationalization report
- Integrated Water Management Policy

Wildtracks also collaborates with other conservation organizations in northern Belize and southern Mexico towards the establishment of a transboundary protected area network, for increased communication and collaboration, towards improved management effectiveness and conservation outputs in the region.

“Belize has always been considered a stronghold for Antillean manatees - but now they are in trouble. Belize has a total population count of just over 500 individuals, and an estimated population of between 700 and 1,000. In 2015, 40 deaths were reported, with the cause identified as predominantly watercraft collision. This is not good. This is not sustainable.”



c) Annelise Hagan



“Wildtracks works closely with the Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development, partnering towards sustainable development goals and increased climate-change resilience in the coastal communities of the Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary”

Sustainable Development

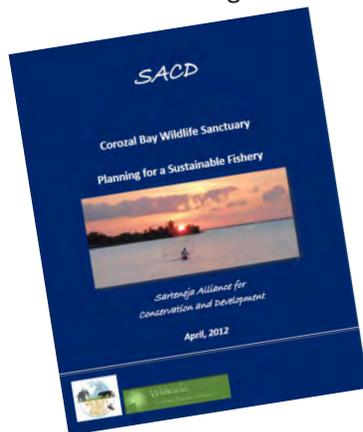


Wildtracks works closely with the Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development, partnering towards sustainable development goals in the coastal communities of the Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary area.



Wildtracks believes in the importance of quality, accuracy and multi-sectoral, participatory input from stakeholders in identifying solutions to sustainable development issues, with the building of ownership and partnerships during the process being as important as the outputs.

Wildtracks has provided mentoring for community organizations, assisting them in growing in capacity, with improved organizational, financial, Board and project management, and building an appreciation for the value of balancing conservation and sustainable development, and the roles of transparency and evaluation in the organizational management cycle.



Tourism and Community

Wildtracks is based in Sarteneja. Whilst a small community, Sarteneja has the largest population of fishermen in Belize. With over 85% of the Sarteneja population reliant on fishing – predominantly free diving for lobster and conch – income diversification is important – not just for individual fishermen, but for the community as a whole.

Wildtracks has been working with the Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development (SACD), Sarteneja Fishermen Association (SFA) and Sarteneja Tour Guide Association (STGA), three key community-based organizations - to shift the economic base of the fishing community from a reliance on a fragile fishing industry, dependent on the health of the reef, to a robust tourism industry based on the wealth of natural and cultural resources of the Sarteneja area.

As part of this, Wildtracks has provided over 50 fishermen with training as tour guides under the National Tour Guide Training Program, and facilitated the planning process for the Sarteneja Tourism Development Plan, being implemented by the three organizations. It has partnered with SACD to provide technical support for the establishment of a women's homestay group and for the establishment of a supporting microloan program, has provided training for women in packaging and marketing craft products, and linked them with markets in the USA.

Wildtracks is partnered with SACD for the development of climate change adaptation plans for each of Belize's three northern fishing communities – Sarteneja, Chunox and Copper Bank. As a component of this, Wildtracks is also providing technical input to SACD and the local traditional fishermen to develop a Sustainable Fishery Plan for Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, to ensure continued benefit from the estuary in generations to come. This will identify and address mechanisms for strengthening natural resilience to climate change.



Mainstreaming Biodiversity Awareness



“Public and political awareness of the importance of Belize’s National Protected Areas System’s contribution to the national economy, in watershed protection, and water security, natural disaster mitigation, and climate change buffering, is considered inadequate.”

This transcribes to an unwillingness to adequately defend Belize’s National Protected Areas System and the natural and cultural resources and environmental services provided, even though this is for the benefit of the nation. Wildtracks addresses this through a number of avenues, including:

- Partnering with COMPACT and the Belize Fisheries Department to engage politicians and resource users through the production of the Marine Protected Areas Atlas
- Strengthening awareness of ecosystem services in protected area management planning with NGO co-management organizations and during community workshops
- Integration of ecosystem services into Wildtracks activities in schools

Outreach and Education

Wildtracks was established initially to bring inspiring, educational field activities focused on tropical forests, mangroves and coral reefs, engaging students and creating conservation leaders.

Now partnered with SACD, the education program has gone from strength to strength. Reaching three coastal communities and five schools, the lessons engage students and build their interest and awareness in the natural resources around them.

Current focus is also on raising awareness of climate change, as part of an integrated community adaptation planning program.



Goal: Wildtracks has engaged and inspired both the local and national community towards improved awareness and active stewardship of Belize’s natural resources

- *By the end of 2020, students of the northern coastal communities will be engaged, fully aware of key environmental issues, and practicing good environmental stewardship*
- *By the end of 2020, Wildtracks will have increased awareness and acceptance of the role of ecosystems in building resilience to climate change at local and national levels*
- *Wildtracks is implementing a fully functional outreach programme with targeted, effective messages that continue to influence conservation / sustainable development decisions at local and national level*





Wildtracks is well established, and is now poised and ready to expand the scope of its activities for increased conservation success at both local and national levels. Key areas of focus include:

- Improved long term biodiversity viability in north east Belize through establishing one of three priority national biodiversity corridors, direct protected area management, and strengthened community-based stewardship of Corozal Bay Wildlife Sanctuary and the larger seascape.
- Increased viability of threatened species in Belize through national conservation collaborations, addressing threats, and strengthening rehabilitation and release back into the natural environments of Belize.
- Engaging stakeholders and raising awareness of key biodiversity and conservation issues at all levels of society through strategic partnerships, presentations, trainings and publications towards improved stewardship of the natural resources of Belize.



The Wildtracks Team



Paul and Zoe Walker
Directors, Wildtracks Belize



The Wildtracks Team
Without whom
Wildtracks could not
happen.



A picture says a thousand words...so many thanks to Tony Rath (Tony Rath Photography) (left), to Pete Oxford (Pete Oxford Photography), August Jennewein, Eran Gissis, Suzanne Iwanicki and Jamie Tambor for the use of their amazing photographs in this document.

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Belize Forest Department

Belize Animal Rescue

Belize Wildlife and Referral Clinic

Centro de Conservacion de Manatides de Puerto Rico

Houston Zoo

OAK Foundation

Protected Areas Conservation Trust

Sarteneja Alliance for Conservation and Development

Save the Manatee Club

Tropical Rainforest Coalition

COMPACT - United Nations Development Program

Wild and Free - Rehabilitation and Release