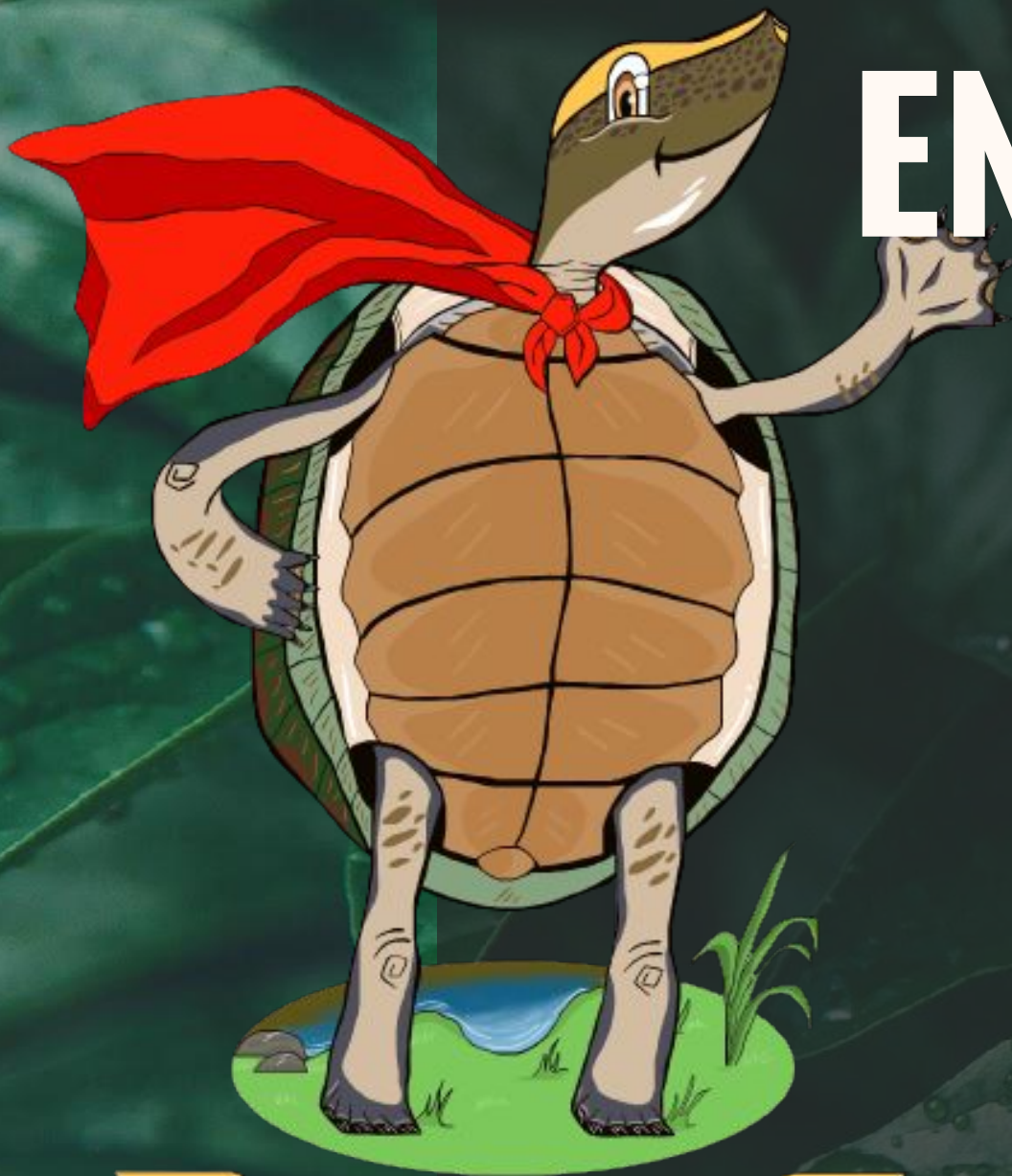


HICATEE HEROES: WORKING TO SAVE AN ENDANGERED TURTLE IN BELIZE

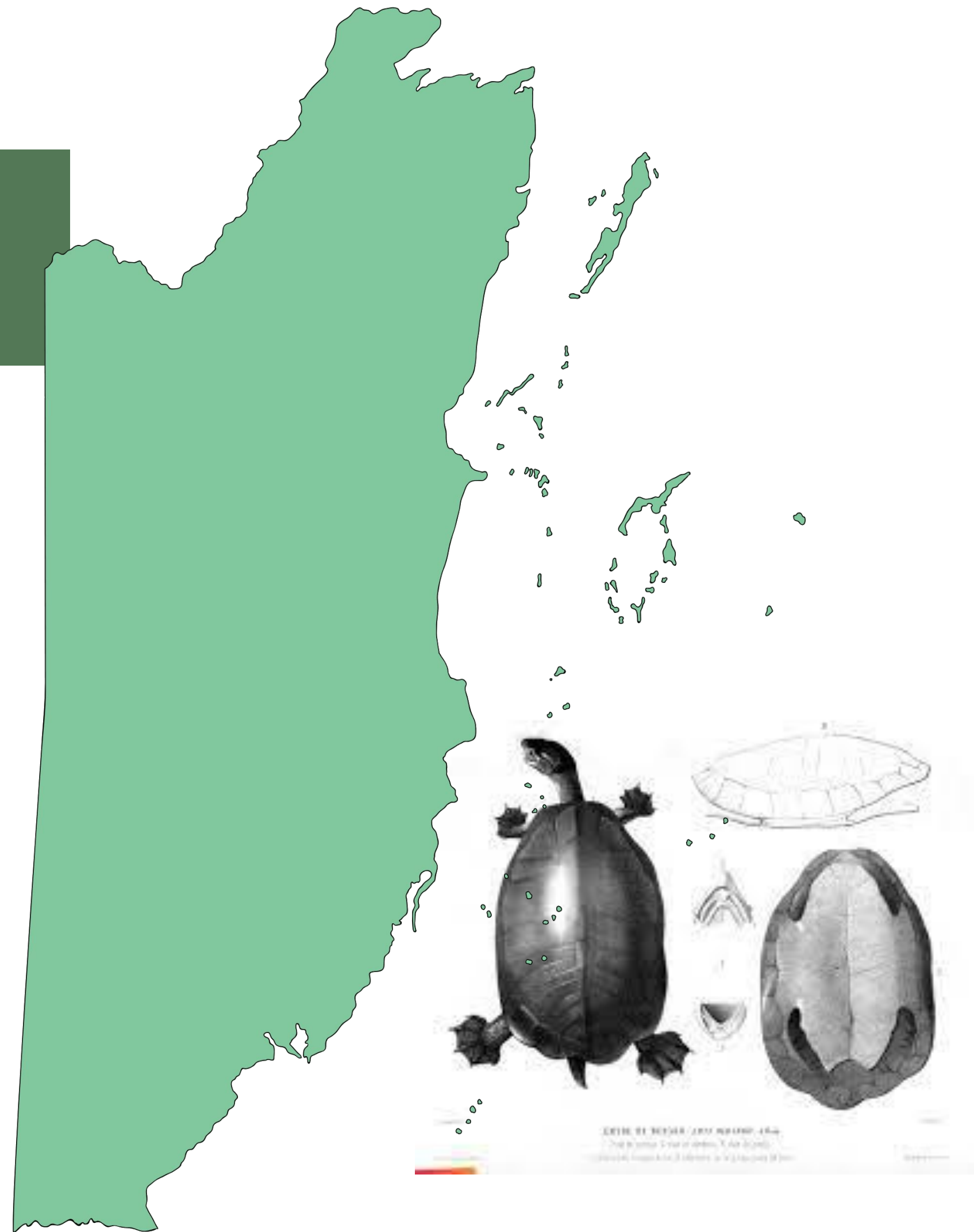
#SaveTheHicatee



BE A HICATEE HERO!

Presentation Objectives

- Turtles in Belize
- Geographic Distribution
- Species description
- Hicatee Habitats
- Cause of Decline
- Conservation efforts



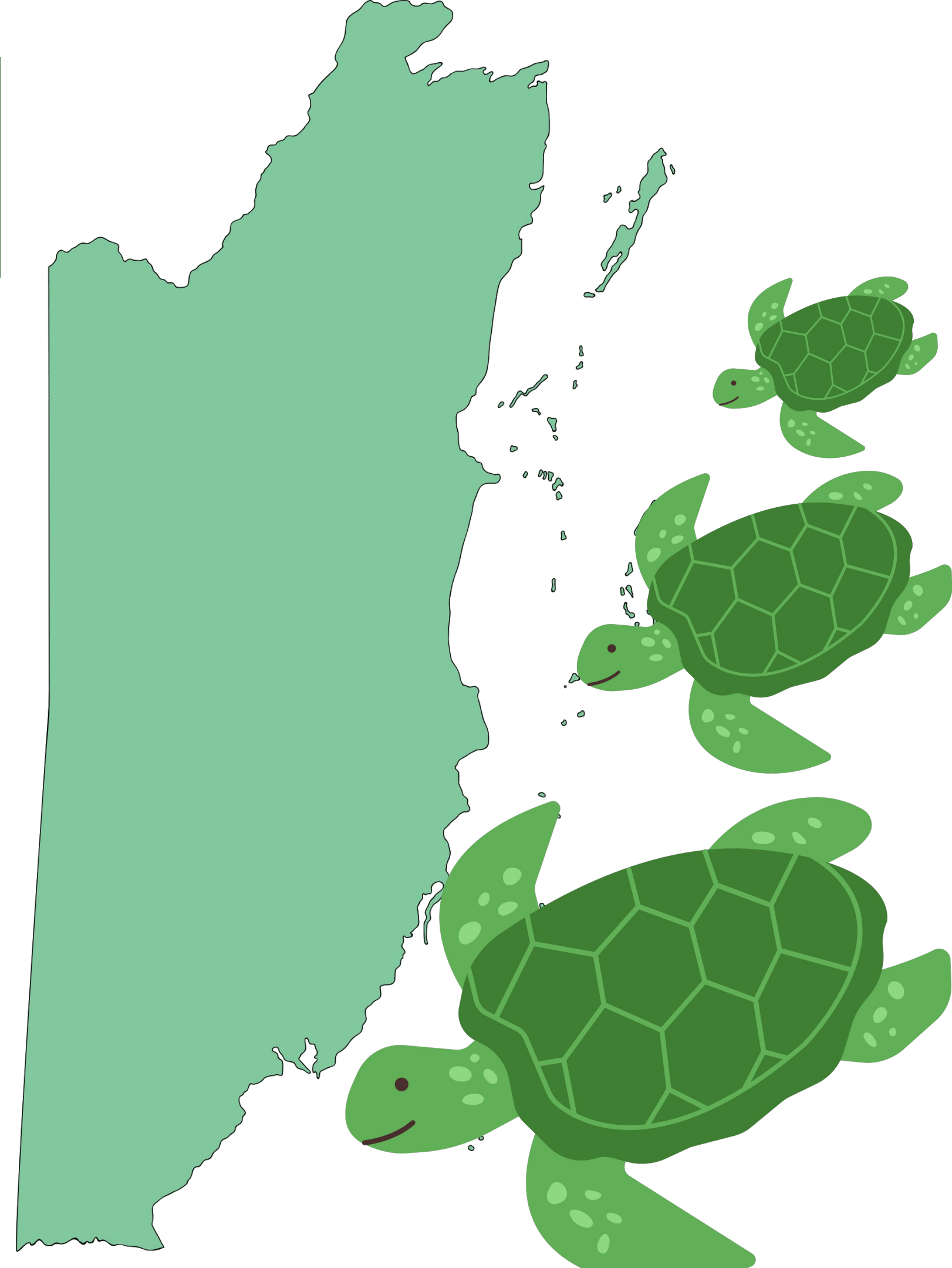
Turtles that are native to Belize

- 9 species of freshwater turtles

1. White-lipped Mud Turtle
 2. Tabasco Mud Turtle
 3. Meso-American Slider
 4. Red-Cheeked Mud Turtle
 5. Mexican Giant Musk Turtle
 6. Furrowed Wood Turtle
 7. Narrow-bridged Musk Turtle
 8. Central American Snapping Turtle
 9. Hicatee
-

- 4 species of sea turtles

1. Hawksbill Sea Turtle
2. Green Sea Turtle
3. Leatherback Sea Turtle
4. Loggerhead Sea Turtle





WHAT IS A HICATEE?

- Largest freshwater turtle in Central America
 - **Critically endangered**
 - Limited range Eastern Guatemala, Southern Mexico, & Belize
 - Last remaining survivor in the family dermatemydidae
 - Lives underwater
 - Long lifespan (>45 yrs)
 - Scientific Name: *Dermatemys mawii*
-

SPECIES DESCRIPTION

HATCHLING



ADULT MALE



ADULT FEMALE

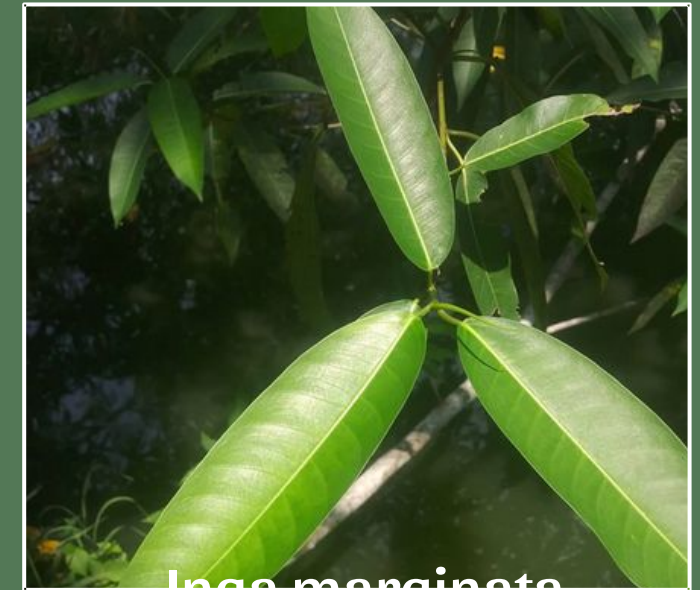


DIET –TOTALLY HERBIVOROUS

Paspalum paniculatum



Ficus insipida



Ficus insipida - Fruit



Inga marginata



SPECIALIZED WEBBED-FEET



TAIL-LENGTH COMPARISON



#TeamHicatee



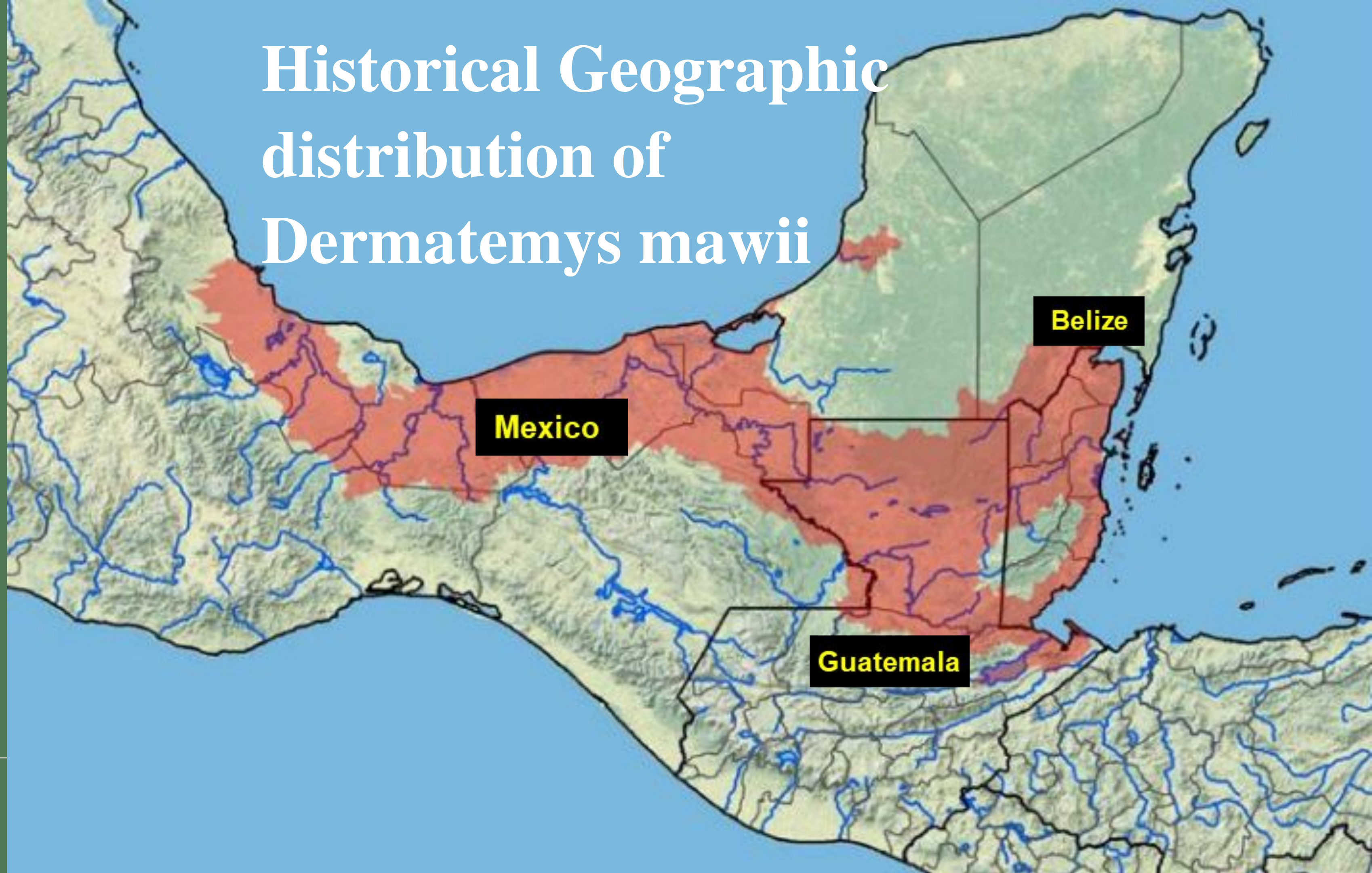
SHELL-COMPARISON



WHERE DO HICATEES LIVE?



Historical Geographic distribution of *Dermatemys mawii*



A photograph of a tropical river scene. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding lush greenery and a large tree on the left bank. The sky is a pale blue with some light clouds. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

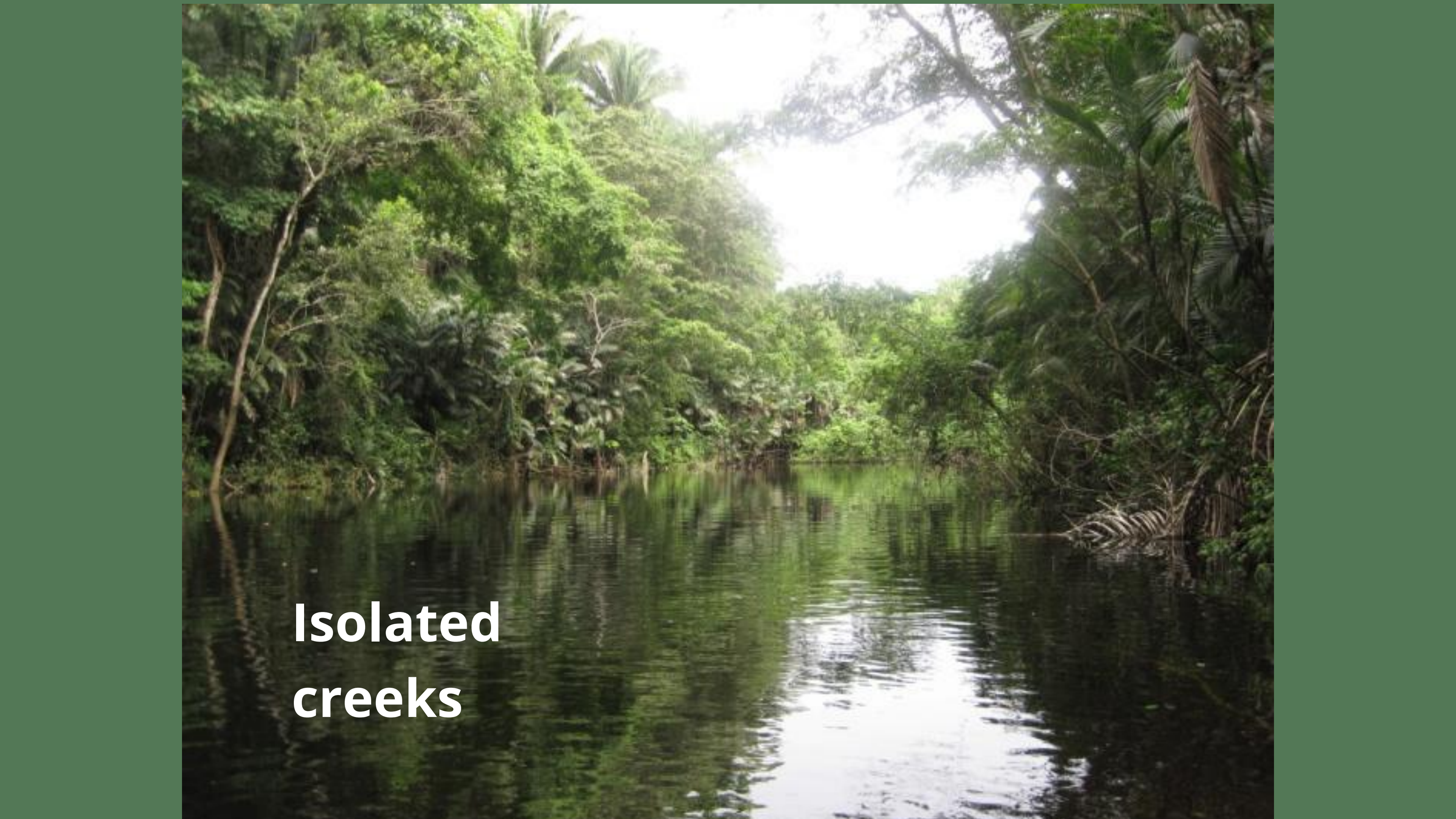
Hicatee Habitats

A person wearing a green t-shirt and a black cap is seen from behind, paddling a canoe on a river. The river water is a murky green color. In the background, there is a dense tropical forest with many palm trees and other lush vegetation. The sky is clear and blue. Another person is visible in a small boat further ahead on the river.

**Slow moving
rivers**

A photograph of an estuary. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding greenery. On the left, there are dense green bushes. On the right, there is a large, leafy tree. The sky is blue with several white, fluffy clouds. The word "Estuaries" is written in white text in the lower right quadrant of the image.

Estuaries



**Isolated
creeks**

Freshwater Creeks



WHY ARE HICATEES DISAPPEARING?



MAIN CAUSE OF DECLINE

Traditionally hunted for food



#TeamHicatee

BELIZE LAWS AND REGULATION

#TeamHicatee

THE HICATEE LAWS OF BELIZE



WHAT THE LAW SAYS

- 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 1ST MAY AND 31ST MAY
- NO PERSON SHALL TRANSPORT MORE THAN FIVE TURTLES IN ANY VEHICLE
- THERE ARE **SIZE** LIMITS: CAUGHT FEMALES **MUST** BE BETWEEN **15.2 INCHES** AND **17.2 INCHES** (CARAPACE LENGTH)
- NO PERSON SHALL POSSESS OR USE A NET TO TAKE HICATEE
- IT IS **ILLEGAL** TO CAPTURE HICATEE 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.*



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



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

BELIZE LAWS AND REGULATION

#TeamHicatee

THE HICATEE LAWS OF BELIZE



HOW TO MEASURE A HICATEE

The female hicatee is measured from the front of the shell to the back (Carapace length). The length of the shell must be between **15.2 inches** (43 centimeters) and **17.2 inches** (38 centimeters). It is illegal to take female hicatees smaller or larger than this.

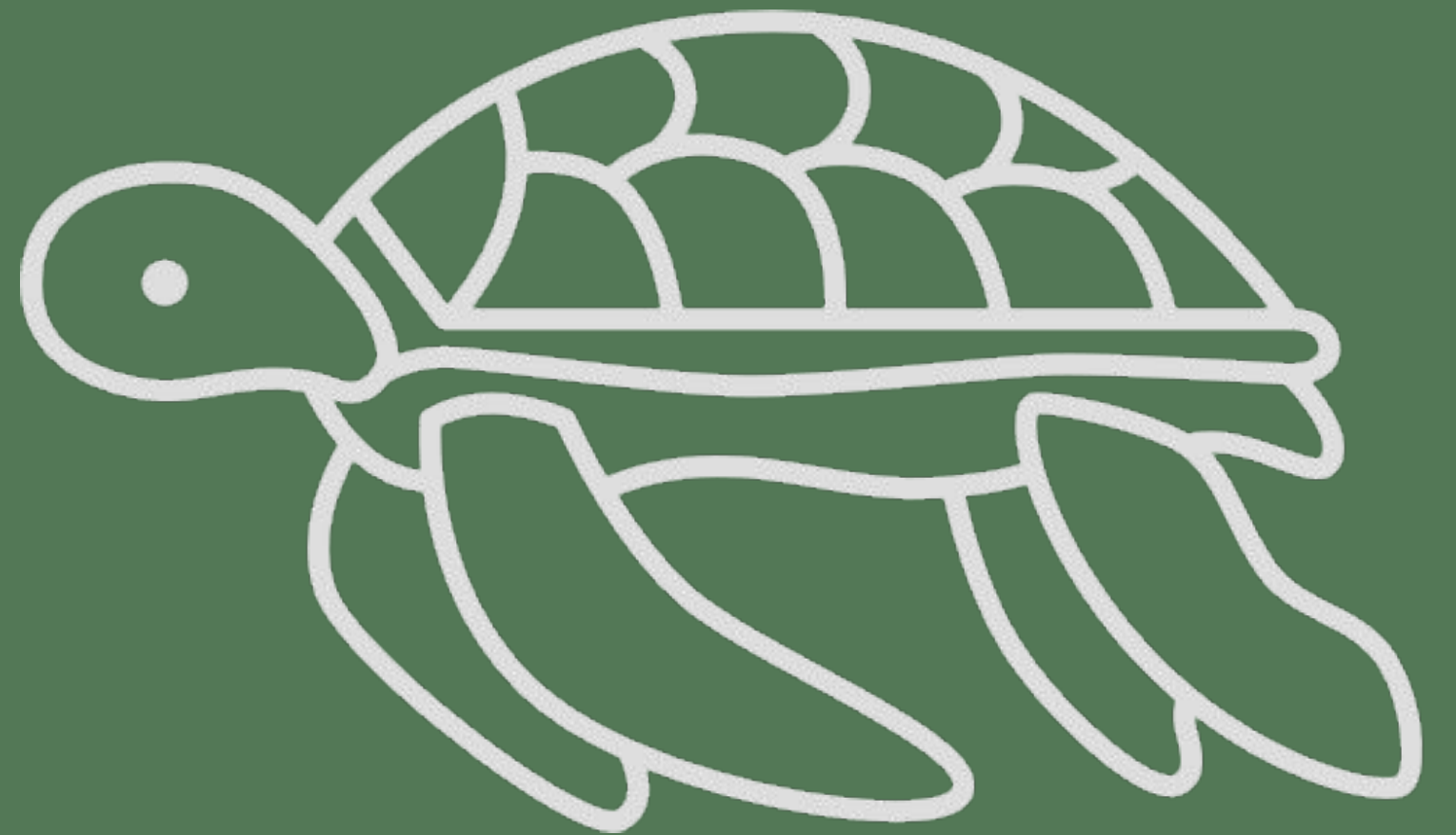


**HOW ARE WE
SAVING THEM?**





CONSERVATION EFFORTS



BFREE AND TURTLE SURVIVAL ALLIANCE PARTNERSHIP

- TSA: A global organization working to save endangered tortoises and freshwater turtles all over the world.
- Began working with BFREE to save *D. mawii* in 2010
- Country-wide survey to determine status of the species
- Followed by workshops for local people
- Led to the creation of a captive breeding facility at the BFREE Field Station

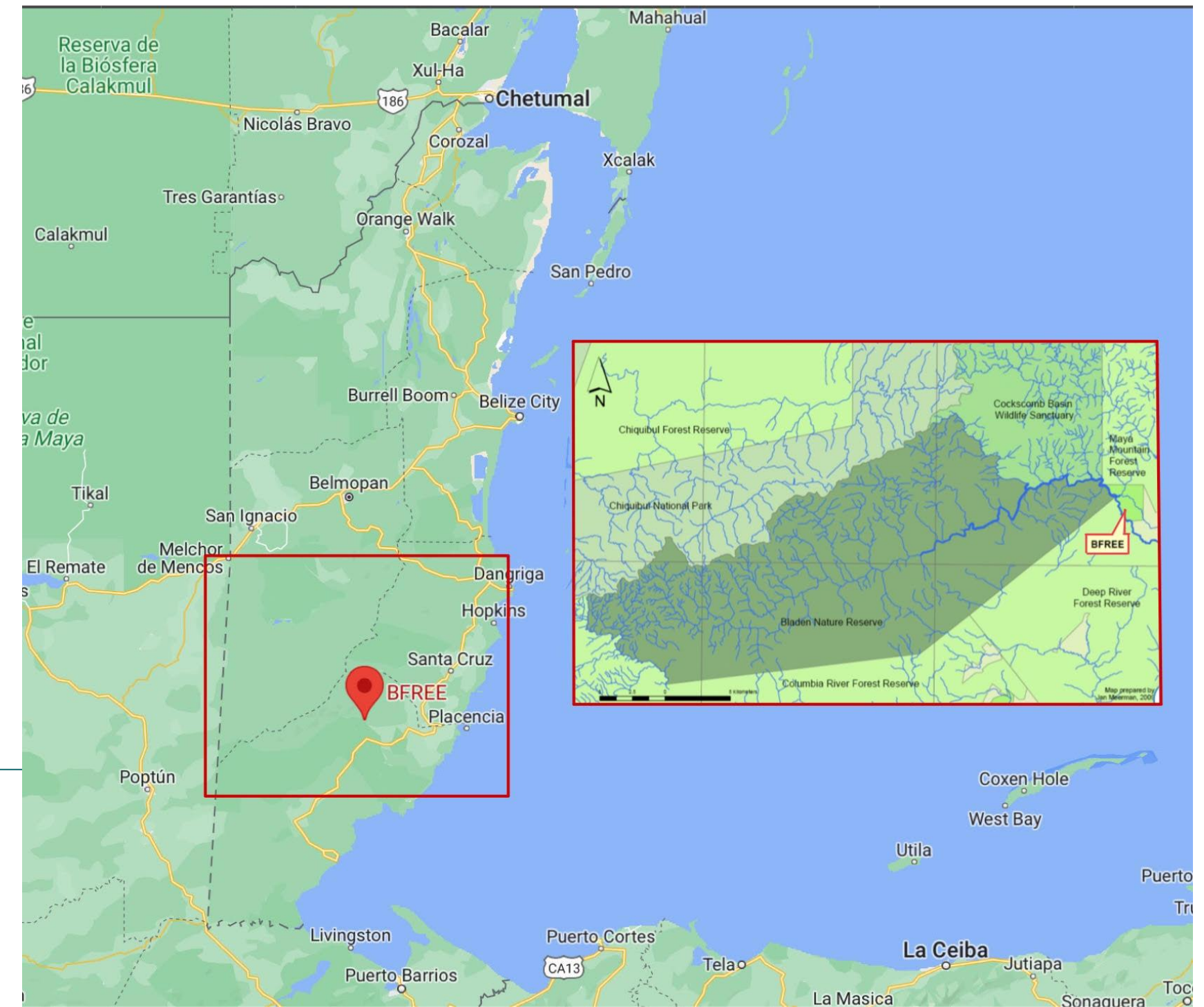


WHERE IS BFREE?

Est. in 1995 as a biological field station
and privately protected area

1,153-acre private reserve

BFREE is bordered by **4** protected areas
and connects to **1.5 million acres** of
lowland tropical rainforest



Mission

To conserve the biodiversity and cultural heritage of Belize

Philosophy

The only successful conservation program is one that involves local communities



BFREE's Initiatives

Research
Education
Ecotourism
Conservation
Advocacy
Land Stewardship



THE HICATEE CONSERVATION & RESEARCH CENTER

- Facility est. **2014** at the BFREE Field Station in southern Belize
- **45** adult and subadults – Founding population
- **2** Breeding ponds, **1** rearing pond
- Focused on Hicatee research, Raising awareness and re-wilding Healthy Hicatees back into the wild



Overview of the Hicatee Conservation and Research Center



- **111 Nests** to date
- Over **1150** eggs deposited
- Over **900** Hatchlings

Re-Wilding

- To date, the BFREE (HCRC) has released 415 hatchling and juvenile Hicatee

- Prior to release, all turtles were measured and PIT-tagged
- 4 release locations that have included rivers, lagoons, and ponds

#TeamHicatee



RAISING AWARENESS



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

FOLLOW THE LAWS

- It is **ILLEGAL** to buy or sell Hicatee
- It is **ILLEGAL** to catch between 1 May and 31 May
- It is **ILLEGAL** to capture in several areas in Belize
- A person must have no more than 3 Hicatees on them at any time or transport more than five in any vehicle
- There are size limits: Any females caught must be between 15.2 to 17.2 inches in size
- No person shall possess or use a net to take Hicatee

TAKE ACTION

- Be a Hicatee Hero; wear the cape and make the Hicatee Promise!
- Donate or Fundraise for Hicatee conservation to support research.
- Visit www.bfreebz.org and share your favorite Hica-tivity with your friends and family!
- Follow BFREE on social media for more ways to take part in Hicatee Awareness Month!

HICATEE PROMISE

I, (your name here) promise as a Hicatee Hero to obey the laws of Belize that protect Hicatee and other wildlife; to respect their homes in the wild, and to share with others why the hicatee is a national treasure!



NATIONAL HICATEE DAY

Join Hicatee Heroes on National Hicatee Day, 17 October to celebrate our national treasure! The hicatee is disappearing, but Hicatee Heroes can save it!



- Community engagement
- Education and outreach







**I'M A HICATEE HERO!
ARE YOU?**

#HicateeHero

How can you Help?

- Volunteer at BFREE to join the scientific research aimed to Help Save the Hicatee
- Promote public Awareness
- Report Sightings of Illegal harvest
- Practice responsible Fishing
- Support conservation Organizations
- Support Habitat restoration Initiatives
- **Avoid** eating Hicatee meat



Support Team Hicatee





QUIZ TIME!





**WHAT IS A
HICATEE?**

A. The largest freshwater turtle in Central America

B. A Hicatee is a mammal

C. A large sea turtle



**WHAT IS A
HICATEE?**

**A. The largest freshwater turtle in
Central America**

B. A Hicatee is a mammal

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**WHAT IS THE MAIN
REASON HICATEES
ARE CRITICALLY
ENDANGERED??**

**A. Overharvesting for Human
Consumption**

**B. Polluted rivers and other
habitat**

C. Lack of food resources



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**WHAT CAN YOU DO
TO HELP SAVE THE
HICATEE?**

A. Eat Hicatee meat

B. Avoid eating Hicatee meat

**C. Don't throw your trash in the
river-Keep the rivers clean**



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**WHERE DO HICATEE
LIVE?**

A. In the Ocean

B. Freshwater river systems

C. On land



**WHERE DO HICATEE
LIVE?**

A. In the Ocean

 **B. Freshwater river systems**

C. On land



**WHAT IS THE HICATEE
CONSERVATION AND
RESEARCH CENTER?**

A. An Aquarium

B. A Field Station

C. A Captive breeding facility



**WHAT IS THE HICATEE
CONSERVATION AND
RESEARCH CENTER?**

A. An Aquarium

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C. A Captive breeding facility



**WHAT DOES A HICATEE
EAT?**

A. Fish

B. Aquatic vegetation

C. Shrimp



**WHAT DOES A HICATEE
EAT?**

A. Fish

 **B. Aquatic vegetation**

C. Shrimp



**WHAT IS THE
HICATEE'S
SCIENTIFIC
NAME?**

A. *Dermatemys mawii*

B. *Dermatemys hawaii*

C. *Dermatemys hicatee*



**WHAT IS THE
HICATEE'S
SCIENTIFIC
NAME?**



A. *Dermatemys mawii*

B. *Dermatemys hawaii*

C. *Dermatemys hicatee*

A cartoon illustration of a turtle wearing a red cape and a yellow headband, standing on a small patch of green grass with a blue stream in the background. The turtle is looking up and to the right, with its mouth open as if speaking. A large green speech bubble is positioned to the right of its head, containing the text 'WHAT DOES HCRC STAND FOR?'.

**WHAT DOES HCRC
STAND FOR?**

A graphic of a sunburst with several orange, brush-stroke-like rays radiating outwards from behind the word 'BONUS'.

BONUS

A. HICATEE CAPTURE AND RELEASE CENTER

B. HICATEE CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH CENTER

C. HICATEE CARE AND RESEARCH CENTER

A cartoon illustration of a turtle wearing a red cape and a yellow mask, standing on a small patch of green grass. The turtle is looking up and to the right, with its mouth open as if speaking. A large green speech bubble is positioned above its head, containing the text 'WHAT DOES HCRC STAND FOR?'.

**WHAT DOES HCRC
STAND FOR?**

A graphic of a sunburst with several orange, brush-stroke-like rays radiating outwards from behind the word 'BONUS'.

BONUS

A. HICATEE CAPTURE AND RELEASE CENTER

A large red checkmark is placed to the left of the second option, indicating it is the correct answer.

B. HICATEE CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH CENTER

C. HICATEE CARE AND RESEARCH CENTER

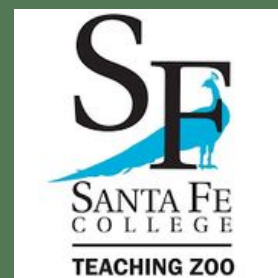


**HAPPY
HICATEE
AWARENESS
MONTH!**

WWW.BFREEBZ.ORG



Thanks to our partners in Hicatee conservation!



For More Information



BFREE

www.bfreebz.org 🔍

Find us on  BFREE Belize

 BFREEBZ

Email: contact@bfreebz.org