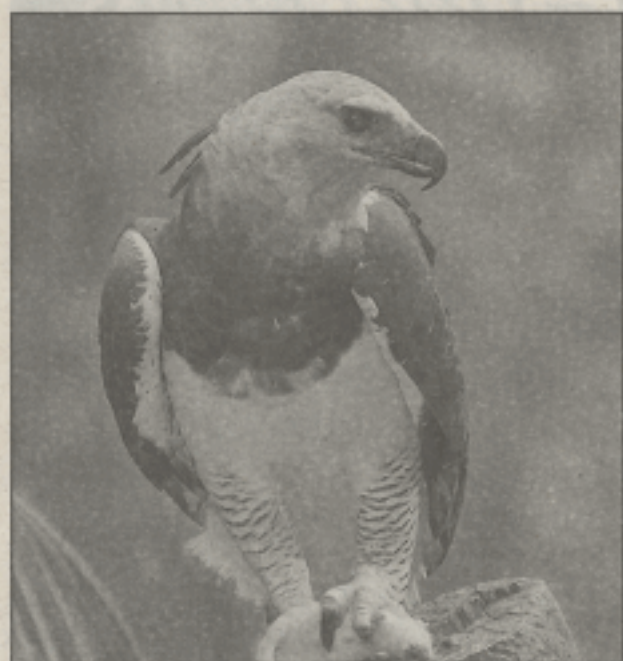


Hope the Harpy released at Rio Bravo



A Harpy Eagle called Hope

A Harpy Eagle called Hope is the fifteenth such bird being released at The Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area (Rio Bravo) owned and managed by Programme for Belize in an attempt to establish a breeding population.

According to Executive Director of Programme for Belize, Edilberto Romero, the Harpy Eagle, which was flown into Belize from Panama last week, was released Monday, December 14, at the 260,000 acre reserve located in northwestern Belize.

"We are on our way to establishing a breeding population of Harpy Eagles in Belize," Romero said.

Harpy Eagles once thrived in Belize but their population disappeared due to loss of habitat, caused by deforestation and the deliberate killing of this majestic raptor.

This initiative to restore Harpy Eagles in Belize is a partnership project being carried by The Peregrine Fund, The Belize Zoo and Programme for Belize. According to Romero the Harpy Eagle is a symbol of hope and the need to protect our precious forest which contributes to the solution of climate change. The release attracted the attention of international dignitaries.

The Harpy Eagle release was witnessed by the US Ambassador Vinai Thummalapaly and his wife Barbara

and the British High Commissioner Pat Ashworth.

Programme for Belize is proud that the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area has been chosen as the release site for the restoration of Harpy Eagles for present and future generation of Belize to enjoy.

According to Executive Director of the Belize Zoo, Sharon Matola, the birds are top predators. They are likely to be considered extirpated from Central America. Matola points out that there are already a few Harpy Eagles in-country and with proper management and protection of the forest they will be here in the future.

Hope was captive bird bred in Panama. In 2005 he hatched, and was trained to be an independent hunter. He was later released in the forest in Panama.

Matola said the program in Belize is far more successful bird survival. Hope, and his other eagle companions are tracked by satellites so that we can receive knowledge on where they go, what they eat and what their secrets are.

The first Harpy eagle came to the Belize Zoo from Panama in 2003.

A harpy eagle male weighs 10-16 pounds. The Female 14-18 pounds and has a wingspan of 7 feet.