

# Belize Birding & Nature | Trip Report

March 4 – 14, 2020 | Written by Martyn Kenefick



With Naturalist Journeys Guide James P. Smith and participants Martyn, Susan, Kathryn, Karen, Sandy, Anne, John, Linda, Jim, Noel, Jan.





## Wed., March 4 Arrivals

A tour which was a phenomenal success, as much for the camaraderie of the group, as for the wildlife we saw. Birding highlights included a *first for Belize* subject to their National Rarities Committee adjudication; two incredible “night-birding” adventures; Sungrebe swimming right beside our boat, and seeing eight of the eleven Yucatan Endemic species available on this itinerary.

I was able to arrive in Belize a full day ahead of our tour, with a flight from Miami lasting a little over two hours. Despite the fact that three large jets had all arrived into this small airport within five minutes of each other, the Immigration, Baggage Reclaim and Customs process was relatively painless and I walked out into the warm, midday sun. I was met by the Crooked Tree birding guide Robert, and we were soon on our way. A pretty smart introduction to Belize birding came in the form of a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, replete with salmon pink belly sat on the airfield perimeter fence.

The drive to Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary took a little over an hour along quiet rural roads with little traffic before branching off on a rough dirt road for the final few miles bordered on either side by wild Cashew trees. Crooked Tree village is really sprawled out, covering a large area—there are just about 1000 residents, but you rarely see anyone. The main activities revolve around agriculture (sugar cane, bananas and citrus) and fishing. There is both a primary school, a police station and a cricket ground! The lodge is at the far end of the village. It has a simple, rustic charm and I was soon shown my cabin, one of just three, just a few metres from the lagoon shore, in time for a traditional Belize lunch of chicken, fried plantain, rice and green salad.

James had arrived the previous day and we were soon out birding. The middle of the day in the hot sun is never prime birding time, although there was a constant gentle breeze coming off of the bay. The grounds comprise open areas of rough grassland with shady copses and bordered by more dense dry hedgerows. In one particular grove we managed to find a small but enjoyable selection of both Neotropical resident species and wintering migrants. Clay-colored Thrushes were scattered in the leaf litter, and we were able to entice in both Black and White Warbler and American Redstart. A pair of Vermilion Flycatchers sought the shade of a densely foliated tree and both Social and Least Flycatcher perched out in the open. Without question, the star bird of the afternoon was a particularly showy and confiding adult male Hooded Warbler, a species often secretive and loathed to give itself away with a male Magnolia Warbler, moulting into breeding dress, running it a close second.

By now, the heat had gone out of the sun, the shadows were drawing in and we decided to spend the rest of the birding light looking out over the bay. There was always something to look at; Great and Snowy Egrets; White Ibis; Great Blue, Tricolored and Little Blue Herons were all feeding in the shallows alongside brightly colored Northern Jacanas, flocks of Blue-winged Teal and whole rafts of both Neotropic Cormorants and American Coots. Both Fulvous Whistling-Ducks and a lone Muscovy Duck flew through and overhead Ospreys were almost ever present, at least one successfully catching a small fish right in front of us. A couple of Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures, so much smaller, and more dainty in flight than their larger Turkey cousins, drifted to and fro, whilst several Caspian Terns flew back and forth along the shoreline.



Where there is water and fish, there is a good chance of kingfishers being present. Perhaps half a dozen Ringed were almost always on view whilst we also found single perched Green and Belted Kingfishers.

Way over on the far shoreline a perched adult Black-collared Hawk was easily picked out with its bright chestnut mantle and creamy-white head; the immature Great Black Hawk which was sat along the same tree line tested our identification skills to the maximum – after all they were both probably at least a mile distant!

Perhaps the most unexpected sight was of a group of four American White Pelicans drifting over; locally they had not been seen to date this season. More expected but just as welcome were several sightings of high flying Wood Storks

All that was left was to enjoy a superb fish and salad dinner to the sound of Common Pauraque calling from the grounds.

### **Thurs., March 5 Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary**

Hot coffee on tap before dawn is a great way to start the day. Shortly after 6.00 AM, we drove for about 20 minutes to the other side of the village and the grounds of Becks B&B. Here oak trees abound; they were fruiting and attracted Acorn Woodpeckers by the score. How many did we see—it is impossible to guess, but 30 might just be a conservative estimate.

One of the target birds in the area is the endemic Yucatan Jay. We quickly found a loose feeding flock of 6-8 black-billed adult birds moving through the groves. We spent close to three hours in the area, walking open dirt tracks through savannah and light woodland finding a number of small feeding flocks. Thanks are due in no small part to a couple of Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls which flew into a nearby tree and remained calling much to the annoyance of a mixed harrowing group of birds which included wintering Chipping Sparrows, Yellow-throated, Black-throated Green and Black and White Warblers; resident Dusky-capped, Social and Vermilion Flycatchers, Yellow-bellied Elaenias and Morelet's Seedeaters. Possibly as many as four Grace's Warblers came into nearby trees, although they totally eluded me.



Overhead, the appearance of high-flying insects attracted small groups of Northern Rough-winged Swallows and a single adult male Purple Martin. A little further down the track, we enjoyed prolonged perched views of a pair of delightful White-fronted Parrots, whilst several Orchard and Hooded Orioles fed on the flowering Flamboyant trees and parties of Groove-billed Anis foraged through the undergrowth. In a final shady grove we caught up with both Yellow-olive Flycatcher and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and a male Summer Tanager

Hummingbirds this morning were few and far between but we did have brief perched views of both male Green-breasted Mango and female Canivet's Emerald.

Retracing our steps back to Becks B&B, the gardens were rather quiet with just a male Black-cowled Oriole to trouble the notebooks. The drive back to the Lodge in time for breakfast saw a soaring flock of about 30 Wood Storks—then bacon and eggs called!

James and I spent the rest of the morning checking once more the shady groves of trees within the Lodge grounds—and again there was plenty to see. New for the trip included our first Squirrel Cuckoo, raucous



Brown Jays, and a flyover screeching Olive-throated Parakeet. An immature Roadside Hawk briefly perched up on a fence post; a trio of Yellow-throated Euphonias added a splash of color to the proceedings and a very vocal Golden-fronted Woodpecker remained faithful to one tree for some while—vocally extremely similar to Red-crowned Woodpecker and with a much larger bill than Yucatan Woodpecker. Yesterday's Hooded Warbler was still in residence, however the star bird of the session was a confiding Mangrove Vireo, rather like a White-eyed Vireo with a dark eye!

Much time was spent trying to identify one particular vocalisation. The call note matched perfectly one part of the known vocalisation of Yucatan Flycatcher—but it was never to be seen. Was it one—we just do not know!

We both “switched off” for an hour or so in the middle of the day. Susan and Kathy arrived at 2.30PM, and the Main Tour Extension officially got under way. After a superb lunch of curried chicken, garden salad and fried plantain we spent much of the afternoon watching the shorebirds and waterfowl in the bay. The species menu was much the same as yesterday afternoon but with a small group of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, two distant soaring Jabiru Storks and a fly past by a group of seven Glossy Ibis.



As the light was starting to go, two pairs of Yellow-headed Parrots flew over us—a speciality of the area and a species now seriously threatened by the cage bird trade. As dusk settled in, up to 12 Lesser Nighthawks flew around the lodge and around a dozen Black-crowned Night-Herons came in to feed on the shoreline.

Once more Common Pauragues serenaded our sumptuous dinner of sautéed shrimp with coconut rice and salad, bringing to an end another glorious days birding.

## **Fri., March 6 Crooked Tree Lagoon**

Dawn broke to overcast skies—for an hour or so it was almost chilly. Literally the first bird to be seen, and right on the shoreline edge in front of the Lodge main building, was a superb Bare-throated Tiger-Heron. The usual water-birds were on view, augmented by half a dozen Wood Storks.

Yellow-headed Parrots were calling from the trees behind us and we spent an inordinate amount of time trying to glimpse perched birds amongst the heavy foliage. We eventually saw the head and shoulders of two birds plus several more flying over. Little did we know that less than two hours later, we would have extended views of a pair right out in the open.





Walking the entrance track, it was rather slow going at first—it seemed as if the birds were also waiting for the sun to come out. However it gave Susan and Kathy the opportunity to catch up with a number of the commoner species—this being their first morning. James pointed out a distant kingbird perched on the tree tops—Couch’s Kingbird. Visually incredibly similar to the numerous Tropical Kingbirds but with a shorter bill, more square-ended tail and distinctly different call note.

Slowly new birds for the tour began to appear, Red-billed and Pale-vented Pigeons, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Olive-throated Parakeet, Mangrove Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Melodious Blackbird, Lesser Goldfinch, and Thick-billed Seed-Finch. Both Vermilion Flycatchers and Morelet’s Seedeaters were much in evidence, the former including a nesting pair along a barbed wire fence. With breakfast time fast approaching, a delightful pair of Black-cowled Orioles flew up and perched in a dead tree

The rest of the morning and early afternoon was to be spent on a boat ride traversing the vast Crooked Tree lagoon, some 16,500 acres in size. Whilst waiting for our transport to the jetty, a Yellow-throated Warbler flitted about in a tree above our heads and a Hooded Warbler flicked between two of the cabins. By now it was pleasantly warm and would become seriously hot by midday. The drive took a mere ten minutes and we then boarded a comfortable small boat with a canopy shelter, expertly skippered by Michael. Indeed we were extremely fortunate to take this journey at all. The water levels were so low, it is very likely that no boats would be able to navigate the channels by the following week. We set off, initially through the navigable channels within the floating vegetation for about five miles before branching off onto the narrower Spanish Creek.

It is almost impossible to describe the sheer abundance of water-birds on view. Most certainly Neotropic Cormorants by the thousand, Great and Snowy Egrets, Wood Stork and White Ibis into the hundreds. There were extremely large rafts of American Coot, one including a female Lesser Scaup and large flying flocks of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, There almost always seemed to be at least one Snail Kite on view and we frequently flushed feeding Limpkins from the reeds and rushes. Pride of place in this open lagoon has to go to at least 25 majestic Jabiru Storks, nonchalantly striding through the shallows and allowing us to get within a few metres of them. A quality back up cast included about 30 Roseate Spoonbills, a dozen Glossy Ibis and our first Fork-tailed Flycatchers. A calling Striped Cuckoo was quickly found by James, sat right out in the open in a shoreline hedge enjoying the sun’s rays

We then forked off onto the much narrower channel of Spanish Creek bordered initially with banks of Mexican Primrose, then with stands of taller trees. For the next hour or so we were to enjoy small day-roosting groups of Boat-billed Herons and several perched adult Great Black Hawks which took absolutely no notice of us whatsoever even though we sailed within just a few meters of them. Gull-billed Terns flew over



and we flushed Black-necked Stilts together with both Solitary Sandpipers and Lesser Yellowlegs from the shoreline as well as at least half a dozen more Bare-throated Tiger-Herons, by far the most skittish of the herons in the area

A Russet-naped Wood-Rail , considered a species in its own right by some authorities and a race of Gray-necked Wood-Rail by others, totally ignored us and continued to furiously peck at a tasty morsel underneath the overhanging branches of the river bank. A superb adult Black-collared Hawk, with fish in its talons, perched out a little ways off before flying straight towards us..

Away from birds, we got extremely close to a baby Morelet's Crocodile lazing the morning away on a sheltered fallen branch. It was only about 18 inches long—but its parents can grow up to about 10ft, together with both of the large Iguanas found in this part of Belize.; adult Black Spiny-tailed and adult Green (which is more of a greenish orange, with a gray head and thick black bands on the tail.) The former is carnivorous and a little over five feet long; the latter slightly larger and vegetarian. However pride of place much go to a confiding family group of Yucatan Black Howler Monkeys foraging in the riverbank trees, totally unconcerned and only mildly curious at our presence. In fact the adult male turned his back on us and treated us with total disdain, as only monkeys can do

As always on these occasions, the outward journey is taken at a snail's pace and the return best described as fast, furious and fun. Back on dry land once more, we had a five minute wait for our transportation back and enjoyed both Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds and a pair of Black-cowled Orioles attending the guest house feeders.

By 3.00PM, the weather had changed. The skies had become overcast once more, there were rain showers visible in the distance and the temperature dropped significantly. We were not to see the sun again today. While Susan rested in her B&B accommodation, the three of us took a slow walk along the entrance track once more and it was extremely productive. One bare tree trunk close to the gate had a superb vivid orange, male Hooded Oriole perched at the top and immediately underneath a Yucatan Woodpecker, both on view for several minutes. This is a Yucatan endemic species, visually similar to Golden-fronted Woodpecker but noticeably smaller, with a shorter bill, yellow both at the base of the bill and chin, with much finer white barring on the mantle. A trio of Olive-throated Parakeets sat out in the open feeding on succulent leaves; a female Barred Antshrike criss-crossed the track in front of us, chattering continuously and a Bat Falcon made several swift "fly pasts", attempting to harass the multitude of Tree and Mangrove Swallows that were catching flying insects. As dusk drew in a Lesser Nighthawk appeared briefly, time for the most succulent pork chops I have ever eaten and a delicious fruit cup for dessert



We spent an hour or so with Robert looking at the nightlife within the grounds and the beginning of the track. Roosting Great Kiskadees and Ruddy Ground-Doves were sleeping low in the garden trees; both a couple of Wolf Spiders and a small Tarantula were on the track and we enjoyed prolonged views of a smallish Common Pauraque by torchlight.

### **Sat., March 7 Morning Birding at Crooked Tree | Lamanai Outpost Lodge**

Our final morning at Crooked Tree. A cold front passed through during the night—early morning was overcast and cool. Indeed it was to remain pleasantly cool throughout the day. We drove in an open top jeep through the bush tracks to Becks B&B. Whilst still in the grounds, Robert pointed out the vocalisation of Rose-throated Becard and we were soon watching two females at close range. We then spent the pre-breakfast hour birding the local savannah. It took a while for things to get going but was still so rewarding for both Susan and Kathy as they were able to catch up with several groups of Yucatan Jays and Brown Jays – we also heard Green Jay, but it was never close. A Yucatan Woodpecker came to check us out, several female Ruby-throated Hummingbirds buzzed around and Red-lored, Yellow-headed and White-fronted Parrots all showed well.

For me, the highlight was seeing both the similar looking Grace's and Yellow-throated Warblers within a few minutes of each other; the former having a yellow loreal area, the latter having both a white lores and bold black side-breast streaks. We also managed to entice a White-eyed Vireo into a bush right in front of us.

A new mammal for the trip was Yucatan Gray Squirrel, almost blackish in color, and drinking from a bromeliad. It was then time to return to the Lodge, enjoy a final breakfast, check out our rooms and head back towards civilisation to meet the remainder of our group for the transfer up to Lamanai Outpost Lodge, our base for the next three nights. The drive to the Lamanai River Post at Kalamalita took around 45 minutes. We parked up and introduced ourselves to Sandy and Karen, Ann and John, the remaining members of the tour group, who had been staying in Belize City

The 22 mile boat ride to Lamanai Outpost Lodge took just over two hours under the very professional supervision of Ruben and Oscar, who were to be our guides throughout our stay. We navigated the New River—so named by the British who opened the area up for mahogany logging and to differentiate it from the Old River which runs through Belize City.

The first stretch allowed the new tour group members to familiarise themselves with some of the commoner Belize birds, Pale-vented and Red-billed Pigeons, White-winged Doves, Groove-billed Ani, Anhinga and Neotropic Cormorant, Ringed Kingfisher, Olive-throated Parakeets, Social Flycatcher, and Tropical Kingbird.

Then things got interesting! On an exposed branch overhanging the water, a Green-breasted Mango has built her nest. It is a tiny green, moss lined cup. No parent was in attendance and Karen was able to peer over the rim to confirm there were two chicks inside. Both Yucatan Woodpecker and Black-cowled Oriole perched out in the open; a day-roosting Lesser Nighthawk allowed a very close approach, as did two adult Boat-billed Herons. Groups of White Ibis and Melodious Blackbirds flew over and then the shout went out, "Sungrebe swimming in front of us." Careful navigation by Ruben allowed us to spend quality time at extremely close range with a white-cheeked, adult male Sungrebe, totally unconcerned by our presence and happily swimming whilst pecking tiny insects from the surface vegetation

As we neared the Lamanai jetty, a Bat Falcon perched atop a slender bare trunk; a couple of Limpkins stood at the water's edge and an adult Snail Kite glided past Lamanai Outpost Lodge is high quality and very comfortable, with careful attention given to detail. Each cabin is spacious and comfortable and the staff go out of their way to help. Once we had settled in and received a brief but professional logistics briefing, we took a late afternoon walk up the hill to the Indian Church savannah behind the Lodge. We found Yellow-throated Euphonias feeding on custard apple; a couple of Grayish Saltators, Yellow-throated and Magnolia Warblers, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, and an absolutely stunning White-crowned Parrot which remained faithful to one particular tree for some while. It would be fair to say that the distant views of both Yellow-winged Tanager and Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift could have been better and closer!

Tonight's dinner, Red Snapper followed by Mango cheesecake, was an absolute delight

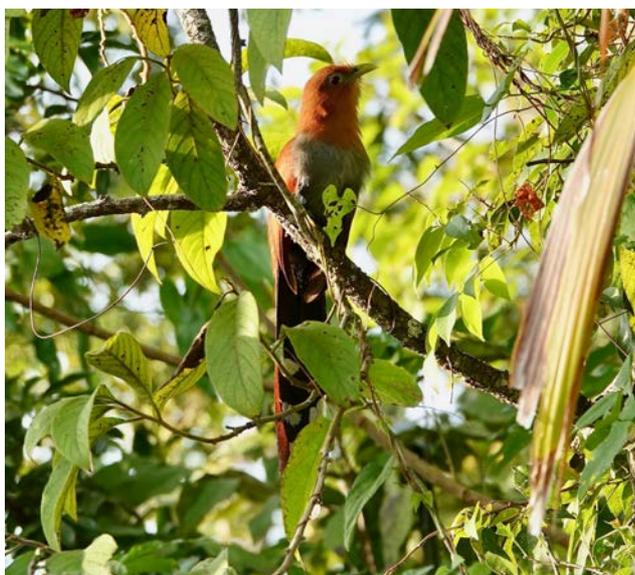
## **Sun., March 8 Lamanai Outpost Lodge**

It really did not want to get light this morning. The cold front still persevered and our pre-breakfast walk was along a wide stony path through forest edge and bush. For the first half hour or so, various birds were just seen flitting from cover to cover, never really showing themselves.

We paused to enjoy a dramatic Provision Flower in full bloom, predominantly cream-colored, but with magenta spines and then a trio of Pale-billed Woodpeckers were found knocking ten bells out of a Guanacaste tree. An intriguing immature hawk flew into view and perched up for some while, its heavily streaked under-parts caused much identification debate with us finally agreeing it to be a dark-phased, sub-adult Short-tailed Hawk. After about 10 minutes, it was spotted by a crowd of Brown Jays and a Montezuma's Oropendola—time to leave, choosing discretion at the expense of valour. We played hide and seek with several Spot-breasted Wrens (they played hide and we tried to seek). Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds buzzed us repeatedly and a White-eyed Vireo performed briefly for some.

After breakfast, we boarded our boat for the few minutes ride to the Mayan ruins at Lamanai Archaeological Reserve. This is a site of just two square miles where six temples have been partially excavated, yet another 727 currently remain untouched. In its heyday, it actually covered 10 square miles with a population of 40,000 – 50,000 people. Some of the construction dates back to 100 BC; much was remodelled every few centuries before a devastating drought around 950AD wiped out much of the population. Those surviving fled to Costa Rica, some returning 400 years later.

The surrounding land is extremely fertile with a mixture of various palms and forest trees. We saw Belize's national flower, the Black Orchid (which in fact is purple). Birding was generally quiet but we did see some quality species. Close by the Museum, we followed a feeding flock including a Yellow-throated Vireo, a Brown crested Flycatcher and both Magnolia Warbler and American Redstart and heard the rather "metallic chipping" of several Northern Waterthrush.



We found another feeding flock in woods close to the Masked Temple which included a Black and White Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Summer Tanager and a perched female Rufous-tailed Jacamar; whilst some saw a Golden-olive Woodpecker . Beside the High Temple, a perched migrant Broad-winged Hawk took no notice of us whatsoever and in trees close to the Stela Temple, two pairs of Gartered Trogons argued over the rights to a termite nest.

The weather was by now closing in, and we returned to the Outpost Lodge with the wind ever freshening and just made it to lunch before a short squally rain shower passed through.

During the early afternoon, whilst others enjoyed a siesta, I walked a few tracks in Indian Church Village. It was predictably quiet with a strengthening wind however I did manage to find a superb adult male Blue Bunting, a pair of Masked Tityras, a pair of Baltimore Orioles and hordes of Melodious Blackbirds.

The group reconvened once more at 3.30 PM, and retraced the tracks I had walked earlier and we were able to see a good selection of species. Fortunately, the Blue Bunting was in the same garden and posed for the photographers and a female Green-breasted Mango appeared to strongly favour one particular Mexican Cedar. We spent some time looking carefully at one “bar-backed” woodpecker. The bars were extremely fine suggesting Yucatan, however the feathers at the base of the bill were red, not yellow and the bill was quite strong...Golden-fronted Woodpecker! We found our first Boat-billed Flycatchers and discussed how to separate them from the much more common Great Kiskadees. Both Blue Grosbeak and Black-headed Saltator perched up in the open and on the walk back a couple of pairs of Red-legged Honeycreepers and our first Keel-billed Toucan added a splash of color to the proceedings.

Lots of Baltimore and Orchard Orioles were showing this afternoon—perhaps getting themselves ready for the flight back north and one particular field was absolutely alive with Morelet’s Seedeaters. Sadly, only Sandy saw a gaudy male Painted Bunting before it dived into cover.

Dinner tonight was shrimp cerviche followed by tomali pie and salad and then a delicious lime pie.

But birding was not done. At 7.30 PM, we boarded our boat once more to go “night birding.” A phenomenal success is solely down to the Ruben’s boating skill and eyesight. Highlights are almost too numerous to mention. Obviously the common waterbirds featured prominently—we found roosting Little Blue and Green Herons; feeding Great Egret and Great Blue Herons. Of more interest were several hunting Boat-billed Herons, a Pied-billed Grebe swimming amongst the water lilies, a cryptically concealed Purple Gallinule sat in the reeds and two roosting Sungrebes, one partially awake, the other fast asleep. Similarly, we found two Green Kingfishers wide awake, staring at our light but beside them were two American Pygmy Kingfishers which refused to wake up. We were able to get within just a metre or so from a pair of Russet-naped Wood-

Rails who so slowly clambered along overhanging branches – and then it was the turn of “night birds proper.” First to show, and rather expected, were several Common Pauraque, sitting on the stony river bank. Then, the much hoped for Northern Potoo sat atop a stout vertical branch and finally the endemic Yucatan Nightjar, a recent split from Tawny-collared Nightjar. How Ruben found this bird, I have no idea. It was perched, rather “potoo-like” on a sloping branch, but against a vegetated backdrop. Finally who would have guessed that Mangrove Vireo would make a night-birding list. We found two, both fast asleep, one actually sat on a nest.

Aside from birds we saw a lot of Proboscis Bats hunting plus three perched at the base of a tree trunk; several Greater Fishing Bats, a few Morelet’s Crocodiles and a Ghost Anole lizard. All in all, this was one of the most successful and enjoyable “night birding” sessions I have ever been on.

## **Mon., March 9 Lamanai Outpost Lodge**

Today was a public holiday to celebrate National Hero’s Day where respect is given to former important people in the life of Belize and what a difference a day makes. The cold front blew away and for the first time in a few days, we saw a sunrise, heralded by a cacophony of noise from a troop of Black Howlers in trees overlooking our cabins. It got warm pretty quickly today, certainly around 30C by 9.00 AM.

Our early morning walk initially retraced the steps we did yesterday across the open scrub land before turning off onto a couple of wide tracks and making a complete circuit through the forest...and it was very birdy!

We finally caught up with our nemesis Spot-breasted Wren and, with patience, got an extremely good view of White-bellied Wren. However White-breasted Wood-Wren played hard to get, always on the move in deep cover and only Kathy got a decent look. Similarly a Black-faced Antthrush called repetitively from deep cover before flashing across the track and out of sight. All anyone saw was a brown shape, hardly a satisfactory look at this endearing species. We came across a couple of warbler flocks with Blue-winged Warbler being the star performer and both Northern Parula and Black and White Warbler a quality supporting act. Green-backed Sparrow was a life bird for everyone. Whilst it posed singing and preening on a thin stem, it was set back deep in the foliage, with only a very narrow viewing window available.

Other northbound migrants found this morning included Yellow-throated Vireo, our first female Rose-breasted Grosbeak, male Summer Tanager and Blue Grosbeak and several Gray Catbirds.

The last part of “the circuit” is across an open meadow beside a lily-strewn pond. In a nearby tree, a pair of Roadside Hawks decided to get a bit frisky—but we averted our eyes.

After breakfast, the group went various ways; some to learn the medicinal properties of plants within the gardens of the Lodge with Oscar followed by an interpretive tour of the village; some to go birding with Ruben whilst I decided retrace our morning walk on my own. We all agreed that bird activity dropped off significantly after 9.00 AM. Nevertheless, Rubin’s group found a female Black-headed Trogon, Northern Bentbill, Lesser Greenlet and Red-throated Ant-Tanager together with fleeting glimpses of Blue Ground-Dove whilst I spent some while watching a pair of Ivory-billed Woodcreepers chasing each other from tree to tree, a male Northern Parula and a confiding Keel-billed Toucan perched below the canopy.

We all met at a small restaurant in the village where we were shown how to make Tomali. We enjoyed a most professional demonstration by Daisy, our host. She confirmed that, on occasion, they make up to 200 in a couple of hours, Both Ann and Kathy bravely tried their hands—the end results looked pretty good but taking about 10 minutes to make one, they would need a lot of practice!

Our lunch was a typical local affair. Following a spicy chicken tortilla with an extremely hot chilli condiment and a tomali with cheese, black beans and slaw, the main course was a chicken soup with onions, vegetables and rice washed down with homemade lime juice



In terms of species diversity, this afternoon was to prove to be perhaps the best birding time we have had at Lamanai. It all started so well with a pair of Jabiru gently circling above the dock as we waited for our boat to arrive – a good omen if ever there was one. The plan was to take the short ride back to the Archaeological Reserve and then walk up back through the forest to Spanish Church and on to the Lodge—a hike of about two miles. Warblers were much in evidence. We managed to find Black-throated Green, Hooded, Black and White, Magnolia, American Redstart and Northern Waterthrush.

There is a belief that if you really struggle but persevere to finally find a particular species, then you subsequently see more extremely easily afterwards. So it was with both Spot-breasted Wren and Green-backed Sparrow, both of which showed well to all. Slowly but surely quality species were added. First a Wood Thrush, then a pair of Rufous-tailed Jacamars, then females of both Slay-tailed Trogon and Summer Tanager and finally at least half a dozen Red-throated Ant-Tanagers. Then it was all about woodcreepers. First to show was a diminutive Olivaceous Woodcreeper working its way up one tree trunk before flying on to another one. A commotion of birds alerted us to a small ant-swarm, attended by Tawny-winged, Ruddy and a huge Northern Barred Woodcreeper. Nearby, James saw a Plain Xenops acting like a nuthatch.

As we neared the end of the trail, a male Dusky Antbird perched up as did a Scaled Pigeon, all too briefly. On reaching the road, a perched Keel-billed Toucan brought to a close a magnificent days birding

Dinner tonight was a pork fillet with mango salsa and garden salad

## **Tues., March 10 Lamanai Outpost Lodge | Chan Chich Lodge**

Lamanai just gets better and better. For our last morning we did something completely different. Promptly at 6.15AM we boarded our boat, crossed over the river and slowly sailed up Dawson's Creek to spend a couple of hours in the Lamanai savannah. This is a large area of sandy soil, rough grasses and scattered stands of oak, pine and "poison wood" trees. The latter is obviously a local name but Ruben warned us



against sitting on a tree stump, “you won’t be able to go to the bathroom for days!” Being in more open country, birds tend to perch up, especially in the early morning sun, and we soon racked up an impressive list of new species for the tour.

However not everything performed as required—the two Yucatan Endemic species found here did everything not to show themselves off. Almost immediately upon dis-embarking , a Black Catbird toured around us in a wide arc, trying wherever possible to land with view obscured. We all saw it but it was a bit of a jig-saw puzzle, first seeing one part of the bird, then another etc. By contrast, two Yellow-lored Parrots, another Yucatan Endemic were on view for a while but very distantly, mostly facing away from us and surrounded by broad green leaves (I just about managed to see one wing!)

The rest was much more straightforward. A flock of eight Yucatan Jays was a welcome “pull back” for Karen who had not been with us at Crooked Tree. Both single Botteri’s and Grasshopper Sparrows posed for the telescopes, sunning themselves right out in the open and calling frequently. Ruben picked out a sub-adult male Yellow-backed Oriole (completely black wings, tail and bib) and Christian called out a Tropical Gnatcatcher feeding in the sub-canopy.

Again warblers were much in evidence. We found a couple of Black and White, Yellow, several Yellow-throated and a male Common Yellowthroat but sadly could not locate the distant singing Gray-crowned Yellowthroat. A perched up singing Eastern Meadowlark seemed to be a bit out of place. Apparently, there is a suggestion that it may be a separate species in its own right—but it looked pretty “standard” to me.

Of those species we had seen before, several pairs of White-fronted Parrots were again much appreciated, female Masked Tityra, Tropical Pewee, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, a pair of White-bellied Wrens and several Golden-fronted Woodpeckers all showed well whilst overhead we saw our first Swallow-tailed Kite for the tour and a couple of male Purple Martins.

And then it got really exciting. Kathy latched onto a tiny, olive-gray passerine feeding in the sub-canopy; tiny bill, bold white eye-ring, two wing bars and a distinctive vocalisation. It can only be a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Sadly, whilst all of the group, and both of our guides, saw the bird and were confident of its identity, and despite staying in the area for some while trying to entice it back in, there was not any opportunity for photography. This would be critically important, as this sighting constitutes potentially, the first ever record for Belize. (I have subsequently learned that many photos were taken by the guides a few days later.

Back on the boat once more, we slowly cruised down a narrow canal between the reeds. At one point, a White-throated Flycatcher responded to our enticement – this is a rather drab brown *Empidonax* flycatcher with a slightly peaked crown, no hint of green tones to the plumage and a very “*unempidonax* like” vocalisation. It mainly stayed, half obscured in the reeds but on one occasion perched up. Not the most aesthetic of species but importantly a “life bird” for all. We had less success with our second target species.



Ruddy Crane called from both sides of the bordering vegetation but remained obstinately elusive. As always, the waterways produced several Ringed, Belted and Green Kingfishers, Great Blue, Little Blue, Green and Tricolored Herons. A couple of adult Yellow-crowned Night-Herons flew in front of us whilst both adult Purple Gallinule and immature Snail Kite just watched us drift by.

Whilst late morning meant packing and settling bar bills for some, Ruben and Karen went back for a final walk on the outskirts of the village seeing both a troop of Collared Aracari and a male Black-headed Trogon. Susan took a solo walk along the trails we walked yesterday finding Ivory-billed Woodcreeper and Yellow-billed Cacique.

Lamanai is a special place—not only for the wildlife but in particular for the friendliness of the entire staff. The drive to Chan Chich took us mainly on packed dirt roads with just tarmac between several villages. Birdlife was sheltering in the heat of the day with just a distant White-tailed Kite and a couple of American Kestrels to trouble the notebook. The route took us mainly through Mennonite agricultural land. This community is mainly of Russian descent and arrived in Belize in 1958. They make an important contribution to the national agricultural economy and embrace both modern and ancient culture and philosophy. Once we hit the turn off which said “Chan Chich 36 miles” we began to see forest on each side. The nearer we got, the more Ocellated Turkeys were seen in roadside grasses. Additionally we probably saw eight different nonchalant Great Curassows, I found a White-necked Puffbird and we all saw a number of White-tailed Deer, most of whom took no notice of our passing.

Eventually we reached Chan Chich and were shown to our cabins. There was still time for a little birding before it got dark. Red-lored Parrots screeched overhead and a Crested Guan appeared to be settling down for the night in a tree right beside one of the cabins.

Talking about cabins, mine was huge with a king-size four-poster bed, enormous bathroom, a shower room big enough to hold a pool table and much more!

### **Wed., March 11 Chan Chich Lodge & Nature Reserve**

Chan Chich is a 250,000 acres, private reserve, much of which is rain forest. The only way to describe birding the Lodge grounds early this morning was WOW! In a 90 minute slow walk we found no less than 55 species and heard a number of others.



Common Pauraque was still calling right outside my room at 4:30 AM and whilst I drank coffee waiting for the rest of the group to join me, White-necked Jacobins and Long-billed Hermits fought for supremacy at the sugar-water feeders; Ocellated Turkeys patrolled the lawns and Melodious Blackbirds sang from every available perch.

Soon we set off, under the professional guidance of Vidal (who just happens to be the half-brother of Ruben from Lamanai—it must run in the genes). In the many flowering trees between the cabins, we found both Golden-hooded and Yucatan Endemic Yellow-winged Tanagers, a pair of confiding Slaty-tailed Trogons and a male Summer Tanager. Atop the surrounding trees, Red-lored Parrots squawked, Black-cheeked and Lineated Woodpeckers drummed and both Red-billed and Scaled Pigeon just sat taking in the morning rays.

We walked down to a clearing close to the staff quarters—and it was “wall to wall birding.” One particular Madre de Cacao tree in full white blossom was a proverbial magnet playing host to a couple of Squirrel Cuckoos, Black-cowled and Orchard Orioles and what was, without doubt, the star bird of the early morning, a dazzling male Purple-crowned Fairy. In trees nearby, we saw both Green and Red-legged Honeycreepers and, much to everyone’s delight, a Chestnut-colored Woodpecker. Whilst scanning the leaf-litter floor, we caught up with a shy male Kentucky Warbler. Over our heads, a pair of Keel-billed Toucans lazily soared over, followed close behind by a Double-toothed Kite which perched up briefly in a distant tree.

After a choice of breakfast dishes, with foraging Blue-black Grosbeak in attendance close by, we all met up for a mornings excursion to the forest surrounding Laguna Seca—a drive of about 30 minutes. Along the route, there was an extremely close Roadside Hawk sat on the grassy verge, a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher on a barbed wire fence and we found both White-tailed and the diminutive Central American Red Brocket Deer.

A fallen tree blocked our drive about half a mile from our scheduled stopping place and in fact this was a blessing in disguise as birding this portion of the track produced a few excellent species. The skies were overcast and we were initially restricted to silhouetted images of flycatchers like Greenish Elaenia and Eye-ringed Flatbill zipping about high in the canopy; our first manikins, females of both White-collared and Red-capped, never showing well, and brief flight views of several Vaux Swift quickly sailing over. A Central American Spider Monkey scampered through the canopy before stopping, sitting down, scratching its belly and staring at us. But that all changed when we found our first of two Smoky-brown Woodpeckers and an immature male Rose-throated Becard.

We then walked down a short but steep track to the water’s edge and, from a number of vantage points, scanned the lagoon, the bordering trees and the skies above. It was time for a raptor show. First to perform were three adult Black-collared Hawks, followed by a perched Laughing Falcon atop a bare trunked tree on the opposite side of the water and an adult White-tailed Kite atop a bush half way down the bank. Shortly thereafter, we came across a migrating flock of some 30 Swallow-tailed Kites with some Plumbeous Kites



amongst them. Whilst admiring these, Kathy called out a Lesson's Motmot sat right over the path.

On the lagoon itself, birds were few and far between. Surprisingly we found a Double-crested Cormorant perched on a pile of logs. Thanks are due to James' "Cormorant id 101" on the differing shape of the gape and gular pouch between Double-crested and Neotropic Cormorants. An adult Bare-throated Tiger-Heron hunted the near shoreline; a male Anhinga held its wings out to dry, a couple of Solitary Sandpipers probed the distant shore and three Blue-winged Teal sat on the water.

By now, it was getting pretty hot and humid. The walk back was interrupted by a perched Sepia-capped Flycatcher and a foraging Olivaceous Woodcreeper but our eyes were on the distant van and its cooler full of cold water and soft drink.

You would expect a middle of the day drive to be quiet and relatively birdless. Well it was until an adult female Aplomado Falcon flew past the bus and obligingly perched up on an exposed branch, followed by a perched Bat Falcon in the car park as we reached the Lodge after yet another amazing morning's birding.

A hard core group – Susan, Karen, James and I reconvened once more at 3.30PM for a walk along Sylvester Rd, a wide forest track through the forest. With heavy cloud cover and heat of afternoon, it began understandably quiet. However what we lost in quantity, we certainly made up for with quality. At the entrance to the trail, a female Gartered Trogon sat in full view, soon followed by a close White-necked Puffbird. Flocks of White crowned and Mealy Parrots were flying over the canopy, but in fairness they were just silhouetted shapes. James and Susan saw a migrant Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and I saw a resident Ochre-bellied Flycatcher. Then the star bird was lured in – a superb male Rose-throated Tanager, another Yucatan Endemic and a difficult bird to catch up with. It posed for the cameras in full view calling for some while.

We diverted up a narrow trail signposted to Norman's Temple. The heat had gone out of the day and we managed to see a quickly moving Golden-crowned Warbler and ended with a small party of Red-crowned Ant-Tanagers.

Following another great dinner where the options were either braised beef, garlic shrimp or stuffed aubergine, we met once again for a night birding session on an open top truck, expertly guided by Luis and driven by Chris (how did he ever see that scorpion in the road?). We were out for about two hours and, simply put, it was brilliant.

We basically stayed on the Chan Chich entrance road, driving out about 10 miles with Luis continually scanning for eye shine. First to be found was a very close Common Pauraque, sat mere metres from us at the edge of the road and then some saw a Lesser Nighthawk flying ahead of us. Scanning the tree canopy, we woke up an Ocellated Turkey from his sleep – he slowly walked down a branch towards us looking totally confused and perplexed. Once out into the Gallon Jug farmland, White-tailed Deer became a regular sight. Not so expected however, right in the middle of a dry pasture field were three Yellow-crowned Night Herons. Then the real fun began

We found the first of five Northern Potoos to be seen this evening, with distinctive bright orange eye shine which could be detected at considerable range. All were using fence posts as hunting platforms from which





to launch themselves out, and acting as flying vacuum cleaners, mopping up some of the numerous moths and flying insects. One of them actually flew right at us, passing no more than 20ft over our heads. Then an owl flew across the road and landed on an exposed thick branch – Mottled Owl. We watched it for about five minutes, with Luis attracting its deadly stare by quietly imitating (presumably) small rodent squeaks. Further on, and on the other side of the road, a superb Black-and-White Owl perched out right in the open. It barely took notice of us, despite being no more than 10 metres away, so intent was it on some perceived movement in the grasses below.

On the return drive, we suddenly stopped once more – this time for a much smaller Middle American Screech-Owl, again right out in the open, staring at us intently with raised ear tufts. A final lurching stop preceded our only “miss” of the night. Luis had detected the head and eye shine of a Tapir which had come to the edge of the vegetation, but darted back into cover without anyone else seeing it. Three different owl species in one drive is exceedingly uncommon—absolute magic!

### **Thurs., March 12 Chan Chich Lodge & Nature Reserve**

By 6.00 AM, the “hard core team” within the group were walking the grounds. It was a perfect morning with not a cloud in the sky. There are so many fruiting trees acting as a huge magnet and this morning included a number of species we had not seen the previous day. Perhaps the favourite, certainly amongst the photographers, were a trio of Collared Aracaris eating small fruits from a tiny bush at eye level.

Both Gartered and Slay-tailed Trogons put in an appearance as did both Black-headed and Buff-throated Saltators. An equal number of Mealy Parrots tried to “out-squawk” their Red-lored cousins in the tree tops whilst three Crested Guans went about their business quietly. One particular tree seemed particularly popular and, during a 30 minute spell hosted a couple of Cinnamon Becards, both Orchard and Baltimore Oriole and a Magnolia Warbler whilst nearby, a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak perched atop a bare snag.

After breakfast, the tour party split into two. John, Ann and Sandy took an interpretive visit to Gallon Jug farm whilst the rest of us climbed up into the open top truck for the 90 minute drive to the Chan Chich escarpment. This is a tall grassy topped hill, some 890 ft high overlooking a 360 degrees vista of pristine forest. The warm air thermals also make it a great place to see birds of prey.

On the drive out, we saw a male Great Curassow and a motionless Bare-throated Tiger-Heron by the suspension bridge; a calling Short-billed Pigeon; three perched Roadside Hawks doing just what their name implied; some fly over Vaux Swifts and a charming new hummingbird for the tour, White-bellied Emerald

The extremely steep stretches of the rough stone track to the top of the escarpment tested our driver’s skills to the limit but by 10.00 AM, telescopes were in place waiting for the action to begin. With birds spiralling up, gliding over and disappearing behind ridges, it is really difficult to know how many of each species we actually saw. Without doubt, during a 90 minute watch we saw an immature and two adult Black Hawk-Eagles; two pairs of White Hawks; at least one and possibly three light-phased Short-tailed Hawks; at least



two adult and one sub-adult Great Black Hawks; at least four adult and two juvenile King Vultures, including a trio of adults which flew towards us at eye level; several Swallow-tailed Kites plus single Bat Falcon and an Osprey. A final look at the trees bordering the hilltop gave some of us brief but good views of a diminutive Yellow-bellied Tyrannulet which called incessantly. The drive back was very quiet as one would expect but we did see a Gray Fox dash across the road in front of us.

Whilst there were a number of options on the lunch menu, most of us opted for a water melon salad followed by fish or shrimp tacos—and good they were too with a moulting male Hooded Warbler in a bush right beside us for company.

Around 3.00PM I went for a short walk in the grounds. It was hot and still however I managed to find a female Lineated Woodpecker, an immature male Summer Tanager calling repeatedly, an adult male Red-capped Manakin feasting on a berry-laden bush and finally a male Red-legged Honeycreeper.

Most of us gathered once more at 3.30PM. Before setting off, we were entertained by two Spider Monkeys leaping a phenomenal distance between trees and crashing into the vegetation close by us. We then drove to Gallon Jug farm where we would be birding the pastures, fields adjacent to the runway and a cotton tree plantation. As we entered, a pair of Aplomado Falcons sat atop the same tree as one had been seen in yesterday. The fields held flocks of Morelet's Seedeaters and a couple of Eastern Meadowlarks but the main attraction was at least 25 Fork-tailed Flycatchers, some of which were actually perched on the runway itself. The cattle pen and water trough attracted both Bronzed and Giant Cowbirds. Overhead amongst the plentiful Mangrove Swallows was our first Barn Swallow of the tour whilst in the distance we picked out another King Vulture, this time an immature bird, perhaps two years old as well as a couple of American Kestrels.

We spent the remainder of the afternoon watching the gathering parrot roost amongst the cotton trees. Probably most numerous were White-crowned – they certainly included one flock of 16 birds. Additionally Red-lored and White fronted Parrots and Olive throated Parakeets were frequently on view. Other notable sightings here included both Golden-fronted and Black-cheeked Woodpeckers; a perched Keel-billed Toucan and an endearing family group of seven Collared Peccaries which ambled across the clearing in front of us.

As the sun set, we returned to the lodge for dinner. Steak for some and Mayan ravioli for others followed by the fruitiest lemon tart I have ever tasted.

## **Fri., March 13 Chan Chich Lodge & Nature Reserve**

The focus of the two forest walks today was not to accumulate a large species list but to concentrate on finding species not seen so far on the tour. The early team of Susan, Karen, Kathy, James and I began at 6.00 AM, spending just a short while in the more open area close to the staff quarters until the light was sufficient





to walk the forest trails. Here we found a large flock of Red-legged Honeycreepers, perhaps 20 or so actively feeding in two particular trees, several Magnolia Warblers and our only Tennessee Warbler of the tour.

We then began a two mile hike stopping to watch a calling Rufous Mourner calling overhead, a Gray-headed Dove walking the path ahead of us, a difficult to see White-throated Thrush and a superb posing male Red-capped Manakin. For once a Stripe-throated Hermit hovered in front of us as opposed to dashing past. Karen spent time watching a band of White-nosed Coatis foraging in the leaf litter and middle storey and James was absolutely “made up” when we saw a Northern Schiffornis “up close and personal.” This is a bird which we had regularly heard but didn’t believe we could coax out into the open. To be frank, it was nothing to look at, just a cold gray-brown all over—but something new for everyone nevertheless.

The whole group set out once more after breakfast onto another winding trail. A male Black-headed Trogon performed well first thing (much to my relief as I had missed every one previously!). A diminutive Ruddy-tailed Flycatcher perched up for most to see—far more impressive than the Northern Bentbill which showed to some, distantly and in silhouette. Then Vidal motioned for us to creep forward very quietly as he had found a perched bird of prey. How close were we to this Double-toothed Kite? well how often can you truly say you have seen the double teeth indentations on the upper mandible!"

A short while later we could hear a small feeding flock passing through. In fairness, we didn’t see any of them but we did have extended views of the bird Vidal has named “the leader.” An incredible visage of yellow and black announced the presence of a Black-throated Shrike-Tanager calling and perched on a thick vine right out in the open for perhaps 10 minutes – a stunning new bird for absolutely everyone.

If we ever needed a reminder that we were “in the wild”, we saw some marks on a tree trunk—scratch marks by a feline, perhaps six feet high—was it Puma or Jaguar we didn’t know, but it sure was big. As we reached the road, a small group of Golden-hooded Tanagers fed in a Cecropia tree and our return walk passed under several Cohun Palms which apparently have the largest leaves of any tree in the world.

We were accompanied at lunchtime by a female Blue-Black Grosbeak which was bathing in a water feature right in front of us and a little later on, was replaced by a male Blue Bunting showing off to Susan and myself.

The early afternoon was pretty hot and the birds were obviously taking a siesta. I did walk around the gardens for a short while managing to catch onto the whirr of wings that was a male White-collared Manakin but little else. Whilst waiting for our final excursion, Susan and I found an immaculate plumaged Yellow-throated Vireo coming into the water feature by the restaurant.

So our final tour led by Luis and the open-top truck was scheduled to leave at 3.30PM. However this was not communicated to a troop of Spider Monkeys who kept us waiting for about 15 minutes before plucking up the courage to scamper across the road right in front of us. We then drove initially through Gallon Jug farm and then onto Laguna Verde where we were to enjoy snacks and a beer while watching the sun go down.

Along the tracks by the runway, there were a couple of Northern Roughwings amongst the Mangrove Swallows. Several Fork-tailed Flycatchers were in exactly the same place as yesterday and a particularly photogenic immature Roadside Hawk just sat on a fencepost and stared at us.

We spent some while watching hummingbird activity around a couple of white blossomed Moringa trees. In one, there were a minimum of 15 White-bellied Emeralds charging around together with a Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, several Ruby-throated Hummingbirds including a full alternate plumage adult male and the much bigger but just as beautiful male Green-breasted Mango. As well as hummingbirds these small trees attracted no less than five Orchard Orioles and a female Summer Tanager.

We then drove onto the lake shore, to be met by one of the Chan Chich staff who had already laid a table for us with chicken kebabs, salsa, beer and wine. We added a new bird of prey to our tour list – a pair of extremely dark plumaged Gray Hawks who were obviously “an item.” Male Montezuma Oropendolas were displaying, raising their tails forward over their heads and making a bubbling sound to attract a mate; several Purple Martins gave us several “fly bys” swooping down for an evening drink; a male Pale-billed Woodpecker flew over and landed on an island in the middle of the lake and, just as the sun was setting, a Bat Falcon zoomed past.

This was the perfect setting to finish our last full day at Chan Chich. The early evening light was absolutely perfect and the scenery stunning. The drive back passed by a number of Common Pauragues before a sudden halt saw Kathy leap out of the truck and walk back to photograph the biggest Red-rumped Tarantula I have ever seen—it was enormous.

## **Sat., March 14 Departures**

Over breakfast, most of us had wonderful views of a very photogenic Wedge-tailed Sabrewing completely unaware that Susan was having the guided walk of her life. Her list included not only three Green Shrike Vireos, a bird we had heard continuously during our stay but also the Yucatan Endemic Gray-throated Chat, male Ruddy Quail-Dove and the stunningly beautiful Lovely Cotinga.

So it was that we drove to the Gallon Jug airfield, boarded our TropicAir eight-seater plane and took the twenty minute flight back to the International Airport and the crowds that is civilisation once more. It is only when you are flying in a clear sky at 3,500 feet, you realise just how much continuous rainforest still exists in Belize, as far as the eye can see on either direction. I cannot wait until I can go back.

Sincere thanks are due to Robert and Mick at Crooked Tree for good guiding and absolutely mouth-watering cooking; Ruben and Oscar the Lamanai guides; absolutely everyone on the staff of Chan Chich where absolutely nothing was too much trouble and, of course, to James for his professional leading and identification skills throughout.

## **Photo Credits:**

Morelet's Seedeater, Susan Hartley (SH); Russet-naped Wood-Rail, SH; Black-collared Hawk w/fish, SH; Orange-throated Parakeet, James P. Smith (JS); Roadside Hawk, SH; White-whiskered Puffbird, SH; Red-legged Honeycreeper, SH; Lamanai, Karen Enriquez (KE); Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, SH; Common Potoo, KE; Spot-breasted Wren, JS; Bat Falcon, JS; American White Pelicans, JS; Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, JS; Tropical Pewee, JS; Immature Snail Kite, SH; Jabiru, JS; Vermillion Flycatchers, SH; Wood Storks, JS; Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, SH; Black-necked Stilt, SH; Little Blue Heron, SH; Jabiru in the crowd, JS; Groove-billed Ani, SH; Yucatan Jay, SH; White-fronted Parrot, SH; Northern Jacana, SH; Sungrebe, JS; Squirrel Cuckoo, SH; Tawny-winged Woodcreeper, JS; Lamanai sunrise, SH; Basilisk, SH; Common Pauraque, SH; Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, SH; Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, SH; Black-and-white Owl, JS; Mottled Owl, JS; Ocellated Turkey, JS; Golden-hooded Tanager, SH; Lesson's Motmot, SH; Slaty-tailed Trogon, SH; Green Honeycreeper, SH; Collared Aracari, SH; Fork-tailed Flycatcher, SH; Martyn, James, & Visdal spotting raptors on the Escarpment, SH; Karen in action at Laguna Verde, JS; White-bellied Emerald, SH; Summer Tanager, SH; Group at dinner, JS; Orchard Oriole, SH; female Blue Bunting, SH; Gartered Trogon, SH; Blue Bunting, SH; Black-cowled Oriole, SH; Blue-black Grosbeak, SH;