

CASA

Casa Avian Support Alliance

Casa Avian Support Alliance - Casa del Caballo Blanco Looking Back and Looking Forward

The sponsors of Casa Avian Support Alliance (CASA) take this opportunity to thank all of the people who have contributed to and supported the mission and goals of Casa Avian Support Alliance over the past year, and wish you and your families the best of the holiday season – health and well-being in the coming new year. As is many times the case, in our rush forward to achieve our goals we often times fail to look back and appreciate what has been accomplished and express our gratitude to those who helped in those achievements. This issue of the newsletter will be devoted primarily to the accomplishments of the past year, provide us that opportunity to say thank you and to talk about changes in staffing for 2007.

NGO Certification

Perhaps the first, significant accomplishment in 2006 occurred in February when Casa Avian Support Alliance, LLC was recognized by the Government of Belize as a Non-governmental Organization (NGO), a status similar to a non-profit (501 c 3) in the United States. CASA was then recognized among

some sixty-plus organizations of similar status in Belize, who have dedicated their efforts to the betterment of its people and environment. CASA was subsequently listed among the projects on the Rainforest Alliance hosted Eco-index (www.eco-index.org/search/results.cfm?ProjectID=1023) a searchable list of projects dedicated to the conservation in the neo-tropics of the Americas. Our many thanks to Diane Jukfosky, Jessica Webb, Nuria Blaños and Melissa Krenke, of Rainforest Alliance for making it possible for CASA to be recognized among these projects.

Initial Proposal Comments and Progress towards the MOU

In early January the CASA sponsors submitted *Proposal for an Avian Rehabilitation and Release Center to be known as the Casa Avian Support Alliance (A Non-governmental Organization for the Rehabilitation and Release of Rescued Birds)* to the Belize Forest Department (BFD) for review and consideration. In late May

the sponsors received a letter offering encouragement and support along with numerous comments and requests for additional information. The questions and comments received from the reviewers provided the sponsors an excellent opportunity to clarify its mission and goals and to rethink and improve upon many aspects of the original proposal. We offer our thanks to the staff of the BFD and the reviewers who helped us to refine our thinking and improve our proposal, with Special Thanks to Mr. Wilbur Sabido, Chief Forest Officer, and Mr. George Hanson, Enforcement, for their time and effort in the review and response to our proposal.

In June the sponsors responded to the BFD with a somewhat longer document that contained substantially more detail pertinent to the development and operation of CASA: the response contained answers to twenty specific questions and six draft protocols including Husbandry, Quarantine, Disease Outbreak, Release, Reporting, and Euthanasia (Response to Comments, June 2006, 40 pgs). [MOU see page 2](#)

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Special Points of Interest:

- CASA and CDCB prepare for the Parrot Festival (January, Houston TX) please visit their web site to learn more about their international efforts. <http://www.parrotfestival.org/>
- Casa del Caballo Blanco and CASA donate stay for Wildcare fund raiser, visit www.wildcaremarin.org to learn more about their program.
- CASA biologist's Wendy Dexter and Jeff Alvarez have scheduled an eco-tour to CDCB in January—if you missed this one another has been scheduled in May to be lead by Bonnie Zimmerman of Project Bird Watch, and another by Jeff and Wendy in June or July, each season is characterized by changing weather patterns and wildlife.

In August, the sponsors met with Mr. Hanson to address a few remaining comments and to discuss the procedures that would follow. Based on their review, and their confidence in and support for the mission and goals of CASA, the BFD began preparation of a letter voicing their support for the project, and informed the sponsors that the BFD would begin preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would further describe and define the function and operation of CASA, and its relationship with the BFD.

The letter, described by Mr. Hanson, was gratefully received in September and enabled the sponsors to initiate the preparation of grant proposals. In early December, a discussion with Mr. George Hanson confirms that the MOU was completed in late October and forwarded for the necessary legal review. Hopefully, the New Year will see the completion of that review, and once satisfactory to the BFD, it will be provided to the sponsors for review and eventual acceptance.

Local Support and Cooperation

In the interim, CASA has continued to build and strengthen its relationships with Doctors Victor Gongora and Miguel Depaz (CASA Board of Advisors) of the Belize Agricultural Health Authority; Doctor Edwardo Tesecum (CASA Board of Advisors), San Ignacio, and Humberto Wohlers of the Belize Zoo, all of who are dedicated to the conservation of biodiversity in the Americas, and proponents of Casa's mission. CDCB staff is currently working with BAHA, as assisted by Dr. Gongora, to address a weevil infestation among coconut palms on the property that are a critical element of the habitat. Dr. Depaz has assisted us with the animals of CDCB, some joyous and some sad; Gringo, the namesake of Casa del *Caballo Blanco*, returned to the grounds in July, Perla, the watchdog of CDCB since its construction passed in Sep-

tember, and now rests in a location adjacent to Gringo's corral with a view of the *Mer de Verde*. Dr. Tesecum is currently caring for a Jabiru with a broken wing and the cooperative efforts between CASA and veterinary members of its Board of Directors in California is discussed on page 3 of this letter. To all of you we offer our humble thank you for your assistance and guidance, and support of our undertaking.

CDCB's Adherence to Green Goals

Mid 2006 witnessed a great deal of activity at CDCB, the host of CASA. The Daily Operations Manager for CDCB, Ernesto Garcia, from May-December 2006, initiated and completed the construction of a corral for Gringo and completed Gringo's stable. During that same period, CDCB underwent a 'Green Audit,' and then hosted a seminar on green practices sponsored by Programme for Belize and Rainforest Alliance.

We are proud to note that Casa del *Caballo Blanco* is one of two lodges listed by the Rainforest Alliance Eco-index of accommodations in Belize.



Gringo after his return to Casa del Caballo Blanco grazing in his new corral

Photo: Wendy Dexter July 2006

CDCB and Casa Relationship with Sacred Heart Junior College

An unanticipated benefit of that review was the opportunity to meet the then Dean, Mr. F. Daniel Gutierrez, M.Sc., Tourism Department Chair, Ms. Maria Marin Mendez, B.Sc., and Science De-

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CDCB and CASA Welcome New Staff and Leadership

With the approach of 2007, both CDCB and CASA will benefit greatly from addition and changes to the existing organization. In mid 2006 Ms. Shenny Manzanero assumed the position of Administrative Lead and Receptionist, Ms. Terry Moguel was hired as Housekeeping, and in late December, Ronnelo Manzanero will join the staff of CDCB as the lead Grounds Keeper. In January of 2007 Jason Wagner, a thoroughly experienced Front Desk Manager will take over as the CDCB Daily Operations Manager. Jason's long experience with other prominent lodges in the area will be of great benefit to CDCB's guests and CDCB.

Of immeasurable value to the continued development of CASA is the addition of Mr. Ricky Manzanero, who will assume the role of In-Country Director, he and his wife will take up residence at the Caretaker's House, and in addition to an eye to the maintenance and improvement of the CDCB grounds, which is already underway, Mr. Manzanero will begin to familiarize himself with the role and responsibilities attendant the

direction of CASA. In January 2007, the Executive Board of CASA LLC NGO will convene to recognize Mr. Manzanero as the new In-Country Director. Known to birding enthusiasts as 'Ricky Bird' he is among Belize's most notable birding guides, and in a recent note to the sponsors described the early morning sighting and/or hearing of the Eastern Meadowlark, White-fronted Parrots, Montezuma Oropendola, Scrub Euphonia, Golden-

fronted woodpeckers, and others, on or in the vicinity of the property.

To Ricky, Jason and Ronnel, *Bienvenidos*; to the existing staff, we thank you for your efforts and contributions throughout the past year. Our special recognition to Domingo 'Mingo' Mesh, who has kept the grounds and tended the gardens since CDCB began. *Gracias Mingo!*

Friends for Conservation and Development - Chiquibul Project

CASA continues to enjoy an important and valued relationship with Friends for Conservation and Development (FCD). In August CDCB hosted an FCD meeting during which the Integrated Strategy and Project to Preserve the Chiquibul/Maya Mountain Key Biodiversity Area was discussed with project participants. As noted by Mr. Raphael Manzanero, Program Director for the project, "It is part of a tri-national bioregion, forming part of the largest remaining block of tropical forest in this part of the world. It is an area of outstanding biological diversity and provides critical habitat for many endangered species." (News5, November 16, 2006). The importance of the Chiquibul preservation project cannot be overstated, particularly with regard to the goals of CASA; preservation of the environment which provides habitat for the avi-fauna is of profound significance and importance, as it is the fundamental and absolutely necessary measure required to conserve species diversity. In its limited capacity CASA has pledged its support to the project, and makes its facilities available to FCD and the Chiquibul Project for data sharing and project management meetings.

CASA's Network for Care and Treatment

On December 20, Dr. Edwardo Tesecum notified the sponsors by email that he was caring for a Jabiru with a broken wing and was gathering data as to the best method of treatment. The Jabiru, a stork, is recognized as the largest bird in Belize, growing to 4.6 feet tall, and is a listed species. The sponsors immediately contacted the Wildcare treatment facility in San Rafael, California, and Dr. Debra Scheenstra, practicing wildlife veterinarian and frequent volunteer at Wildcare. Dr. Scheenstra responded that morning with recommendations as to treatment, however, absent either photographs of the injured Jabiru, or better, x-rays, the recommendations were by necessity generalized. As pointed out by Dr. Tesecum, there is no facility in Belize with the x-ray equipment that can be used for wildlife. Waste disposal is an issue with conventional x-ray apparatus, and digital

equipment is still extraordinarily expensive. CASA will track the progress of the treatment and inform the membership and readers as to the treatments and the results.

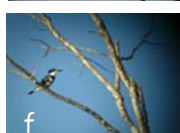
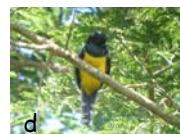
Outreach and Donations

4th Quarter 2006

As part of CASA's Passport Program and as outreach to organizations with similar goals, CDCB, on behalf of CASA has donated 4-day / 3night tour packages to the National Parrot Rescue and Preservation Foundation, of Texas (NPRPF) and to Wildcare of California. The packages will be auctioned at events conducted by each organization; by the NPRPF at the Parrot Festival to be held January 26, 27, and 28 in Houston; and at the nature Lover's Ball by Wildcare in Mill Valley, California. Proceeds of each auction will benefit the work of the respective organizations. See 'Special Points of Interest,' (page 1) for links to each organization.

Note that Ms. Bonnie Zimmerman and Dr. Donald Brightsmith, of Project Birdwatch, Indonesia, will be speakers at the Parrot Festival - Project Birdwatch is a member of the CASA Passport Program.

Can you Name these Birds Frequently Seen in Belize?



- a _____
- b _____
- c _____
- d _____
- e _____
- f _____

Answers: a. Tody Mot-Mot
b. Scarlet Macaw, c. Laugh-
ing Falcon, d. Violaceous
Trogon, e. Fork-tailed Fly-
catcher, f. Belted King-
fisher

Answers to September
Quiz: 1a. 30 days, b. Eat
them; 2. 5 3/4 inches;
3. Peregrine Falcons; 4. Red-
tailed Hawk; 5. a. Papua, New
Guinea, b. Feathers and skin,
c. Choresine Beetle; 6. T;
7. a. Albatross, b. Easterly
direction, c. Every 2nd year;
8. Ostriches; 9. Bats;
10. to 'purify'; 11. Vultures
and Condors; 12. Owls;
13. No, feathers would stick
to tongues.

All Photos: Fernando Tut



Adult Jabiru and two young.

Picture Credit: Fernando Tut, March 2005

Jabiru *Jabiru mycteria*

55 1/2"; wingspan 141" Massive, slightly upturned black bill; unfeathered black head and neck except for conspicuous pinkish red inflatable sac at base of neck. Only stork in the world with all-white plumage. (Birds of Belize, H. L. Jones, 2003, pg 38)

Casa Avian Support Alliance

Birds are the farmers of the world - help us to help them to continue to sow their seeds

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Hola, Greetings from Gringo the namesake of Casa del Caballo Blanco, we are working on a CASA web page, in the mean time visit us at www.casacaballoblanco.com

Jodi



SHJC from page 2

partment Chair, Ms. Karen Lin M. Sc., of Sacred Heart Junior College (SHJC). Following a brief one day meeting in August, the students of SHJC began to, and increasingly, utilize and view CDCB and CASA as a real-time laboratory for application of their studies in tourism, the environment, and the food and beverage, the latter led by Ms. Shalue Butcher. Students from SHJC have assisted with measures identified during the 'green audit' that were required to further minimize the environmental footprint of CDCB; assist with the care of Gringo; and participated in the preparation and service at events hosted by CDCB. The sponsors are currently exploring the development of a new curriculum that will provide the students an opportunity to work hand in hand with CASA sponsors to develop grant proposals for the further

development and operation of CASA. CDCB and CASA are pleased and thankful for the relationship with SHJC. Community outreach, i.e., the inclusion of the local community in the efforts by CDCB/CASA to conserve the bio-diversity and celebrate the local heritage, is among the most fundamental goals of CDCB/CASA.



MEMBERSHIP—The Board of Directors for the Casa Avian Support Alliance (CASA) recognizes the value of interested individuals and organizations (both profit and non-profit), as a means to promote the goals of the organization. Memberships are not viewed as a primary source of income with respect to the sustainability of the NGO, but rather as a means to share the mission, goals and accomplishments of CASA with a broader public. Revenues captured from annual dues will be used primarily to support member related activities such as the Badge of Bird Program and the Quarterly Report to Members.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

REGULAR	Membership Description	BZE	US
Student or Sr. Citizen	Currently enrolled or graduated in last two -years	\$5	\$15
Individual	Individual on card plus one other	\$10	\$30
Family	Two or more	\$25	\$50
Participating Professional	Designed primarily for Veterinarians, Ornithologists, and Biologists involved in CASA's programs	\$30	\$60
SUPPORTING			
Affiliate	Members wishing recognition for affiliation	\$100	\$100
Advocate	Members that actively advocate the mission and goals of CASA	\$250	\$250
Patron	Members who wish to contribute to specific programs underway at CASA	\$500	\$500
Benefactor	Individuals who wish to support and promote the mission and goals of CASA	\$1000	\$1000
Guardian	Lifetime membership	\$2500	\$2500
Non-Profit Organization	Organizations with sympathetic missions and goals that would like to support and identify with CASA	\$250	\$250
For-Profit Enterprises	Enterprises who wish to support the mission and goals of CASA and be recognized for the contribution	\$250	\$250

The benefits of membership at the various levels are as follows:

All Regular Memberships receive a membership card, are invited to the annual meeting, receive a quarterly report, are enrolled in the "Passport Program," are listed in the membership directory, have the right to vote on issues put before the membership, and receive 10% discount on items offered in the gift shop.

Supporting Memberships receive the same benefits listed above and are recognized in the annual report for their contribution to the programs and activities of CASA