

## Chapter 6

### BAS Awards

#### James A. Waight Award

##### First Ceremony - 1987

*The Belize Audubon Society held a short Conservation Award ceremony at the Chateau Caribbean on Friday evening, April 10, 1987. This was in conjunction with the closing of the Cockscomb Basin Management Planning Workshop, organized by World Wildlife Fund-U.S., which took place at the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary from March 24 to April 5.*

*Vice-president Janet Gibson introduced the president of the Belize Audubon Society, Dr. Victor Gonzalez, who gave the history of the award, named the James A. Waight Conservation Award in honour of the Society's first president, and presented the first award to Mr. Waight.*



*At the first James A. Waight Award Ceremony James Waight (left) presents award to Squadron Leader Richard Charles Atkinson*

*In expressing his thanks and appreciation of the honour, Mr. Waight paid tribute to Mrs. Dora Weyer, who founded the Belize Audubon Society, and to the founder members who are still actively participating in the work of the Society. Mr. Waight then presented the award to Squadron Leader Richard Charles Atkinson, who during his stay in Belize has provided invaluable assistance to the Belize Audubon Society in demarcating the boundaries of the Half Moon Caye Natural Monument and promoting the Reef Preservation Fund. In turn, Squadron Leader Atkinson presented a Royal Air Force wall shield to the Belize Audubon Society. (BAS Bulletin, April, 1987)*



**Wall Shield given to BAS  
by the Royal Air Force**

## 1988

*Mr. Ford Young is one of the founding members of the BAS. He has contributed a lot of time and effort in advancing the conservation of the natural heritage of Belize. He served for many years as the Vice President of the Society. He was generally in charge of the monthly field trips that the Society supported. Mr. Young coordinated the Christmas Bird Counts and assisted with aerial surveys in keeping track of the jabiru nesting habits and sites in the country of Belize. These are but a few of the many activities that Mr. Young was involved in during his years on the Board of Directors of the BAS. The Society is grateful to Mr. Young for his past services and looks forward to a continuing fruitful relationship.*

*Over three years ago, nearly all the landowners in an eighteen-square-mile area near the Belize River agreed to voluntarily sign pledges that committed them to protect the habitat of the black howler monkey in that region. They agreed to protect the forest along the river banks, leaving food trees when clearing land and maintaining corridors of forested areas around their farms. Their commitment made possible the establishment of the Community Baboon Sanctuary in 1985. The project reflects the conservation ethic that exists within the people of rural Belize and is truly a grassroots conservation programme. The communities involved in this project include: Bermudian Landing, Big Falls, Double Head Cabbage, Flowers Bank, Isabella Bank, St. Paul's and Willows Bank. The BAS takes great pride in presenting to these communities their conservation award. . . The*

*BAS plays an active role in the management of the sanctuary and works in close cooperation with the Sanctuary Manager, Mr. Fallett Young. Dr. Robert Horwich was a key player in the establishment of the Sanctuary. (BAS Newsletter, April, 1988).*

## 1989

Mrs. Dora Weyer was recognized for her services to the Society. She is a founding member of the BAS and served on its Board of Directors until 1987. She was an active member of the Board and was instrumental in bringing about the establishment of the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. Numerous other projects have been made possible through her untiring efforts.

Walter (Mickey) Craig, Executive Director from 1985 to 1989, was presented with a zericote carving in recognition of his services. Esso Standard Oil, S.A, received a plaque in appreciation of their donation.

## 1990

Dr. Victor Gonzalez was a member of the BAS Board from 1971 through 1973. In 1981 he was again elected, becoming President in 1986. He held that position until 1990 when he resigned to become Chief Environmental Officer in the Ministry of Tourism and the Environment. Dr. Gonzalez served on various committees and represented the Society at international meetings.

Alice M. (Meg) Craig served on the BAS Board as Vice President from 1970 to 1987 and was a member of the Cockscomb and Education Committees. She participated in all the Society's field trips, acting as recorder, and also took part in the Christmas Bird Counts. Mrs. Craig is particularly interested in youth education.

Flor David received a gift in recognition of her many years service as BAS Treasurer.

## 1992

Janet Gibson, former BAS President, was honoured for her work as Chairperson of the Reef Preservation/Half Moon Caye Committee and Coordinator of the Coastal Zone Management Project.

Gregory Smith received the award for his work in marine turtle conservation. He has organized volunteer patrols of turtle nesting beaches on Ambergris Caye.

**1994**

The 1994 James A. Waight Award was given to several Government of Belize officials who have contributed greatly to the conservation of Belize's natural resources.

*The conservation laws (Wildlife Protection and National Parks System Acts) were enacted when Hon. Florencio Marin was Minister of Natural Resources and he was responsible for establishing many reserves. In 1990 he extended the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary to its present acreage.*

*His Excellency Dean Lindo, in his term of office, established Hol Chan, Belize's first marine reserve, and several others.*

*Rudolph (Rudi) Castillo held several important posts as a civil servant. At different times he was Permanent Secretary in the Ministries of Education and Natural Resources, Secretary to the Cabinet and Chief Information Officer. His latest assignment was Belize's High Commissioner to Canada.*

*James Hyde was Commissioner of Lands and Surveys, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Natural Resources and later was Belize's Ambassador to the United States.*

*Robert (Bobby) Leslie served as Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was Secretary to the Cabinet. He was at one time Ambassador to the United Nations and more recently held the post of Belize's High Commissioner to London.*

*These three civil servants/diplomats, as President Therese Rath put it, "worked behind the scenes" during the early years of our Society and helped in many important ways to make BAS what it is today. It was thought fitting that they should be honoured along with the two Ministers of Government.*

**1995**

G. Winston Miller was a founding member of the BAS. As Fisheries Administrator he directed manatee and sea turtle protection projects. Mr. Miller assisted greatly with the development and management of the Half Moon Caye Natural Monument by providing transportation for the Society's various projects on Half Moon Caye.

**1996**

Mrs. Lou Nicolait was given the award in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the cause of conservation in Belize. She was elected to the BAS Board in 1984 and was an active member through 1987. She founded the Belize Center for Environmental Studies and worked closely with BAS. The *Belize Country Environmental Profile* was prepared by “Miss Lou” and her associates.

**1998**

The former Park Director of the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, Ernesto Saqui, was presented with Belize Audubon Society’s most distinguished conservation award. This year BAS began having this Award Ceremony on James A. Waight’s birthday, February 16. The Award was presented to Mr. Saqui by Mrs. Lydia Waight, at the Belize Marine Terminal and Museum in Belize City.

The Award was granted to Mr. Saqui, an outstanding leader in his own right, particularly because of his invaluable contributions in changing the attitudes of the villagers of Maya Center who, in the beginning, saw conservation as a foreign idea. The award also recognized his outstanding and steadfast contributions to develop the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary into one of Belize’s most popular and internationally renowned protected areas.

**1999**

On February 16 the James A. Waight Conservation Award was presented posthumously to Julian Cho by David Craig on behalf of the Waight family. A profile of the honouree was given by Lisel Alamillo and a video presentation prepared by Great Belize Productions showed news clips of Julian Cho. The award was graciously accepted by his widow, Maggie Cho.

At the same ceremony a Junior Achievement Certificate was given by BAS to fifteen-year-old Edwin Francis Colon of Punta Gorda. Valerie Woods, Director of the Belize Tourist Board made the presentation. Diane Haylock of ANDA served as Mistress of Ceremonies, BAS Executive Director Osmany Salas welcomed the group, and Joy Grant, Chairperson of BACONGO, gave the vote of thanks.



*The 1999 James A. Waight Award for Conservation, given posthumously to Julian Cho, was accepted by his widow, Maggie Cho (above).*



*Edwin Francis Colon (left) of Punta Gorda, winner of the first BAS Junior Achievement Award*

### World Wildlife Fund Award

During his visit to the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary on February 6, 1988, HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, presented Mr. Ignacio Pop, Senior Warden at the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary with an award for his work at the Sanctuary. Mr. Pop was first a Forest Ranger and then became a Warden when the Sanctuary was declared.

### Conservation of Primates Award

The American Society of Primatologists, an organization devoted to research and conservation of primates throughout the world, awarded their 1988 Conservation Award to Fallett Young, Sanctuary Manager of the Community Baboon Sanctuary, administered by the BAS. Mr. Young was selected from a worldwide field of candidates for his work in helping to conserve the black howler monkey, locally called “baboon.”

### Goldman Environmental Prize

The Goldman Environment Prize was established in 1990 by an international committee. It has the prestige of a Nobel Prize and is awarded to “men and women of vision and courage, who take great risks for the environment.”

BAS Vice President, Janet Gibson was one of the six “grassroots heroes” from around the world who was honored in San Francisco on Earth Day, 1990.

Mrs. Gibson was chosen for her work in establishing the Hol Chan Marine Reserve, the first of its kind in Central America.

### Belize National Award

On December 12, 1990 the Honourable Florencio Marin, Minister of Natural Resources, presented awards to founding members W. Ford Young, Dora Weyer, Alice M. Craig, James A. Waight and Lydia Waight. Mr. Marin commended BAS for “lobbying over the years for the conservation of Belize’s natural heritage.”

## Knight of the Golden Ark

In November of 1996, His Royal Highness Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands honored BAS founding member and secretary Mrs. Lydia Waight with the award of the “Knight of the Order of the Golden Ark.”

Mrs. Waight was granted the award because of her years of seemingly tireless effort towards conservation. For 27 years she has been a driving force behind the Belize Audubon Society. “Mrs. Lydia,” as she is affectionately known, more than deserved this honor. Her example of sincere volunteer service serves as a guiding example to the entire conservation community in Belize and throughout the world.



*Lydia Waight, Knight of the Order of the Golden Ark*

## Wardens of the Year

Ignacio Pop and Steve Tillett were the recipients of BAS’ first Warden of the Year Awards, presented to them at BAS’ 29th Annual General Meeting on May 26, 1998. The awards were given in recognition of their outstanding performance during their 14 years of service with the Society.

Ignacio Pop was one of the first wardens hired to work at the CBWS, even before the Society became officially involved in its management in 1986. He has worked continuously at the Sanctuary since that time.

Ever since he was hired in the formative years of the CTWS, Steve Tillett has performed with dedication. He has participated in numerous specialized wildlife conservation training sessions and is one of the most lively and knowledgeable staff naturalists.