

ACES American Crocodile Education Sanctuary

2017 Annual Report





MISSION

TO **CONSERVE** BELIZE'S CRITICAL WETLAND HABITATS AND PROTECTED SPECIES, SPECIFICALLY CROCODILIANS, THROUGH SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND EDUCATION TO **PRESERVE** WILDLIFE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

CHALLENGES AND WHAT LIES AHEAD



While every year has its challenges, it's these challenges that make us stronger as individuals, as a species, and as an organization. Aside from having to "duck tape" our golf cart together on just about every croc rescues this year, 2017 has raised some unforeseen concerns over unimaginable acts of cruelty towards crocodiles. This year revealed the highest number of reported crocodile abuse instances in ACES's history, and more crocodiles have succumbed at the hands of man than 2015-16 combined. As humans, we cannot comprehend this and ask why? As CONSERVATIONISTS, we must ask ourselves purely, what can we do to change this fact?

ACES intention this upcoming year is to advocate the humane treatment of crocodiles by transforming the notion 'that we must learn to coexist with one of the world's most feared apex predators' to 'we all must acquire a knowledge of the importance of crocodiles so that we can harmoniously coexist with one of the world's most revered species.' ALL LIFE MATTERS.

As ACES FUTURE expands through its international presence, new team members, and increased local partnerships, determination drives our mission to protect the local populace, threatened crocodiles, and all vulnerable species by addressing a range of MANAGEMENT issues and increasing community awareness.

Supporting Belize's crocodiles' important cultural and social significance, ACES's key educational public outreach is via CSI:BELIZE "Crocodile Scientific Investigators" expeditions, where anyone can join us on a educational crocodile research survey. Since 2010, these excursion not only have provided a crucial population distribution of the American crocodiles in Ambergris Caye; but also, have additionally increased ACES's self-sustainability by 56%, enabling ACES the ability to respond to emergency croc calls countrywide free of charge.

PUBLIC SAFETY is critical and is addressed by ACES through a system of managing 'crocodiles of concern.' As the only crocodile organization working under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Belize government, ACES commends the Belize Forest Department on their increasing enforcement, and encourages the responsible behavior of everyone, especially in areas where crocodiles are likely to be encountered.

On behalf of ACES entire Team, we thank you for your continued support in 2018. *From the Founders: Cherie Chenot-Rose, Published Research Biologist and Vincent Rose, Expert Crocodilian Behaviorist*



Together
We All Take a
Bite Out of
Extinction!



RESCUE - REHABILITATE - RELEASE

ACES has had some incredible accomplishments in 2017, most notably the rehabilitation and recovery of an American crocodile named Phineas. Near death when ACES rescued him, Phineas' mouth had been taped closed, then wrapped tight and knotted with wire by unkind humans. Upon capture, Phineas was not only emaciated, but also suffering from an awful infection inside a large open wound inflicted by malicious individuals at the base of his skull. ACES slowly nursed Phineas back to health

by cleaning the wound a couple times each week; administering antibiotics; and force feeding him while his body focused on healing. ACES Team, along with the help of Veterinarian, Dr. Ines Ilic of San Pedro Animal Hospital and French volunteer Amaury Mellier, thoroughly cleaned and sutured closed the injury, greatly increasing his chances of survival. After five intense months of dedicated medical care and attention, Phineas healed beautifully and was released back into the wild on August 3rd.



STARVED

Utterly emaciated, the croc had his mouth taped and tied shut with wire



DEPLETED

Too weak to eat on his own, Phineas was force fed until he gained back his strength

ABUSED

American croc found floating nearly lifeless in a canal



BEATEN

A gash dug so deep into his neck an entire hand could fit inside the wound



RESCUE - REHABILITATE - RELEASE

HOPE

After a month, Phineas began to eat on his own, put on weight, and gain back his strength



HEALING

Phineas was given a proper diet, antibiotics, a stress free environment, and time to heal



SURGERY

Too big to heal on its own, the island vet properly cleaned and sutured the gash closed



RECOVERY

Five months later, Phineas was healthy, healed beautifully, and was ready for life in the wild again!

SUCCESS stories like Phineas' motivates ACES Team to DEDICATE themselves to the PRESERVATION of Belize's protected crocodiles. Rescues like this could not be possible without the gracious donations from those who believe in our mission.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!



2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



JAN 11th

Captive American croc Jaws is welcomed into his new permanent home in the sanctuary at RAZ, thanks to habitat funding from La Fondation Brigitte Bardot



MAR 14th

ACES relocates a stubborn 10ft croc from Belama Phase 2, Belize City and restores peace to community



APR 15th

Dr. Ines Ilic of San Pedro Animal Hospital performs surgery to close the wound of severely injured American croc Phineas



APR 24th

ACES rescues a distressed rare heron and transports it to bird experts

AUG 3rd

A rehabilitated, healthy, and strong Phineas crosses the final bridge of recovery and is released back into the wild



2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



AUG 18th

ACES rescues two crocs in Caye Caulker who were being targeted by poachers



NOV 9th

ACES trains Belize Forest Department Wildlife Officers on safe and humane crocodile handling techniques. With the growing amount of development happening in Belize, croc-human conflicts are on the rise. It is crucial for Officers to know how to properly handle crocodiles when necessary while also educating on how to safely coexist.

NOV 15th

Jaws gets a companion. After 7 years in captivity, Jaws finally has company. An aggressive and problematic 5-foot female was presented to Jaws. After a few weeks of chasing her around and asserting his dominance, Jaws finally accepted the female, and has now even become protective over her!



NOV 13th

Vince Rose, presents ACES croc research and challenges of croc conservation efforts in Belize at The Rufford Small Grants Foundation (RSG) 2017 Conference.



DEC 16th

ACES takes third place in the San Pedro Holiday Boat Parade, raising over \$1900 for crocodile conservation



SEPT 25th

Three crocs relocated after being displaced by mass habitat clearing on Ambergris

BUT WAIT... THERE'S MORE FROM 2017

COMMUNITY CHOOSES TO COEXIST

A 9.5-foot croc named Zander was trapped when trying to capture a problematic croc. The community decided that since Zander was not the target animal and not causing any issues, they wanted him released back in the canal where he was caught.



2017 ACES USA

Founders, Vince and Cherie, appeared on FOX 4 News as the "Croc Couple" presenting "Safe with Snappy" to promote the expansion of ACES to the USA and provide public safety tips on coexisting with crocodilians.

APPEARANCE IN DOCUMENTARY

ACES was featured in *Les Gardiens Du Reef*, a documentary about the beautiful ecosystem in Belize and those who are preserving it. Filmed by Gérard Maximin of Eclectic Production.

RESCUED HATCHLINGS

Three hatchlings were rescued from an exposed and dangerous drainage ditch off the side of the main island road



FED CROCS GO INTO CAPTIVITY

Three Morelet's crocodiles had to be placed into captivity due to their aggressive behavior brought on by illegal feeding

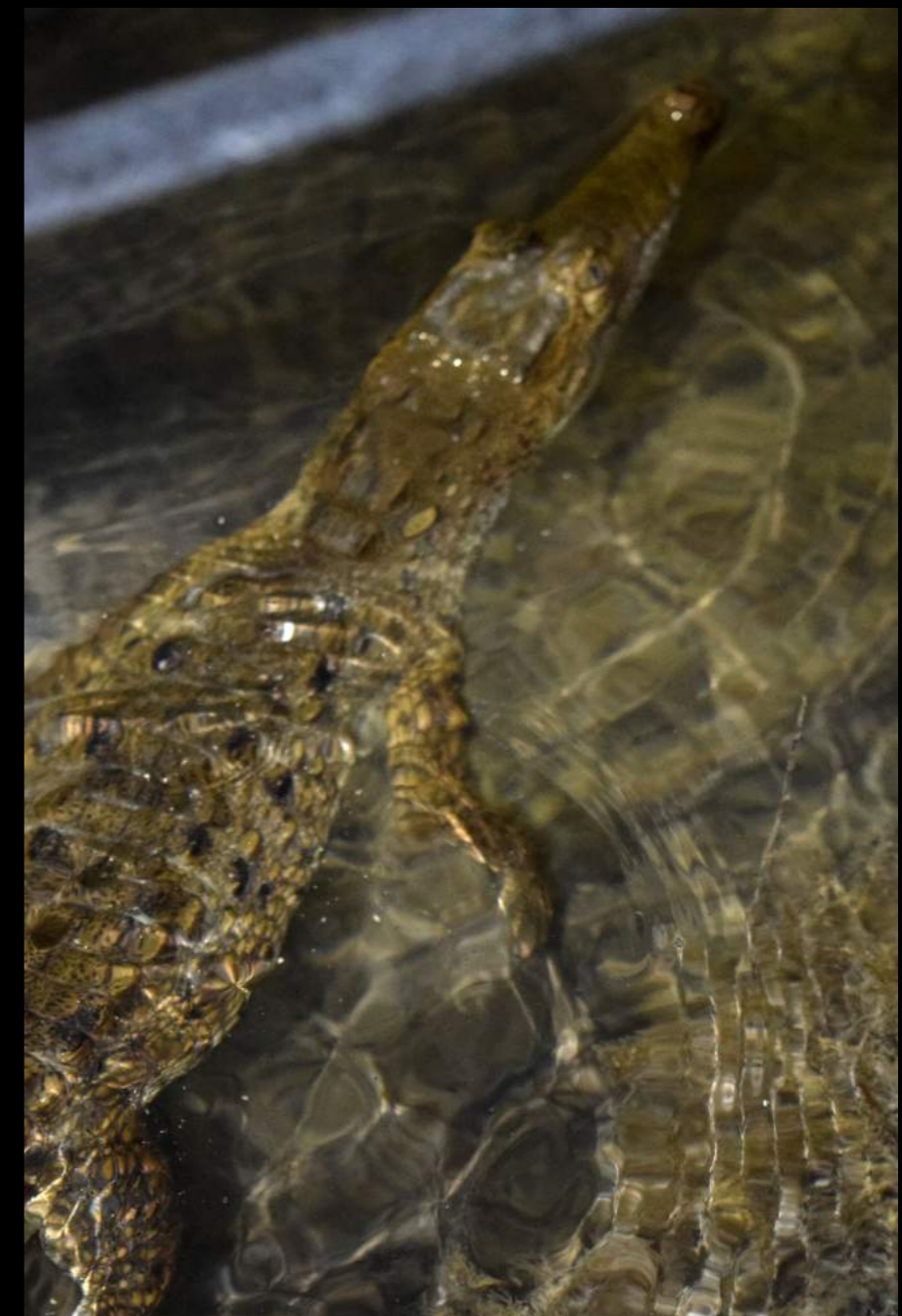


M I C R O C H I P SCANNER DONATED

Halo scanner donated by Microchip ID Systems, Inc. Louisiana, USA

Country-wide Croc Calls

*In 2017, the number of crocodiles rescued, rehabilitated, and re-released were down compared to previous years primarily because the total number of crocodiles sighted, in general, have decreased.



CROC-HUMAN CONFLICTS RESOLVED BY ACES COUNTRY- WIDE IN BELIZE	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Crocodile calls received & responded to	26	61	48	173	110	98	84	117
Nuisance crocs relocated	9	27	8	29	25	26	16	22
Problematic crocs relocated	2	6	5	7	8	2	5	4
Crocodiles rescued, rehabilitated, and re-released	3	10	21	67	91	45	21	18*
Problematic crocodiles placed in captivity	5	3	5	5	4	2	5	8
Illegal and/or inhumane captive crocs rescued	0	22	1	6	1	4	2	1
Documented croc deaths due illness/natural cause	2	1	1	4	7	3	0	2
Documented crocodile deaths due to man	16	3	6	5	8	4	6	12
Crocodiles found with bullet wounds / bang stick	11	4	2	10	0	1	1	1
Live crocs found with tails chopped off by a machete for illegal sale of the meat	0	4	1	6	2	1	0	0
Other wildlife calls received and responded to	0	0	3	20	3	4	3	9
Reported crocodile attacks fatal on humans	UNK	UNK	0	0	1	0	1	0
Reported crocodile attacks non-fatal on humans	UNK	UNK	2	0	2	0	1	1

Captive Crocodiles

ACES strives to re-release all rescued animals; for all that, non-releasable animals that are severely injured or large problematic crocodiles are compassionately cared for in secured natural habitats.



ACES 2017 Crocodile Long-term Captivity Numbers

STATUS	AMERICAN CROCODILES	MORELET'S CROCODILES	OTHER WILDLIFE
Captive Jan. 1st, 2017	8	14	0
No. of Animal Intakes	12	6	9
No. Eggs Intake	25	0	0
Non-viable eggs	25	0	0
No. of Captive Births	0	0	0
No. Captive Euthanized	0	1	0
No. Deaths in captivity	0	2*	0
No. Re-released	9	9	8
No. Transferred Out	0	0	1
Captive May 2017	11	8	0
Captive in Rehab to be Re-released	6	0	0

* Killed by a large adult, possibly hybrid, crocodile in captivity.



STUDYING WITH ACES



My name is Amaury Mellier, I am a 23-year-old french student of Biology. I want to work in wildlife conservation, specifically researching reptiles.

I visited Belize in 2014 for a two-month internship to learn about crocodile conservation with ACES. I learned a large range of information about the American crocodile, a native species of Belize present on Ambergris Caye, including protocol of captures, physiology, morphology and behavior.

In 2017, I returned for a month to continue my education. I was so glad to come back for another adventures and was pleasantly surprised with how dense the curriculum was the second time around.

A truly wild American crocodile has a natural fear of humans, but when illegally fed either directly or indirectly, the animal soon learns that humans mean food. Now, if you feed a mouse every single day, eventually you can get that mouse to comfortably eat out of your hand. But when you apply this scenario to a Crocodilian, an animal with the strongest bite force in the world, you suddenly have an extremely dangerous situation on your hands. Crocodilian conservation and education about safely living with these animals is invaluable to communities like those in Belize. The work being done by ACES has the ability to prevent potentially fatal croc-human conflicts from occurring and encourages people to take action in preserving their paradise and all those who call it home.

~ Amaury

Thanks to Vince Rose, Boss of ACES, for his metaphor about the mouse. Thanks to Cherie Chenot-Rose, Boss of ACES, for encouraging me to write about my experience. Thanks to Chris Summers my buddy, teacher and friend. Thanks to Christina Manzi, Dustin Mincer, and Ryan Ancona for giving their time to help ACES.



Crocodiles produce high levels of stomach acid, allowing them to digest large meals, even bone, but what they cannot digest is plastic. Plastic solidifies in their stomachs and causes blockages, leading to starvation and death.



PROBLEMS WITH POLLUTION

The trash polluting Laguna del San Pedro is reaching record levels. Since this is the primary habitat and waterway for crocodiles living on the island, it is ACES goal to spearhead a movement to clean up the lagoon in 2018. The high levels of pollution are affecting all animals that inhabit the lagoon, including crocodiles, aquatic life, birds, and plant life. Furthermore, the people who live on and consume fish out of the lagoon are at risk of contracting illness from these unclean waters. ACES plans to collaborate with local communities to clean up and address proper waste disposal to protect the environment and ourselves.

“The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.”

-Rachel Louise Carson, American biologist and writer



EDUCATION & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Education is the key to living harmoniously with crocodiles and key to their survival. Though both the species found in Belize tend to be shy and timid, one must always remain cautious when in and around crocodile habitat, they are apex predators after all. But with a few precautions, and a little understanding of the animal, it is relatively easy to coexist along side these beautiful beings.

During ACES educational presentations, everyone is encouraged to ask questions and get involved, whether it be primary school children, summer camps, teachers, medical professionals, Belize Forest Department Officers, police officers, or a curious bystander. We start discussions about what to do and what not to do to keep yourself and others safe; why crocodiles are important to the environment; we talk about their biology, physiology, and ecology; and, cover some croc behaviors to be aware of. We strive to shed light on any misconceptions and guide people away from the fearful image crocodile myths have created.

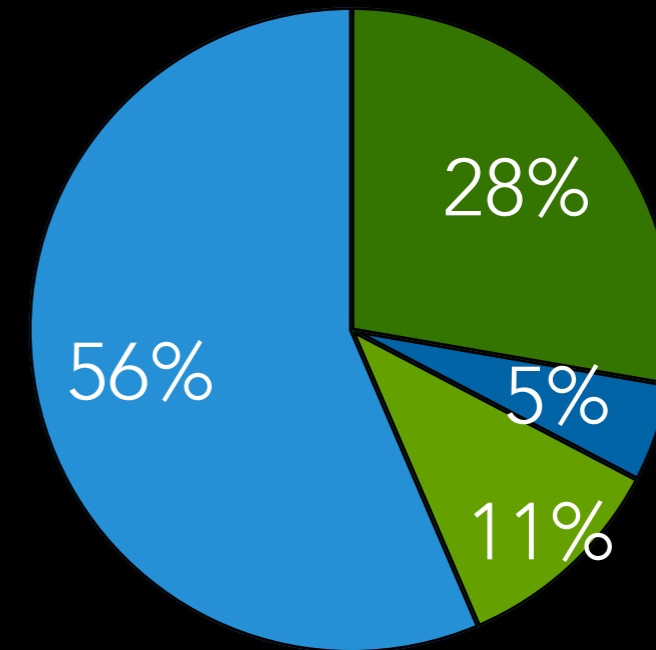
We aim to be an accessible resource for all those in the community by participating in local events, frequently visiting and surveying subdivisions, and communicating our activities through all forms of media.



HOW YOUR MONEY WAS SPENT

REVENUE & SUPPORT (BZD)	2016	2017
Previous Year Balance	10,961	3,406
Donations	580	3,406
Grants	0	18,980
In-Kind Revenue	5,945	7,400
CSI:Belize Revenue	45,533	38,820
TOTAL Support and Revenue	63,019	72,012
EXPENSES (BZD)	2016	2017
Equipment - tape, ropes, microchips, etc.	1,832	1,764
Captive Crocs Food & Care	4,601	1,452
Fuel & Oil	2,074	1,617
Equipment & Croc Habitat Maintenance	2,642	7,075
Educational Materials, Permits, & Gov. Fees	2,834	1,471
New Construction Materials	10,200	0
Project FBB - incl. Captive Croc Care	3,132	17,427
Travel Expenses Croc Rescues & Relocations	6,780	11,703
Local Wages	19,573	13,648
TOTAL Expenses	53,668	56,157

INCOME



● Grants ● Donations ● In-Kind ● CSI

La Fondation Brigitte Bardot (FBB)

- Rescue, rehabilitation & re-release of injured crocodiles;
- Croc relocation efforts for human safety;
- Veterinary care, medicines, & supplements for captive crocs;
- Habitat and equipment maintenance;
- Construction of new, secure yet natural, needed habitats;
- Consumable equipment (i.e. microchips for croc ID)



MEET CAPTAIN CHRIS SUMMERS

ACES DAILY OPERATIONS MANAGER

Originally from High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, England, Chris is a long-time Belize resident with native ties. After volunteering his time and labor to ACES for over four years, he became an official part of ACES's Team, and employee, in 2014. Trained by ACES Founders, Vince & Cherie, Chris is highly skilled in crocodile wrangling, behavior, biology, scientific data collection, and safe crocodile handling techniques.

Today, Chris is in charge of all crocodile rescues, relocations, and official croc training in Belize; as well as, ACES Captain and Lead Field Researcher.



MEET CHRISTINA MANZI

ACES MARKETING, EVENT, AND FUNDRAISING COORDINATOR

Originally from Boulder, Colorado, Christina started as a volunteer with ACES in 2016. She has been trained by Chris and Vince in crocodile wrangling, behavior, biology, scientific data collection, and safe croc handling techniques. After five months of volunteering, Christina decided to move permanently to Belize to aid ACES in our mission to protect and preserve Crocodylians. She is currently volunteering full-time to increase ACES's online presence, marketing, fundraising, education, and public relations. Christina additionally aids Chris with croc rescues, relocations, research, education, and official training courses, in addition to photographing crocs every chance she gets.

"There's always this eye-opening moment when someone realizes just how truly complex and beautiful these creatures are. You can see it on their face as their view of crocs change from mindless eating machine to highly intelligent and physiologically unique animal. It's really a rewarding moment."



MEET RYAN ANCONA

ACES FIRST MATE



“This was one of the first major events where I realized that these creatures weren't the scary, man-eating monsters that I was raised to believe. They are living beings like anything else.”

My name is Ryan Ancona. I am an 18-year-old Belizean and an online high school student finishing my last few months of 12th grade. I've been working with ACES on the Crocodile Expeditions as a first mate since July 2016. I met Chris Summers through the local Crossfit gym and learned about his work with crocodiles. I became very interested, so when he started looking for someone to help him on the boat, I jumped on the opportunity.

My general interest in the crocodiles turned into a love as I started learning about their biology and how complex of beings they are. I have been learning about how to safely capture and handle them, as well as their biology and physiology. I also accompany Chris on the relocations of sick or nuisance crocodiles. The eye-opening experience was with a crocodile named Phineas that was severely injured by people who had wounded his neck then released him back into the water with his mouth taped and tied shut with wire. As we were carrying him to the emergency holding pen, I noticed a level of compassion and care for this poor guy from everyone that I hadn't ever experienced before. I realized the fear that a lot of people have is mostly a lack of understanding and the one main thing that I wish to do at ACES is to help people understand them.

ACES has helped me find a love for these animals that I wouldn't have come close knowing on my own and I hope to learn and experience much more as time goes on.

~ Ryan

FUTURE PROJECT - JULIO'S NEW HOME

Julio is a 3.4 meter adult male American crocodile that has been given numerous chances, via relocations, to remain in the wild. Unfortunately, he continued to eat pets; and thus, must be placed into captivity for human safety and his own.

Julio's new home at ACES at Belize's Rainforest Adventure Zone (RAZ) is currently under construction thanks to funding from La Fondation Brigitte Bardot and RAZ and should be completed by the end of February 2018. His move from ACES temporary holding facility on Ambergris Caye to his new home on the mainland will make Belize news!



WAYS TO GIVE

There are many ways to support ACES and help PROTECT wildlife for future generations. Please visit AmericanCrocodileSanctuary.com/donate for more information on protecting the FUTURE of nature.

Give-In-Kind Donations

Donate items to help reduce croc-human conflicts and keep people and crocodiles safe

Monetary Donations

Give a one-time cash gift

Become a monthly supporter

Honor a loved one with a tributary gift

Start a Trend to Keep it Clean

Pick up trash to reduce pollution that can be harmful to wildlife and the surrounding environment

YOUR HELP TAKES A BITE OUT OF EXTINCTION!

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THANK YOU!

*A heartfelt thank you to all our supporters
and a special thanks to
La Fondation Brigitte Bardot and Belize Forest Department for your
dedication and faith that together we can make a difference!*

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Education Sanctuary

