

Letters

To the Editor

Misleading reports

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Please look at a map. Fifty to sixty miles upriver from the damsites is certainly not nesting grounds for Scarlet Macaws. British Forces have been conducting jungle training exercises in the Upper Macal River Area and Raspaculo River area for well over six years. Logging has occurred in virtually every part of Belize. What continues to lend the adjective "pristine" to the Raspaculo River is that no hunting, no vegetation/logging disturbance occurs at this time, no encroachment, no alteration of the habitat is going on at this time. It exists unaffected by human activities, and very few areas of our Belizean forests can be viewed likewise.

This, combined with the unique vegetation type found there, is the reason that wildlife flourishes, that species are found in this river valley not found in other areas of Belize. Leading the public to believe that the area to be flooded is so scant in size, that it should not be considered as an environmental detraction is extremely misleading.

No other habitat such as this is replicated in Belize. This is the primary reason that it supports such an array of species. If this type of reporting is called "being transparent" with information, then I have serious reservations about the element of honesty being employed.

And I find it extremely offensive that the people reading it cannot, in turn, read or understand a map, and that they are ignoring recent information relayed in the press and through other communication means about this issue. Let us continue to look at facts. This issue is too important for all Belize, and should not be clouded by misleading statements.

Signed: Sharon Matola

Chalillo Dam Scheme

Editor Sir,

I am writing as someone who has come to know and love your country through the friendship of my late husband, Gerald Durrell, and myself with the Director of the Belize Zoo and Tropical Education Center, Sharon Matola.

In fact, Ms Matola credits my husband and his conservation vision as the inspiration behind the Belize Zoo. Of this, I am immensely proud, for your zoo and the principles it stands for are unparalleled in Latin America. Its educational and research programmes on the stunning wildlife of the country reach far beyond the

gates. The activities of Ms. Matola and her staff, consistently remind us of the modern concept that sound management of natural resources underpins well-being of a nation and the fact that Belize sets a shining example to the world.

It is, therefore, deeply distressing to me personally to learn of the Chalillo Dam project. As I understand the situation, the region concerned is unique in its ecosystem profile, providing a protected and safe habitat for many endangered species. It is true that animals move great distances, and this special region of Belize no doubt has a significant impact on providing faunal resources to other areas of your country.

This, in turn, enhances the nature-based tourism industry of Belize, a significant contributor to your GNP. The proposition is to trade off this special region, which generates wildlife in perpetuity, for a reservoir that will generate electricity for perhaps 50 years. I maintain, as do others that there are alternative ways to obtain energy which can spare the loss of this unique habitat and the richness of biodiversity found there.

My contact in the past with Belize and its decision-makers compels me to feel that the right decision, the most sound decision will be made.

I urge all Belizeans to think long and hard about the Chalillo Dam project and its implications for the future of your wonderful country.

Signed: Lee Durrell

Help please!

Editor Sir,

The Government is saying that each department is getting money for improvement. So, how come the Rockview Mental Hospital is not benefiting?

The hospital is in a disgraceful state. It does not have a vehicle, it is under-staffed and because of poor security, patients walk out whenever they choose to. This is one of the main reasons why we have so many mentally ill people about the place.

With its small staff, the hospital is inefficient. Whenever a person calls for assistance, they are referred to the police because the center does not have any vehicles. The police, in turn, respond by saying that they are not trained for working with the mentally ill or say that it is not their job.

Where can we turn? I am turning to your newspaper to try and get Government's attention to please do something about it because these patients are people's mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, sons or daughters. These people are a part of society and can become better if we give them more attention.

Signed: I Cruz

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To the Editor

Misleading reports

Editor Sir,

Reports that BEL and the current geotechnical investigations of the proposed dam at Chalillo have "passed the first test" and the subsequent information presented in recent newspapers are quite misleading.

Saying that the "granite formation in the area is much harder than internationally set standards for granite and bedrock formation for such a project" addresses one immediate area. What is being ignored is the karst limestone which would indeed be involved in the formation of the holding reservoir - this is less than 10 kilometers away from the dam site itself.

The information reporting that "forest rangers have said that nesting sites for macaw parrots are located about 50-60 miles upstream from Chalillo on the Raspaculo Branch of the Macal River" is an inaccurate assumption. What is this based upon? The only Scarlet macaw nests documented are all within 16 kilometers or less than 10 miles from the dam site.

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