



GWCMC'S FIFTH ANNIVERSARY E-MAGAZINE

WHAT'S INSIDE

- ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE
- PSITTACINE SURVEY
- CAIMAN SURVEY
- REGISTRATION OF DOMESTIC WILDLIFE USERS
- RESPONSES TO WILDLIFE INCIDENTS



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Established in 2017, the Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission (GWCMC) is one of Guyana's newest environment agencies. Securing the future of Guyana's wildlife through effective, sustainable management, and conservation is the ultimate purpose of our Commission. In 2016, the Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill was tabled in Parliament and passed on August 9. It was assented to by His Excellency, President David Granger on October 5, 2016 and brought into effect on June 1, 2017 by order of Minister of State, Honourable Joseph Harmon. With the commencement of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act (WCMA), the GWCMC was birthed.

On the occasion of our fifth anniversary, we present this magazine which showcases our key achievements over the five year period. Outlined below is a summary of our major achievements according to the Strategic Areas which guide the Commission's work.

i. Operations and Finance

In our first strategic area, we aim to have effective and efficient operational and financial systems and procedures in place. In this area, our focus is on staffing, infrastructure and financing. The Human Resources structure developed for the Commission provides for 128 staff of the Commission – both technical and administrative. It was envisaged that the Commission would have a technical arm and an administrative arm. The Divisions in the technical arm are the Research Division (RD), Monitoring and Compliance Division (MCD), Licensing and Permitting Division (LPD) and Communications and Outreach Division. To date, three of the four divisions have been formalised – the Communications and Outreach Division still remains to be formalised. The staffing levels of the formalised Divisions are below 50% of the levels provided for the structure. The LPD achieved 50% of the staffing capacity at the end of the June, 2022. however, the other Divisions are well below the staffing capacity projected with the current staffing capacity of the RD and MCD being below 20%. Meanwhile the Administrative Arm is at 24% of staffing capacity. At the time of commencement of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act, the then Wildlife Division had a staff complement of 15. Our staff complement currently stands at 28.

ii. Legislation and Compliance

We seek to develop an appropriate legal framework and ensure compliance with the laws governing wildlife in Guyana. Section 83 of the WCMA provides for the making of Regulations under that Act. Thus far, the Commission has developed:

- Wildlife Conservation, Management and Sustainable Use Regulations (2019);
- Wildlife Holding Premises Regulations (2019)
- Draft Zoo Administration and Management Regulations; and
- Draft Wildlife Transportation Regulations.

The Commission has monitoring protocols in place for the international trade which involves monitoring of holding premises and shipments in the international trade. In July, 2021 upon completion of a National Risk Assessment (NRA) by the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism and Proliferation Financing (AML/CFT/PF) a Risk Based Action Plan (RBAP) was developed which provided specific steps for implementation by GWCMC to counter money laundering and the financing of terrorism and proliferation financing. Actions to be taken by the Wildlife Commission include:

- Prioritising combatting the financial flows associated with illegal wildlife trade proportional to risk; and
- Establishing a multi-agency coordination mechanism for sharing of intelligence and information related to illegal wildlife trade among key agencies.

Consequently, the Commission has engaged with several agencies including Guyana Police Force (GPF), Guyana Defence Force (GDF), Customs Anti-Narcotic Unit (CANU), Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA), Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC), Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA), and Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) with regard to the establishment of a Steering Committee and Task Force for execution of the Wildlife Crime Strategy.

iii. Awareness and Education

The Commission has been working to increase appreciation and understanding of wildlife importance nationally through World Wildlife Day celebrations. Each year, since the establishment of the Commission, World Wildlife Day has been celebrated with activities that are geared to children and schools.

The Sustainable Wildlife Management Project which is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Centre for International Forest Research (CIFOR) in collaboration with the GWCMC has been working in Region 9 to support wildlife clubs and to develop an environmental education curriculum.

The Commission was also able to conduct awareness raising activities across Guyana on the Regulations and the domestic licensing system. This was made possible through support from the Bioamazon Project which is administered by the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation (ACTO) with funding from the German Development Bank.

iv. Research and Interventions

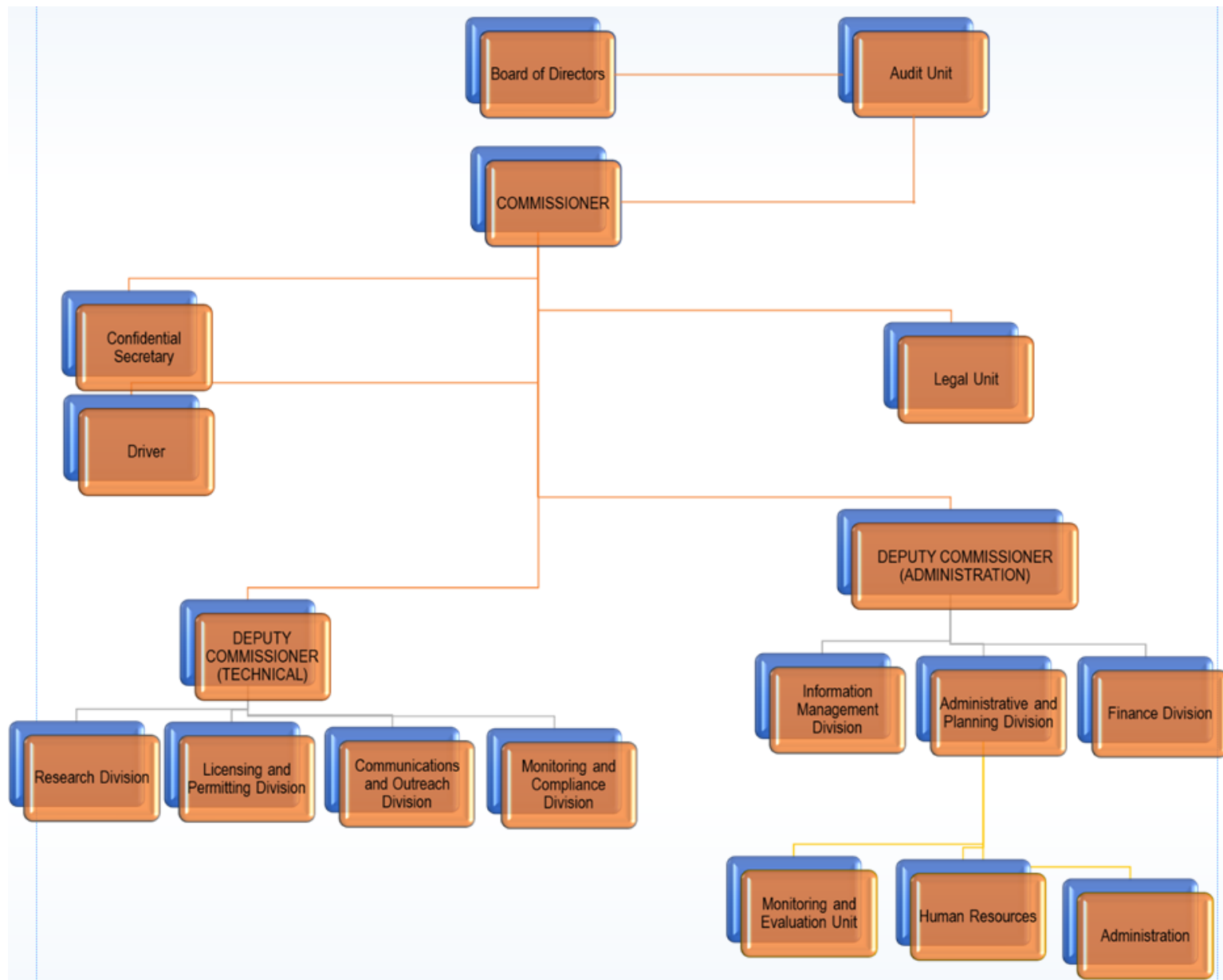
In our fourth Strategic Area, we seek to gain a better understanding of the threats to the future of Guyana's wildlife to ensure better decisions and management practices.

Under Strategic Area IV we have managed to conduct an assessment of our psittacines (parrots and macaws) and with much needed support from the Bioamazon Project, which contracted Iwokrama, management plans have been developed for six species of wildlife: spectacled caiman, dwarf caiman, wedge-headed caiman, red-footed tortoise and yellow-footed tortoise and the tapir.

Wildlife emergencies and wildlife conflicts are particularly heavy issues for the Commission. These have no easy solution and potentially could end badly for humans and wildlife alike. Wildlife conflict will continue to increase as development takes place. However, the Commission continues to develop and evolve in a bid to reduce these incidents so that humans and wildlife can coexist mutually.

As we publish this booklet on our achievements for the five year period we salute and express gratitude to our hardworking staff for their commitment. We would also like to thank our partners and sister agencies for their contributions. We look forward to taking on the challenges of the coming years even as we aim to fulfill our vision of "Securing the future of Guyana's wildlife".

GWCMC's Organisational Structure



Licensing and Permitting Division

In accordance with the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act, 2016, the Licensing and Permitting Division is responsible for the issuance of permits and licences for the import, export, re-export or introduction from the sea of any specimen of wildlife. Additionally, the Division is also charged with the implementation and management of the licensing process governing domestic utilization of wildlife. The Licensing processes cover both commercial and non-commercial use of wildlife.

The Licensing and Permitting Division is also responsible for the management and distribution of national and individual species quotas to ensure the sustainable use of our wildlife.

The Monitoring and Compliance Division, in collaboration with the other Divisions at the GWCMC, the relevant stakeholders and bordering countries, is responsible for the effective monitoring of the use of wildlife resources in Guyana. Trapping, hunting, rescuing and releasing, transporting, exporting and importing are monitored to ensure the effective conservation of the species internationally traded, the species utilised locally and the species affected by extraction of other species. Moreover, the Monitoring and Compliance Division is also responsible for responding to wildlife related reports which include wildlife conflicts, protected species in captivity and injured wildlife.

Monitoring and Compliance Division

Research Division

The Research Division is responsible for promoting scientific research and knowledge of wildlife, assessing species status, devising measures for protection of endangered/threatened species of wildlife and promoting conservation of biodiversity. This Division works closely with the Wildlife Scientific Committee (WSC) and plays a supporting role to the WSC. The WSC is responsible for advising the GWCMC on matters related to research, trade and conservation of wildlife.

The Communications Division has the overall responsibility for maintaining internal and external communication with stakeholders, project collaborators, implementing agencies and service providers. In this regard, the activities of the Division are geared at increasing appreciation and understanding about the importance of wildlife nationally, and to disseminate information on wildlife regulations and procedures to relevant stakeholders. Specific responsibilities of the Division are to:

- Develop and distribute informational materials, e.g., posters, brochures, flyers.
- Establish and support wildlife clubs
- Execute awareness campaign to increase coverage of the Commission's mandate
- Organise workshops and seminars

Communications Division

Human Resources

The Human Resources Department leads in the development and implementation of the Commission's policies, practices and procedures to meet the evolving needs of the Commission.

The Department is responsible for recruitment, training, maintaining inter-office relationships and interpreting employment laws, compensation and benefits. The Department works diligently behind the scenes along with other Departments to ensure the Commission runs effectively and efficiently. .

Administrative Division

The Administrative Division makes up part of the operational arm of the Commission and its primary responsibility is to provide administrative support to all departments. Some of these duties include:

1. Procurement of capital and recurrent items.
2. Overseeing all vehicle use and organising logistics for the Commission.
3. Planning and directing portions of the Commission's operational programmes.
4. Planning and recommending to the Commissioner changes in Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs).
5. Ensuring that daily janitorial duties are executed.

Finance Unit

The Finance Unit manages the systems pertaining to financial management. As such, the Unit is responsible for the preparation of bank reconciliation, calculation and preparation of levies, updating all accounting books, and processing financial transactions.

Registration of local wildlife users

Part of the GWCMC’s mandate requires it to regulate the domestic utilisation of wildlife. In 2017, the Commission embarked on an exercise to issue permission documents to persons engaged in the local trade of wildlife. At that time, the enabling regulations under Section 83(1)(a) of the Wildlife Management and Conservation Act (2016) were under development and a licensing framework for domestic activities involving wildlife was not yet in place. Subsequently, Wildlife Conservation, Management and Sustainable Use Regulations were passed in 2019 which outlined six (6) categories of licenses for local wildlife use. These are:

- 1. Wildlife Trapping License
- 2. Wildlife Collecting License
- 3. Wildlife Commercial License
- 4. Wildlife Recreational License
- 5. Captive Wildlife License
- 6. Special Wildlife License

Under the Domestic Licensing System, the following persons would need to obtain licenses: Trappers, Middlemen, Wildmeat Vendors, Wildlife Breeders, Wildlife Collectors (of both plants and animals), Researchers, Recreational Hunters, and restaurants that sell cooked wild meat. Indigenous Village Councils may also apply for a license to cover wildlife users who are registered members of the village.

A breakdown of the users registered can be seen below:

Total Trappers	243		Persons applied for more than 1 category	136
Total Wild Meat Vendors	93		Persons applied for 1 category only	473
Total Middleman	123		Total unidentified applicants not listed	4
Hunter	116		Amerindian Villages applied	1
Total Category	646		Overall Total	614

Pursuant to the registration of local wildlife users, the Domestic Wildlife Licensing System was officially launched on June 1. Wildlife users are therefore now required to obtain the necessary license to legally practice their trade in Guyana.

LICENSING OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE

In relation to the international trade of Wildlife, the Licensing and Permitting Division (L&PD) granted exportation licenses to twenty-three applicants over the five-year period. To facilitate the trade of wildlife, a total of 3,309 permits were granted.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION



WORLD WILDLIFE DAY

World Wildlife Day is celebrated annually on March 3 to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild animals and plants. Over the years, the Commission has organised various events to commemorate the day. This includes:

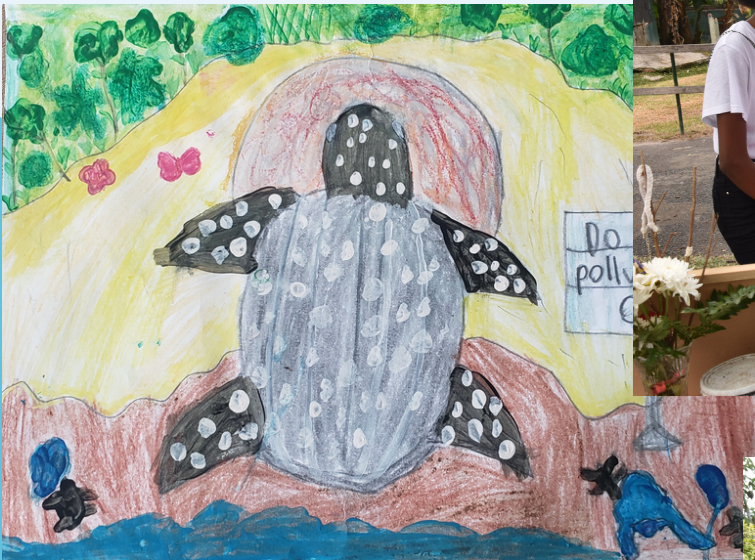
- Exhibition on big cat conflict in Mainstay/Whyaka (2018)
- Workshop on big cat conflict in New Amsterdam (2018)
- Clean up at the Kingston Seawall (2019)
- Panel Discussion (2019 and 2022)
- Youth Forum (2019)
- Marine Fun Day for Canaan Full Gospel Children's Home, Corentyne, Berbice (2019)
- Zoo Fair (2020 and 2022)
- Awareness sessions at Primary schools in Mahaicony River and Supenaam Creek. (2020)
- Development and Release of a Video (2021)
- Art Competition (2021 and 2022)
- Airing of Wildlife related movie on TV (2022)



MEDIA APPEARANCES

The Department has engaged in 85 radio interviews, 9 television appearances as well as maintaining a regular presence on social media, especially Facebook and YouTube. Additionally, in 2019, the Commission's website was reactivated and has been regularly updated since.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION



Survey conducted to assess the distribution of five species of psittacines

The Research Division embarked on a psittacine survey during the period 2018 – 2019. This survey sought to highlight the distribution of the mealy parrot (*Amazona farinosa*), red and green macaw (*Ara chloropterus*) and blue and gold macaw (*Ara ararauna*) in the following areas: Berbice River, Canje Creek, Corentyne River, North West District, North and South Rupununi and Demerara River. The aim of the survey was to provide a scientific basis on which animals are traded as well as to assist the Commission in implementing management strategies to allow for the sustainable use of psittacines in Guyana.

Methodology

The survey incorporated two field aspects which were:



• Species Count

Prevalent areas for the flying over, feeding, roosting or nesting of and trapping of psittacine species were selected by a local guide for conducting the psittacine counts. Counts were conducted twice within 24 hours. Firstly, between 5:00am – 8:00am and secondly, between 3:00pm-6:00pm. Information recorded included: species name and number of individuals seen, species flight direction, species activity, distance between species and observer, GPS, commencement time and end time of the survey. Environmental information recorded included forest type, vegetation present, weather type, soil type, canopy cover and temperature.



• Trappers Interview

Interviews were conducted within communities that are frequently involved in the trapping of psittacine species for trade and domestic use. Information sought after included trapping methods, species trapped, trapping intervals, trapping efforts and knowledge of policies that governs the trapping and trade of psittacine species in Guyana.

Key Findings

The key findings from the survey are as follows:

Mealy parrot

Population Density

Area	Density per km.
North West District	5.1 Ind/Km
Demerara River	10.64 Ind/Km
Berbice River	218 Ind/Km

Habitat - riverine and inland habitats. This species occupies hilly or flat areas with primary forest.

Threats - mining and logging



Red and green macaw

Population Density

Area	Density per km
Berbice River	7.8 Ind/Km
Demerara River	3.67 Ind/Km
North West District	11.1 Ind/Km
Rupununi Region	2.7 Ind/Km

Habitat - areas of high elevation that are highly forested. Flora species that were predominant in their area of occurrence included Wamara, Kabukali, Cow

wood, Baromalli, all which occupied the upper canopy of its forest. Red and Green Macaws were found feeding on Conts Seed, Hurihe seed, Bullet wood fruit, Baromalli fruit, Wamara fruits, kabukali fruits, cocorite palm and Whitey fruit.

Threats - removal of timber species used for feeding and foraging, for the extractive sectors, agriculture and absence of a land use policy speaking to the protection of wildlife.



Blue and gold macaw

Population Density

Area	Density per km.
Rupununi	44.6 Ind/Km
North West District	27.6 Ind/Km
Berbice River	18.3 Ind/km

Habitat - Blue and gold macaws occur in high forest in close proximity to rivers, large creeks, inlets and swamps. Their presences are also dictated by various palm species including cocorite, cabbage palm, manicole palm and turu palm.

Threats - logging, lack of survey to establish population trends, information gap on the utilisation in the domestic pet trade and extraction in the closed season

Trapping and Livelihoods

As it relates to trappers, it was found that bird trapping is a male dominated field, especially popular in males 45 years and older. Males who are younger than 45 years are involved mainly because of a relative who has made trapping a “family business”. Females on the other hand provide the investment and employ young skillful males to trap on their behalf.

Materials used for trapping include a variety of locally sourced materials giving rise to tools such as nets, lassos, and gums. The trapping methods varied based on the preference and to a greater extent the skillset of the individual trapper.

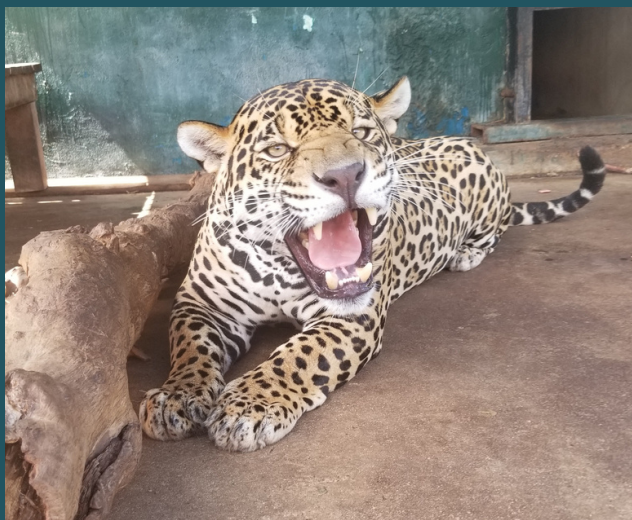
Challenges faced by trappers

- Some of the challenges faced by trappers are:
- Vector borne diseases such as malaria, typhoid, dengue, leishmaniasis and other diseases associated with ticks and fleas.
- Transportation to collecting sites
- Low prices paid for birds
- No license for trapping
- Smart birds - If an attempt to capture a parrot/macaw is unsuccessful, then it is unlikely that they will be lured in a trap for a second time.
- Bites from psittacines
- Falls and broken limbs as a result of climbing damp trees
- Bites by venomous snakes
- Change in forest composition or blockage of access areas



JAGUAR RELOCATED DUE TO CONFLICT AT MABURA HILL

Lee is a jaguar that was taken out of its natural environment and placed in captivity due to conflict with humans at Mabura Hill. In mid-2018, residents complained of losing approximately 60 dogs within the space of 3 months. During this period, the community had experienced severe electricity woes, with power being reduced during the hours of 23:00 h to 05:00 h. Many persons were of the opinion that Lee was responsible for their losses. Fearing for their lives and aiming to secure their property and livestock, residents resorted to trapping Lee. During the process of being trapped Lee was injured. As such, the Monitoring and Compliance Division responded to this incident. Lee was removed and transported to Georgetown for veterinary care. After an assessment, it was determined that he was not a good candidate for return to the wild and he is currently housed in the Guyana Zoo.



Wildlife seized under various circumstances



As part of fulfilling its functions and responsibilities, the Monitoring and Compliance Division (MCD) of the Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission (GWCMC) has responded to several wildlife incidents over the years. This includes rescue and release of injured wildlife, wildlife in conflict situations with human communities, and seizure of wildlife in various circumstances.

Over the years, the significant seizures that have occurred are as follows:

- A manatee seized from a resident in Den Amstel
- 24 red and yellow-footed tortoises seized from an unlicensed vendor
- Songbirds seized from intended smugglers at the Eugene F. Correia International Airport and the Cheddi Jagan International Airport
- Butterflies seized from intended smugglers at FedEx and the Guyana Post Office Corporation.



Survey done to assess the black caiman population in Guyana

The Research Division embarked on a symbolic survey of the black caiman population in Guyana. The objectives of this study were:

1. to provide an update on the population status of black caiman in Guyana with a focus on populations along sections of the Rupununi River, and
2. to determine whether the black caiman population in Guyana continues to meet the biological criteria that warrants this species to remain a CITES Appendix I listing or if it can be down listed to Appendix II.

The survey covered a total of 184.5 km of sections in the Rupununi, Rewa and Essequibo Rivers and 1,609 black caimans were observed in total.

Methodology

In order to determine whether the black caiman should be categorised in Appendix I or II, its population size, distribution and the population trends needed to be analysed.

- To answer the question of the population size, a population assessment in the North Rupununi was done.
- To answer the question of their distribution, traditional knowledge was consulted
- To answer the question about the population trends, traditional knowledge and an exhaustive literature review on previous surveys on black caimans in Guyana were consulted

The population was assessed in terms of their abundance index, nesting sites and habitat. Three rivers, which included Rupununi, Rewa and Essequibo rivers, were selected and surveys were conducted along various sections. Rupununi had a total of seven survey sites ranging from Katoka to Crash Water Creek. Rewa River (Small Government Pond to Seawall) had a total of three survey sites and for the Essequibo River (Yatoka Pond to Primus Inlet) three sites which included ponds, were surveyed.

Rivers and ponds were included in night time spotlight surveys and day time nest searches. The Essequibo River showed the highest mean encounter rate, followed by the Rupununi River then the Rewa River. The number of caimans spotted were recorded in ten-minute time intervals. A GPS point was recorded every 10 minutes. This was done to determine the areas with the highest concentration of black caimans. A total of eight nests were discovered. The nest descriptions ranged from showing signs of predation, intact active nests and nests from previous seasons.

A total of 25 respondents were targeted to assess local utilisation, human-black caiman conflict, and population status from a local perspective.

Findings

According to the survey, the encounter rate for the Rupununi River will equate to 32 ind/km and for the Essequibo River 33 ind/km. While this estimate is evident in some areas, the results also indicated that the population occurs in clusters and the encounter rates can be as low as 1.2 ind/km.

Based on the findings, the research concluded that the population of black caimans in Guyana is distributed in the rivers of the North Rupununi Wetlands at encounter rates and size classes which indicates a stable productive population. Moreover, they are not restricted in their area of distribution, does not seem to face substantial threat from humans and is fulfilling its role in the ecosystem as a top predator. Therefore, the recommendation was made for a proposal to be developed to down-list Guyana's population.



CONTACT US:

ADDRESS: GANGES STREET, SOPHIA,
GEORGETOWN, GUYANA

TELEPHONE: 223-0940

WHATSAPP: 646-1229

EMAIL:

WILDLIFEMANAGEMENTAUTHORITY@GMAIL.COM

FACEBOOK: @GUYANAWILDLIFE

WEBSITE: WILDLIFE.GOV.GY