



Together we can Take a Bite out of Extinction!

Annual Report 2011

AMERICAN CROCODILE EDUCATION SANCTUARY Crocodile Conservation



ACES is dedicated to the conservation of Belize' critical wetland habitats and protected species, specifically Crocodillians, through scientific research and education to preserve wildlife for future generations.

Crocodile Behaviorist Vince Rose

VINCE & CHERIE ROSE FOUNDERS & RESEARCH BIOLOGISTS
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CORPORATE DONORS

ACES work in 2011 would not have been possible without the generous support of the following organizations:

- Belize
- Ambergris Daily
- Belize Forest Department
- Belize Wildlife Conservation Network
- Caribbean Connection
- Carts Belize
- Coastal Express
- Conch Creative
- Cotton Tree Chocolate
- Doris Wilderness
- Exotic Caye Beach Resort
- Grand Belizean Estates
- Island Construction
- Island Films
- Legend's Burger House
- Maya Island Air
- Rite-Way General Contractors
- San Pedro Animal Hospital
- San Pedro Sun
- Xanadu Island Resort
- Canada
- Edmonton Reptile and Amphibian Society
- United Kingdom
- Rufford Small Grants Foundation
- United States
- Belize Economic & Ecological Development Fun
- Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries
- LightHawk
- Optics for the Tropics
- Summerlee Foundation



Research Biologist, Cherie Chenot-Rose, training Forest Department personnel.

ACES WORKS WITH AND IS PERMITTED BY THE BELIZE FOREST DEPARTMENT



Photo by The San Pedro Sun

From the Founders

Founded in 2006, the American Crocodile Education Sanctuary (ACES) is a nonprofit organization permitted by the Belize Forest Department, verified by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, and dedicated to conserving Belize critical wetland habitats and protected species, specifically crocodilians, through scientific research and education to preserve wildlife for future generations.



Our primary goal is the institution of an essential, educational crocodile refuge for ill, injured and problematic crocodiles. ACES's ongoing research focuses on the long term monitoring of threatened, saltwater American crocodiles, *Crocodylus acutus*. Our fundamental management strategies include: reducing human-croc conflicts and man-related crocodile mortalities through public education; protecting croc nesting site habitats; monitoring croc habitat water qualities; providing refuge and professional care for ill, injured and problematic crocodiles; and rehabilitate wild crocodiles for re-release when able.

Originally located in the Toledo District of Belize on the Rio Grande River, ACES was a Green and eco-friendly crocodilian sanctuary providing a safe haven for both wild and rescued crocodiles where researchers and students could come to study these magnificent reptiles. Our facility was lost to arsonists September 5, 2010. This 2011 Annual Report reflects ACES recovery and forward movement in our crocodile conservation efforts in Belize.

Considering the numbers of our annual crocodile rescues, confiscations, and relocations over the past 6 ½ years, human-crocodile conflicts in Belize, especially Ambergris Caye, are steadily increasing due to indiscriminate and unregulated development; deliberate illegal crocodile feedings as tourist attractions; indirect croc feedings via improper discarding of food scraps and inadequate waste disposal; an increase in poaching for meat, trophy skulls, and teeth for souvenirs; and finally, needless crocodile killing out of fear. Furthermore, several large, wild American crocodiles in Ambergris Caye have been found lacking teeth and in generally poor health. While this could be due to several factors, ill apex predators are an indicator of an environmental disturbance. The first step to addressing all of these factors is to assess the crocodile population in the said region.

Thanks to all of you who support our work both financially and emotionally, together, we have taken the first steps towards taking a bite out of extinction!

Only through working together can we save our species for our children,

Vince & Cherie Rose

ACES CROC CALLS	2010	2011
Number of croc calls ACES received & responded to	26	61
Number of ill, injured and illegally kept crocs rescued, rehabilitated and re-released into the wild	3	10
Number of nuisance crocs relocated	9	27
Number of problematic crocs relocated	2	6
Number of crocs rescued from the wild and placed in captivity	5	3
Number of crocs rescued from illegal and/or inhumane captivity and placed in captivity	0	22
Number of documented croc deaths due to illness or natural injury	2	1
Number of documented croc deaths due to man	16	3
Number of crocs found with bullet wounds	11	4
Number of crocs found with tails chopped off by a machete for illegal sale of the meat	0	4

Nuisance Crocodile versus Problematic Crocodile

A nuisance croc is one that is bothersome. It hangs around regularly, but acts like a crocodile and flees when approached suddenly. A problematic croc approaches humans boldly and stands its ground when approached, moving away slowly if at all. This croc will try to or will succeed at eating a family pet, and most likely has been illegally fed by humans.



“We are working more and more closely with ACES when they have problem crocodiles, basically for technical and professional development.”

- JAZMIN RAMOS, BELIZE FOREST DEPARTMENT WILDLIFE OFFICER

TO THE RESCUE



Morelet's rescued from inhumane captivity.



Thanks to corporate donors, in 2011 we received \$12,691 USD and was able to succeed in rebuilding ACES, after the arson in 2010, at the Caribbean Shrimp Farm in Ladyville, Belize. Two American crocodile habitats were completed and one was started thanks to donations from the *Doris Wilderness* and the *Edmonton Reptile and Amphibian Society*. To date, two American crocodiles, George and Xanadu, have been recovered from the arsoned facility and now comfortable live at the new ACES Educational Crocodile Eco-Sanctuary. Additionally, one severely injured croc who almost lost her foot was rescued, has healed nicely, and shares her habitat with another problematic croc that would have otherwise been killed.

Our most rewarding rescue of the year was made possible by *The Summerlee Foundation*, whose donation enabled the construction of a 150' x 300' secure and natural enclosure for the rescue of twenty-two (22) vulnerable, freshwater Morelet's crocodiles, *Crocodylus moreletii*. These crocs were being held in captivity illegally and in inhumane conditions for several months. While Belize laws do protect both species of crocodiles under the *Belize Wildlife Protection Act (Chapter 220)*,

the lack of education and resources for enforcement leave many animals subject to such cruel conditions countrywide.

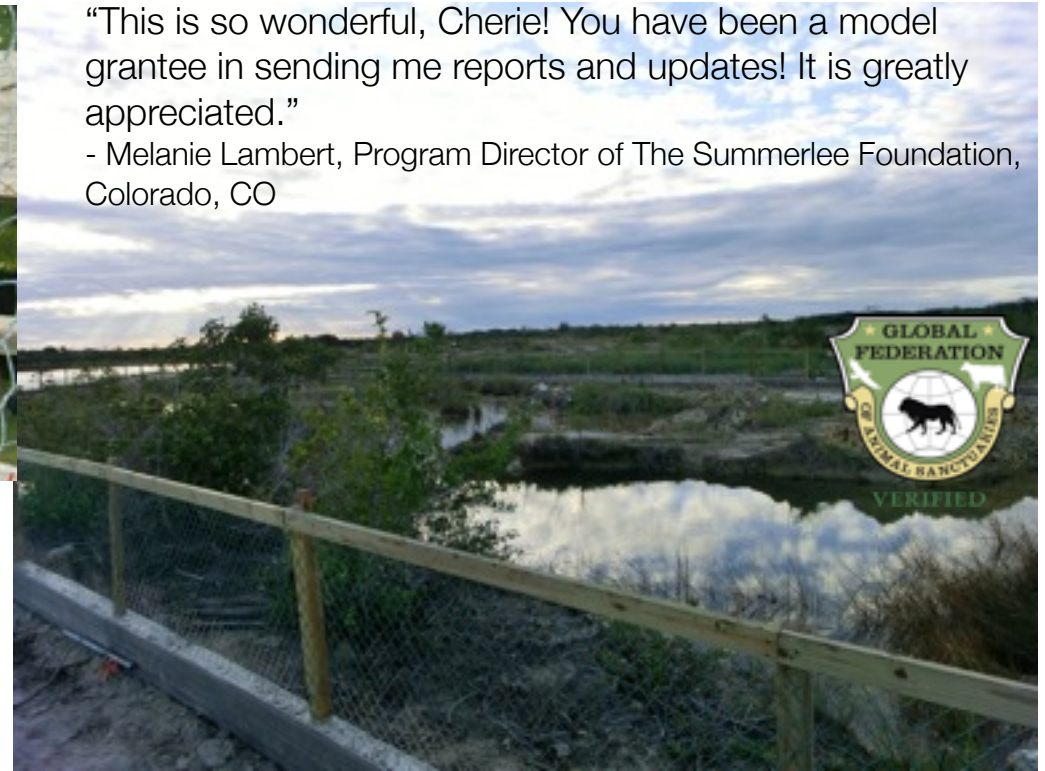
When ACES reached out and notified Mrs. Melanie Lambert, the Program Director for the Summerlee Foundation based out of the USA, of the terrible condition of these illegally kept crocodiles, she immediately responded and everyone began working together to make the new facility a reality to rescue these crocodiles. "It's so nice to work with people who put the animals' best interests first rather than their own egos," stated Melanie.

**"It's so nice to work with people who put the animals' best interests first rather than their own egos."
- Melanie Lambert**

Thanks to everyone involved, including the *Belize Forest Department*, the *Belize Vivarium*, and the *Belize Wildlife Conservation Network*, crocodiles that would have been euthanized now have the chance to survive. People will be able to visit the rescued crocs for educational tours to learn about crocodiles and their important role in keeping Belize's wetland habitats healthy and in balance.

"This is so wonderful, Cherie! You have been a model grantee in sending me reports and updates! It is greatly appreciated."

- Melanie Lambert, Program Director of The Summerlee Foundation, Colorado, CO



During the rescue efforts of these Morelet's crocodiles, we were excited to announce the official verification of the new ACES facility by *The Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS)*. We are the first animal care facility in Belize to receive such recognition.

The GFAS mission is to promote excellence in sanctuary management and in humane care of animals through international accreditation, collaboration, mentoring, and greater recognition and resources for sanctuaries, while seeking to eliminate the causes of displaced animals. GFAS aids sanctuaries in striving for continuous improvement, in attracting more support from funders, and in providing the best care possible for rescued animals.

Sanctuaries accredited by GFAS earn the highest level of credibility with donors, the media, and members of the public, and are clearly distinguished from pseudo-sanctuaries and substandard facilities. The GFAS accreditation is a "seal of approval" to reassure donors and foundations internationally. Supporters of GFAS include, but are not limited to, the Animal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Animal Welfare Institute, the Captive Wild Animal Protection Coalition, the Humane Society of the United States, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, and the Summerlee Foundation.

To date, all twenty-two crocs are healthy, free from the contracted mouth rot and browning disease, and growing!

Consolidated Statement of Activities & Changes in Net Assets

For the years ended December 2011 and 2010. Please note that September 5, 2010, ACES lost everything and rebuilt with an initial donation of \$967USD from that date.

SUPPORT AND REVENUE - Values in US dollars.	2011	2010
Donations	16,099	100
Grants	8,455	8,285
Fundraisers	2,250	0
CSI Tours	180	0
Contract Income	1,888	0
Interest	17	2
TOTAL Support and Revenue	28,889	8,387
Equipment Assets (boat, engine, colorimeter, GPS, etc.)	5,407	0
TOTAL ASSETS	34,296	8,387
EXPENSES - Values in US dollars.	2011	2010
Crocodile Population Survey Ambergris Caye	8,269	0
Ladyville Croc Sanctuary	12,691	0
Ambergris Caye Croc Refuge & Education	6,759	0
Croc Rescues (bait, equipment, fuel)	4,120	2,165
Personnel (all volunteered)	0	0
TOTAL Expenses	31,839	2,165
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS - VALUES IN USD	2,457	6,222
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	7,189	967
Net Assets at End of Year	9,646	7,189

ACES research is funded by *The Rufford Small Grants Foundation* and will validate the American Crocodile population and habitat viability on Ambergris Caye in Belize through daylight, eye-shine and nest sighting surveys; kind crocodile tagging; and habitat quality assessments. Health, size, sex, and location of encountered crocodiles will be utilized to generate a population structure and distribution to aid the Belize Forest Department in developing an effective management program for the conservation of this threatened species and it's habitat in Ambergris Caye.



A broader impact resulting from this project is an increase in public awareness about crocodile conservation. Working closely with communities during data collection will present the opportunity to educate the local populace on the importance of crocodiles in Belize's ecosystems and how to safely coexist with them; thus expectantly, reducing croc-human conflicts and nonsensical crocodile killings in Belize.



LightHawk has been paramount in ACES crocodile research. Ambergris Caye, Belize



Crocodile Rescues, Relocations, Research, and Education for the Future...



“Jaws” a rescued crocodile with a healed, broken jaw that was inflicted by man.

Generally, people fear what they do not understand. It is imperative to first educate the local people and children about crocodiles to raise awareness concerning the importance and value of American crocodiles in Belize’s highly diverse ecosystems.

By involving communities in crocodile field research and rescues the local communities gain a new understanding of these reptiles and their habitats. The opportunity to touch a restrained crocodile during relocation efforts can give an individual a new sense of reverence toward the animal, especially when it is a hatchling.

By teaching people how to act and react in crocodile-human interaction situations that is safe for both the human and the crocodile gives people the ability to have some control over the situation, hence

lessening fears and in turn decreasing the number of needless crocodile killings. Our goal is to give people the opportunity to gain a new understanding about crocodiles. It will be these people and the children that take actions to protect the wild populations of American crocodiles and conserve their vital wetland nesting habitats in the future.

In 2012 we hope to obtain funding for the launching of a ‘Safe with Snappy’ campaign. Focusing on how to safely coexist with these apex predators will promote public awareness through community involvement and school participation with the posting of crocodile safety signs; distribution of educational brochures on why it’s important not to feed wildlife; free public presentations on the Belize Wildlife Protection Act (Chapter 220) and crocodilians; collectively reporting

crocodile sightings to ACES to aid in scientific research; and observing and assisting with crocodile rescues and re-releases when safely plausible. In addition, school children would join ACES on field trips for the re-lease of juvenile rescued crocodiles.

The aim is to communicate pertinent information about the biology and behavior of crocodiles while discrediting local myths and enhancing community involvement and safety.

Added projects would include assisting low-income housing areas with filling under their homes to prevent crocodiles from inhabiting these areas, which is a common problem on the island; and the construction of a small educational croc refuge and visitor center with displays.



Collected scientific data provides essential information about population distributions of American crocodiles in the region. Since very little is known concerning the American Crocodile’s status and hatchling viability in Belize outside of Turneffe Atoll, the information provided by ACES will be vital to effective conservation methods for Belize.





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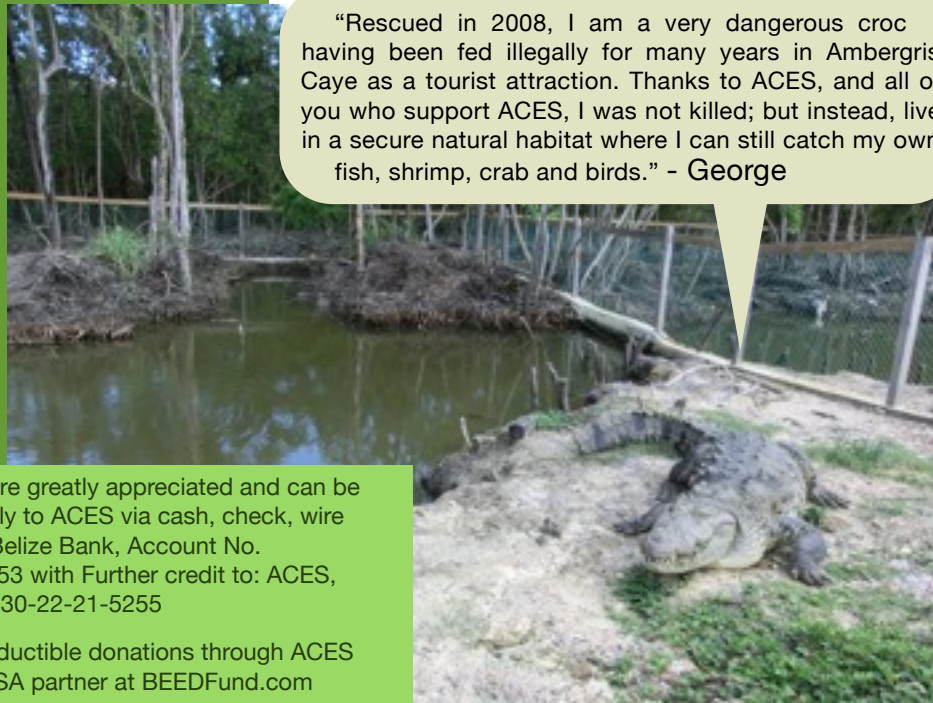
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"Rescued in 2008, I am a very dangerous croc having been fed illegally for many years in Ambergris Caye as a tourist attraction. Thanks to ACES, and all of you who support ACES, I was not killed; but instead, live in a secure natural habitat where I can still catch my own fish, shrimp, crab and birds." - George

Donations are greatly appreciated and can be made directly to ACES via cash, check, wire transfer to Belize Bank, Account No. 6550-8-26053 with Further credit to: ACES, Account # 630-22-21-5255

Give tax-deductible donations through ACES 501 (c)(3) USA partner at BEEDFund.com

United States
 Bob Delany



UK based *Wild Productions Limited* arrived in San Pedro February 2012 for a two-week filming session with ACES. The footage will be used for an episode on *Wildlife SOS* a Discovery Channel's Animal Planet Europe series that is now in its 15th year and 10th series. The popular series focuses on capturing the most challenging situations that wildlife rehabbers face around the world, including animal cruelty, illegal captivity, habitat destruction, and the illegal poaching and sale of protected animals and their parts. The renowned program is regarded as one of the longest-running animal rescue TV series. *Wildlife SOS* founder, host, writer and managing director Simon Cowell, MBE (*Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire*) has been filming wildlife for the past 30 years, with an emphasis on education and getting people to care about animals. "When they grow to care about the animal, they then have a reason to conserve," stated Cowell in an interview with *The San Pedro Sun*. Cowell, who sports a mischievous grin, also founded The Wildlife Aid Foundation and emanates an infectious passion for wildlife. The foundation's Wild Aid Hospital, located in Leatherhead, Surrey, UK cares for thousands of rescued wild animals each year; where they are treated, rehabilitated and more often than not returned to the wild. ACES episode should air this September. Please email us for more details at acesnpo@hughes.net.