

Southern Belize: Birding & Nature | Species List

February 20 – 28, 2019 | Written by Bob Meinke



Guide **Bob Meinke**, with expert local lodge naturalists **Marvin** and **Steven**, and **9 participants**: Kelly, Isaac, Lenore, Harold, Cindy, Richelle, Beth, Nancy, and Joe

SUMMARY

We enjoyed a scenic and productive trip, starting with the vast freshwater wetlands at Crooked Tree Lagoon, transitioning on to the montane woodlands of the Mountain Pine Ridge, and ending our tour in the broadleaf forests and mangroves of Toledo District at the southern tip of Belize. Working our way down the length of the country increased our exposure to a wide range of habitats, and with it came a nice assortment of resident and migrant bird species as well as other wildlife.

Highlights among the resident species included King Vulture, Bare-crowned Antbird, Black-and-white Owl, Yucatan Jay, White-winged Becard, Ruddy Woodcreeper, Eye-ringed Flatbill, Violet Sabrewing, three species of Trogon, and five species of Kingfisher (with multiple, close-in views of American Pygmy a surprising bonus). And while not unexpected, Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, Bare-throated Tiger Heron, Montezuma Oropendola, Golden-headed Tanager, Barred Antshrike, and Squirrel Cuckoo were all exquisite reminders of the rich colors and morphological diversity that characterize the avifauna of the Neotropics. North American migrants were also plentiful during our visit, and among the many warblers encountered, Blue-winged, Worm-eating, and Prothonotary stood out among the 21 overwintering species we recorded, most of which were just entering full breeding plumage as they readied for their journey north to the U.S. and Canada.

Our observations also included an interesting range of non-avian vertebrate species, with West Indian Manatee, Yucatan Black Howler Monkey, and Morelet's Crocodile joining several species of bats, rodents, iguanas, geckos, and snakes in rounding out our list.

The compilation below summarizes our sightings, and includes species seen by all or at least some of the participants. An “**HO**” placed after a bird name means the species was *heard only and not sighted*, and “**LO**” covers those few species *only spotted by the trip leader or a lodge guide*. The ordering of families and species mirrors the checklist we used on the trip, and species-level taxonomy (for birds) follows the latest updates appearing in the Clements Checklist (Cornell Lab of Ornithology).

BIRDS – 250 species [including 6 (HO) and 6 (LO)]

Anatidae: Ducks, Geese, and Swans (4)

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) Seen in a large mixed flock (with the following species) on Crooked Tree Lagoon, during our morning boat trip with Rubín

Fulvous Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) See previous species—Fulvous is far less common in Belize than Black-bellied, and we were fortunate to see both species at Crooked Tree on the lagoon

Blue-winged Teal (*Spatula discors*) Observed on Mountain Pine Ridge, during our morning walk around the small lake on Hidden Valley Reserve—the most common duck in Belize

Lesser Scaup (*Aythya affinis*) Seen in the scope, in two ponds far below an overlook at the Nim Li Punit Maya Site

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Cracidae: Guans, Chachalacas, and Curassows (2)

Plain Chachalaca (*Ortalis vetula*) Especially plentiful on the grounds of Hidden Valley Inn, but seen at many other locations as well (for example, we had great views of birds in trees during our walk with Rubin at Cooked Tree village)

Crested Guan (*Penelope purpurascens*) A beautiful pair was seen perched in low trees right outside the front entrance to Hidden Valley Inn—great views were had by the entire group

Podicipedidae: Grebes (2)

Least Grebe (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) Two apparent breeding pairs were seen swimming and diving on the small lake we walked along during our first morning at Hidden Valley—an infrequently seen species

Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*) Seen in the scope, swimming and diving (with Lesser Scaup) in the two ponds far below the overlook we visited at the Nim Li Punit Maya Site (outside Big Falls)

Columbidae: Pigeons and Doves (12)

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) Not as common as in U.S. cities, a few birds were spotted in Belize City (the day we arrived), and also seen in Belmopan as we passed through on our drive up to Hidden Valley (**introduced species**)

Pale-vented Pigeon (*Patagioenas cayennensis*) A widespread species often seen overhead, it was occasionally perched in trees near Hidden Valley Inn, Barton Creek Cave, and in the Big Falls area

Red-billed Pigeon (*Patagioenas flavirostris*) Seen flying at Hidden Valley Inn, as well as during our lunch stop at Blue Hole National Park¹ on our way south to Big Falls—not present in the south

Short-billed Pigeon (*Patagioenas nigrirostris*) The most plentiful arboreal pigeon during our stay in Big Falls

Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) A few birds were seen at Crooked Tree Village, and at the Punta Gorda airport—thankfully not yet as common as it is in parts of the U.S. (**introduced species**)

Ruddy Ground-Dove (*Columbina talpacoti*) Small flocks were seen multiple times on most days of the trips, one of the most common species of the tour

Blue Ground-Dove (*Claravis pretiosa*) The rather monotonous coo of this species was heard daily at Big Falls, especially in the morning—a bird was also briefly seen by Kelly (and possibly a couple others in the group) on the trip to Barton Creek Cave

NOTE: The taxonomy of *Leptotila* doves (below) in Belize has recently undergone revision, and Lee Jones' guidebook (*Birds of Belize*) includes *Gray-fronted Dove*, which is now considered a South American endemic. The entry for Gray-fronted in his guidebook refers to what is now known as Gray-headed Dove. Gray-chested and Gray-headed are difficult to separate in the field, even with good views. Upon listening to recorded vocals for these species after the trip, we've decided that both species were present at Hidden Valley and Big Falls. White-tipped Dove (easily separated by its blue orbital ring and voice) was largely limited to the Crooked Tree area during our trip.

White-tipped Dove (*Leptotila verreauxi*) Very vocal in the brush at Crooked Tree Village and the lowlands abutting Mountain Pine Ridge—birds were heard more often than seen

Gray-chested Dove (*Leptotila cassini*) Present at both Hidden Valley and Big Falls (see NOTE, above)

Gray-headed Dove (*Leptotila plumbeiceps*) Present at both Hidden Valley and Big Falls (see NOTE, above)

Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) A few birds were observed on fences in Punta Gorda during the morning of our departure

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) Not common, we saw birds in the Crooked Tree area near village homes (and how does a bird native only to the New World have *asiatica* for its species epithet—there must be a story there...)

¹ Also referred to as St. Herman's Blue Hole National Park, not to be confused with the Great Blue Hole, a well-known marine sinkhole off the coast of Belize

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Cuculidae: Cuckoos and Anis (2)

Squirrel Cuckoo (*Piaya cayana*) We saw two, possibly three birds moving furtively through the mid-canopy at Blue Hole National Park (during our lunch stop as we drove south to the Lodge at Big Falls)—an impressive species

Groove-billed Ani (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) A common but scattered species in Belize, particularly in fields and waste areas, we saw one or more small flocks most days of the tour—notable were several birds Joe and Bob watched vigorously feeding on lawns near Barton Creek Cave, displaying far more energy than we thought an ani capable of

Caprimulgidae: Nightjars and Allies (1)

Common Pauraque (*Nyctidromus albicollis*) The Pauraque's characteristic whooping call was frequently heard at dusk and dawn, and we had good twilight views of birds hunting insects on the lodge lawns while at Big Falls

Apodidae: Swifts (2)

White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*) Generally more montane in distribution than other swifts in Belize, this species was observed flying above the Mountain Pine Ridge near Thousand Foot Falls

Vaux's Swift (*Chaetura vauxi*) (LO) Briefly seen overhead at the Punta Gorda Airport the day of our departure—virtually identical to the Chimney Swift (but the latter is a scarce passage migrant in Belize, while many populations of Vaux's are resident)

Trochilidae: Hummingbirds (12)

White-necked Jacobin (*Florisuga mellivora*) Quickly recognizable, the navy-blue head and stark white collar set this dominant species apart—seen during the latter half of the trip, especially at the Green Hill Butterfly Farm feeders

Long-billed Hermit (*Phaethornis longirostris*) This elegant hummer was found several times, with most observations during our stay at the Lodge at Big Falls—a lek for this species occurs along the Monkey River trail we explored on our last day, but the birds there were still largely inactive

Purple-crowned Fairy (*Heliathryx barroti*) (LO) Observed at the Green Hill Butterfly Farm, but not at the feeders—a single bird was seen among coffee plants and bromeliads, apparently collecting nest materials

Green-breasted Mango (*Anthracothorax prevostii*) Birds were seen at the Green Hill feeders, Blue Hole National Park, and during bird walks in the Big Falls area—the females have a distinctly patterned breast

Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) A North American migrant and probably the most common hummingbird in the Crooked Tree area during our visit—most of our sightings there were of female birds

Scaly-breasted Hummingbird (*Phaeochroa cuvierii*) This large species, related to the Sabrewings, was a regular at the Green Hill feeders and in the canopy of the nearby forest

Wedge-tailed Sabrewing (*Campylopterus curvipennis*) Seen at the Green Hill feeders during our visit, and later two birds were seen chasing insects from a high perch at Blue Hole National Park, the day we drove south to Big Falls

Violet Sabrewing (*Campylopterus hemileucurus*) An absolutely stunning species, this large, vivid hummingbird was easy to spot as it visited the Green Hill Butterfly Farm feeders

White-bellied Emerald (*Amazilia candida*) Seen in trailside vegetation at Blue Hole National Park, this comparatively plain species was also seen in the riparian forests lining the Rio Grande at Big Falls, and near Monkey River

Azure-crowned Hummingbird (*Amazilia cyanocephala*) A subtle beauty, the Azure-crowned Hummingbird was very common at Hidden Valley Inn and seen daily—it was the only hummingbird species recorded on the lodge grounds!

Rufous-tailed Hummingbird (*Amazilia tzacatl*) The most common hummingbird throughout the tour, birds were routinely seen at feeders (except at Hidden Valley) as well as in a range of natural habitats

Cinnamon Hummingbird (*Amazilia rutila*) A richly-colored hummer closely related to the previous species, Cindy reported seeing Cinnamon Hummingbird at Crooked Tree Lodge, and her description of the bird was spot on!

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Rallidae: Rails, Crakes, and Gallinules (2)

NOTE: In the *Birds of Belize* guidebook, Lee Jones includes Gray-necked Wood-Rail, a species that has since been split—populations from mid-Costa Rica south are now called Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, while those from northern Central America (including Belize) and Mexico have been changed to Russet-naped Wood-Rail.]

Russet-naped Wood-Rail (*Aramides albiventris*) Birds were briefly glimpsed near the back pond at Crooked Tree Lodge, and then a pair was seen well by most of the group meandering on the grounds of The Lodge at Big Falls
American Coot (*Fulica americana*) A few birds were seen at a distance swimming on Crooked Tree Lagoon

Aramidae: Limpkin (1)

Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*) The haunting calls of this unique wader were heard by the early-arriving group who stayed at Crooked Tree Lodge—individual birds were later observed at dawn, patrolling the shoreline of the lagoon

Charadriidae: Plovers and Lapwings (1)

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*) A few birds were heard and then seen at the Punta Gorda Airport prior to our departure on our last day

Jacanidae: Jacanas (1)

Northern Jacana (*Jacana spinosa*) Common on floating vegetation in the shallows of Crooked Tree Lagoon

Scolopacidae: Sandpipers and Snipes (3)

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*) Scattered observations during the trip, at Crooked Tree Lagoon and along the Monkey River in Toledo District

Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*) Initially dismissed as a Spotted Sandpiper, a single bird spotted in a wet pasture by a receding pond (on our return from Barton Creek Cave) was subsequently determined, by consensus among the observers, to be a Solitary Sandpiper

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) Small flock seen from our boat, darting along the incoming surf as we approached the mouth of the Monkey River from the sea

Laridae: Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers (4)

Laughing Gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) Scattered individuals flew along the coast at Punta Gorda, as we drove in from Big Falls to catch our departure flight

Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*) The intense, red-orange bill and overall size were diagnostic—small groups of the species were observed flying over Crooked Tree Lagoon

Royal Tern (*Thalasseus maximus*) This was the tern seen by the group flying and diving on the open ocean, as we navigated the shoreline before arriving at Monkey River

Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) Observed flying in mixed flocks (with Royal Tern) along the beach at Punta Gorda—reported by Joe on our way to the airport to catch our departure flights

Ciconiidae: Storks (2)

Jabiru (*Jabiru mycteria*) Approaching five feet tall, this is the largest wader in the Americas—we saw distant birds in the water along Crooked Tree Lagoon, and some of us later had a very low flyover (right over Isaac) during an afternoon walk near the lagoon's Eastern Causeway (amazing!)

Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*) Seen in flight by some of the early arrivals at Crooked Tree Lodge, primarily as kettles of soaring birds during our morning birding walk with Rubin—a few individuals also seen near Monkey River

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Fregatidae: Frigatebirds (1)

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*) Unmistakable, even at a distance, seen cruising overhead at Crooked Tree Lagoon, and then again along the shoreline during the Monkey River trip—adults and juveniles were both common

Anhingidae: Anhingas (1)

Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*) Seen in mangroves along the coast near the Monkey River estuary—most interesting was a lone bird passing time at the small lake at the Hidden Valley Reserve, high up on the Mountain Pine Ridge (a very odd place for an Anhinga to be)

Phalacrocoridae: Cormorants (2)

Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) Scattered individuals and small groups were seen at Crooked Tree Lagoon, and up the Monkey River

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) Generally more maritime than Neotropic Cormorant in Belize, many were seen by the group on open coastal waters as we traveled to Monkey River

Pelicanidae: Pelicans (1)

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) Same locations as Double-crested Cormorant (above)—groups of birds were plunge-fishing as we passed nearby on the water

Ardeidae: Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns (9)

Bare-throated Tiger-Heron (*Tigrisoma mexicanum*) An infrequent but widespread heron in Central America and southern Mexico, this striking species was seen at Crooked Tree, and again near Big Falls (the highlight being a bird clearly visible on a large nest at the Belize Spice Farm and Botanical Garden—nice photos by Lenore!)

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) A common species from home, less so in Belize—birds were seen wading and in flight at Crooked Tree Lagoon, and later near the Monkey River

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) Another familiar bird to most of us, with a global distribution, Great Egrets were observed several times during the trip (at Crooked Tree and later in Toledo District near Big Falls)

Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) Common around Crooked Tree village, and also in the Monkey River area

Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) Another of the mid-size waders common around Crooked Tree Lagoon, the species was also seen near Big Falls and at Monkey River

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*) Just a single confirmed sighting, pointed out by Joe, as a lone bird slowly took off late in the afternoon from along the Eastern Causeway that spans Crooked Tree Lagoon

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) Seen sporadically throughout the trip, but most days and often locally common (especially in farm fields and pastures near Big Falls)

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) A beautiful species also common in the U.S., we saw birds in the mangroves at Crooked Tree Lagoon, and also glimpsed one along the Rio Grande at The Lodge at Big Falls (just before our departure for the airport)

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*) Good views during our boat trip from Independence to Monkey River, seen perched in mangroves on a tiny caye, with Great Egret and Brown Pelicans

Threskiornithidae: Ibis and Spoonbills (2)

White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) Observations of this species were restricted to flyovers at Crooked Tree and near the Monkey River

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) Seen by a few of us before our first morning walk at Crooked Tree

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Cathartidae: New World Vultures (4)

King Vulture (*Sarcoramphus papa*) We had scope views at King Vulture Overlook (Mountain Pine Ridge), and some of us later saw birds in flight during our stay at Hidden Valley—an impressive species even at a distance, with a distinctive pattern when seen from below

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) The most frequently seen raptor during the trip, observed daily

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) A close second to Black Vulture in abundance, very widespread

Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture (*Cathartes burrovianus*) A close kin of the Turkey Vulture, Bob and Joe got a good look at a pair of birds soon after arriving at Crooked Tree our first day in Belize, then never saw the species again—others in the group encountered it during their excursion to the Belize Spice Farm and Botanical Garden near Big Falls

Pandionidae: Osprey (1)

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) One (or possibly more) birds were seen perched along the shoreline and flying above the mangroves, as we cruised towards the Monkey River estuary—this was the resident, largely coastal form of Osprey in Belize (subsp. *ridgwayi*), which is morphologically distinct from North American migrant forms of the species

Accipitridae: Hawks, Eagles, and Kites (12)

White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*) We were stopped along the road into Blue Creek (our first full day at Big Falls) when Richelle spotted this species perched across an open field—a very sharp eye!

Gray-headed Kite (*Leptodon cayanensis*) Reported by Tony (our guide for the drive to Caracol), seen as his group descended from the Mountain Pine Ridge into the broadleaf tropical forest near the Macal River

Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*) Unmistakable in flight, several of these remarkably graceful raptors were seen swirling above the ridges at Hidden Valley

Black Hawk-Eagle (*Spizaetus tyrannus*) Seen during our walk around the grounds of Green Hill Butterfly Farm, Marvin helped a few of the group get looks at this striking and uncommon species

Snail Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*) Another stunning raptor seen at Crooked Tree by the early arrivals on the tour—the shallow waters and mud flats of the lagoon are prime habitat for Apple Snail, the principal food for Snail Kites

Plumbeous Kite (*Ictinia plumbea*) Each year is different, and we were unsure if this South American migrant would have arrived yet on Mountain Pine Ridge during our visit—we ultimately had fantastic views of this beautiful species in trees near the entrance to Green Hill Butterfly Farm, the first Plumbeous Kites of the year for our local guides

Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) It was easy to dismiss this common North American breeder when we saw an adult bird zig-zagging above a rice field in southern Belize, near Big Falls—but these comments by author Lee Jones, in *Birds of Belize*, explain guide Steve Choco's excitement: "Uncommon to very uncommon winter visitor on mainland, primarily in north of country, adult may be unrecorded in Belize." Our bird seems to have defied expectations...

Common Black Hawk (*Buteogallus anthracinus*) Preferring frogs and similar prey in lowland streams and rivers, this typically coastal species was seen along the Monkey River during the last day of the tour

Roadside Hawk (*Rupornis magnirostris*) A small, fairly common hawk (and aptly named), we saw scattered birds perched in open habitats, often along roads, and mostly during the first half of the trip

Gray Hawk (*Buteo plagiatus*) An elegant species, easy to confuse in some plumages with Roadside Hawk (the latter generally distinguished by at least some rufous on the breast)—we observed Gray Hawks on the drive back up from Barton Creek Cave, and near Big Falls

Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) Seen overhead as we started our road trip south from Hidden Valley to Big Falls—an uncommon to rare migrant in Belize

Short-tailed Hawk (*Buteo brachyurus*) A single bird soared up from below as we stood at the valley overlook at the Nim Li Punit Maya Site—a resident species in Belize

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Strigidae: Owls (3)

Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum*) At least Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls had taken up residence in low, open trees around the lodge building at Hidden Valley—not the least bit shy, most of our group was able to see the birds on at least two mornings

Mottled Owl (*Ciccaba virgata*) (HO) Joe clearly heard this species during our stay at Big Falls, but we never succeeded in actually locating the birds—a disappointment!

Black-and-white Owl (*Ciccaba nigrolineata*) Any dismay we may have had at missing the Mottled Owl was more than set aside by our show-stopping encounter with the Black-and-white Owl, also on the lodge grounds at Big Falls—a mesmerizing species (both visually and vocally), we all had clear, prolonged views, thanks to guide Steve Choco!

Trogonidae: Trogons (3)

Slaty-tailed Trogon (*Trogon massena*) At least one colorful male (and possibly a female, as well) was observed perched in the forest at the Green Hills Butterfly Farm

Black-headed Trogon (*Trogon melanocephalus*) Our most observed trogon, first seen during our bird walk with Rubin at Crooked Tree, we later had additional scope views of this species during hikes near Big Falls with Steve Choco

Gartered Trogon (*Trogon caligatus*) One of three species that have been split from what was formerly Violaceous Trogon (the name used in *Birds of Belize*), Gartered Trogon was only seen in the high trees at the Nim Li Punit Maya Site outside Big Falls

Alcedinidae: Kingfishers (5)

Ringed Kingfisher (*Megaceryle torquata*) Common at Crooked Tree Lagoon, this (the largest of the American kingfishers) was also seen during our walk along Blue Creek, south of Big Falls—an imposing species!

Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*) This widespread North American breeder is present in Belize only as an overwintering migrant—it was nonetheless common at Crooked Tree, and oddly, it was the only kingfisher we saw along the Monkey River in Toledo District

Amazon Kingfisher (*Chloroceryle amazona*) The largest of the Neotropical green-plumaged kingfishers, this species was absent at Crooked Tree, but later turned up along Blue Creek the day of our hike (and also in the river near The Lodge at Big Falls)

American Pygmy Kingfisher (*Chloroceryle aenea*) Many tours miss seeing this bird, being so small and stealthy, so we were fortunate to have two great encounters—the first, as Rubin quietly poled our boat along the shore at Crooked Tree Lagoon, and the second at a small forest pool at Green Hill Butterfly Farm (a tiny yet striking species!)

Green Kingfisher (*Chloroceryle americana*) Relatively common at Crooked Tree Lagoon, also seen near Barton Creek Cave and along Blue Creek (during our hike with Steve Choco)

Bucconidae: Puffbirds (1)

White-whiskered Puffbird (*Malacoptila panamensis*) Kelly spotted and quickly identified this species in the understory at Blue Hole National Park (during our lunch stop on the way to Big Falls)—it was seen again at least twice, during hikes towards the end of the tour

Ramphastidae: Toucans (2)

Collared Aracari (*Pteroglossus torquatus*) Found by the group that went with Tony to Caracol, and seen in the Big Falls area—usually high in the trees, remarkable colors

Keel-billed Toucan (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*) This iconic species (the National Bird of Belize) was first seen by the group that went with Tony to Caracol—the whole group later saw multiple toucans on our drive from Hidden Valley to Big Falls (including several at our stop for souvenirs at the Orange Gallery gift shop)

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Picidae: Woodpeckers (7)

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) A generally uncommon migrant in Belize, mostly seen offshore on the cayes—Marvin pointed out a single bird on the grounds of Hidden Valley Inn, a nice find

Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) Well known in the U.S., but also a common resident in Belize, we saw this gregarious species on feeders, poles, and open branches at Crooked Tree village and Hidden Valley Inn

Black-cheeked Woodpecker (*Melanerpes pucherani*) A close relative of the Acorn Woodpecker, we saw this species at Blue Hole National Park (during our lunch stop on the drive down to Big Falls), and later during our hike at Blue Creek with Steve Choco

Yucatan Woodpecker (*Melanerpes pygmaeus*) Listed as “Red-vented Woodpecker” in Lee Jones’ *Birds of Belize*, this sought-after Yucatan endemic was first spotted by Kelly at Crooked Tree—the best the rest of us had were glimpses!

Golden-fronted Woodpecker (*Melanerpes aurifrons*) We saw this species almost daily, both in the Mountain Pine Ridge and southern Belize—however, it was never abundant

Lineated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus lineatus*) Probably our best views of this distinctive species were had at the Nim Li Punit Maya site—though it was recorded most days of the trip, it could be difficult to spot clearly despite its large size

Golden-olive Woodpecker (*Colaptes rubiginosus*) A beautiful species, observed on our drive back from Barton Creek Cave, briefly at the feeders at Big Falls, and in the trees at the Nim Li Punit Maya Site

Falconidae: Falcons and Caracaras (5)

Laughing Falcon (*Herpetotheres cachinnans*) Reported by guide Tony after returning with his group from their day trip to the Caracol Maya site—a species with an unforgettable call

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) Seen at Crooked Tree, before the main tour started, the only sighting of the trip—a common resident in North America and much of South America, but considered transient in Belize

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) A single bird was observed as we drove from Big Falls to the Blue Creek trailhead prior to our hike there with Steve Choco—an uncommon migratory species on the mainland

Bat Falcon (*Falco ruficularis*) We saw a lone Bat Falcon perched high atop the grain elevator in Big Falls village

Orange-breasted Falcon (*Falco deiroleucus*) The falcons weren’t cooperating this trip, and we unfortunately had only distant scope views of birds perched near King Vulture Overlook, near Hidden Valley Inn

Psittacidae: Parrots (7)

White-crowned Parrot (LO) (*Pionus senilis*) Seen by Bob with guide Steve Choco at Big Falls before we headed to Punta Gorda airport on the last day—a small group flying rapidly overhead

Red-lored Parrot (*Amazona autumnalis*) By far the most common Amazon of the trip, in fact most parrots we encountered turned out to be Red-lored—often seen in the treetops, we had many nice views

Yellow-headed Parrot (*Amazona oratrix*) Restricted to northern Central America and southern Mexico, and considered endangered due to collection for the pet trade—we saw fly-overs on two separate days at Crooked Tree

White-fronted Parrot (*Amazona albifrons*) We saw this species in flight, as well as perched, during our morning bird walk with Robert (from Bate’s B&B) in the Crooked Tree area

Mealy Parrot (*Amazona farinosa*) Seen by guide Tony and his group during their trip from Hidden Valley to the Caracol ruins—the largest parrot in Belize (not counting macaws)

Olive-throated Parakeet (*Eupsittula nana*) We initially saw these slender parakeets (mostly as they hurtled past overhead) at Crooked Tree, and then had extended looks at a feeding flock in flowering trees, during a roadside stop on our way from Hidden Valley to Big Falls—the species was common during the latter half of the trip

Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*) Scarlet Macaws are known from the Vaca Plateau area, yet seeing them as far inland as Caracol, where our group went with their guide Tony, is less likely than across the mountains on the Caribbean slope near Red Bank—so spotting a flock of this enormously showy parrot near Caracol was a fabulous bonus!

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Thamnophilidae: Antbirds (5)

Great Antshrike (*Taraba major*) It was nearing dusk and the end of a long day of birding, but for those interested, Steve Choco was anxious to show off a new trail he had cut through the forest on the grounds of the Lodge at Big Falls—four of us signed on, spending an hour walking and stooping along Steve’s “Antbird trail,” and it was well worth it, as we found several interesting species, including male and female Great Antshrike

Barred Antshrike (*Thamnophilus doliatus*) Dubbed the “Zebra Antbird” by Cindy, this common (yet often elusive) species was well-represented and very vocal at Crooked Tree Lodge, and we had little trouble viewing both the black-and-white striped male and the utterly different yellow-rufous female (a striking example of sexual dimorphism)

Dot-winged Antwren (*Microrhopias quixensis*) Also a sexually dimorphic species (with a virtually all black male and a red-rufous female), a pair of Dot-winged Antwrens was seen by most of the group during our lunch stop at Blue Hole National Park

Dusky Antbird (*Cercomacroides tyrannina*) Another of the species found along the Big Falls “Antbird trail” (see Great Antshrike, above), Isaac, Joe, Kelly, and Bob had nice views of this species through the tangles

Bare-crowned Antbird (*Gymnocichla nudiceps*) A target for us at Big Falls, most of the group had fleeting views of this fascinating species one morning—later that afternoon, Bob and Joe happened on an Army Ant swarm, and as we watched the expected woodcreepers and ant-tanagers, we were astounded when a male Bare-crowned Antbird also joined the mixed flock—we ended up with close, extended views of one of the most sought-after species in Belize

Formicariidae: Antthrushes (1)

Black-faced Antthrush (*Formicarius analis*) A real skulker and a nice find by the group, seen outside Big Falls as we accompanied Steve Choco one sultry afternoon, along a shaded trail through a lowland forest

Furnariidae: Ovenbirds, Woodcreepers, and Allies (7)

Olivaceous Woodcreeper (*Sittasomus griseicapillus*) First spotted during an afternoon walk the second day we were at Crooked Tree, this olive- to gray-headed species is one of the few woodcreepers to depart significantly from the brown-rufous color pattern (also seen later by the whole group, at Blue Hole National Park)

Ruddy Woodcreeper (*Dendrocincla homochroa*) Completely rufous, typically with a scruffy crown, the group had excellent looks at this species on the Howler Monkey walk during our stop along the Monkey River—uncommon!

Tawny-winged Woodcreeper (*Dendrocincla anabatina*) Only seen once, a very active pair of birds came in during Joe and Bob’s serendipitous encounter with an Arm Ant swarm at Big Falls (see Bare-crowned Antbird)

Wedge-billed Woodcreeper (*Glyphorhynchus spirurus*) Excellent views of this distinctive species (smallest of the woodcreepers) were had during our morning birding at Blue Hole National Park (before lunch), as well as our first day at Big Falls

Ivory-billed Woodcreeper (*Xiphorhynchus flavigaster*) Seen on two days during our stay at Big Falls, our best looks as a group were had of two birds foraging on tree trunks at the Nim Li Punit Maya site

Streak-headed Woodcreeper (*Lepidocolaptes souleyetii*) Part of a mixed species group foraging at an understory ant swarm, near the Lodge at Big Falls (see Tawny-winged Woodcreeper)

Rufous-breasted Spinetail (*Synallaxis erythrothorax*) Another of the gems we discovered along Steve Chaco’s “Antbird trail” at Big Falls (see Great Antshrike)—with a little patience, we eventually had several close looks at this habitually wary species

Tyrannidae: Tyrant Flycatchers (26)

Greenish Elaenia (*Myiopagis viridicata*) (HO) This flycatcher was confirmed as “heard only” during our afternoon walk with Steve Choco, on our third day in the Big Falls area—its rather nondescript plumage and tendency to forage in the canopy makes this species easy to miss

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Yellow-bellied Elaenia (*Elaenia flavogaster*) A fairly common species, seen by most of the group several times, in the brush at Hidden Valley as well as around Big Falls

Ochre-bellied Flycatcher (*Mionectes oleagineus*) Found during our trip to Blue Creek village—a frugivore that specializes in mistletoe fruits (unusual for a flycatcher)

Northern Bentbill (*Oncostoma cinereigulare*) An unadorned small flycatcher (but notable for its odd bill and distinctive trill), with a preference for thickets and tangles—we had excellent views of this often heard (but seldom seen) species during our short hike along the Monkey River (a coveted life bird for Kelly, finally realized!)

Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher (*Poecilatriccus sylvia*) Yet another of the understory prizes we found one afternoon along Steve Choco's "Antbird trail" (see Great Antshrike)—a pair of this species was clearly seen flitting back and forth among the lianas

Common Tody-Flycatcher (*Todirostrum cinereum*) Frequently heard but not always easy to pinpoint in the brush, we had good views on two of our days in the Crooked Tree area

Eye-ringed Flatbill (*Rhynchocyclus brevirostris*) Always hard to find, Kelly, Joe, and Bob had unexpectedly good views of a bird perched quietly on a suspended vine in the understory at Blue Hole National Park (during our stop for lunch on the way to Big Falls)

Yellow-olive Flycatcher (*Tolmomyias sulphurescens*) A taxonomically complex group, *Tolmomyias* species are the Neotropical equivalents of the *Empidonax* flycatchers that birders struggle with in North America—some of us had a quick look at this species in the mid-canopy during our afternoon walk with Steve Choco (third day at Big Falls)

Stub-tailed Spadebill (*Platyrinchus cancrominus*) A tiny understory flycatcher, Kelly accurately described the field marks of this species as she birded solo along the forest margins, prior to lunch at Blue Hole National Park

Royal Flycatcher (*Onychorhynchus coronatus*) (HO) During a brief stop as we returned from Thousand Foot Falls in Hidden Valley, Marvin tried valiantly to coax a singing Royal Flycatcher from some low brush, but was unsuccessful

Tropical Pewee (*Contopus cinereus*) Seen perched several times during our stay The Lodge at Big Falls, and also at Crooked Tree village

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*) A well-known North American breeding species that overwinters in Belize—seen by the early-arriving group on our first full day at Crooked Tree, on the grounds of the lodge

Least Flycatcher (*Empidonax minimus*) Another overwintering empid, seen at Crooked Tree and again at Big Falls

Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*) Joe and Bob were birding along Barton Creek one hot afternoon, remarking that this would certainly be a perfect spot for a Black Phoebe, and literally 20 seconds later, one called and flew by (the only time the species was seen during the tour)—strange, but true!

Vermillion flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) Several birds were spotted by the group that stayed in Crooked Tree before the main tour started—the brilliant color of the males was impossible to miss

Bright-rumped Atilla (*Atilla spadiceus*) We had excellent looks (including scope views) of this impressive flycatcher during a pre-breakfast walk at Big Falls, on the lower lodge grounds

Yucatan Flycatcher (*Myiarchus yucatanensis*) Despite having a good look, some time and photo study was needed before Bob, Joe, and Kelly agreed that the bird we saw (during our morning walk with Robert, from Bates B&B at Crooked Tree) was indeed this **Yucatan endemic**, and not Brown-crested Flycatcher

Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*) A resident flycatcher in the SW U.S. and throughout much of the Neotropics, we heard this species at Crooked Tree, and then had good looks at perched birds (during our last highway stop the day we headed south from Hidden Valley to Big Falls)

Brown-crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*) This species was more common than Dusky-capped during the trip—we saw birds at Caracol and Barton Creek, and at the Nim Li Punit Maya site

Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) Easily recognized and one of the most common songbirds of the trip, this large, colorful flycatcher was seen most days (especially in southern Belize)

Boat-billed Flycatcher (*Megarynchus pitangua*) Another boldly-colored, conspicuous species, similar-appearing but less common than Great Kiskadee (except at Hidden Valley, where it was the dominant large flycatcher)

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Social Flycatcher (*Myiozetetes similis*) Another very common flycatcher at middle and lower elevations throughout Belize—seen by the group most days during the trip

Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) Yet another extremely common species—seen daily at mid- to lower elevations in scrub and second growth, often perched on fences, treetops, and utility wires

Couch's Kingbird (*Tyrannus couchii*) Nearly identical in appearance to Tropical Kingbird, the two species are easily separated only when vocalizing—we had unequivocal evidence of Couch's Kingbird at Big Falls, based on calls

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (LO) (*Tyrannus forficatus*) Sitting on fences surrounding the international airport at Belize City, as we taxied in on our flight from Punta Gorda on our last day (others may have seen the species here, as well)

Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*) A perched, roadside bird was sighted by Kelly as we drove to Independence from Big Falls (to meet our boat for the Monkey River trip)—a species that's easy to recognize from the vehicle, even at 50 mph!

Pipridae: Manakins (1)

White-collared Manakin (*Manacus candei*) This typically elusive species was observed on separate days on the lodge grounds at Big Falls, during early morning walks—both males and females were easy to spot as they gleaned for insects in low thickets

Tityridae: Becards and Tityras (4)

Black-crowned Tityra (*Tityra inquisitor*) One of the last new birds seen by the group on the trip, we found this species (the least common of the two tityras in Belize) above the trail during our stop along the Monkey River

Masked Tityra (*Tityra semifasciata*) A few individual birds of this distinctive species were seen in the Big Falls area, with our best looks in the riparian forest along Blue Creek

Rose-throated Becard (*Pachyramphus aglaiae*) Spotted almost immediately as we exited the vehicles at the Nim Li Punit Maya site near Big Falls, we watched a female sitting quietly on a hanging branch in the mid-canopy

White-winged Becard (*Pachyramphus polychopterus*) A rather scarce species in Belize, but widespread and common in much of South America—we had very nice views of birds perched in trees (at the same location where the group had glimpses of Bare-crowned Antbird) on the lodge grounds at Big Falls

Vireonidae: Vireos (6)

Rufous-browed Peppershrike (*Cyclarhis gujanensis*) A striking species, we were alerted to a singing peppershrike in the canopy at Crooked Tree Lodge one afternoon—our patience eventually paid off, and most of us ended up with good views

Tawny-crowned Greenlet (*Tunchiornis ochraceiceps*) A few of the group managed to see this elusive understory species, as we walked in the shade along Blue Creek (on our first day trip out from Big Falls)

Lesser Greenlet (*Pachysylvia decurtata*) Initially encountered at Caracol, Lesser Greenlets were also present at Blue Hole National Park, and in the canopy during most of our forest walks while at Big Falls—often hard to see, a non-descript species reminiscent of Tennessee Warbler

White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*) First seen by the group as birds foraged near the picnic area at Blue Hole National Park—also locally common along Blue Creek, and near the river bordering The Lodge at Big Falls

Mangrove Vireo (*Vireo pallens*) The subspecies found in Belize is not restricted to coastal mangrove habitats, and we observed several Mangrove Vireos (very active and vocal) in brushy fields near Crooked Tree Lodge

Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*) Also seen in Crooked Tree village and on the lodge grounds, and later near Barton Creek Cave—a common breeding songbird in the eastern U.S., and an overwintering migrant in Belize

Corvidae: Crows and Jays (3)

Brown Jay (*Psilorhinus morio*) A loud, ubiquitous species, seen and heard repeatedly during the tour

Green Jay (*Cyanocorax yncas*) We had a brief look at birds near feeders and on the grounds of Hidden Valley Inn—a beautifully colored species

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Yucatan Jay (*Cyanocorax yucatanicus*) Robert (our morning guide on our third day at Crooked Tree, who also operates Bates B&B) delivered this **Yucatan endemic** for us, as we birded along the sandy back roads on the outskirts of the village

Hirundinidae: Swallows and Martins (5)

Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) We had scattered sightings at each of our lodge stays—most notable was at Barton Creek Cave, where the population is subspecies *ridgwayi*, which some ornithologists feel is unique enough to be considered a separate species endemic to the Yucatan Peninsula

Gray-breasted Martin (*Progne chalybea*) Seen most days during the tour, we had especially good looks at Crooked Tree (where birds were nesting and perching on wires)

Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*) Not seen until the last day of the tour, when Joe observed birds circling the Punta Gorda airport before his flight back to Belize City—a North American breeder, not resident in Belize

Mangrove Swallow (*Tachycineta albilinea*) Closely tied to water, this species (the smallest swallow in Belize) was common at Crooked Tree Lagoon, and was seen again during our day on the Monkey River

Barn Swallow (*Progne chalybea*) Also a migrant species in Belize (seen by Joe, same location as Tree Swallow)

Troglodytidae: Wrens (3)

House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) Never occurring in great numbers, but seen off and on (for example, it was common near the main lodge building at Big Falls)—House Wrens in Belize are resident and non-migratory

Spot-breasted Wren (*Pheugopedius maculipectus*) Isaac, Joe, and Kelly had the group's first good looks at this skulker, as they negotiated a forest boardwalk one afternoon near Crooked Tree Lagoon—distinctly patterned

White-breasted Wood-Wren (*Henicorhina leucosticta*) This species occurs in humid lowland forests throughout Belize—birds were heard singing several mornings, especially at The Lodge at Big Falls, and were finally seen during our afternoon forest walk with Steve Choco

Poliptillidae: Gnatcatchers (2)

Long-billed Gnatwren (*Ramphocaenus melanurus*) Often difficult to spot, this typically secretive species perched in view for most of us near the picnic area at Blue Hole National Park, just before we boarded the vans to continue our drive to Big Falls

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliptila caerulea*) Widespread throughout much of the U.S., this species also breeds in Belize—it was common at Crooked Tree, and was also seen at Caracol and on the lodge grounds at Big Falls

Turdidae: Thrushes (2)

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) Another winter visitor to Belize, Wood Thrushes were seen methodically walking the forest floor at Crooked Tree Lodge, the Lodge at Big Falls, and along the Monkey River

Clay-colored Thrush (*Turdus grayi*) A frequently observed species (Middle America's answer to the American Robin), this ubiquitous thrush was seen daily—it's the National Bird of Costa Rica, known for its elegant song (if not for its looks)

Mimidae: Mockingbirds and Thrashers (2)

Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) Another of the common North American breeders that winters in Central America, we saw catbirds every day of the trip—never in great numbers, yet their mewing call was a regular component of the background bird chatter on most outings

Tropical Mockingbird (*Mimus gilvus*) A generally widespread species in Belize, it was recorded on just a single day of the trip, at Crooked Tree—its overall absence seemed inexplicable

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Fringillidae: Finches and Euphonias (3)

Scrub Euphonia (*Euphonia affinis*) Scattered individuals were seen on the grounds of Crooked Tree Lodge and in yards and fields in the village

Yellow-throated Euphonia (*Euphonia hirundinacea*) Widespread—seen at Crooked Tree, Caracol, Barton Creek, Blue Hole National park, and the Big Falls area

Black-headed Siskin (*Spinus notatus*) Glimpses were had by Marvin and Kelly when we first arrived at King Vulture Overlook—although mid-day and hot, Kelly subsequently found a flock feeding nearby, but just as the group re-boarded the air-conditioned van to return to Hidden Valley (so the choice was lunch, or siskins, and lunch prevailed)

Emberizidae: New World Sparrows (3)

Green-backed Sparrow (*Arremonops chloronotus*) Seen early in the morning along the forested road that enters the lodge compound at Big Falls—birds were quietly foraging in the understory

Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) One of the most common and widespread songbirds in North America, U.S. birds are largely migratory—however, populations in Belize are residents and typically occur in pine-oak-palm habitats (we saw birds at Crooked Tree in the Caribbean Pine savannah)

Rusty Sparrow (*Aimophila rufescens*) Locally common on Mountain Pine Ridge, we ran into several small flocks on our way to and from Thousand Foot Falls, and also on a morning walk on Hidden Valley Inn trails through Tiger Fern (*Dicranopteris pectinata*) habitat—a Mexican and Central American endemic

Icteriidae: Yellow-breasted Chat (1)

Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*) Seen at Crooked Tree (under cashew trees) as we walked with Rubin, and later at The Lodge at Big Falls—a migrant in Belize, Yellow-breasted Chat (a taxonomic conundrum, and long considered an anomalous warbler) was only recently (2017) split off in its own family by the American Ornithological Union

Icteridae: New World Blackbirds and Orioles (13)

Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*) A couple birds were sitting on fenceposts as we drove down the dirt road to Blue Creek village, on our first full day at Big Falls—seen from the van

Yellow-billed Cacique (*Amblycercus holosericeus*) Brief views of this secretive species were had by a few of us during our first morning walk at Big Falls

Montezuma Oropendola (*Psarocolius montezuma*) Most birds were seen sporadically as flyovers, at Barton Creek, Nim Li Punit, and Monkey River, and a breeding colony was also viewed at Caracol—the mechanical vocalizations of oropendolas are amazing

Black-cowled Oriole (*Icterus prothemelas*) Common but intermittent, individual birds and small groups were seen over several days at Crooked Tree village, Hidden Valley, and in forested areas near Big Falls—a resident species

Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*) A common North American non-breeding migrant in Belize, birds were primarily seen in the lowlands during our trip, around Crooked Tree, Barton Creek, Caracol, and near Big Falls

Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*) A breeding species in the SW U.S., Hooded Oriole is a resident in Belize—our views of the species were limited to trees around Crooked Tree village

Yellow-backed Oriole (*Icterus chrysater*) The most common oriole seen by the group at Hidden Valley Inn—a beautiful resident species, it appeared daily on the feeders and in the garden areas

Yellow-tailed Oriole (*Icterus mesomelas*) Also seen at Hidden Valley Inn, but not as frequently as Yellow-backed—this species has an odd bi-modal distribution, with some populations restricted to the Mountain Pine Ridge, and others in the coastal lowlands (we saw birds along the Monkey River)

Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) A non-breeding migrant that occurs across much of Belize in the winter—birds were seen at Crooked Tree, Hidden Valley, Barton Creek, Caracol, and Big Falls

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Bronzed Cowbird (*Molothrus aeneus*) Initially only heard, and later seen, at Crooked Tree village

Giant Cowbird (*Molothrus oryzivorus*) An enormous cousin to the preceding species—some of our group saw this brood parasite harassing Montezuma Oropendolas at their nest sites at Caracol

Melodious Blackbird (*Dives dives*) The most common Icterid species of the trip—often around homes and gardens—a very vocal species seen (and heard) daily

Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) Another bird we became accustomed to seeing and hearing everywhere we went—their vocal repertoire is so varied and bizarre you never grew tired of them

Parulidae: New World Warblers (22)

NOTE: New World Warblers occurring in Belize are nearly all North American breeding species that overwinter south of the U.S. border—the genus *Basileuteris* includes the only year-round resident warblers in Belize, and we saw just one *Basileuteris* species out of the 22 warblers we recorded.

Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*) Individuals were seen strolling the understory and trails during our stay at Big Falls—also found at Green Hills Butterfly Farm the day we drove to Barton Creek Cave

Worm-eating Warbler (*Helminthos vermivorum*) Glimpsed by Kelly at Blue Hole National Park along a back trail, and later by much of the group during our afternoon hike near Big Falls

Louisiana Waterthrush (*Parkesia motacilla*) (LO) Seen by Bob near a small pond at Green Hills Butterfly Farm (where we also saw American Pygmy Kingfisher)—the less common of the two overwintering waterthrushes in Belize

Northern Waterthrush (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) Seen most days of the tour, especially down south, where we saw birds working the lawns surrounding The Lodge at Big Falls every day of our stay

Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora cyanoptera*) A beautiful species, seen briefly in the brush at Crooked Tree Lodge, and then later at Blue Hole National Park (during our lunch stop on the way to Big Falls)

Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*) Infrequent, yet seen most days, this energetic and acrobatic species was seen multiple times, creeping and probing along branches and tree trunks

Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) (LO) During a rest break on our first full afternoon at Crooked Tree, this species was seen in a mixed flock by Bob in the open pine-oak forest that surrounds Bates B&B

Tennessee Warbler (*Oreothlypis peregrina*) Common in mixed flocks at the Nim Li Punit Maya site, we also saw this drab species at Crooked Tree, Barton Creek, and along Blue Creek (during our day trip from Big Falls)

Kentucky Warbler (*Geothlypis formosa*) (HO) Heard repeatedly in the understory near Blue Creek, on the lodge grounds at Big Falls, and along the Monkey River trail—it was glimpsed, but never satisfactorily seen

Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*) (HO) The distinctive call of this species was briefly heard near the cow pasture at the lodge entrance on our last morning at Big Falls

Hooded Warbler (*Setophaga citrina*) Common during the second half of the trip (around Big Falls), we also saw birds in brilliant breeding plumage on the ground around the picnic area at Blue Hole National Park

American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*) Very common at the lower elevations, we saw displaying males and females many times during the trip

Northern Parula (*Setophaga americana*) Locally common in fields and cashew orchards around Crooked Tree village, occasional elsewhere on the tour

Magnolia Warbler (*Setophaga magnolia*) Very common during the tour, we saw isolated birds or birds in mixed flocks almost every day

Yellow Warbler (*Setophaga petechia*) Not common, but we did see a few birds around Crooked Tree Lagoon, and also in brush near Barton Creek

Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) Seen in mixed flocks at Nim Li Punit as well as near the Big Falls lodge, several males were in full breeding plumage ahead of departing for their North American breeding grounds

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Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle subsp.) (*Setophaga coronata*) Abundant in North America, and much less so in Belize, we found single birds during our first morning walk at Crooked Tree, and near the small lake at Hidden Valley
Yellow-throated Warbler (*Setophaga dominica*) We saw several birds in the mangroves and in gardens at Monkey River village, and nowhere else on the tour

Grace's Warbler (*Setophaga graciae*) Closely tied to pine habitats on its breeding grounds in western North America, Grace's Warbler generally maintains this link during migration—we found the species in the Caribbean pine forests around Hidden Valley Inn, and in the savannahs surrounding Crooked Tree village

Black-throated Green Warbler (*Setophaga virens*) Seen in the Crooked Tree pine savannahs, at Thousand Foot Falls near Hidden Valley, and in lowland forest near Big Falls

Rufous-capped Warbler (*Basileuterus rufifrons*) Viewed by those who opted to go Barton Creek Cave, a brightly plumaged bird revealed itself in the tiger fern thicket by the roadside, just as we left Hidden Valley Inn—*this is the only Belizean resident (i.e., non-migratory) warbler species we saw on the trip*

Wilson's Warbler (*Cardellina pusilla*) We saw a single bird—associating with a mixed species flock—during our early morning walk at the Nim Li Punit Maya site near Big Falls

Cardinalidae: Cardinals, Grosbeaks, and Allies (9)

Hepatic Tanager (*Piranga flava*) Seen only at Hidden Valley Inn, where male and female birds were active in the nearby pines and other trees on the lodge grounds

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*) Bright red males and yellow females were both seen, initially in the Crooked Tree area, and later at Caracol and near Big Falls

Red-crowned Ant-Tanager (*Habia rubica*) Joe and Bob were on a late afternoon walk on the lodge grounds at Big Falls, when they came across an Army Ant swarm—they were initially alerted to the ants by the noisy buzzing calls from this and the next species, which had joined antbirds and woodcreepers in a foraging melee at the swarm

Red-throated Ant-Tanager (*Chlorothraupis stolzmanni*) See above (also seen at Caracol)

Black-faced Grosbeak (*Cyanocompsa cyanooides*) A single bird was seen in the high canopy by a few of the group, as we walked with guide Steve Choco during our birding day at Blue Creek

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) This migrant species was discovered during our morning trip to the Nim Li Punit Maya site, near Big Falls

Blue-black Grosbeak (*Cyanoloxia cyanooides*) (HO) Marvin identified this species from its call, during a roadside stop on our way back to Hidden Valley Inn from Barton Creek Cave—efforts to spot the bird were unsuccessful

Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*) Infrequent, an uncommon winter visitor seen at the Big Falls feeders—in beautiful breeding plumage

Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*) Seen briefly, during our morning visit with Marvin to the small lake north of the inn on Hidden Valley Reserve

Thraupidae: Tanagers and Allies (14)

Crimson-collared Tanager (*Ramphocelus sanguinolentus*) A stunning species, a bright male was seen on the grounds of the lodge at Big Falls as it flew across the lawn in front of the main building

Scarlet-rumped Tanager (*Ramphocelus passerinii*) Closely related to the former species, and formerly known as Passerini's Tanager, we saw several birds at The Lodge at Big Falls

Blue-gray Tanager (*Thraupis episcopus*) A common visitor to feeders in the Neotropics, we saw exceptionally vivid examples of the species around Crooked Tree and at Big Falls

Yellow-winged Tanager (*Thraupis abbas*) A single, brightly plumaged bird made an appearance at the feeders at Big Falls

Golden-hooded Tanager (*Tangara larvata*) A striking songbird, it ranges further north than any of the other species of the large Neotropical genus *Tangara*—seen several times around the lodge grounds at Big Falls

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Red-legged Honeycreeper (*Cyanerpes cyaneus*) We saw scattered birds at Blue Hole National Park, and on most days while in southern Belize (often at the feeders at Big Falls)

Blue-black Grassquit (*Volatinia jacarina*) Fairly common at mid- and lower elevations, generally in scrub and semi-disturbed fields, etc., especially in southern Belize

Thick-billed Seedfinch (*Sporophila funerea*) A pair of birds (male black, female rusty) was seen from the boat in tangled thickets, while we drifted close to shore along the Monkey River

Variable Seedeater (*Sporophila corvina*) Like a more slender-billed version of the preceding species, Variable Seedeaters were seen on several occasions, especially during our stay in southern Belize—birds preferred overgrown pastures, fencerows, and fields

Morelet's Seedeater (*Sporophila moreletti*) This small seedeater was abundant most days during the trip, and was locally common at lower elevations in a wide range of open habitats—a recent split, listed as White-collared Seedeater in the *Birds of Belize* guidebook

Yellow-faced Grassquit (*Tiaris olivaceus*) Occasional during the trip—recorded along the edges of open fields around Hidden Valley Inn, and later along the road on the way to Barton Creek Cave

NOTE: We follow the Cornell Clements Checklist and eBird by keeping the saltators (below) in the tanager family (Thraupidae)—some authors prefer Cardinalidae, others are simply uncertain

Buff-throated Saltator (*Saltator maximus*) Seen primarily during the latter half of the trip, our best views were on the lodge grounds at Big Falls, where birds often visited the feeders

Black-headed Saltator (*Saltator atriceps*) The most common of the saltators on the tour, scattered birds were spotted at Hidden Valley Inn, Blue Hole National Park, and at Nim Li Punit (near Big Falls)

Grayish Saltator (*Saltator coerulescens*) Only seen at the Green Hills Butterfly Farm (on our way to Barton Creek Cave from Hidden Valley)—one bird was particularly memorable, as it repeatedly and vociferously confronted its own image in the side mirror of an old truck

Passeridae: Old World Sparrows (1)

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) A well-known species globally, seen sporadically throughout the trip in urban and other settled areas (*introduced species*)

MAMMALS – 9 Species

Common Opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*) We saw this mammal as it clambered over some vegetation near the pool at Big Falls, the same evening we were watching the Black-and-white Owl—related to the Virginia Opossum of the U.S., this Neotropical species ranges from Mexico to South America

Proboscis Bat (*Rhynchonycteris naso*) We had daylight looks at these odd bats, clinging in tight formation to the underside of tree limbs as we drifted along the Monkey River

NOTE: The follow three bat species are included courtesy of Nancy—thanks!—who had a device with her on the trip called an *Echo Meter Touch 2 PRO Handheld Bat Detector*, manufactured by Wildlife Acoustics (WA). WA describes the device as “an innovative combination of hardware and software that lets you listen to, record, and identify bats in real-time – on your Android or Apple iOS device.” So Nancy tried it out, and after recording the vocalizing bats above the verandah at Big Falls and inputting the data, she came up with the following

Lesser Dog-like Bat (*Peropteryx macrotis*) Native from southern Mexico to Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil

Thomas' Shaggy Bat (*Centronycteris centralis*) Native from southern Mexico to Ecuador and Peru

Sinaloan Mastiff bat (*Molossus sinaloae*) Native from central Mexico to northern South America

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February 20 – 28, 2019 | Written by Bob Meinke

Yucatan (or Guatemalan) Black Howler Monkey (*Alouatta pigra*) Seen well (and heard very clearly) during our trip and hike up the Monkey River—also heard at a distance in Big Falls

Deppe's Squirrel (*Sciurus deppei*) Seen frequently in the trees near the lodge and the surrounding forests at Big Falls

West Indian Manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) Several groups of mature and young animals were observed in eel grass beds from the boat, during the Monkey River excursion—we got great looks for 20+ minutes!

Central American Agouti (*Dasyprocta punctata*) Seen foraging every morning and evening on the lawns at The Lodge at Big Falls

REPTILES and AMPHIBIANS – 11 Species

Morelet's Crocodile (*Crocodylus moreletii*) A modest-sized specimen (ca. 1.5 m) was found sunning on floating debris in the Monkey River—several (mostly submerged) specimens of undetermined size were also seen lurking near the boat dock in Monkey River village

Black Spiny-tailed Iguana (*Ctenosaura similis*) Pointed out by Marvin near Barton Creek Cave, and also seen near the Monkey River

Green Iguana (*Iguana iguana*) The common greenish or orange iguana seen in the riparian brush and overhanging vegetation along rivers and creeks—we got plenty of looks at colorful adults sunning themselves near Barton Creek Cave, Caracol, and the Monkey River

Brown (or Striped Basilisk) (*Basiliscus vittatus*) Seen along Barton Creek, as well as the Monkey River—sometimes referred to as the “Jesus Christ lizard,” for its ability to rapidly run across open water when agitated or threatened

Brown Anole (*Norops sagrei*) The colloquial “chameleon” often sold in pet stores, we saw this anole at Big Falls and Crooked Tree (**introduced species**; indigenous to Cuba and the Bahamas, known to outcompete native species if established elsewhere)

Neotropical Green Anole (*Anolis biporcatus*) Seen briefly in vegetation and near the lagoon at Crooked Tree

House (or Asian) Gecko (*Hemidactylus frenatus*) Common, but typically restricted to areas of human habitation—seen chasing insects by the outside lights and climbing the lodge screens and walls at Crooked Tree, Hidden Valley, and Big Falls (**introduced species**)

Central American Banded Gecko (*Coleonyx mitratus*) A beautiful native gecko, which attempted to share Joe's quarters with him at Big Falls (but was gently urged to leave)

Mayan Coral Snake (*Micrurus hippocrepis*) Reported by some of us at Hidden Valley, the amount of red described by the group in the banding on the body suggested that the species was the Mayan Coral Snake—although venomous, not considered particularly dangerous and not aggressive

Tabasco Mud Turtle (*Kinosternon acutum*) Small turtles seen sunning on woody debris floating in a farm pond by a marshy field, near El Progreso (on our drive along Seven Mile Road to Barton Creek Cave)

Mesoamerican Slider (*Trachemys scripta*) Mid-size turtle observed in pond during our trip with Marvin to Barton Creek Cave, near El Progreso