

Croc Dre & the Silkgrass Croc Rescue by ACES



This is Croc Dre at ACES in Punta Gorda, December 2010. Dre is a female, Morelet's crocodile, *Crocodylus moreletii*. Dre was being illegally kept at 'Crocodile Isle' in Silkgrass along with nine other crocs in very poor conditions. Wildlife Officers Andre Lopez and Miguel of the [Belize Forest Department](#), accompanied by Silkgrass Police Officer Edward Gonzalez, and ACES/American Crocodile Education Sanctuary confiscated nine illegally kept and very ill Morelet's crocodiles.

The large croc seen here in the concrete moat perished days prior to the rescue effort. Under the Belize Wildlife Protection Act (Chapter 220) it is unlawful to keep any protected wildlife in captivity without the proper permits from the BFD. In this particular case it was the crocodiles who suffered most, for they were being kept in unhealthy and inhumane conditions. Unknowledgeable of

proper crocodilian husbandry, 'Crocodile Isle' contained the animals in a rough concrete moat without ample freshwater and was feeding them a non- nutritional diet solely of thawed, frozen chicken.



ACES assisted the BFD with the capture of the crocs. Each crocodile was tagged, measure, sexed and examined for condition of health. All nine crocs were deemed in poor health, showing signs of severe stress and possessing multiple skin infections caused by the concrete surface, poor water conditions and unhealthy diet. These particular Crocodilians, whose immune systems are one the strongest known in the animal kingdom, must have been in unhealthy conditions for quite some time to show such advance signs of infections. In addition, people assisting the rescue efforts themselves were in need of immediate medical attention due to infections of the skin from the contaminated water. The rescued reptiles were relocated to ACES's facility in southern Belize where they were placed in natural freshwater rehabilitation pens for treatment and recovery.

At ACES the crocs receive vitamin supplements, nutritionally balanced diets of fresh free range chicken, fish, crab, pork and beef, antibiotic treatments for skin lesions and minimal human interaction. After rehabilitation, BFD and ACES shall determine if any of the crocs will be candidates for re- release. Unfortunately, once a crocodile becomes accustomed to being fed by humans it will most likely become problematic if released back into the wild. This is one of the reasons why feeding wild crocodiles is extremely detrimental and illegal in Belize.

June 2009, seven of the rescued crocodiles were successfully rehabilitated, healthy, and desensitized to humans. They were re-released into the wild in the Sibun National Forest. To date none of the croc have been recaptured as problematic. Dre & Miguel were not re-release candidates due to their size (>6 ft). Unfortunately, Miguel was killed by croc George, ACES most problematic and largest crocodile at 14ft.

ACES, permitted by the Belize forest Department, is a non-profit organization committed to conserving Belize's critical habitats and protected species, specifically American Crocodiles, through scientific research and education in desire to preserve Belize's wildlife for future generations. Crocodilians are not only an essential part of Belize's ecosystem, but are currently proving to be ambassadors for antibiotic research: when scientists expose crocodilian blood to pathogens such as HIV, West Nile Virus and E Coli, it starts to kill them.



Worldwide there are only an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 [American Crocodiles, *Crocodylus acutus*](#), left and Belize is considered one of the last refuges for this highly vulnerable species. Anyone can 'Help Take a Bite Out of Extinction' by becoming an ACES's 'Crocodile Crusader' and adopting a rescued croc or by donating through ACES 501(c)(3) partner in the USA *The Belize Economic & Ecological Development Fund* at [BEEDFund.com](#).

In-kind donations are also appreciated, ACES new facility is in immediate need of construction supplies, including galvanized fencing and poles, concrete, sand, gravel and rebar for completing containment facilities for the rescued crocs and for other problematic, ill/injured crocodiles which are in need of being rescued.