

The Zoological Society of Milwaukee's conservation efforts in Belize.  
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Birds Without Borders-*Aves Sin Fronteras* project, Zoological Society of Milwaukee.  
Milwaukee, WI and Belize, Central America.

The Zoological Society of Milwaukee has been involved in conservation and education projects in Belize, Central America since 1987. In 1997, a major research, conservation and education project called Birds Without Borders-*Aves Sin Fronteras* (BWB-ASF) was initiated in Belize with four major goals: 1.) research on both migratory and resident bird species, 2.) application of the research results to conservation by compiling the data into recommendations for landowners on how land can be managed to benefit birds, 3.) educating children and adults about birds and 4.) training of Belizeans to conduct the research with the end result being autonomy of Belizeans in designing and conducting their own research as well as implementing local conservation strategies. To affect capacity building, only Belizeans were hired to work on the project and 19 Belizeans have been trained while working for BWB-ASF. As a result of this training, the BWB-ASF staff now conducts field research independently, is involved in local and regional conservation efforts and has trained other Belizeans. In 1999, the Zoological Society of Milwaukee's sister organization, the Foundation for Wildlife Conservation Inc. purchased 6,137 acres of land in central Belize to protect it from development and now manages this land as the Runaway Creek Nature Preserve (RCNP). RCNP is an important part of a continuous biological corridor and research conducted by BWB-ASF staff has shown that RCNP provides habitat for many rare species of animals and plants as well as 287 species of birds. The efforts involved in the above endeavors and what we have learned from them will be discussed so that others contemplating similar projects can learn from our experiences.