

# Wildlife Conservation Crosses International Borders

## *Profile of a community conservation organization*

By Robert Horwich and Maggie Jones

Community Conservation Consultants, (CCC), based in Gays Mills, Wisconsin, is a non-profit, nongovernmental organization that works directly with communities to promote management and conservation of natural resources. A primary function of CCC is to catalyze the formation and development of community-based conservation programs. Our programs seek to find a balance between preservation of natural resources and community development. We work in partnership with local people to provide assistance, expertise, and training in resource management in the context of local, cultural, social, and economic conditions.

CCC is designed to address specific program needs through integration of its four main divisions: conservation and resource management; ecotourism and sustainable development; research; and education and publications. CCC's main strength is its flexibility to mold creative solutions to individual projects. Input is from a balance of professionals and community members. This process is designed to produce programs with a greater chance of long-term success. Community conservation demands creative solutions to individual situations. Each situation is unique and requires unique solutions often revolving around flagship animal species, specific habitats, natural landmarks, endangered species, or locally prominent or historically important species.

### **Belize and Other International Projects**

Our first project, the Community Baboon Sanctuary (CBS) in Belize, started as an experimental grassroots conservation effort by rural Belizean subsistence farmers to protect the Black Howler Monkey (*Alouatta pigra*). By approaching landowners with respect for their autonomy, decision-making capacity, and way of life, while underscoring the benefits of proper management on their own lands, the CBS has succeeded in placing control of the stewardship of lands with the individual landowner. The CBS was initiated in 1985 involving 7 villages and over 100 landowners to protect approximately 18 square miles of private lands. There is a tourism and education program centered in a small natural history museum at Bermudian Landing. The sanctuary is managed by a local committee with representatives of each village. Financial administration was originally by the Belize Audubon Society but it is currently administered by a committee of local landowners. CCC's current involvement consists of advising when requested and carrying on research on the Black Howlers within the sanctuary. This project has become a successful model spawning a new wave of conservation projects within Belize and internationally.

### **Gales Point Manatee Project, Belize**

The Gales Point Manatee project involves helping the community of Gales Point, Belize, create a protected area of the 170,000 acres surrounding the village, encompassing a large river and lagoon system. The area extends through a cross-section of varied ecosystems, including cays, ocean tidal areas, coastal beach and mangrove forests, pine forests, lagoon mangrove forests, brackish lagoons, broad leaf semi-deciduous tropical rain forests, cohune palm forests, and riverine rain forests. The area also includes many limestone caves within the karst hills in which are

**ABSTRACT:** Community Conservation Consultants (CCC) strives to establish community-based wildlife sanctuaries with a strong emphasis on voluntary local participation and respect for the rural people and landowners to be the best stewards of their own lands. CCC provides local groups with fresh approaches toward the conservation of species and habitats and works to empower local people to manage their own lands with minimal outside interference.

**KEY WORDS:** Community conservation; ecotourism; translocation; manatee; spider monkeys; howler monkeys.

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**ROBERT H. HORWICH** received his Ph.D. in 1967 from the University of Maryland and did postdoctoral work in India with the Smithsonian Institution. Based on his 25 years of research on infant development, he developed a method for reintroducing cranes using sounds, puppets and costumes. Since 1984, he has initiated community conservation projects in Belize, Mexico, the United States, Russia, India and Nicaragua. He founded and is Director of Community Conservation Consultants.

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found pot shards and bones, indicating ancient Mayan burial grounds. The Government of Belize has created two Special Development Areas for the region as interim protected areas. CCC volunteers have created a zoning plan for the area as well as specifically for the village, which resides on a long narrow peninsula extending into the Southern Lagoon.

Additional work included carrying out a biodiversity assessment with a United States Agency for International Development grant, including a general survey of howlers and Spider Monkeys (*Ateles geoffroyi*) within the area. Village development work included installing better sewage systems, planting viral resistant coconuts, and creating a buoy system for manatee protection.

With the participation of villagers, researchers are gathering data on tree phenology, hunting and fishing yields, monitoring and protecting sea turtle nests, as well as creating vegetation and wildlife Geographic Information System (GIS) maps. CCC works with Belize Enterprises for Sustainable Technology and the Gales Point Progressive Cooperative in these works. This project, along with working with other Belize communities, has led to work with the Protected Areas Conservation Trust to create a park system for Belize based on community co-management.

#### **Punta Laguna, Mexico**

Another project with primates as its focus involves CCC working with Pronatura of Yucatan to help the village of Punta Laguna in Mexico to protect their local population of Spider Monkeys. The area is currently an archeological site, which the Mayan community hopes to develop for additional tourism. There is currently a rainforest honey project to develop income for the community. CCC associate Dr. Laura Vick of Peace College, North Carolina, is gathering basic information on the ecology of the population of more than 100 Spider Monkeys and helping to create a conservation plan for the Spider and Howler Monkeys. Fu-



Visitors tour the museum at CCC's Community Baboon Sanctuary in Belize.

ture plans include initiating a tree phenology study and helping to create an area guidebook. A conservation plan to connect Spider Monkey populations and their habitats through expanding the protective areas and connecting them through corridors has begun through the work of Pronatura de Yucatan.

#### **Other International Projects**

CCC has worked elsewhere in the world including work in Taldom, Russia and a community mapping project in Trinidad. The group is currently beginning two new projects in Assam, India and Nicaragua. In Assam, the project involves creating a conservation plan for the highly endangered Golden Langur. The project also involves working with local nongovernmental organizations and tribal people to reforest large areas within Assam forest reserves. In Nicaragua, the project focuses on protection of the Rio Escalante-Chacocente National Wildlife Refuge, which is an important nesting beach for over 20,000 female Olive Ridley Turtles and is also an important fragment of dry tropical forests on Nicaragua's Pacific Coast.

#### **Wisconsin Projects**

Closer to home, in Wisconsin, the Kickapoo Reserve was initiated by CCC to bring local control to federally confiscated lands along the

Kickapoo River in the southwestern part of the state, in the heart of the driftless area. This is one of the oldest rivers in North America, and one of the most beautiful, with unique ecosystems. This land had been under control of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as part of a failed dam project.

In the late 1960s, 8,600 acres were purchased under eminent domain, 144 rural families were removed from their farms by the federal government and over the next 20 years, 18 million dollars was spent building the dam almost to the point of completion. The project was halted by environmental groups who identified endangered species of plants and animals located there and by the fact that the dam would silt in very quickly. This situation has been a source of local conflict for thirty years.

In 1992, CCC proposed a community sanctuary and rural education center for the area. Despite the historical problems, the proposal was approved by the local community with little dissent. In 1994, the Wisconsin state government passed legislation, written by a local committee, for management of the lands. According to this legislation, the area is managed by a nine-person Kickapoo Reserve Board, six of whom are local residents. Recently two additional board positions were

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birds of different ages require different foods. A vitamin deficiency chart is also included. Capture, rescue, and transportation of the birds are described in enough detail to direct volunteers to safely transport the birds. Obvious large lettering with a comic character point out the "Important Dos and Don'ts," a definite benefit to a volunteer rushing to a rescue.

The authors do a good job of addressing common health maladies associated with waterfowl. The list includes botulism, septic arthritis, bumblefoot, and other common conditions. Injuries due to interaction with humans are described, including from fishing lines and hooks. Even sensitive issues are addressed, including waterfowl injuries caused by domestic dogs. Suggestions are given on handling the public in cases where diplomacy is mandatory.

The subject of orphan waterfowl is well covered, from the incubation times and hatching information, (and suggestions on a NO hatch policy) to common health problems. Thoughts are offered on how to prepare the duckling for release or adoption. The authors conclude with important questions that should be evaluated before placement is considered.

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## CCC crosses borders

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created for representatives of the Ho Chunk Nation who now own 1,200 acres of the reserve under the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

CCC is now working with Trout Unlimited to create a local water quality monitoring program within the eight valley schools, utilizing citizen monitors as well. As part of that project they have introduced GIS computer mapping into the area schools for use of the data collection, storing, and processing. CCC has also produced a small natural history museum, The Museum of the Kickapoo, in an historic building that once was a hydroelectric plant in Gays Mills, Wisconsin.

Elsewhere in southern Wisconsin, CCC is working with two local groups to help private landowners to protect the biodiversity and flora and fauna of their lands. The Blue Mounds Project works with over 100 landowners. An ecological extension worker works with these landowners to guide their land management practices with emphasis on restoring native ecosystems. This group also has seminars and events to benefit their members and landowners.

Within the same area, CCC has helped create the Eagle Land Cooperative which monitors the increasing nesting and over-wintering population of Bald Eagles along the Wisconsin and Kickapoo Rivers.

CCC has always valued and stimulated educational materials at all levels. Under the Orangutan Press name, CCC has printed three editions of "A Belizean Rain Forest — The Community Baboon Sanctuary," by Robert Horwich and Jon Lyon. Other educational material projects include writing a book on Creole uses of rainforest plants, a guide to the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, a guide to community tourism in Belize, an oral history of the Natural History of the Garifuna in Orinoco, Nicaragua, and a booklet on converting farming practices to organic methods in Wisconsin.

### Publications

Research Projects

A variety of research projects are also being carried out by CCC volunteers. These include studies on the ecology, social behavior, and population changes of the Black Howler Monkey and the phenology of trees in the Community Baboon Sanctuary, Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, and Manatee Special Development Area of Belize. Another primate research project involves reestablishing a population of howlers at the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary in Belize where the monkeys had historically been extirpated by hunting. This project was carried out with the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Belize Audubon Society.

### Research Projects

Animals were translocated from the Community Baboon Sanctuary to the Cockscomb Basin during 1992-96 and were monitored using radio transmitters. In addition to the study of animal movements, there was a study of the ecology of the translocated animals before movement and later while in their new environment. Translocations of 62 animals were carried out between 1992 and 1994. A recent survey in 1997 showed an increase in the population to over 100 animals. This new population has been increasing at the rate of over 10 percent per year.

CCC is interested in providing a service to help communities to protect their forests and wildlife. If any groups or individuals are interested in help toward these goals, want additional information on any CCC projects or publications, or wish to receive the CCC newsletter, please contact the authors.

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