



Wildtracks

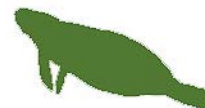
Conservation, Education and Research

The Wildtracks Rehab Newsletter

Issue 02, 2014



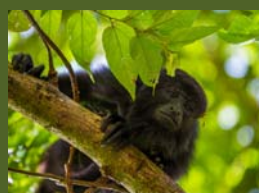
# The Wildtracker



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Photo: Tony Rath Photography

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## Conservation and Research



## Education and Outreach



## Sustainable Resource Use



## Support



# Welcome...

*We are excited to be able to share with you the many wonderful things happening here at the Wildtracks Centre*

### **A word about Wildtracks**

Wildtracks is based in Belize, and has been active since 1990. The organization was registered as a Belize non-profit in 1996. It implements its activities through three primary Programme Areas:

- Conservation and Research
- Education and Outreach
- Sustainable Development

... supported by the fourth, the Support Programme, through volunteer work, income generation, grants and donations.

Under the Conservation and Research Programme, Wildtracks hosts two of Belize's four officially recognized national wildlife rehabilitation programmes - one for primates, the other for manatees.

The Primate Rehabilitation Centre works with Belize Forest Department towards ending the illegal wildlife trade in endangered Yucatan black howler monkey and Geoffroy's spider monkey, and returning confiscated and surrendered primates to the wild.

The Manatee Rehabilitation Centre is also managed in partnership with the Belize Forest Department, and in collaboration with the Marine Mammal Stranding Network and the National Manatee Working Group. It provides facilities for all injured manatees and orphaned manatee calves found in Belize's waters.

Both rehabilitation programmes are focused on returning animals to health, and releasing them back into the wild once they have gained the skills necessary to survive.

*We would like to thank all of you - volunteers and donors alike - for becoming part of the Wildtracks network! Your support is an essential part of every success story!*



# Yucatan Black Howler Monkey

Howler monkeys are largely arboreal, commonly living 25-30 meters high up in the canopy. They are found in tropical forests, particularly along river banks. These globally endangered monkeys spend about 70% of their day resting. The other 30% is spend roaming their territories and eating.

Howler monkeys are the only fully herbivorous New World Primates, with mature leaves making up approximately 70% of their diet, supplemented by fruit, seeds, flowers, stems, and even twigs. Their molars are highly adapted for grinding plant matter, helping them to cope with this specialized diet. Howler monkeys have an enlarged hyoid bone and larynx which allow them to perform the howling for which they are famous. Howls can be heard up to two kilometers away, and are used primarily as a communication mechanism between different groups.

The Yucatan Black Howler monkey range extends from the Yucatan Peninsula, through Belize and into northern Guatemala.

They are generally found in groups of two to ten individuals, living in territories of between five and forty-five hectares. Each group consists of one dominant male, several females and their offspring.



Both females and males become sexually mature between the ages of three and four. A female will have one young at a time, investing approximately a year into parental care. For that first year of life, the infant stays close to its mother, growing increasingly independent as time goes on. When males reach sexual maturity they leave their natal troop and travel alone for a time until they are old enough to begin challenging other males and building their own group of females.

When a male takes over another male's troop, he will often attempt to kill the offspring of the previous dominant male. This action, known as infanticide, can also result in abandoned and severely injured infants. It is suspected that some of the monkeys who have come into Wildtracks have been victims of troop take-overs, with injuries such as broken arms, broken hands, as well as often being extremely ill and malnourished.



**Yucatan Black Howler Monkeys**  
*Alouatta pigra*

**Order:** Primates

**Family:** Atelidae

**Average Adult Male Weight:** 11.5kg

**Average Adult Female Weight:** 6.5kg

**Average Length:** 70cm

**Status:** Endangered (IUCN Redlist)  
CITES Appendix 1



# Back to the Wild...

Photo: Tony Rath Photography

*The goal for all primates at Wildtracks is to release them back into the wild with the skills to survive. Currently, Wildtracks releases groups of rehabilitated Yucatan Black Howler Monkeys into Fireburn Reserve annually. Fireburn Reserve is a reintroduction site, historically supporting a viable howler monkey population. However, the howler monkey population was wiped out more than 60 years ago as a result of past hunting pressure. Over the past four years, Wildtracks has released 26 howler monkeys back into the reserve, re-establishing the wild population.*

Fireburn is 1,818 acres of lush tropical forest located within the North East Biological Corridor. This privately protected area is managed by Wildtracks, in collaboration with the Fireburn community. Howler monkeys disappeared from the area by the 1950's, but are now returning under the howler reintroduction initiative, creating a new population, and buffering against impacts such as destructive hurricanes that may result in the species disappearing from other sites in Belize. The remote nature of the area (it takes a 15 mile boat ride to reach it), abundance of food trees, and the lack of current hunting pressure makes the site ideal for this purpose.

Monkeys are considered ready for release based on several criteria: their age, health, and the skills gained in the pre-release enclosures. In 2014, a total of ten howler monkeys were released- four of Wildtracks' rehabilitated howler monkeys, and a further six translocation monkeys. The translocation monkeys are wild individuals that have wandered into urban areas or been isolated in small patches of forest by agricultural clearance. They are generally adult and considered to already have the skills for surviving in the wild. They only spend enough time at Wildtracks to be treated for any injuries, illness or parasites.

The four rehabilitation monkeys were released as two pairs (Paz and Kofi, and Livvy and Sultan), at separate release sites. These sites were previously scouted for availability of browse, fruit and good habitat, to give the pairs the best chance of survival.

With a post release success rate currently standing at 95%, we are optimistically hoping that the first wild-born howler monkey in over 60 years will be born at Fireburn this summer!



Photo: Tony Rath Photography



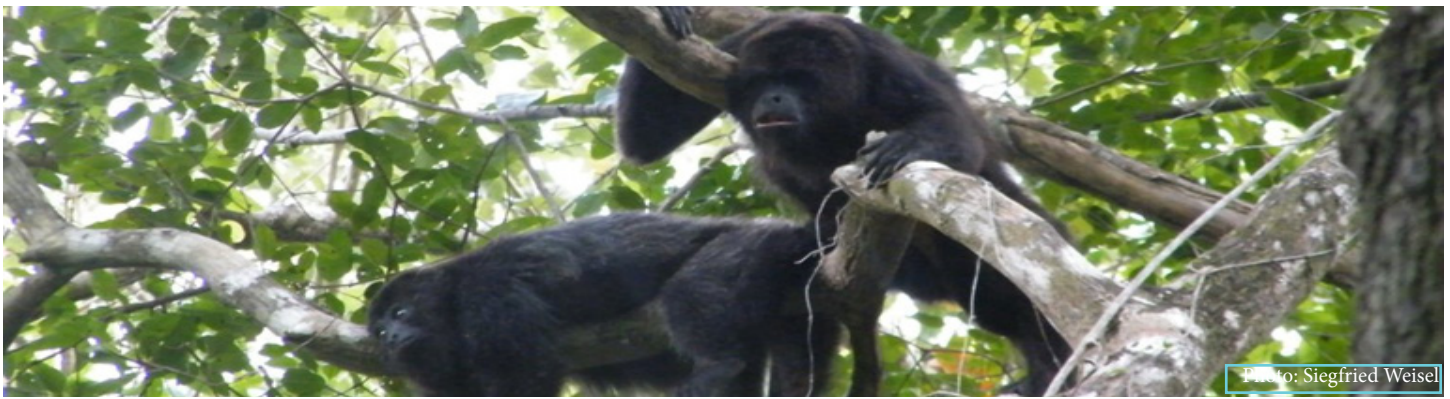


Photo: Siegfried Weisel

*Wildtracks, in partnership with the Forest Department, has been releasing groups of Yucatan Black Howler monkeys into Fireburn Reserve for four years. During the release time each year, Masters students from the University of Leeds and staff from Houston Zoo travel to Belize to work with Wildtracks volunteers during the post-release phase. The post-release monitoring team journeys to Fireburn to conduct studies on the ecology and behavior of the newly released troops, while providing daily tracking to ensure the troops are becoming well established.*



Photo: Tony Rath Photography

When the release date arrived, the two pairs of rehabilitated howlers (Paz and Kofi, and Livvy and Sultan) were coaxed into transport kennels for their journey to Fireburn. After being transported by car, boat, and then carried through the jungle on foot, the monkeys arrived at their release sites. For three days each pair was kept in a release cage and looked after by their carers. On the third day, the doors were opened and the pairs were freed, marking the start of the post-release monitoring.

To ensure a successful release, monkeys that have been through the Wildtracks Rehabilitation Programme are closely monitored for 60 to 90 days after release. The post-release monitoring team typically includes a local tracker, a research student, and a Wildtracks volunteer. Tracking starts early, the teams waking up before the monkeys do, locating them, following them and monitoring their behavior until they go to sleep in the evening.

Data that is collected during the post release monitoring phase is then used to help plan future releases, as well as identify the strengths and the weaknesses of the current rehabilitation process, with the adaptation of release protocols where necessary.

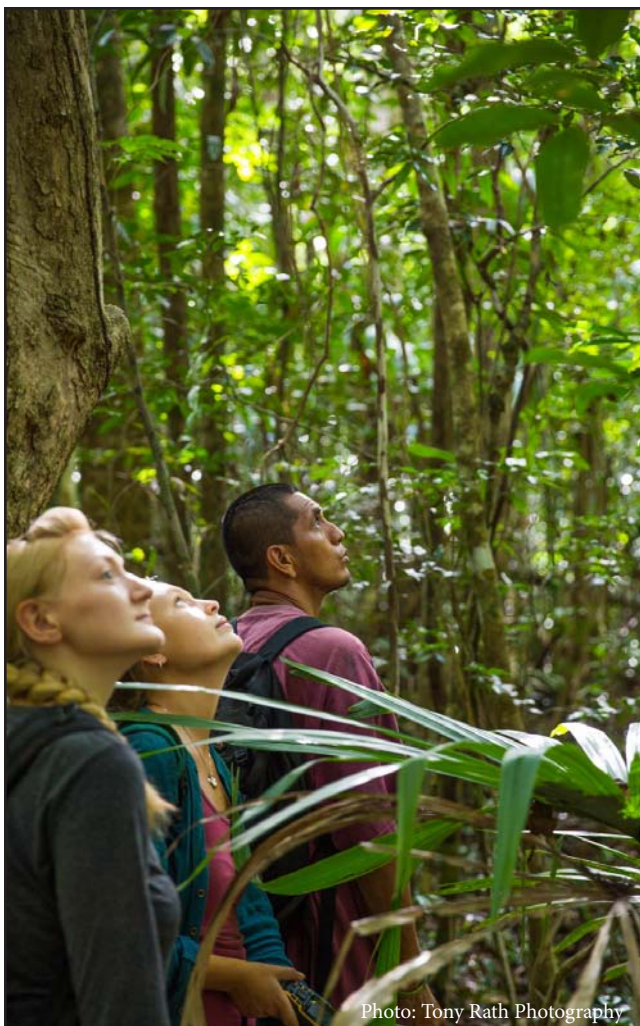
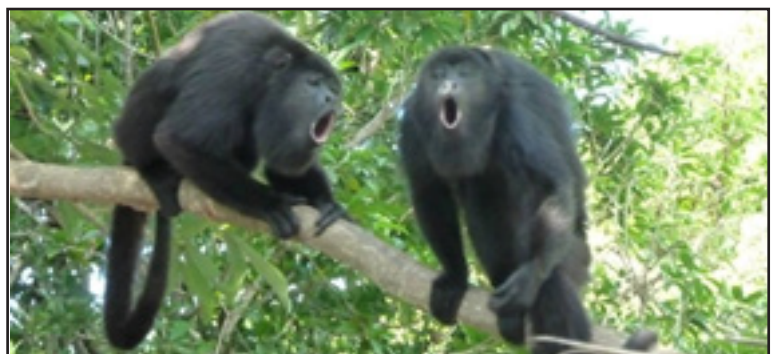


Photo: Tony Rath Photography







# The Howlers of Wildtracks...

Photo: Tony Rath Photography

## Introducing... Spartacus!



Photo: Ed James

At midnight on September 8th, 2011, Wildtracks received a phone call from Hickatee Cottages, just outside Punta Gorda, in southern Belize. A baby howler monkey had just been spotted crawling helplessly through the rain and mud, with an almost completely severed hand. He was rescued and kept warm overnight in a box with a hot water bottle, and then flown by Tropic Air to Belize City. Paul met the flight, then transporting him to the Belize Wildlife and Referral Clinic in Cayo District for treatment.

Weighing only 600g and estimated at only 4 - 4.5 months old, the baby was in critical condition and lucky to be alive. After being anesthetized, an assessment of the hand revealed a broken radius and severed ulna, thought to be from a bite. However, with some tendons intact and blood vessels still pumping, there was hope that the arm could be saved. The surgery was complicated and very risky, and even though the wrist was successfully re-attached, it wasn't clear whether he would ever fully recover use of the hand. However, this tiny monkey had an incredible will to live - and because of this fighting spirit, was given the name "Spartacus".

Spartacus had a long road to recovery ahead of him, but he made progress every day and won over the hearts of everyone he met along the way. He was the inspiration for the Belize Wildlife and Referral Clinic's logo, and has since appeared in eBaum's World's "25 animal rescues to restore your faith in humanity".

Eventually, Spartacus joined a troop of howlers in a pre-release enclosure to prepare for his release in June, 2013. While he was able to climb trees well, it was clear that he could not keep up with the other howlers. His wrist, it seemed, had not healed as well as would be required for release.

With heavy hearts it was decided that Spartacus would be held back and re-assessed. X-rays of the arm showed that the ulna and radius had fused together, significantly limiting his hand's range of motion. Spartacus would need yet more, specialized surgery. A specialist, Dr. Gilbert Brodeur, agreed to donate his time and expertise for the operation, to attempt to repair the bones, and funds for travel were raised through the Wildtracks support network.

Spartacus has since healed and has been integrated with Jenny, a female howler monkey. He still limps slightly on his left arm but now has full use of his fingers to grip and climb. He has become a very strong, playful, and happy monkey, and is due to be released with Jenny in June of 2015!

## Meet the teens...

The 'Teens', as they are affectionately called, are a troop of four young howler monkeys here at Wildtracks. At 2 1/2 years old, Sam, Pebbles, Peanut, and Polly, are at a transitional age. Having all come in to Wildtracks at a very young age, they each began their rehabilitation process in the Nursery with full-time, individual, specialized care, and since then, have experienced all the steps of the Wildtracks rehabilitation process.

After outgrowing the Nursery, they gradually worked their way through the Forest Enclosure phase, and have recently reached an important milestone on their journey to becoming wild monkeys. In mid-May, they moved from their Forest Enclosure to the "Pre-Pre-Release" enclosure - a small version of the pre-release enclosures. This small forested patch, surrounded by a fence, is where they begin learning to navigate the tree tops, climbing, and finding browse for themselves. At first, they were only allowed to play outside in the enclosure for an hour a day, with volunteers observing from outside the enclosure each playtime, until confident that the troop members were navigating the trees safely and with ease.

At first, having learned to climb in a controlled, caged environment, they were unsure of which branches would support their weight and how far they could safely jump. Although there were a few falls and missteps at the beginning, they quickly adapted to their new environment. Soon, the teens were jumping from tree to tree with ease. Within two weeks, they had advanced to spending all of their daylight hours in the trees.

Since their move from their Forest Enclosure to this larger Pre-Pre-Release enclosure, the teens have shown remarkable growth and progress - they are well on their way to their release next summer, and becoming wild monkeys!



Photo: Tony Rath Photography

## A special thanks to...Houston Zoo



*We currently have 46 monkeys in our care at Wildtracks, with an estimated US\$1 dollar covering the amount of food each monkey needs per day. Each year, the Houston Zoo Primate Section puts on a fundraiser to help cover some of the day-to-day operational costs we are confronted with, along with many of the unforeseen expenses, such as veterinary visits, and the ongoing costs of cage construction, maintenance, and repair. In addition to fundraising, a member of the Primate Department travels to Wildtracks each year to assist with the primate releases.*

***Wildtracks is very grateful for the support of Houston Zoo. Not only is the financial support extremely important but the volunteer input and skills transfer is greatly appreciated!***

## Tony Rath...

**Wildtracks thanks you for your beautiful photographs!**



Photo: Tony Rath Photography

Thank you... for continuously supporting the work being done at Wildtracks and helping us to spread our conservation message. Through annual visits you have documented the many animals being rehabilitated here, providing us with a detailed record at how each animal is growing and thriving throughout its rehabilitation process - as well as showcasing the work of many dedicated volunteers.



# Nursery Update!



Photo: Tony Rath Photography

The Nursery Troop (Little Bean, Hobbes, Jessie, Suri and J.W.) have transitioned to the next step of their rehabilitation - moving from the Nursery Unit to an outdoor Forest Enclosure! .

At first, the monkeys had mixed reactions to their new surroundings – J.W. was (as he always is) a bit nervous and unsure about all the new sights, smells and sounds, and needed a fair amount of reassurance for him to feel relaxed enough to explore his new surroundings. Jessie and Suri were also slightly wary of the new enclosure, and especially suspicious of their new neighbours (the Teens in pre-pre-release and the spider monkeys in the new Spider Monkey Complex).

Hobbes, however, immediately appreciated the extra space and freedom to swing, jump and play. In fact, Hobbes loved the new enclosure so much that he defiantly refused to leave at the end of each day! Last, but certainly not least, Little Bean thrived in the new enclosure, and with all the new swinging and jumping opportunities it provides, she has adapted well and has become a much more independent little howler monkey.

Before long, the group were practicing their howls in response to the Teens' roars each morning. Whilst they are not managing to produce quite the same impressive noises as the older howlers, they are making valiant attempts, and are improving by the day.

As of December, 2014, they are now living outside full-time, with only limited support from their carers, as they experience their first nights away from the security of the Nursery Unit. The next step? Their move to the Pre-Pre Release enclosure, preparing them for their eventual release into the wild!



Photo: Tony Rath Photography



# The Littlest Howlers of Wildtracks...

Vicki arrived on June 23rd as a four month old baby howler monkey, and is currently the youngest monkey at Wildtracks. Though she is tiny, she has a big personality, and an even bigger appetite! She was confiscated by the Forestry Department after being found in a small crate in someone's backyard. She was sick with amoebic dysentery when she came in, but quickly recovered with improved care and medication. With one-on-one care, her personality started emerging - she has a sense of confidence that doesn't seem to match her small size - Vicki knows what she wants and can be quite a determined little monkey about getting it.



Photo: Tony Rath Photography

Innie is thought to have been orphaned by poachers. At three months old, he was found lying in a pool of blood with a hairline fracture in his right arm. His mother had been killed, and he was left to die, unable to fend for himself. Incredibly, he was found, rescued and taken to the Belize Wildlife and Referral Clinic, where his arm was bandaged. From there, he made his way to Wildtracks, where his new life would begin. He was lively, adventurous and curious, even upon arrival, and the burden of his cast did not stop him from exploring. He was a crazy little monkey, wanting to see, touch, and climb everything. He learned quickly how to climb with



one arm and how to use his tail to his advantage. He absolutely loved being taken for walks, and was soon practicing his 'not so scary' howl! About a month into his rehabilitation, it was time to take his cast off - a big step forward. The first day without his cast, he seemed hesitant to use his arm, which didn't have the strength of his other one. However, within a day he was using it equally well. With the advantage of two arms, he began to climb even faster and further than he had before. Innie is now a rambunctious, happy little monkey, who is growing so fast- he has doubled in size, and is not such a baby anymore!

## The story of Innie and Vicki's Integration...

In the days before their introduction, Innie and Vicki were always near each other, but being in quarantine, couldn't touch. Innie was his usual confident self, actively trying to reach out and touch Vicki, like a brave little man. Vicki, the younger and smaller of the two, was hesitant around Innie at first, but soon started to act as though she wanted to play with him as well. When they were finally taken outside for their first meeting, Vicki quickly bounded over to Innie. Innie then showed he wasn't as tough as he had been acting. He immediately whined and cried as he tried to escape this new little monkey's touch. He would run up on his carer's shoulder to avoid her. Vicki was steadfast in her desire to meet him, clumsily running after him with little eyes that seemed to scream "Why won't you love me?!" It was a little heart-breaking to watch Vicki, filled with excitement and delight at seeing this new potential friend, and trying to interact, when he wanted nothing to do with her. She was determined to play, but Innie seemed terrified. However, Vicki didn't seem fazed. She knew she would make him love her.



A new approach was then tried. Innie and Vicki were taken for walks together, each riding on the opposite shoulders of one of their carers. Once moving with his surrogate parent, Innie seemed much more relaxed, and finally allowed Vicki to snuggle up to him. They rode around, with Vicki wrapped tightly around Innie, who seemed to be silently tolerating her advances. This began their gradual bonding process. The following days were a mixed bag of snuggles and playing, along with some fighting and crying when one would grow tired of the attention. However, it became quite clear they were going to get along in the long run. Soon the snuggles, playing, and even hand holding and touching noses replaced any fighting and whining. While they still have little quarrels, it was clear that they were getting along well. Innie and Vicki are the beginning of a new troop that will grow as more young monkeys come in, to one day explore the forest together, in the wild.



# The Manatee Calves of Wildtracks:

## Mitch and Lucky!

The call came in from Jamal Galves, coordinator of the Belize Marine Mammal Stranding Network, regarding an orphaned manatee calf reported near Belize City on the evening of June 30th. The calf was alone, swimming in circles and struggling to breathe, with an adult manatee, presumed to be the mother, dead nearby. The Wildtracks team sprang into action and began preparing for the calf's arrival. Volunteers scrubbed and filled the intensive care pool while Paul and Zoe coordinated the pick-up and transfer of the calf.

Paul met Jamal in Orange Walk, just as the sun began to set. A small crowd formed around the two vehicles to watch as the tiny male manatee, wrapped in a damp t-shirt, was transferred to the Wildtracks vehicle. Paul laid him gently on a foam mattress - it was quite clear that he was in significant pain. His breathing was laboured, and he gasped and thrashed with every breath. He also appeared to have bruising on his left side, probably from being swept against the sea wall by waves. On the long and bumpy road back to Wildtracks, volunteers monitored the calf's every breath and kept his eyes and skin damp.

On arrival, he was carried down to the Manatee Rehabilitation Area. The Wildtracks team waited in the Intensive Care Unit, and a volunteer was ready in the water, prepared to assist the calf, and to provide him with the social contact a calf of his age requires. When he attempted to take his first breath in the new pool he panicked, thrashing and struggling to reach the surface. It was immediately clear he would require assistance breathing. Thus began many days of 24-hour watches. Each shift was two hours long, and required two volunteers - one to sit in the pool supporting him and keeping his nostrils above the water when he tried to surface to breathe, and one to record the timing of his breaths and his behaviour. His chances of survival were thought to have been under 50%, but that didn't stop the volunteers from working tirelessly to save him.

The next morning he was still alive, but continued to struggle with breathing and swimming on his own. He refused to take a bottle, keeping his jaws locked tightly closed, and the decision was made to tube feed him, to help him regain his strength. His condition improved slowly throughout the day and he began to swim around the pool. However, he was still weak and required assistance breathing. Over the next few days of continued 24-hour manatee watches, the little calf began to improve.

Having shown improvement and a better prospect of survival, he was given the name "Mitch". He began to feed through a tube taped to Paul's finger, and then graduated to a bottle. He gradually became more social, constantly nuzzling and suckling on whoever was in the water with him. After a week and a half, Mitch was fully able to navigate the pool and breathe on his own, ending the 24-hour manatee watches. He continues to grow and improve every day.

Thanks to the hard work of the Wildtracks team, with input from Blue Ventures volunteers, Hugo Castillo, and Lien Crawford, his chances of a successful release back into the wild are high!





July was a very exhausting month for the Wildtracks team. After nine days of 24-hour watches with Mitch, the team had a week to catch up on sleep before Wildtracks got another call from Jamal. On July 17th, a second orphaned and injured calf had been reported south of Belize City.

The calf had washed up on a remote beach, and was severely emaciated. Once the stranding was confirmed, volunteers across Belize sprang into action to try and save the struggling little calf. While Paul and two members of the Wildtracks team were transporting the calf, others began to prepare for his arrival. The experience was definitely a case of “deja vu”! Having run out of concrete pools, volunteers set up a temporary plastic pool next to Mitch's pool, in the Intensive Care Unit.

On arrival the calf was found to have many scratches of varying depths and lengths on his back. More worryingly, there were signs of spinal bruising, and he had been beached for an unknown length of time. He was extremely emaciated, his skin was wrinkled and loose, and he resembled a brown leather bag of bones. Judging by his size, he was estimated to be between two and three months old and, based on his state, was thought to have been without his mother for as long as ten days. Like Mitch, he struggled to reach the surface when trying to breathe.

After 17 days of 24-hour watches, the calf was able to breathe unassisted, and regained some of his strength. He began eating well, and his deeply wrinkled skin started to fill out. The wounds on his back have now all but disappeared. If it had not been for one person swimming past a remote beach, this little calf may never have been found in time. Now his chances of survival are increasing every day, giving him the very fitting name of “Lucky”.



## THANK YOU JAMAL!

Wildtracks would like to say a huge thank you to Jamal Galves for all of his hard work with the Marine Mammal Stranding Network. Jamal is currently the Manatee Conservation Program Coordinator for the Coastal Zone Management and Authority Institute. Through his work, Jamal has become an integral part of manatee conservation in Belize, not only by educating the communities about manatee conservation, but also by being instrumental in the rescues of three out of the four manatee calves presently in the Wildtracks Rehabilitation Programme. If it weren't for Jamal's dedication, and the dedication of the volunteer team that works with him under the Stranding Network, many of the manatees reported as stranded or orphaned would not be successfully rescued.



# New Arrivals, Updates and Other News

## Selva

Although I originally came to Wildtracks to focus on manatee rehabilitation, a monkey stole my heart my first month here. She was a shy, extremely overweight 16 year old spider monkey. Upon intake, her name was Sylvester - her previous owners had clearly mistaken her gender as male, her name was therefore adjusted to Selva.

I started spending time with Selva, and although she initially ignored me, she eventually became more curious and would come over and dutifully check my hair for bugs. A few weeks after her arrival, I noticed her lying on the ground - unusual behavior for a monkey that is supposed to live high up in the trees! Worried that she was suffering from depression, I started spending most of my days trying to lift her spirits and comfort her. She became less and less interested in her surroundings... even in her food, and at her lowest point, only beans would peak her interest.

We soon realized that she was suffering from constipation. I was overjoyed to finally know the reason for her odd behavior and the fact that now I could finally help her. After a few days of treatment she started moving around and eating again. By this time we had become very close. As soon as I came in to her enclosure and sat down, she would run over, jump in my lap, and happily let me groom her.

As the weeks passed, I watched her go from overweight, depressed, and sick to beautiful, curious, and healthy. During the rest of my time at Wildtracks, I worked to keep her healthy and happy, but the one thing I was looking forward to the most was seeing her bond with other spider monkeys. That time has come. She has moved to the Spider Monkey Complex and is now integrated with Panchita.

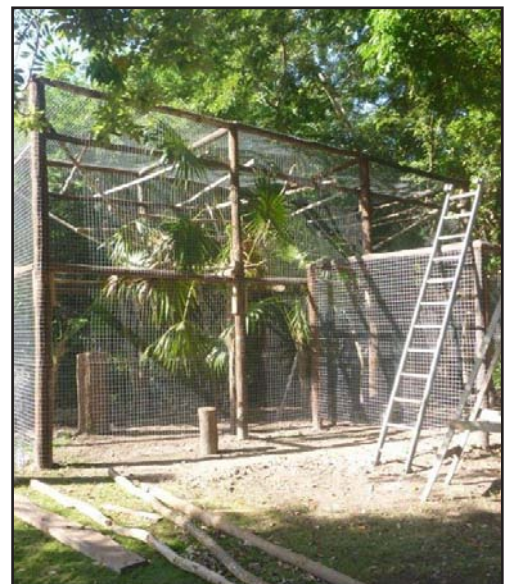
I couldn't be happier to have been a part of the process of her transition from being a "pet" to eventually being a wild spider monkey - something she was always meant to be. There is no doubt that Selva girl will always have a very special place in my heart.

Caitlin Brush



## Nikki and Rafiki's enclosures

Nikki and Rafiki are long term residents - Nikki the white-faced capuchin - not native to Belize, and illegally smuggled into the country - and Rafiki the spider monkey with his bad scoliosis of the spine. It isn't unknown for these two species to coexist in the wild, so we will be trying to integrate them - some monkey company is always healthier than no monkey company - and they both need a friend...



# Thanks to our Supporters...



***On September 26th, the Spider Monkey Complex was officially completed. The support Wildtracks received throughout the entire process was overwhelming. Many mornings have started with Zoe wandering out to gaze in awe at the spider monkeys, high above, chuckling delightedly at all their space.***

***Thank you, thank you, and thank you once again to all those who contributed both in time and donations!.***

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With the addition of Mitch and Lucky, Wildtracks has a record number of manatees in rehabilitation at the Centre, with four calves / sub-adults in residence. Each manatee requires significant time and resources to ensure it has effective care. The annual cost of milk alone for a single manatee calf is approximately Bz\$7,000! With the arrival of the two additional young calves, our resources were beginning to stretch thin. When Lucky arrived, Wildtracks started a fundraiser not only to help with increased milk consumption, but also to pay for a new pool and a replacement pump to fill all of our pools. We are happy to announce that within a month we raised enough funds to outfit a large temporary pool for the two youngest manatee calves and purchase a pump to ensure that we continue to be able to fill all of our current pools. As the weather began to get colder in November, maintaining the water temperature of Mitch and Lucky's pools became more and more financially daunting. Manatee calves are extremely susceptible to cold stress, which can have serious, long term effects on health- especially of young calves. We launched the "Warm a Manatee" appeal to fund butane gas refills for the pool heater. It costs approximately US\$30 every four days to keep the pools at a safe temperature for Mitch and Lucky, so we set a goal of US\$840 to get us through the frequent cold spells we experience at this time of year. It was a complete shock when we reached this goal in less than two days! Thank you to everyone who contributed towards keeping these manatees warm this winter!!

We would also like to thank the Belize Volunteer Club for joining our efforts in manatee rehabilitation by sending volunteers for weekend training here at Wildtracks. These trained volunteers will be part of an emergency response team, assisting in the 24 hour intensive care required for the increasing number of injured and /or orphaned manatees coming into the centre.

Thank you to Gillian Kirkwood and the Belize Humane Society for the sale of Wildtracks t-shirts in Belize City.  
The proceeds have gone a long way in contributing to the cost of milk for 2014!

A huge Thank You to all those who have contributed over the last six months - whether in time or through funds - Wildtracks could not do what it does without you!





# The Final Word:

## In Memory of Duke...

Photo: Tony Rath Photography

*Duke was with us for more than two years, and his struggle to stay alive, to grow, his accepting nature, and the battles he fought, won, and ultimately lost against his ill health, captured the hearts of the volunteers and staff at Wildtracks. Duke was a manatee full of personality; known for a brief hug during swims, driving Rhamases crazy, and "getting personal" with the occasional kneecap, he was the first manatee that many volunteers here at Wildtracks were introduced to.*

*In September, losing Duke, we faced the very hard reality of wildlife rehabilitation that you can't always win. You can never predict the outcome, but each and every one of the animals here deserves to be given a fighting chance. We are lucky to have a history full of successes, something that keeps Wildtracks moving forward after a loss such as this. Every animal is worth the effort.*

*Rest in peace Duke, may you swim in the sunniest, seagrass-filled lagoon.*

