

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 28, 2022

Punta Gorda

Toledo, Belize



### **Ya'axché's Citizen Science Symposium shared biodiversity research and monitoring results to its MGL stakeholders.**

Belize's state actors, NGO representatives and community beneficiaries gathered on Friday, September 23, 2022, to witness Ya'axché's first ever Citizen Science Symposium. This community forum was also streamed virtually to our online participants who connected to learn about the wildlife-friendly methods of farming and monitoring efforts in the Maya Golden Landscape (MGL). Session one featured presentations expanded on 'farmscape' biodiversity monitoring in the MGL. Session two delved more into the identification and propagation of culturally important and threatened tree species. Our participating stakeholders were able to truly connect to the integrated management approaches that combine livelihood improvement and forest conservation for food security and landscape restoration.

As a knowledge-sharing platform for citizen scientists, our local stakeholders who are mainly our farmers from the buffering communities, obtained first-hand knowledge on the use of the data collected from their farms and what their monitoring efforts and stewardship contributes to. The linkages to forest connectivity, soil health, native bees, mammal diversity on farms, as well as our co-existence with jaguars were highlighted. Integrating a capacity building approach, the farmers and other participants learned about threatened trees identification in the forest; they were also exposed to the results of Ya'axché's propagation trials of species such as rosewood and prickly yellows. There was an emphasis on the best practices learnt and willingness to share our experiences with other stakeholders involved in reforestation initiatives.

A total of seventy-three participants attended the Ya'axché's Citizen Science Symposium from the ten MGL communities and beyond, governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the public. Ya'axché looks forward to continuing working through citizen science as an interdisciplinary field to boost scientific research, increase public participation in scientific research and empower citizens in their everyday lives.

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*"Harmony between nature and human development for the benefit of both"*

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