Fun at the Belize Zoo!

CELA Returns to the Zoo!

Center for Engaged Learning Abroad (CELA) has a happy history of participating here at our special zoo. They are enthusiastic animal conservationists, and also many have an ardent interest in becoming a wildlife vet. The training received here enhances their animal knowledge and our zoo keeping squad works along with them. Terrific training for all!

Dr. Michelle Kneeland, an experienced wildlife vet, put her good talents to work. All of us who work with wildlife in captivity understand the “story” told in a critter’s poop. By examining poop under a microscope, so much can be revealed. Are parasites a problem, would de-worming need to happen, should diet changes be made...these are important issues which are clarified by “poop detectives”.

Dr. Michelle’s survey of our animals discovered a small infection in the eye of “Zippy” the pelican. All learned how to apply medication, and how quickly “Zippy’s” infection was reduced to nearly nothing at all! We were given a baby squirrel not that long ago. The plan was made to raise the babe and then release. Our keepers appreciated sharing good raising techniques with the CELA group, and squirrel baby is on his way to becoming part of the wild environment in Belize.

Our staff is also quick to ask questions about animals which are part of their daily world. Our very special vulture, “Max” has recently been slow to respond to his dinner. We factor animal behaviour into the daily checks of all, and a change in style and food approach is never ignored. “Max”, while not jumping up and down when his food comes his way, does indeed have a very full crop. The handsome vulture is eating, no problem.

CELA vets, professional and experienced, have had strong impact here. All of us recall a while back, when ultra-special jaguar cub Chiqui arrived from the Belize Wildlife Referral Clinic. We were thrilled to provide a loving home for little Chiqui, however, it was CELA wildlife vet, Dr. Julio Mercado, who readily brought to our attention that the cub was severely de-hydrated! He guided us on treatment, and she received a three-day rehydration course which undoubtedly got her back into good and healthy condition.

Other animal professionals participate in the CELA experience. Crocodile expert and colleague, Dr. Marisa Tellez, shared natural history information about both species of crocs found in Belize, and also led a short survey of an area where Morelet’s crocodiles have been noted. Of course, all of the participants met famous “Rose” the crocodile. Being able to sit next to “Rose” and study the interesting aspects of her reptilian profile, was a highlight. Books were provided, as well, so each CELA participant could read her story and further appreciate this unique reptile.

We certainly look forward to further collaborations with CELA, and heartily thank them for their professional and caring approach here at The Belize Zoo.