

The Toledo Howler

Newspaper of the Toledo Chapter of the Belize Tourism Industry Association

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FREE

The Three Kings Are Coming

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They won't be waiting until Christmas but they will be bearing the gift of their combined musical talents. These are the three kings of Belizean music. Wilfred Peters from Belize city and Paul Nabor and Florencio Mes from Toledo itself.

They will be headlining the festival's closing concert performance along with Carlos Perotte. The Three Kings is the title of a newly released award winning DVD which features their culture, lives and music.

The fourth Toledo Cacao Festival promises to be better than ever! It will be held over the Commonwealth Day Holiday weekend and is a celebration not only of cacao



but also the rich mix of cultures of the Toledo District.

The Festival opens with its signature *Wine & Chocolate* evening on Friday 21st May, held on the rooftop terrace of the University of Belize. Guests will enjoy fine wine and food, live music from Pablo Collado, and a specially-commissioned performance by the National Dance Company of Belize, choreographed by Gregory Vernon - Director of the Institute of Creative Arts.

Saturday sees the return of the *Taste of Toledo* fair, this year in its new seafront location at Petillo Park and the grounds of



Deer dance performers at Lubaantun 2009

the Father Ring Parish Hall. The Fair showcases local and national artisans work, local food and cookery demonstrations by local chefs, as well as music and dance performances and master classes, and a special screening of the newly released award-winning "Three Kings of Belize" DVD.

New *Cacao for Kids* activities will include a sock-puppet class, and also creating the longest rainforest mural in Belize, with a chalk pavement art scene along Front Street. We can't hope to compete with the current world record 75,000 square feet creation, but will be setting a record for Belize!

The *Sea Toledo* kayaking, snorkelling and boat trips will depart from the Fisherman's Co-op wharf, giving everybody the chance to appreciate the beautiful coastal waters of Toledo. The inland *Cacao Trail* tours take you through the organic cacao orchards in Toledo, to learn how the pods are grown, harvested and processed before being turned into chocolate - the food of the Gods!

On Sunday the focus moves inland to the ancient Maya site of Lubaantun - the place of the fallen stones - and you can learn more about the current excavations being led by Dr Geoff Braswell as part of the National Geographic sponsored Toledo Regional Interaction Project.

As in previous years, a Maya dance will be performed in the plaza, with a special introduction by Dr Jaime Awe, Director of the Institute of Archaeology. This year sees the villagers of San Jose perform the Monkey Dance - a tradition that goes far back in time, and performed to influence the corn harvest. Six dancers dress as 'batz' and six as 'max' - howler monkeys and spider monkeys respectively - with the thirteenth dancer representing the devil and the father of the monkeys.

Visit www.ToledoChocolate.com for

Calling all craft makers!

Be part of the Toledo Cacao Festival

If you would like to be part of the Taste of Toledo fair then contact Sulma Hernandez at the BTIA Information Centre for exhibitor information. (Toledo based craft makers only)



BTIA's distinctive octagonal Information Center on Front street in Punta Gorda. All you need to know about Toledo is inside

Join BTIA and display your promotional materials in the information center.

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Contact Toledo BTIA at the Tourism Information Center, Front St., Punta Gorda Tel. 722-2531

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Archaeology:

Wild Cane Cay: Ancient Maya Trading Port

From 1982 to 1992 I excavated at Wild Cane Cay, a major port for ancient Maya sea trade. The island was first settled in the Early Classic period (A.D. 300-600). Animal and fish bones from our excavations indicate they were proficient mariners. They fished in the nearby coastal waters for barracuda, manatee, turtle, and snappers, hunted up rivers and on the mainland for deer, agouti, and jute snails, and traveled farther offshore for parrotfishes and other salt water fish. The ancient bones were identified by comparing them with bones from modern fish and animals. We found stone and clay weights used for fishing lines and for nets. Although

no boats have yet been reported, we know the ancient Maya traveled by canoes. However, we found the canoe paddle from K'ak' Naab' in nearby Paynes Creek National Park. In the Classic period, the Wild Cane Cay Maya notched the sides of pieces of pottery. In the Postclassic, they formed clay into sinkers. Most of the diet was probably from plant foods. We excavated corn cobs, native palm fruits (coyol and cohune), mamey apple, and crabbo/nance. They used calabash containers and grew avocado trees, likely eating its fruit. The modern trees on Wild Cane Cay are not indigenous, but were planted by 19th century historic settlers of the cay: Breadfruit, tamarind, coconut palms, and citrus are not native to the Americas.

Wild Cane Cay became a major port in the Late Classic (A.D. 600-900), supporting the rising inland cities of Lubaantun and Nim Li Punit with goods from the coast and imported from farther away along the sea trade route around the Yucatan. Wild Cane Cay may have managed the inland transport of salt from the nearby Payne's Creek salt works, which I have been investigating since 2003. In addition to salt, various marine resources were traded inland for rituals and food, shown in artwork and found in burials of nobles at inland cities: Stingray spines and ob-

sidian blades were used for ritual bloodletting. There are images of leaders letting blood to conjure a spirit to gain access to supernatural powers and divine knowledge. Conch and other shells, coral, manatee bone, and fish also were traded inland.



Aerial view of Wild Cane Cay showing natural harbor and coconut trees that once covered the modern island and

Wild Cane Cay witnessed its hey day as a port during the Postclassic (A.D. 900-1500) after the nearby inland cities and the Paynes Creek salt works were abandoned. As merchants, the Wild Cane Cay Maya found new trading partners, acting as a port for sea trade around the Yucatan and beyond. Payment for services may have been in trade goods. The obsidian that litters the surface of the island comes from volcanic



A Tohil Plumbate vessel in a private collection in the U.S., collected before the 1971 Antiquities legislation in Belize.

outcrops in the highlands of Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. Obsidian is more common at Wild Cane Cay than at most other Maya sites, which I attribute to its role as a port.

My archaeological research at Wild Cane Cay included excavation of household middens (ancient gar-

bage), excavation of the coral architecture distinctive to southern coastal Belize, and excavations offshore in the shallow waters and mangroves that surround the island. We excavated 172 shovel tests offshore at regular intervals to evaluate the size of the ancient sites. We found deeply buried parts of the site to a meter below the sea-floor (where we reached the limit of excavating in waist deep water!). Two startling conclusions came of this hard labor in 1990 and 1991: The ancient site was 10 acres and has been submerged and eroded to its modern 3 ½ acre size. Sea-level has risen at least a meter since the ancient settlers lived on the cay. In fact, our on-

going fieldwork in Paynes Creek National Park indicates sea level rose closer to 2 meters since the Early Classic period.

Excavations in the mounds from 1982 to 1992 revealed a distinctive building tradition not reported in the Maya area outside the south coast of Belize: Coral rock was mined from the sea for use as a platform for pole and thatch buildings. In one mound, Fighting Conch, we excavated the remains of six buildings, each built on the foundations of its predecessor. The coral platform was leveled with finger coral and then a hard packed dirt floor was made for the building. The Wild Cane Cay Maya used locally available stone, just as the inland Maya used locally available limestone and sandstone.

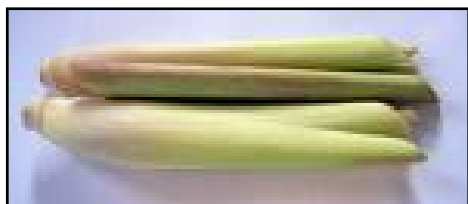
Visiting Wild Cane Cay The island is privately owned, but managed by TIDE. Visitors should check in with the TIDE rangers at the Port Honduras Ranger Station on nearby Abalone Cay. The government of Belize Institute of Archaeology prohibits the excavation or collection of artifacts without a permit from their agency, so take photos, not artifacts!

Contributed by Heather McKillop, Louisiana State University (hmckill@lsu.edu)

Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Venue / Time	Other Info
Friday 21 May	Wine & Chocolate evening, with live music by Pablo Collado, and a special performance by the Belize National Dance Company	University of Belize, Rooftop Terrace, Punta Gorda	
Saturday 22 May	Taste of Toledo Cookery and Craft Fair	Petillo Park and Father Ring Parish Hall and grounds	
Saturday 22 May	Cacao for Kids Activities	Petillo Park and Father Ring Parish Hall and grounds	
Saturday 22 May	Sea Toledo Marine Trips	Departure Fishermen's Co-op Wharf	
Saturday 22 May	Cacao Trail Tours	Departure from Petillo Park	
Sunday 23 May	Monkey Dance performed by the villagers of San Jose	Lubaantun, San Pedro Columbia Village	
Sunday 23 May	Concert by Wilfred Peters, Paul Nabor, Florencio Mes and Carlos Perrotte	Lubaantun, San Pedro Columbia Village	
Details of times and prices will be published on the Festival website at www.toledochocolate.com			

Wat's Cookin? Lemongrass



Lemongrass Oil (Infusion)

Ingredients Lemongrass, a glass jar with lid, extra virgin olive or almond oil, and a pot of boiling water.

Method

1. Crush up a bunch of lemongrass and stuff into glass jar. Do not wash the lemongrass before you put it in the jar. Do not let any water get into the jar. If your lemongrass is wet, allow to dry before using.

2. Pour enough oil into the glass jar so that it completely covers the lemongrass. Do not cover the jar.

3. Heat up some water in a large pot until it begins to steam. *Turn it down to a gentle simmer. Place the uncovered jar (with lemongrass and oil) in the simmering pot and allow standing for at least an hour, the longer the better. Be sure to check on the water in the bottom pan to make sure it has not all evaporated.

*NOTE: you can also use a crock-pot or double boiler for immersing the jar. Alternatively, you can expose the glass jar to full sun for a few weeks until oil is yellow and completely infused with lemongrass.

4. Cool the oil down and strain the herbs through a mesh strainer. Use the oil as a topical ointment or as soothing massage oil.

Iced Lemongrass Tea

Ingredients 1/4 cup Chopped fresh lemongrass- whole leaf or

2 tbs. Dried flakes
4 cup Boiling water
enough sugar to taste

Method

Add lemongrass to boiling water, boil for one minute and allow to steep until cool and strain. Sweeten to taste, and serve in tall glasses over crushed ice. Makes four servings.

NOTE - Sometimes Citronella is mistaken for Lemongrass and for good reason; they are first cousins. The two plants look almost identical and both species are members of the same grass family. So how can one tell them apart? The smell emitted after crushing the leaves is very different. Lemongrass has thinner blades and the stem is green. Citronella has wider leaves and the stems are red. The thing to remember is that Lemongrass is good to eat, and Citronella is NOT.

Contributed by Ana Arzu See her article on the medicinal uses of lemongrass on page 11

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Restaurant Guide

Name	Address	Cuisine	Phone	Opening Hours
Coleman's Cafe	Big Falls Village, near the rice mill	Belizean	720-2017	Daily: 11:30- 4pm & 6- 9pm [Reservations Preferred]
Earth Runnins' Café and Bukut Bar	Main Middle Street, PG	Belizean/ International	702-2007 600-9026	Wed-Sun: 7am-2pm & 5-11pm
Gomier's Restaurant and Soy Centre	Alejandro Vernon St, near PG welcome sign	Vegetarian / Seafood	722-2929	Mon-Sat: 8am-2pm & 6-9pm. Closed Sundays
Grace's Restaurant	Main St. PG	Belizean/ International	702-2414	Daily: 6am-10pm, including holidays
Hang Cheong Restaurant	Main St, PG	Chinese	722-2064	Daily: 10am-2pm & 5pm-midnight
The Lodge at Big Falls	Big Falls Village, near the rice mill	International/ Middle Eastern	671-7172	Daily: 11:30am – 2pm & 6:30 – 9pm [Reservations Required]
Machaca Hill Lodge	Wilson's Road	International/ Caribbean Fusion	722-0050	Lunch: noon-2:30pm. Dinner: 7:30-10pm. [Reservations preferred]
Mangrove Restaurant	Cattle Landing, by the curve	Belizean / International	722-2270	Daily: 5pm-10pm. [Reservations preferred]
Marenco's Restaurant & Ice Cream Parlor	57 Main St, PG	Belizean/Seafood/ Ice Cream/ Snacks & pastries	702-2572	Mon-Sat: 9am-2pm & 5-10pm. Sundays: 5-10pm
Marian's Bay View Restaurant	Front St, south of the market by the sea	East Indian/ Belizean	722-0129	Mon-Sat: 11am – 2pm & 6 – 10pm Sun & Hols: noon – 2pm & 7 - 9pm
Martina's Kitchen	BTL parking lot, PG	Belizean	623-3330	Mon-Sat: 7am-3pm. Closed on Sundays
Mom's Restaurant	Queen St, PG, by the park	Belizean	620-1607 661-1359	Mon-Sat: 6 am-2 pm & 4-9 pm Closed Sundays
Rainforest Cafe	Big Falls Village, just south of the bridge	Belizean	669-0080	Daily: 10am-10pm
Reef Bar & Restaurant	Front St, upstairs by the market	International/ Belizean	625-8652	Daily: 10am-2pm & 4pm-midnight. Closed on Tuesdays
Sho's Local Restaurant & Grocery Shop	Entrance to Blue Creek Village	Belizean/ Catering	668-6540	Mon-Sat: 7am-8pm. Closed Sundays. Group reservations required
The Snack Shack	BTL parking lot, PG	Breakfast & lunch/ Snacks, shakes, juices & pasties	702-0020	Mon-Sat: 7am – 4pm. Closed Sundays
Waluco's	Opposite TIDE pier in Hopeville	Belizean/East Indian/Seafood/ Catering	670-3672	Mon-Thurs: 7am-2pm & 5-10pm. Weekends: 7am-late

Natural History: The Whale Shark

The whale shark, *Rhincodon typus*, is a transient resident of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef and passes through Belizean waters every year between April and June to feed on eggs from aggregations of spawning snappers. Whale sharks are easily identified by the pale yellow stripes and spots that cover the animals' skin. These patterns are unique to each individual and can be used to identify and count the number of individuals within a population or area. However, population data remains scarce and as a result whale sharks have been listed as vulnerable to extinction on the IUCN red list of threatened species. Since 2003, whale sharks have been a protected species in Belize and no individual may be caught or killed in the waters of Belize (GOB SI 56). Whale sharks are slow moving filter feeders, straining suspended matter and food particles from the

water using their gill plates. They take water in through their mouth and then force the water out over their gills, trapping food particles on the gill plates. Whale sharks are



the largest living fish species, with the biggest confirmed individual measuring 20m (66ft) in length. It is estimated to take whale sharks 20 to 25 years to reach sexual maturity and they can live between 70 to 100 years. Females retain eggs within their body and give birth to live young, with newborn pups

ranging from 40 to 60cm (16 to 24") in length. Despite their size, whale sharks can be surprisingly gentle and curious and divers and snorkelers can swim with these large fish, although caution should be taken around the large tail fin.

Whale shark interaction tours have become increasingly popular in Belize over the last decade, running from late March through June at Gladden Spit, and less predictably at the Sapodilla Cayes, on the Barrier Reef. However, in order to protect the whale shark populations and minimise stress, strict regulations have been developed in recent years to govern the number of tourists and boats that can visit an area at one time and the activities that can take place. All Tour Guides must be 'whale shark certified' and operate from properly licensed boats,

Continued on page 15

NEVER *has roughing it felt so smooth.*



Machaca Hill Rainforest Canopy Lodge, in the heart of the lush coastal rainforest of southern Belize, is the centerpiece of our 12,000-acre private reserve. Enjoy total luxury in a setting of jungle and riverine environments; observe exotic wildlife and contemplate the reliquaries of ancient Mesoamerican civilizations. We are dedicated to providing every imaginable courtesy and comfort, from fine cuisine and spa indulgences to the simple pleasures of sharing our natural resources. And the ultimate luxury: splendid isolation.



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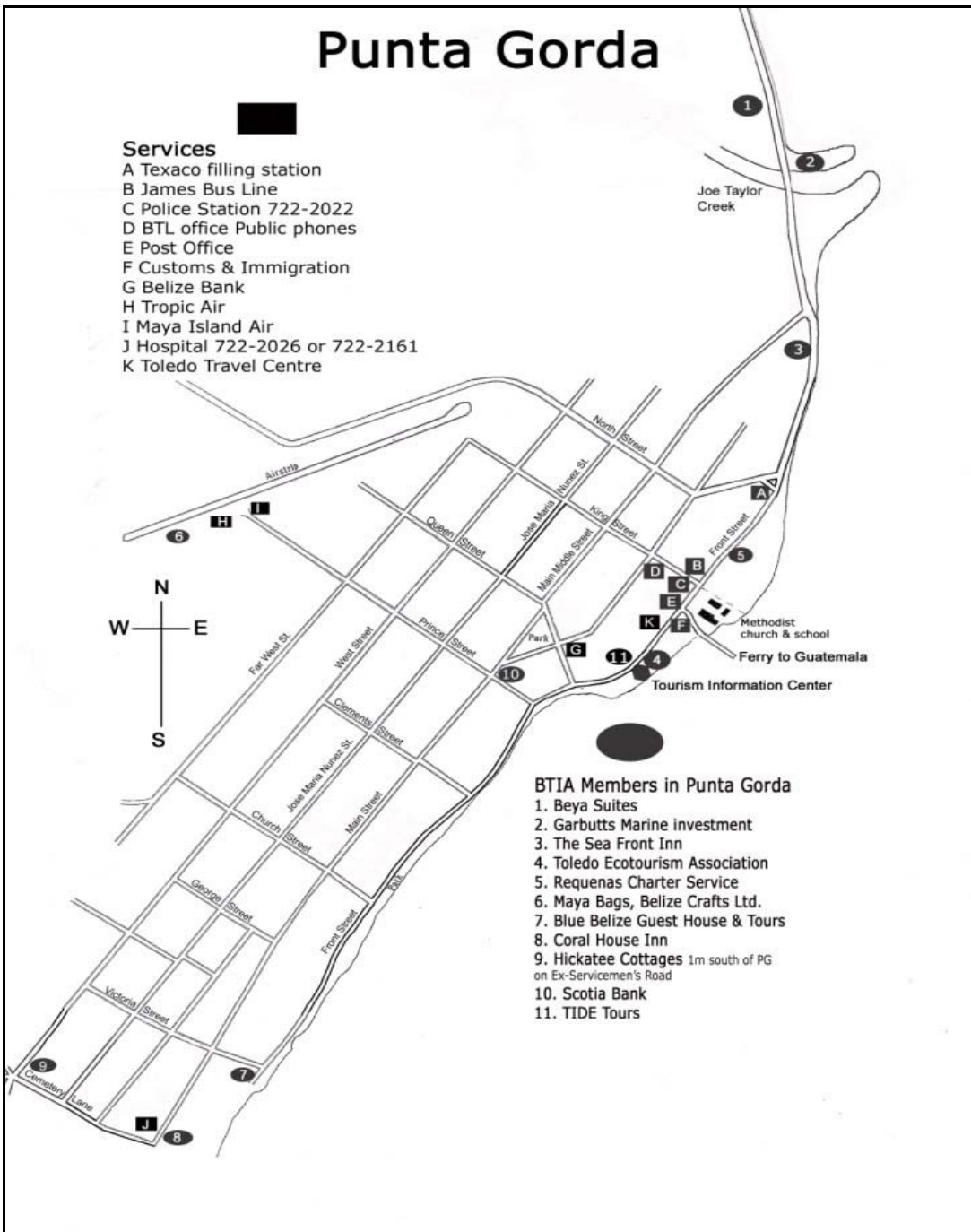


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The BTIA membership year runs from January to December. Make sure your business gets on the map for 2011.

How Do I Join BTIA?

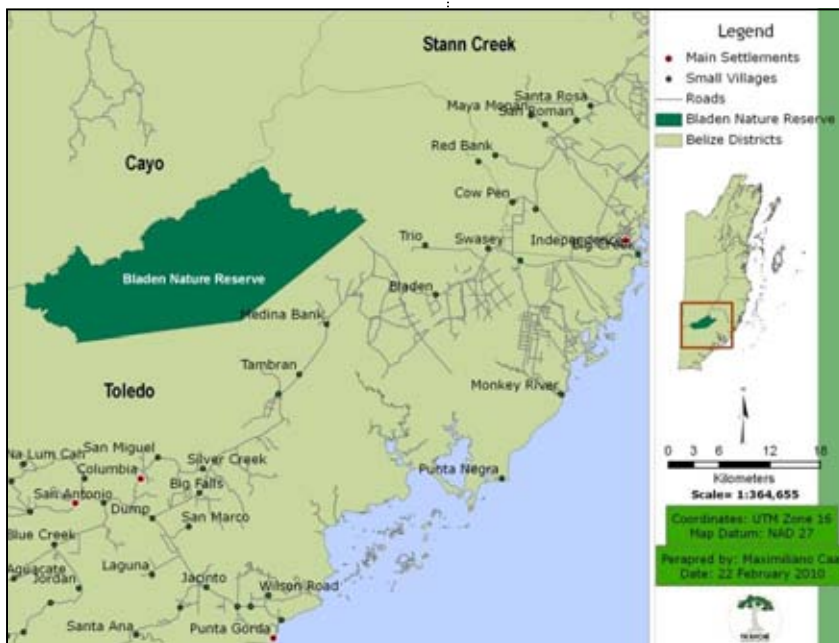
Visit www.btia.org to read about BTIA and all the other membership benefits and to download an application form. Complete the form and hand it in to Sulma Hernandez at the Tourism Information Center on Front St.

BTIA meets monthly on Wednesdays at the Tourism Information Center on Front Street. Be a part of BTIA and make a practical contribution to the economic development of Toledo District.

Ten Things you should know about Bladen Nature Reserve

1. Bladen was designated a Nature Reserve through a careful planning process that took into consideration its extremely high level of biodiversity and unique topography. The expansive piece of land covers ecosystems ranging from pine savannah to broad-leaf forest to particularly unique features of the southern Maya Mountains.
2. Bladen is the largest and most effectively managed of only three Nature Reserves in the country. As such, nature reserves are legally bound to the highest classification of protection in Belize allowing for only research, education and conservation activities. These strict standards are to be upheld in order to conserve areas of particular interest to the protected area system of Belize.
3. Bladen is co-managed by Ya'axché Conservation Trust, a community oriented non-profit organization. Local

rangers employed by Ya'axché handle the day-to-day management of the area by rigorously patrolling, protecting and monitoring the area. There are rangers present at BNR 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Location of Bladen Nature Reserve in northwest Toledo

4. Even with Ya'axché's diligent efforts to conserve and protect the area, Bladen is still threatened by over-hunting and fishing, illegal development, de-reservation, and illegal entry by foreign xateros (gatherers of the xate palm used by florists in flower arrangements).
 5. Due to the unique composition of the reserve, Bladen is of supreme value for research and educational purposes. Nationals, as well as foreign visitors, are permitted to enter Bladen under strict guidelines enforced by Ya'axché and Belize Forest Department. All visitors must apply for research or education permits and may do so by contacting Ya'axché at 722-0108 or yaaxche.info@gmail.com.
- (Continued on Page 13)

Tour operator: Blue Belize

Blue Belize tours has been in operation since 2006 and is a marine and river based tour operator offering a range of activities from fishing to diving.

The tour operation is run by Dan Castellanos a native of Monkey River Town. Growing up at the river mouth the sea has been Dan's life and he possesses the depth of knowledge that comes from a lifetime learning about and understanding the sea and all its flora and fauna.

Spanish and now runs tours throughout the Belize barrier reef system and also into Guatemala's Rio Dulce and Lake Izabal region on the southern coast of the Bay of Amatique.

When he is not guiding visitors at sea, Dan has gained extensive experience providing technical and logistical support to a number of research programmes relat-



Dan and a guest hold a barracuda



Dan takes guests up the jungle clad Moho river south of Punta Gorda

Dan comes from a fishing family and began fishing himself at the age of four. As he grew older he began to free-dive for lobster, conch and other fish. Since then he has taken a path that many conservation organizations encourage, moving from being a commercial fisher to a tour guide and tour operator with an emphasis on educating visitors and protecting the marine environment for future generations.

Apart from his naturally acquired knowledge Dan has been a licensed tour guide for the past seven years and has eight years experience as a skipper of catamarans off the coast of Belize and Guatemala and the Bay Islands off the north coast of Honduras. He speaks Creole, English and

ing to marine pollution, fish, sharks and reef fish spawning aggregations in Belize. These programmes have been funded by the Wildlife Conservation Society, The Nature Conservancy, Smithsonian Institution and a variety of other organizations.

Dan is a skillful boat captain and fisherman

and won two trolling competitions during 2009 when his boat took first prize for the largest fish. In the first competition it was a 21 pound barracuda and in the second a 32 pound black grouper. Dan offers both flyfishing tours and tours that include trolling or bottom fishing with hand lines for snapper and other species.

Dan has two new tour offerings. The first combines natural history and culture taking guests up the Moho river and then continuing south to the Garifuna village of Barranco where another local guide takes the guests around the village, its mu-

seum and Garifuna temple.

North of Punta Gorda Dan is taking guests up the coast by sea to do the Monkey River tour and stop for lunch before meandering back down to Pg looking out for manatees along the way.



Picnic on West Snake Caye

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The matstela at Nim Li Punit is depicted on the \$2 dollar note. Read more about Nim Li Punit in the next edition of the Howler.

BTIA TOLEDO MEMBERS 2010

Business Name	Email	Phone	Contact Person
Belize Crafts Ltd, Maya Bags	belizeexecutivedirector@mayabags.org	722-2175	Desiree Arnold
Beya Suites	info@beyasuites.com	722-2188	Lisa Avila
Blue Belize Guest House & Tours	info@bluebelize.com	722-2678	Dan Castellanos & Rachel Graham
Coral House Inn	coralhousebelize@yahoo.com	722-2878	Rick & Darla Mallory
Cotton Tree Lodge	chris@cottontreelodge.com	670-0557	Chris Crowell
Cuxlin Ha Retirement Village	cuxlinha@hotmail.com	501-614-2518	Dona Lee Scafe
Dem Dats Doin	demdatsdoin@btl.net	501-722-2470	Yvonne Villoria
Garbutt's Marine Investment Co.	garbuttsmarine@yahoo.com	604-3548	Dennis Garbutt
Hickatee Cottages	cottages@hickatee.com	662-4475	Ian & Kate Morton
The Lodge at Big Falls	info@thelodgeatbigfalls.com	671-7172 / 614-2888	Marta & Rob Hirons
Machaca Hill Lodge	info@machacahill.com	722-0050	Brian & Jane Gardiner
Maya Ant and Bee Group	mayaantandbee@gmail.com	662-1139	Ofelia Cal
Requena's Charter Service	watertaxi@btl.net	722-2070	Julio Requena
Romero's Charter Service	rcharters@btl.net	722-2625/2924	Frances Romero
Scotia Bank	elvis.perez@scotiabank.com	722-0098/0099	Elvis Perez
The Sea Front Inn	larry@seafrontinn.com	722-2300	Larry & Carol Smith
Sun Creek Lodge	sun creek@hughes.net	600-8773/614-2080	Bruno & Melissa Kuppinger
TIDE Tours	info@tidetour.org	722-2129	Karel Kuran
Toledo Eco-Tourism Association	teabelize@yahoo.com	722-2531	Vicente Sackul / Reyes Chun
Toledo Tour Guides Association	info@toledotourguides.org	665-6778	Bruno Kuppinger
Tranquility Lodge	info@tranquility-lodge.com	677-9921	Sheila & Rusty Nale
Tumul K'in Center of Learning	tumulkin_tourism@yahoo.com	608-1070	Rosemary Salam

We can take you there



Reservations: 226-2012

reservations@tropicair.com www.tropicair.com

Where to get your copy of The Toledo Howler

- ◆ BTIA Tourist Information Center, Front St in Punta Gorda
- ◆ Tropic Air and Maya Island Air terminals throughout Belize
- ◆ Business premises of BTIA members in Toledo (see list above).
- ◆ Tropic Air office in Puerto Barrios, Guatemala.
- ◆ Requena's Charters office in Puerto Barrios, Guatemala.
- ◆ Placencia Tourist information Center, Placencia Village
- ◆ Gas stations on Southern and Western Highway
- ◆ Online at:
 - www.belizefirst.com;
 - www.ecoclub.com;
 - www.ambergriscaye.com
 - www.expatbelize.com
 - www.thelodgeatbigfalls.com
 - www.tidetours.org
 - www.guidetobelize.info/en/media/toledo-howler-newspaper.shtml

Accommodation:

Machaca Hill Rainforest Canopy Lodge

Machaca Hill Rainforest Canopy Lodge, located 5 miles northwest of Punta Gorda, is a luxurious all-inclusive hideaway for discerning travelers seeking a pristine eco-retreat. Nestled atop a steep hill overlooking the Rio Grande River and surrounded by a private nature reserve, the resort offers panoramic views east to Port Honduras and west towards the Maya Mountains.

Each of its twelve treetop suites is beautifully designed with floor to ceiling windows, private screened veranda, oversized bathroom with double vanity sinks and rainforest shower area. There are also a multitude of small luxuries such as a cappuccino machine, personal water



One of 12 beautifully designed tree house suites

purification system, walking sticks, hair dryer, safe and air conditioning. Each suite has two queen beds, with the exception of the honeymoon suite which offers a king sized bed.

The décor is a fascinating mixture of Belizean and African designs. This isn't surprising given that the present managing couple who oversaw



Managers Jane and Brian Gardiner

the renovations in 2008 are Brian and Jane Gardiner, both originally from Africa. Brian was born in Zimbabwe and Jane in South Africa.

Machaca Hill originally opened as El Pescador in 2002 and was subsequently purchased by Outpost International in 2007. The Gardiners came on-board in July 2008, bringing with them 20 years of experience managing safari lodges in places like Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Botswana.

The dining experience at Machaca Hill is led by Chef Ken Gundu, also originally from Zimbabwe. Chef Ken creates an exciting menu, fusing African, Belizean and international flavors. Many ingredients come from Machaca Hill's own organic garden.

Adding to the uniqueness of the dining experience, the resort also boasts a riverside dining complex at the base of the hill which offers interactive cookery classes for guests. A 30 foot catamaran equipped for dining cruises adds yet another dimension.

The newest addition to Machaca Hill is the Jabulani Spa (Jabulani means "joy" in the South African Zulu language). The spa was created with two goals in mind: to further provide guests with luxurious services in a tranquil environment and to



Jabalani Spa with massage bed

create a one-of-a-kind treatment space using renewable, natural materials. Spa treatments are available to the public. Bed & breakfast rates are also available.

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NEW ITEMS

TRANSPORT SCHEDULES

Schedule of Flights from Punta Gorda To Belize City and from Belize City To Punta Gorda

Flights stop at Placencia & Dangriga

Depart Punta Gorda	Arrive In Belize City	Service Provider	Depart Belize City	Arrive In Punta Gorda	Service Provider
6:45am	7:45am	Maya Island Air	8:00am	9:00am	Maya Island Air
7:00am	8:10am	Tropic Air	8:30am	9:30am	Tropic Air
9:30am	10:30am	Maya Island Air	10:00am	11:00am	Maya Island Air
9:40am	10:50am	Tropic Air	10:30am	11:30am	Tropic Air
11:30am	12:30pm	Maya Island Air	12:30pm	1:30pm	Tropic Air
11:35am	12:40pm	Tropic Air	2:30pm	3:30pm	Tropic Air
1:35pm	2:45pm	Tropic Air	2:30pm	3:50pm	Maya Island Air
4:00pm	5:00pm	Maya Island Air	4:30pm	5:30pm	Maya Island Air
4:00pm	5:00pm	Tropic Air	4:50am	6:00pm	Tropic Air

Schedule of Buses leaving Punta Gorda

Departs from Punta Gorda	Arrives in Belize City	Service Provider	Type of Service
4:00am	10:00am	James Bus Line	Regular
5:00am	11:00am	James Bus and Usher's Bus Line	Regular
6:00am	11:00am	James Bus Line	Express
6:00am	12:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular
8:00am	2:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular
10:00am	4:30pm	James Bus line	Regular
12noon	6:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular
1:30pm	7:30pm	Usher's Bus Line	Regular
2:00pm	7:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular
3:00pm	8:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular
5:00pm	To Dangriga	El Buen Pastor	Daily

Boats To Puerto Barrios and Livingston, Guatemala

Service Provider	Dep. Punta Gorda	Arrive In Puerto Barrios	Dep. Puerto Barrios	Arrive In Punta Gorda
Requena's Charter Service	9:30am	10:30am	2:00pm	3:00pm
Pichilingo	2:00pm	3:00pm	10:00am	11:00am
Marisol	4:00pm	5:00pm	1:00pm	3:00pm

Boats to Livingston depart on Tuesdays and Fridays at 10 a.m.

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Arzu on Medicinal Plants: Lemongrass or Fevergrass

Lemongrass (*Cymbopogon citrates*) is tall decorative aromatic grass that could very well be the most popular home remedy in Central America, and for good reason. It is an attractive, low maintenance, easy to grow plant, and quite effective in the treatment of many common ailments. It acquired the name Fevergrass because traditional folk medicine reveres this plant as the master home remedy for treating colds and fevers. Like most grasses in Belize, once planted, Lemongrass will continue to grow without any further assistance from you. It grows with just as much ease in other parts of the world, which include India, Brazil, Philippines, Malaysia, Viet Nam, Madagascar, New Guinea, Africa, and South America.

The lemongrass variety found in Belize is the *Cymbopogon citratus*, also known as the West Indian lemongrass, a perennial tropical grass that looks very much like common field grass. What differentiates the two is the rich lemon-like aromatic essence

released when you crush the leaves of the Lemongrass. The leaves can be stored dry or frozen, and retain



Lemon or Fevergrass (*Cymbopogon citrates*)

their aromatic essence, until you are ready to use them. As soon as you pick them, tie the blades into a bow, place them inside a plastic bag, and freeze at once. Alternatively, you can dry the leaves, cut them up with scissors, and store the cuttings in a glass jar.

In cooking with lemongrass, use only the bottom third part of the grass – slice it or dice it real fine before adding it to your foods. It makes an excellent addition to tikini, chicken broth, and even to coconut milk for slightly different flavor. You can use the fresh leaves, and wrap them around shrimp, fish, and any other seafood before cooking to enhance their taste. Use it in your barbecue. Lay a clump of lemongrass on the grill under your fish or your chicken or duck or goat or gibnet, or any barbecue meat for that matter. You can use the tender young shoots to enhance the flavor of stir-fried vegetables with meat or no meat.

Medicinally, herbalists use a strong lemongrass infusion to treat colds, fevers, and digestive complaints. They use Lemongrass oil as a body rub to relieve muscle pains, cramps, rheumatic pain, and spasms.

(Continued on bottom of Page 12)

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Southern Voices

Robert Pennell



Robert Pennell has been the Station Manager for Tropic Air in Punta Gorda for the last nine years. He is also the Chairman of the Liquor Licensing Board, Central Park Committee and Toledo Community College Board.

Have you always lived in Toledo? Yes I've lived here my whole life, 46 years, apart from two years at college in Belize City. I went to St Peter Claver Primary School in PG and then Peter Claver High School which became Toledo Community College.

What are the most significant changes you have seen in Toledo in your lifetime? The paving of the Southern Highway is definitely the biggest change and the full impact of this has yet to be felt. This will really open up the district. Toledo is no longer cut off. They started paving around 1996 and back in those days I had a construction company which was involved in the project. We built the concrete culverts for some sections of the highway. Now that the highway is paved, it has made it easier for government to open feeder roads and by extension more land is accessible in the district. Now that we have the Southern Highway, government says they will begin paving the road to the border at Jalacte in April but we will have to wait and see.

What makes you optimistic about the development of tourism in Toledo? Tourism has been growing at a slow, steady pace. People talk about an explosion of development but I don't think that will happen because the pieces are not all in place. Stakeholders are not united enough. We must decide what we want for Toledo. We are an attractive destination because we are off the beaten path. We should emphasize smaller, up market properties catering to tourists looking to get away from the mainstream. For example, because we are less developed, visitors can enjoy birding from any place in the district, including town, which is wonderful.

What could the government do to promote tourism in Toledo? Government needs to work together with the Minis-

try of Tourism so there is synergy in their policies and vision. They can't for example be giving out marine product export licenses on one hand while local demand from restaurants and residents is not being met. Restaurants are forced to ship food down from up north. I can see how much is shipped down since a lot of it comes down on the planes. Government needs to have a long term plan in place which all departments and ministries understand.

What can PG Town Council do to support tourism? I don't think PG Council understands tourism and so it's up to the private sector to show them the benefits of supporting tourism development. For example, more tourism means more restaurants, which means more employment which increases construction of homes and businesses which increases revenue from property taxes, trade and liquor licenses. So the Council stands to gain a lot from tourism development.

Which do you prefer, reef or rainforest? Definitely rain forest. The big trees and wildlife are beautiful and there is so much to learn in the forest.

If a tourist has time to visit just one place in Toledo, where would you suggest? Blue Creek Cave

Which is your favorite month or season? March, in a normal year, because it's between the wet and the dry - not too hot and not too wet.

What is your most memorable encounter with a wild animal? When I was first working at Tropic Air, I used to watch a white hawk from my window, hunting over the field outside. It would hover effortlessly and then suddenly dive to the ground in one motion. It was beautiful.

Do you use any herbal medicines? Not really although I sometimes swallow a garlic clove for general health.

What is your favorite Belizean dish? Anything with corn. I especially like dukunu with stewed chicken.

Does Tropic Air have any development plans you can share with us? They are hoping to start regional flights to Guatemala or Honduras, from Placencia or maybe PG.

Tell us something about PG our readers may not know. The last hurricane to hit Toledo before Iris (in 2001) was back in 1945. The boat which used to transport people up and down the coast was moored in town but after the hurricane, the boat was seen floating in the middle of Hopeville which was completely covered by the sea.

[The views expressed in this interview are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editorial team or the Belize Tourism Industry Association.]

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Lemongrass *(Continued from Page 11)*

The oil is also used topically to relieve toothaches, treat fungal infections, and as hair dressing to enliven the hair and relieve migraines. Lemongrass has the Magical ability to repel snakes and attracts love like a magnet- but only if you plant it around your own home or in your own garden. Mystics and metaphysicians include lemongrass oil in the potions they use to increase financial fortune, and to develop psychic abilities.

Call 600-3873 for more information

Bladen Nature Reserve

(Continued from Page 6)

6. Conservation target species such as jaguar, puma, ocelot, margay, jaguarondi, tapir, spider and howler monkey, and harpy eagle are found throughout the reserve. Although there are many species already known to exist in Bladen, still more are as yet undiscovered.

7. Bladen protects the headwaters of the Monkey River, the largest watershed of the Toledo District and a very important river for several communities. It also serves as a very valuable wildlife corridor as part of the Maya Golden Landscape.

http://www.yct.bz/maya_landscape.html

8. It is understandable that people want to experience the natural beauty of Bladen through tourism but this natural beauty has arisen out of the lack of historical human interference. There are many areas available for tourism in Toledo and we must not be tempted to sacrifice the quality of Bladen for short-term economic goals.

9. The pristine wilderness, Mayan artifacts, and primary growth forests found within Bladen are valuable for their existence alone but further to this their role in the natural cycles of the environment we live in here in Toledo cannot be overstated.

10. It is our duty to protect our resources for the benefit of current citizens of Belize and future generations. The preservation of Bladen is our gift to our children, and our children's children.

This feature was submitted by the Ya'axche Conservation Trust. The Howler welcomes other contributions in response to this feature or articles advocating alternative approaches to conservation, tourism and development.



Bladen Reserve's famous Blue Pool



Primary forest with huge trees in the reserve

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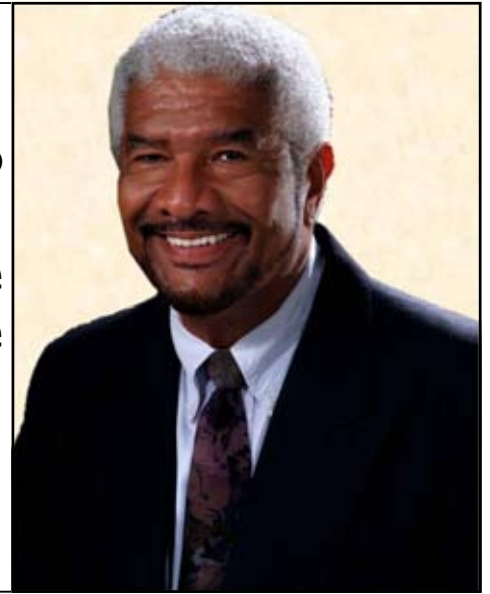
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1110 acres of lush green rolling hills where the former Seven Hills Estate meets the left bank of

the Rio Grande River. This beautiful property has two large creeks and approximately two miles of river frontage.

It is approximately 3 miles from the sea. This property has an abundance of birds, fish and wildlife making it an exceptional setting for eco-tourism. It is going for about one quarter of the price of similar properties in the area.



JUST REDUCED from \$600,000 to \$499,998.

60 acres of pristine forest land, on the edge a beautiful emerald lagoon. Situated in the heart of the Payne Creek's Nature Preserve, this property has a superabundance of

fish, birds and other indigenous wildlife. These factors make the property ideally suited for nature lovers, sport fishermen, and sailing enthusiasts. Its proximity to the sea and coral reefs makes it great base for scuba divers. The property is comprised of 6 10-acres parcels of land. Its strategic location makes the lagoon a natural haven for yachts, sailing sloops, catamarans and other pleasure crafts. The natural beauty, serenity, size and strategic location of the property make it a great choice for : quiet family retreat, tourist resort or residential and/or recreational subdivision. The asking price is a mere \$499,998 for entire 60 acres, or \$150,000 for each of the six 10 acres parcel.

Craft Focus: Ixchel Women's Group, Indian Creek

The Ixchel women's group in Indian Creek consists of ten women from the village who have worked together for the past fifteen years making and selling their crafts as well as offering visits demonstrations.

Their crafts include jippi jappa baskets, cuxtals, embroidered bags, carvings, necklaces and bracelets.



Ixchel with an entwined serpent as head dress and carrying an upturned jar. Woven onto a bag by one of the group members

Their baskets range in price from \$5

for the smallest items up to \$150 for the largest pieces.

The group takes its name (pronounced Eesh-chel) from the aged jaguar goddess of midwifery and medicine in ancient Mayan culture.

The group also offers craft making demonstrations showing guests how to weave the jippi jappa or sew a cuxtal (the traditional shoulder bag used by farmers to carry their food to their plantations).

The group also offers lunch and guests will then have the opportunity to grind corn on a stone, form and cook tortillas on a comal (heavy metal grill plate used over an open fire). Guests may also roast and grind cacao beans before making a traditional cacao drink or get some exercise outside squeezing sugar from the raw cane as it is put through a mangle to extract the juice.



Grinding corn on a stone to make tortillas

They have recently built a thatched palapa next to the waterfall behind the village where all of these demonstrations and tasting now take place.

Contact Tecla Acal to arrange a visit
Telephone 709-2006 or 630-4184
A meal and demonstrations cost \$10 per person.

The Ixchel women's group has a sign by the highway opposite Indian Creek Primary School.

Birding Hot Spots with Lee Jones

In my first article on Birding Hotspots back in July, I mentioned that most migrants concentrate on the cayes, but I did not mention why, saving that intriguing phenomenon for a later article. Now that spring migration is upon us, this would be a good time to address that question. If the sight of the handsomely patterned and brightly colored jewels that are the warblers, tanagers, orioles, buntings, and thrushes gives you pleasure, and you have an opportunity to visit the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve or the Snake Cayes in April or May, by all means, drop everything you're doing, clear your schedule for a weekend, and go! When the weather conditions are right – this can be a passing cold or warm front, a low overcast sky or morning ground fog, or strong westerly winds – the result can be what in birding parlance is called a “fallout” of birds. On a good day, you can see as many as a dozen species of warblers on one small caye, and 15-16 is not unheard of. Although the sheer numbers of birds are much smaller in spring than fall, it is still routine to see on a single caye a dozen or so catbirds or wood thrushes or rose-breasted grosbeaks or indigo buntings or redstarts or.... Well, you get the picture.

But why not just stay home and enjoy the same remarkable “fallout” of birds in P.G. or Placencia? True, you are likely to see more migrants along the coast than inland, but nothing on the mainland can compare to a good migrant day on the cayes (and the smaller and more isolated the caye is, the better). Why is this so? The first clue is that most songbirds, including all the groups of birds mentioned above, migrate at night. That's right, they migrate under cover of darkness. There are a number of reasons why it makes sense for a small bird to migrate at night. Among these are the reduced risk of hyperthermia and dehydration at night when it is cooler; the decreased likelihood of encountering headwinds or crosswinds at

night, the lack of predation by hawks and falcons; *and by migrating at night* they can spend the daylight hours tanking up on food for the long journey ahead.

For navigating at night, birds use the general terrain below them, (e.g., mountains, valleys, rivers, or coastline), the fixed star pattern in the northern sky, and perhaps most sur-



A migrating American Redstart rests and refuels on Half Moon Caye

prisingly, their remarkable ability to detect the earth's magnetic field. So, in a very real sense, birds are glorified, winged compasses!

The second clue is that despite all of the navigation tools at their disposal, birds are imperfect navigators. A number of factors can intervene to throw them off course: an overcast sky, steady crosswinds during the night, ground fog, and in rare cases, a defective genetic “compass” that can cause the bird to head out in entirely the wrong direction.

The third clue is what I will call “dawn surprise”. And the fourth clue that goes hand in hand with the third is the funnel effect. Under normal conditions the bird navigates its course accurately and, at dawn, finds itself over a lush green rainforest, a marsh, a cornfield, or just about anywhere on the mainland. It then comes in for a landing, finds the nearest tree, bush, flower, or corn stalk and resumes its daily routine. But if it has been

cloudy, foggy, or windy, it may find itself over open ocean as dawn approaches. This is the “dawn surprise”. The bird will change course if necessary and make a beeline for the nearest point of land. As often as not, this land on the horizon is an island or a promontory on the mainland. And if no land is visible? Several controlled studies have demonstrated that the bird will reverse course and start flying back in the direction it came from. That way, it is sure to reach land eventually – if it has enough energy reserves to last that long.

A good way to visualize the funneling effect islands have on migrating birds is to imagine 1000 birds migrating over 1000 acres of terrain. When dawn comes, those migrating over land, let's say 500 of the 1000 migrating over 500 acres of land, drop down to the earth below them to start their daily routine. That comes out to one bird for every

one acre of land. One small bird in an acre of rainforest can be exceedingly hard to locate, so this would not be a particularly good place to go to look for migrants. But the other, less fortunate 500 find themselves out at sea at dawn. The only land below them is a small island. All 500 birds head for that one piece of real estate. Now, 500 warblers, orioles, and buntings on, say, tiny Nicholas Caye all at one time would be quite an impressive a sight!

One last tidbit in case you're not yet sold on a trip to the cayes this spring. Many of these birds are exhausted when they finally reach land after flying all night and half the morning. Some don't make it at all. But the ones that do are more concerned about finding a morsel to eat than avoiding potential predators – and that includes *you*. There are times when I have had exhausted birds hopping on the ground at my feet, even gleaning gnats and flies off my shoes and pant legs. And that, to me, is the magic of islands.

The Whale Shark *Continued from page 4*

and once in the water all persons must remain 15 feet away in any direction from a whale shark. Touching, chasing or molesting whale sharks is strictly prohibited. Through the use of these guidelines, whale shark tours have allowed people to experience the natural beauty of this magnificent species in its own habitat.

If you would like more information about whale sharks please contact TIDE at the details above. Alternatively, contact the Southern Environmental Association (SEA) in Placencia who co-manage Gladden Spit and Silk Cayes Marine Reserve and Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve, and work directly with whale sharks in Belize (info@seabelize.org, Tel: +501 523-3377).

Contributed by

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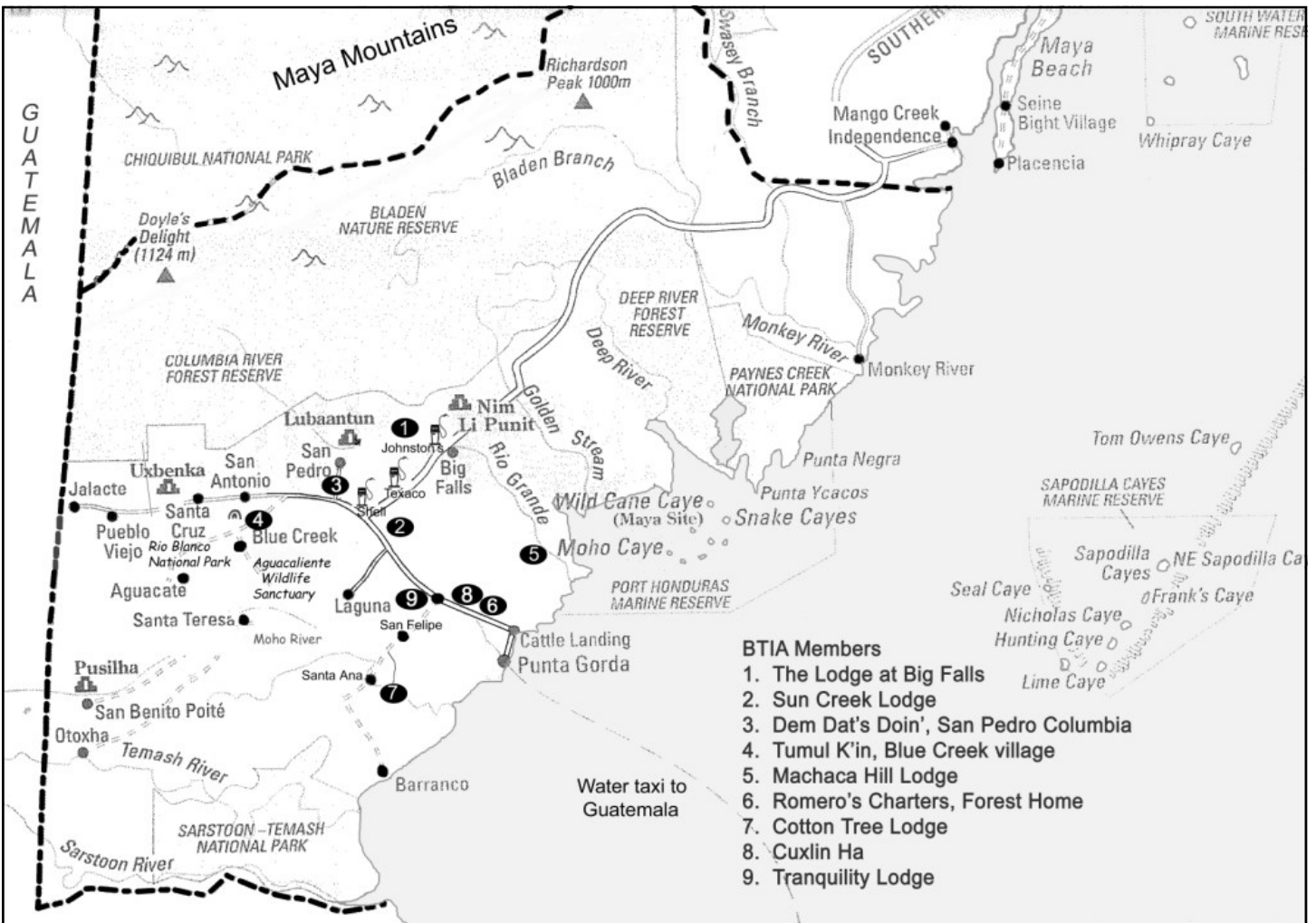
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