

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Punta Gorda



Ya'axché Protected Area Manager Marchilio Ack receives James A Waight Award

Marchilio Ack, also known as Moon, has been awarded the prestigious James A. Waight Award for his incredible work in conservation. Evidence of unsustainable resource extraction in southern Belize incited Moon's deeply ingrained passion for conservation.

As an adventurous child venturing into Toledo's forests, Moon learned how to treat forests with respect and to use their resources wisely. In 1998, he formed an alliance with fellow villagers to protect a 15,000 acre strip of land which connects important forests of the Maya Mountains to that of southern Belize's coastal plains. This corridor provides habitat to animals such as tapirs and jaguars, important to Belize. With support from Fauna & Flora International, funding was secured to purchase the land now known as Golden Stream Corridor Preserve, and establish the NGO that would later be known as Ya'axche Conservation Trust. Moon's first served the young conservation and community development organization Ya'axché Conservation Trust as a community ranger in 1999. In addition to his work with Ya'axché, Moon has displayed immense leadership abilities by serving as Alcalde and Chairman of Indian Creek. In these highly regarded Maya leadership position, Moon directs the development and governance of the village.

Despite having no education beyond primary school, Moon has risen professionally from a ranger to the position of Protected Areas Manager at Ya'axché. As Protected Areas Manager, he leads a team of 12 rangers to protect the 15,000 acre Golden Stream Corridor Preserve, the 100,000 acre Bladen Nature Reserve and the 36,000 acre Maya Mountain North Forest Reserve.

Moon also works closely with livestock farmers to help them co-exist with jaguars in southern Belize. In addition to protecting habitat for jaguars, Moon collaborates with and provides training to livestock farmers who are interested in implementing key mitigation measures on their farm to reduce jaguar conflict. Moon understands the difficult issues of preserving the livestock farmer's livelihood whilst conserving a key predator species.

Moon's selfless and tireless dedication to his work makes him well loved and highly respected among communities of the Toledo District. Ya'axché is privileged to be working with a professional with an unwavering passion for conservation and community development.

The James A Waight Award will be presented to Marchilio Ack on Thursday, February 16th 2017 at 6:30pm at Biltmore Plaza, Belize City. The award commemorates the birthday of The Belize Audubon Society's first President – James A Waight (1907-1999).

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