

Hicatee Activity Guide

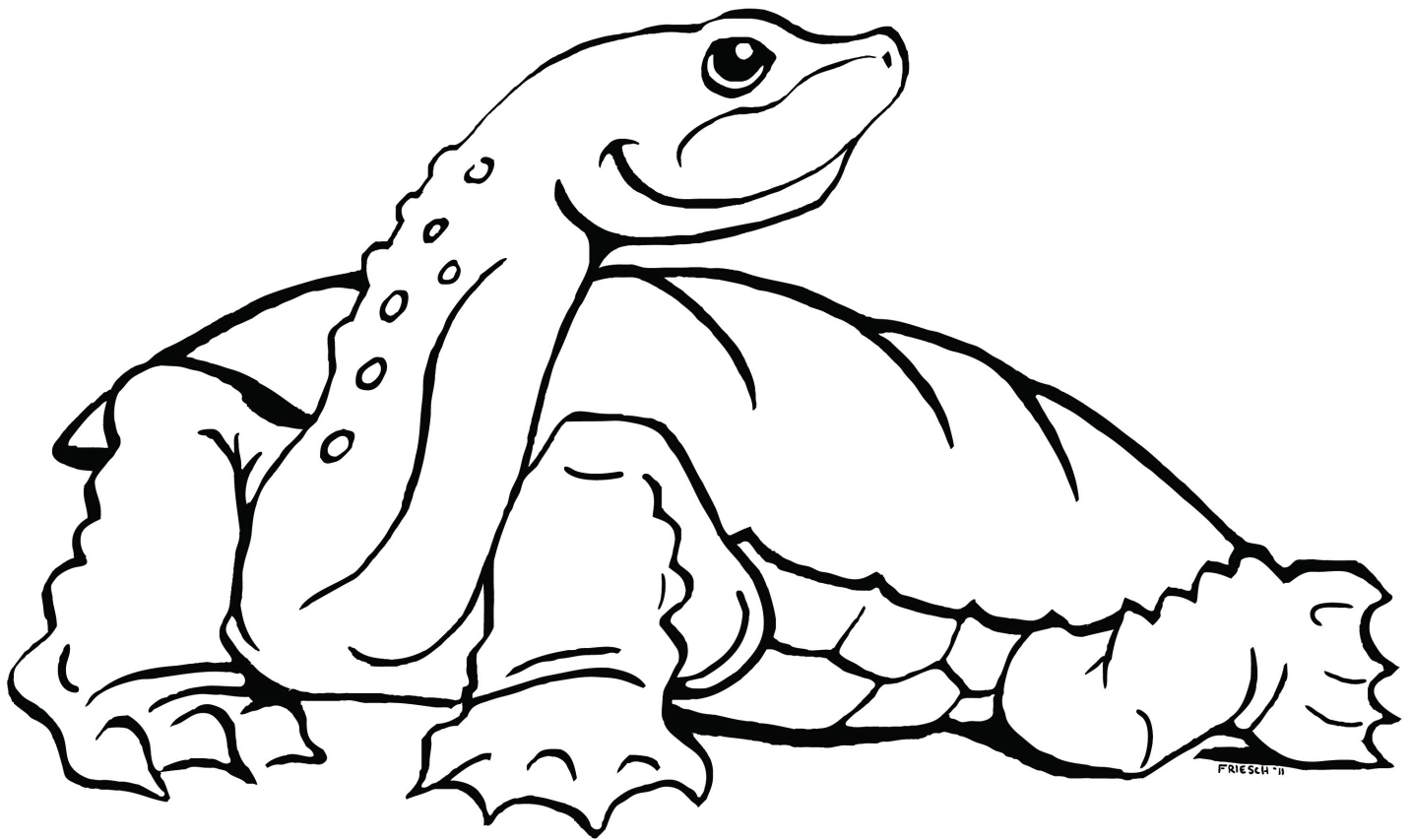


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The Hicatee Turtle, also known as the Central American River Turtle (*Dermatemys mawii*) is a critically endangered species found only in Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico.

The Hicatees are disappearing because people are eating too many of these turtles throughout their range.



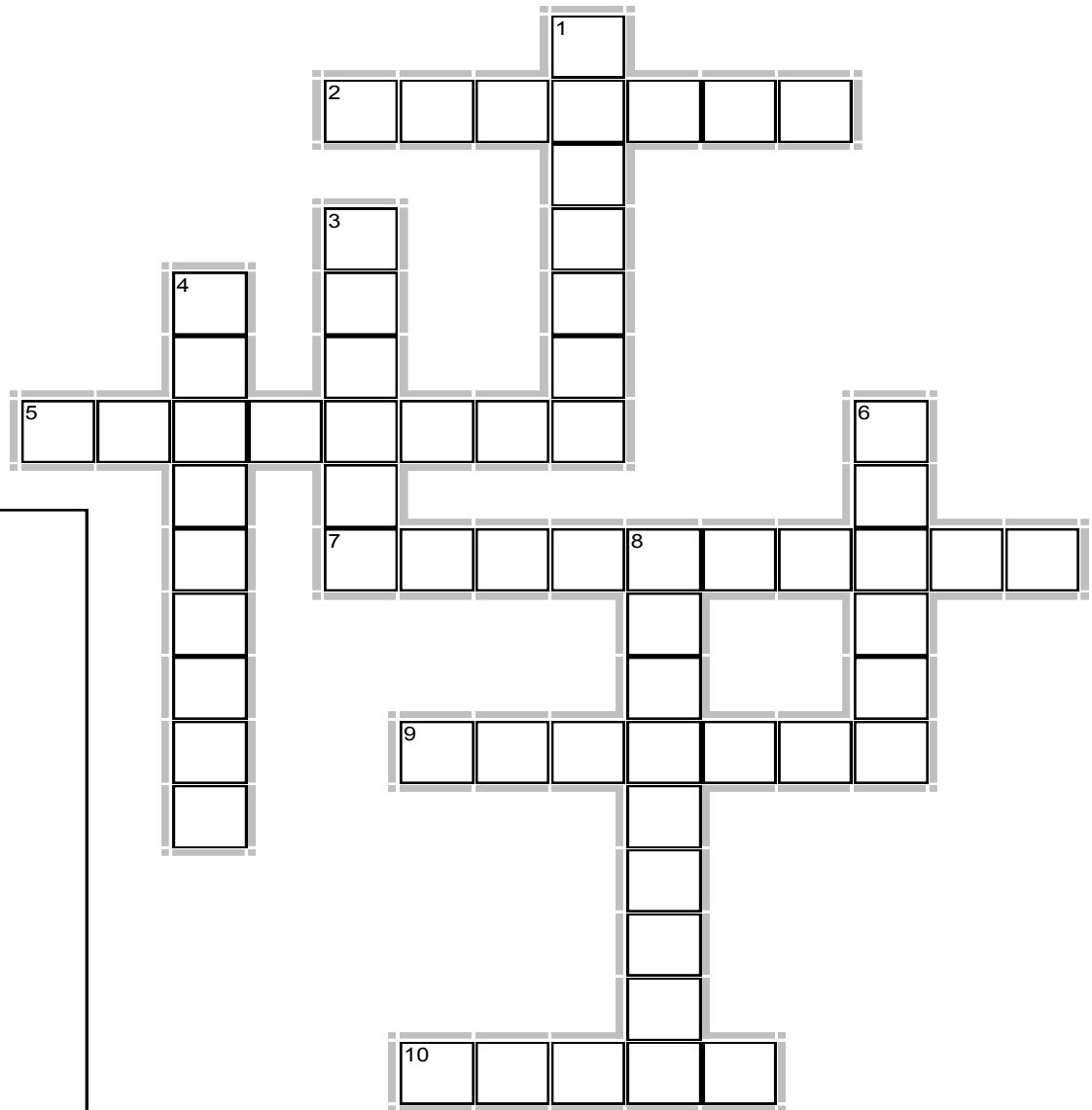
Hicatees are primarily active at night, which means they are a nocturnal species. Each evening, they will spend hours swimming in rivers, creeks, and lagoons, searching for food. They are a herbivorous species, which means they only feed on plants and fruit.

Laws have been created to help protect the Hicatee and save this unique species of turtle.

Did you know:

- It is ILLEGAL to buy or sell a Hicatee!
- Any females caught must be between 15.2 to 17.2 inches in size
- A person must have no more than 3 Hicatees on them at any time
- A vehicle must have no more than 5 Hicatees in it at any time.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Word Choices

Belize
 Crocodile
 Endangered
 Hicatee
 Lamanai
 Nocturnal
 Reptile
 Shell
 Turtle
 ZooMiami

Across

2. Critically endangered turtle found in Belize.
5. Name of the zoo in Florida which is helping conserve many species in Belize.
7. Word used to describe an animal species which is going extinct.
9. Group of animals which include the Hicatee, and all turtles, lizards, snakes, and crocodiles.
10. Something a turtle possesses to protect itself.

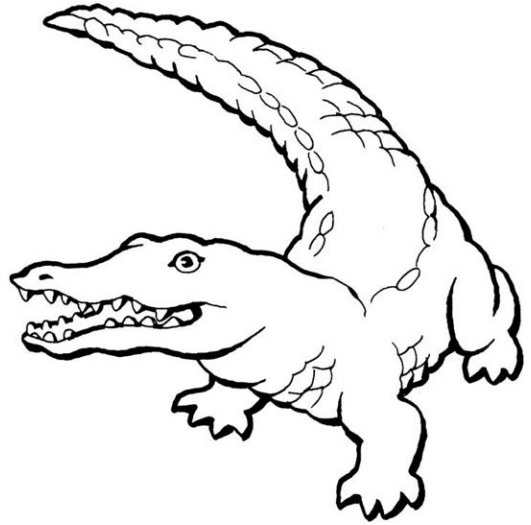
Down

1. Mayan word for "Submerged Crocodile" and name of region along the New River Lagoon.
3. Country on the East coast of Central America, just south of Mexico.
4. A type of large reptile that is frequently encountered in the same rivers as Hicatees.
6. Type of reptile which uses a shell to protect itself.
8. This is what animals which are active at night are called.

The Hicatee turtle is a species of reptile. Reptiles are a group of animals which includes turtles and tortoises, lizards, crocodiles, tuataras, and snakes.

In Belize, there are more than 40 species of reptiles. Of these species, the largest reptiles in Belize are the crocodiles. There are two species, the American Crocodile and the Morelet's Crocodile.

The American Crocodile is found along the coast in Belize, while the Morelet's crocodile is found in most of the streams, rivers, lagoons, and lakes throughout most of the country. It actually occupies most of the same range and habitats as the Hicatee turtle.



Now that you have learned about the Hicatee turtle,
can you draw one in this box?

The Hicatee turtle is an endangered species. This means that its numbers are declining throughout its entire range and it is in danger of extinction. Extinction is when a species no longer exists in the wild and they have completely disappeared.

Because they are large, Hicatee turtles are eaten by many people, which is why this species is critically endangered. They can grow to a length of about 2 feet and weigh as much as 50 pounds! It can take them about 20 years to reach maturity, so every time an adult turtle is removed from the wild, it takes 20

years to replace it! Once the turtles are mature, males will have a very colorful yellow head and a long tail. Females have a grayish-brown head and a short tail.

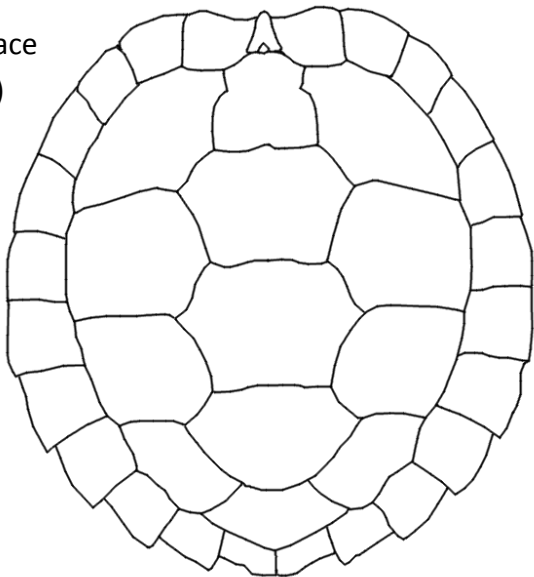
The only way to ensure that this species doesn't go extinct is by following the laws of Belize to help save the Hicatee Turtle!

The Freshwater Turtles of Belize

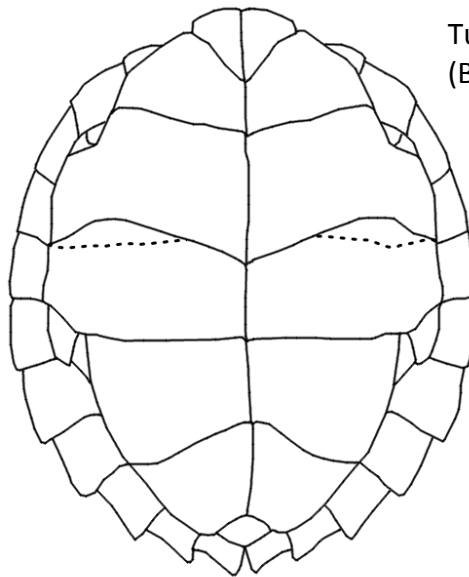
- Central American River Turtle (Hicatee)
- Mesoamerican Slider (Jicotea)
- White-Lipped Mud Turtle (Casco de burro)
- Tabasco Mud Turtle (Casquito)
- Red-Cheeked Mud Turtle (Scorpion turtle)
- Central American Snapping Turtle (Tortuga lagarto)
- Northern Giant Musk Turtle (Morokoi)
- Narrow Bridged Musk Turtle (Chamarro)
- Furrowed Wood Turtle (Mojina)

Every species of turtle and tortoise has a shell to protect itself, but each species has a unique shell. The shell is actually a part of their body and will grow as the turtle grows. Some shells are hard and some are soft, while some have the ability to open and close. For example, the shells of each of the species of turtle in Belize are very different. Some have ridges on the top of the shell, also known as the carapace, like the snapping turtle and giant musk turtle. All of the mud turtles in Belize have a hinged plastron, which means they are able to open and close a part of the bottom of the shell.

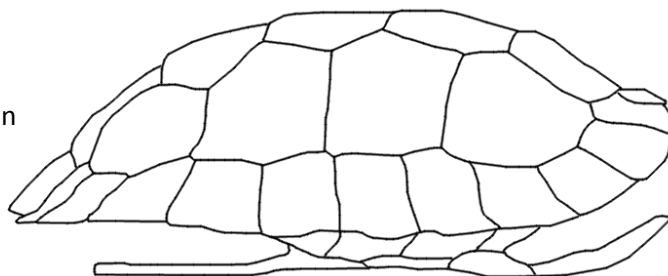
Turtle Carapace
(Top of Shell)



Turtle Plastron
(Bottom of Shell)



Side View of Turtle Shell
Both Carapace and Plastron

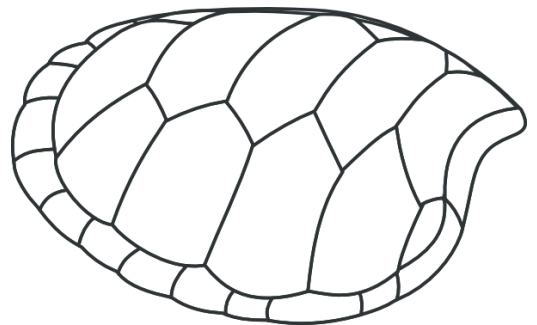
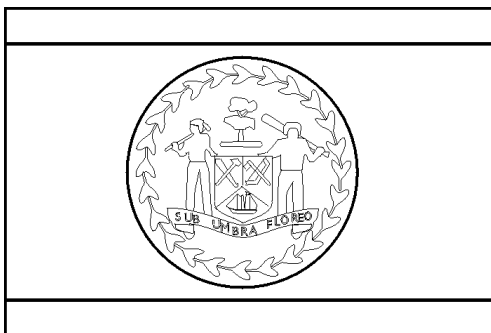


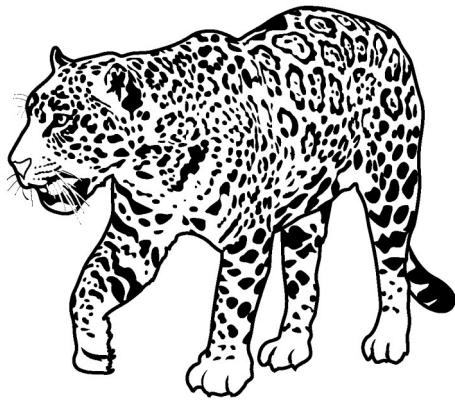
CONSERVATION WORD SEARCH

J	I	G	R	N	V	Y	T	E	X	M	Q	I	V	N	M	R	I	I	V
M	W	O	Y	V	S	N	O	B	X	K	U	H	D	G	I	X	H	I	N
E	L	I	T	P	E	R	R	L	N	D	B	P	D	V	I	R	K	Z	O
E	D	O	H	H	G	N	T	B	J	N	J	C	E	O	O	Y	Z	D	I
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Z	B	T	G	Q	G	C	A	S	C	U	T	E	S	G	A	Q	V	Z	V
I	I	A	U	C	S	U	A	T	Q	C	A	K	B	Q	L	C	J	N	R
L	L	X	L	R	H	D	K	T	C	G	K	K	U	T	Y	E	T	A	E
E	N	K	G	H	T	W	K	O	E	E	T	A	F	D	F	J	E	B	S
B	Y	Y	C	H	B	L	L	F	J	E	T	V	I	D	B	R	W	K	N
X	D	O	X	Z	N	X	E	L	V	I	O	O	Z	R	O	M	V	J	O
C	A	R	A	P	A	C	E	A	C	T	J	E	R	V	X	M	C	E	C
Q	S	U	M	S	L	R	R	Q	G	U	C	N	I	P	O	H	L	F	O
H	T	S	C	S	M	R	B	P	X	G	T	B	L	W	F	U	Z	M	D
C	B	J	E	C	Z	C	T	H	V	S	R	S	Z	D	T	Q	I	C	H
I	P	J	I	U	S	X	N	E	X	E	K	Z	G	W	K	L	T	Z	K
R	M	T	K	C	G	Q	M	S	H	C	D	W	E	D	Y	B	G	E	K
J	K	T	N	M	U	S	U	P	E	O	K	M	P	K	Y	Y	V	X	D
R	H	U	Q	Y	I	H	O	C	K	A	X	S	U	B	G	P	Q	G	V

Find the words **below** in the box of letters **above** and circle them. They can be forwards, backwards, and diagonal.

AQUATIC
 BELIZE
 CARAPACE
 CONSERVATION
 CREEK
 HERBIVORE
 HICATEE
 LAGOON
 PROTECT
 REPTILE
 RIVER
 SCUTES
 TORTUGA
 TURTLE
 ZOO

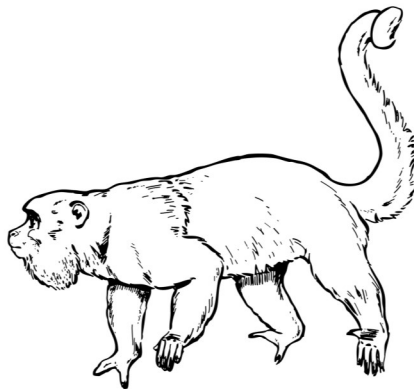
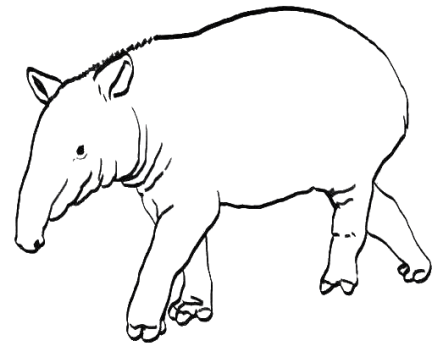




Zoo Miami is working with the University of Florida and the Lamanai Field Research Center in Belize to conduct research on a variety of species. Most of our work is being conducted in Lamanai, which is derived from the Mayan word for “Submerged Crocodile”. Not only are we conducting research on the Hicatee turtle, we also work with the five species of cats; Jaguar, Puma, Jaguarundi, Ocelot and Margay.

The goal of our research is to learn more about these animals and help Belizeans with the conservation of these amazing species.

Many of the mammals found in Belize have declining populations and some are even endangered, like the Baird’s Tapir. The Baird’s Tapir is Belize’s national animal, which is also called the “Mountain Cow” or “Danto”. It is a unusual looking mammal that is found in both forests and rivers.



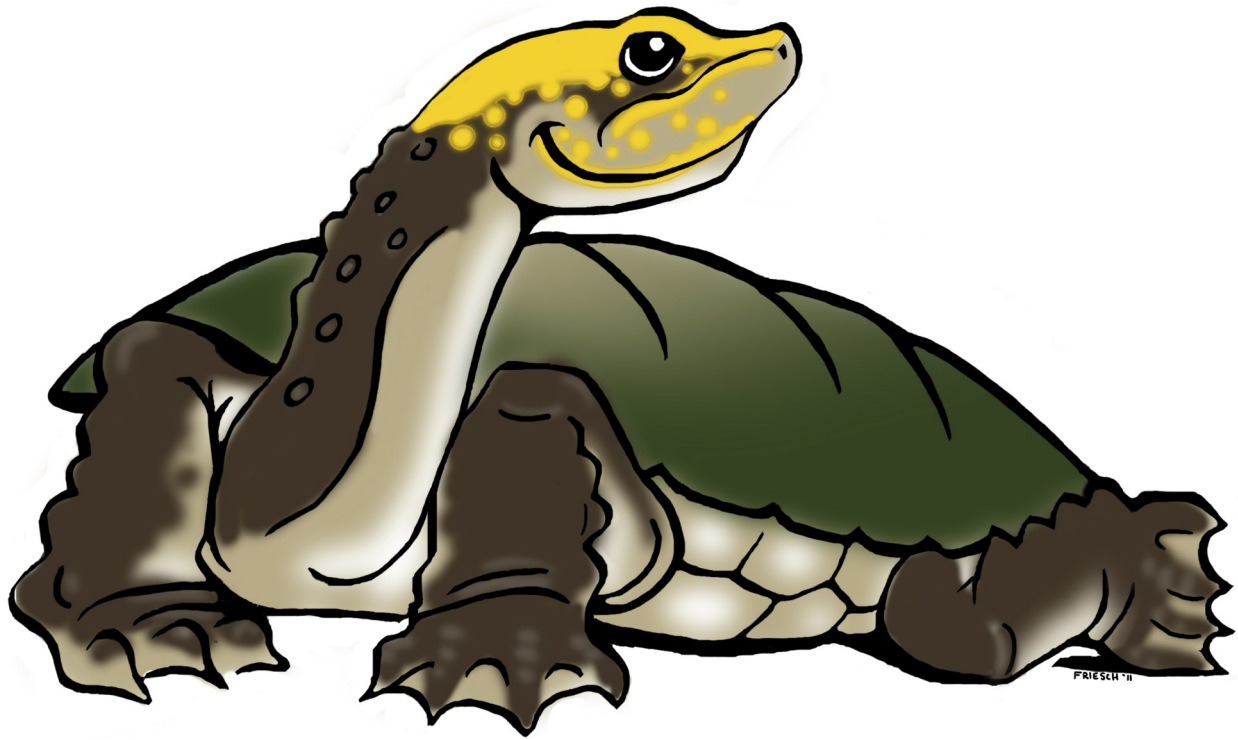
Another very well known species which is also endangered, is the Yucatan Black Howler Monkey. Most of these endangered species are continuing to decline because of habitat loss and over hunting. Some species, like the Howler Monkey and the Yellow-headed Amazon Parrot are illegally kept as pets, which also contributes to their population declines

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE ANIMAL

If you could choose any animal in the world, what species is your favorite?

How about in Belize, which species is your favorite and why?

The next time you are outside, count as many species of animals as you can and write them down:



The Hicatee Promise

I, _____, promise to follow all of the laws in Belize, relating to Hicatees and other wildlife to ensure their long-term survival. I am not only going to help the Hicatee turtle, but I am also going to help conserve all of the species of plants and animals in my region so that they do not become endangered or go extinct.

The Hicatee Activity Guide was generously supported by:



www.speciesconservation.org



www.turtleconservationfund.org