

## THE HICATEE

The hicatee is one of the 25 most endangered freshwater turtle species in the world, and the most threatened within its range of Mexico, Belize, Honduras and Guatemala.

Mating and nesting occurs between September and November. The female lays 6 to 20 eggs on sandbanks. Eggs, once laid can go dormant for up to 200 days before warmer temperatures and drier conditions trigger hatching. It can take up to 300 days after the eggs are laid until they are hatched.

The hicatee can tolerate saltwater and feed on both mangrove and sea grass vegetation. The hicatee is a fantastic swimmer but moves slowly on land. Its passive behavior makes it relatively easy to catch by hunters. The hicatee were eaten by the ancient Maya 1500 years ago who kept them in ponds as storage until consumption.

Today, with increasing pressures from an ever growing human population, this ancient turtle stands on the brink of extinction!

**Let's protect them, before they disappear forever!**

## LEARN MORE

### Conservation

If you are interested to know more about the hicatee and what is being done to save it, contact Environmental Research Institute at University of Belize.

**Phone:** (+501) 822-2701

**E-mail:** [info@eribelize.edu](mailto:info@eribelize.edu)

**Web:** [www.eriub.org](http://www.eriub.org)

### Laws and regulations

For questions pertaining laws and regulations on the hicatee, contact Belize Fisheries Department.

**Phone:** (+501) 223-2623 / 224-4552

**E-mail:** [species@btl.net](mailto:species@btl.net)

**Web:** [www.agriculture.gov.bz](http://www.agriculture.gov.bz)

### Other resources

[turtleconservationfund.org](http://turtleconservationfund.org)

[turtlesurvival.org](http://turtlesurvival.org)

[facebook.com/hicatee](https://facebook.com/hicatee)



## THE HICATEE IS DISAPPEARING



but **TOGETHER**  
we can save it!

The hicatee turtle is one of Belize's best known animals, but because of over-hunting it is disappearing! We must all act now to ensure that the species does not go extinct!

The hicatee, also known as the Central American River turtle or by its scientific name *Dermatemys mawii*, is one of the rarest turtles in the world. It is classified as Critically Endangered by IUCN and is the last species within its family Dermatemydidae.

**The hicatee is the last remaining species of its family!**

## UNDER THREAT

In a study done in 2010, researchers found that the hicatee had disappeared from some rivers while numbers had fallen sharply in others.

This fall in numbers is almost certainly due to over-hunting, some hunters are taking up to 40 turtles in a night! It was noticed that the areas with the healthiest populations were areas under protection.

The most effective way of ensuring the future viability of the hicatee population in Belize is simply to avoid eating hicatee meat!



The male hicatee is recognized by its bright yellow head and a longer, thicker tail.

## LAWS & REGULATIONS

There are laws in place which are being enforced to prevent the hicatee from going extinct.

Any person who contravenes any or part of the regulation (see right column) in relation to the *Dermatemys mawii* (locally known as hicatee), commits an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine of two thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or to both such fine and imprisonment.

These laws are to prevent the extinction of the hicatee!



The female hicatee has a more modest appearance compared to the male.

## LAWS & REGULATIONS

- IT IS ILLEGAL TO BUY OR SELL HICATEE
- NO PERSON SHALL HAVE IN HIS POSSESSION MORE THAN THREE TURTLES AT ANY TIME
- IT IS ILLEGAL TO CATCH HICATEE BETWEEN 1<sup>ST</sup> MAY AND 31<sup>ST</sup> MAY
- NO PERSON SHALL TRANSPORT MORE THAN FIVE TURTLES IN ANY VEHICLE
- THERE ARE **SIZE LIMITS**: CAUGHT FEMALES **MUST** BE BETWEEN 15.2” AND 17.2”
- IT IS ILLEGAL TO USE ANY NET TO CATCH HICATEE
- HICATEE **CANNOT BE CAUGHT** IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:
  - Belize River: *Beaver Dam Creek to Labouring Creek.*
  - New River: *Irish Creek to Water Bank.*
  - Rio Bravo: *Upstream from Dos Bocas Dam, also Booth's River.*
  - Cox and Mucklehany Lagoons, headwaters of Mussel Creek
  - Northern and Southern Lagoons and tributaries (Manatee lagoons and Manatee River)
  - Sibun River: *between Ferguson Bank and Sibun Bar.*