



### **-SPECIES LIST-**

## **Belize Birding & Nature Tour: Lamanai and Chan Chich (with Crooked Tree Extension)**

**January 21–28, 2020**

**-Compiled by Bob Meinke-**

**Naturalist Journeys Host:** Bob Meinke

**Special Assistant:** Kelly Amsberry **Principal Lodge Guides:** Eduardo (Lamanai) & Luis (Chan Chich)

**Participants:** Dottie Anderson, Cathy Brose, Mary Brzezinski, David Chan, Jan Drury, Larry Drury, Nancy Furbush, Debbie Hall, Brenda Nehring, Merbie Payne, Thomas Payne, and Myrna Perkins

**(HO)** = Heard only, distinctly enough to be counted (but not seen)

**(I)** = Introduced species, not native to Belize

**(E)** = Endemic to the Yucatan Peninsula (restricted to Belize and adjacent Mexico)

**Summary:** We had a successful and enjoyable winter trip to Belize, featuring excellent lodges, exquisite landscapes, and impressive biodiversity. Including the Crooked Tree pre-trip extension, we observed 238 species of birds, 11 mammals, and 10 reptiles and amphibians. Never rising to more than a few hundred feet above sea level over the course of the trip, we nonetheless experienced a remarkable array of habitats, including mangrove lagoons, Caribbean Pine and White Oak savannahs, riparian woodlands, rugged escarpments, freshwater lakes, and many square miles of tropical broadleaf forest (much of it old growth). We recorded 12 species of pigeons and doves, 17 large waders, 22 raptors, 7 parrots and parakeets, all 4 of Belize's beautiful trogon species, 12 hummingbirds, 19 warblers, 4 kingfishers, 9 woodpeckers, 7 woodcreepers, 7 vireos, 12 orioles and their relatives, 23 tyrant flycatchers, and 12 species of true tanagers. And we topped it off by getting world class looks at the stunning Lovely Cotinga, one of the rarest and most sought-after birds in Northern Central America. We had a very enthusiastic and congenial group of travelers, who always made the most of their opportunities, and we owe much appreciation to our Belizean guides at Crooked Tree, Lamanai, and Chan Chich. Every day was a triumph thanks to them!

### **BIRDS (238 species recorded, of which 6 were heard only):**

#### **TINAMOUS: Tinamidae (1)**

**Slaty-breasted Tinamou** *Crypturellus boucardi*—This was an unexpected surprise, when a single individual broke from the roadside vegetation and scurried along in full view, as we slowly descended in the trucks from the Upper Escarpment northeast of Chan Chich Lodge. Most of us had at least a quick look at this typically very secretive species.

#### **DUCKS, GEESE, AND SWANS: Anatidae (5)**

**Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna autumnalis*—One of the many aquatic species we spotted on the water during the pre-tour extension at Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. The contrasting plumage and the vivid, coral-colored beak and legs of this species are always a treat.

**Fulvous Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna bicolor*—Also observed during our morning boating experience at Crooked Tree, this species was mostly seen in monospecific flocks, or occasionally as individuals mixed in with groups of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks.

**Muscovy Duck** *Cairina moschata*—Seen meandering around homesteads in Crooked Tree Village, this large duck species is native in Belize, though the birds we saw may have been domesticated.

**Blue-winged Teal** *Spatula discors*—The most widespread duck species in Belize, although seldom occurring in large concentrations. A few birds were seen at Crooked Tree, and also at Laguna Seca near Chan Chich.

**Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis*—A small group of Lesser Scaups were seen at a distance at Crooked Tree Lagoon—we had clear enough views to determine they were not the similar-appearing Ring-billed Duck.

### **GUANS AND CURASSOWS: Cracidae (3)**

**Plain Chachalaca** *Ortalis vetula*—This pheasant-sized cracid was seen every day during the main tour, with scattered individuals (often quite vocal) present at both Lamanai and Chan Chich. This and the following three species have historically been hunted as wild game in Belize, impacting their numbers. However, prohibitions on hunting in recent years has improved the outlook for these birds.

**Crested Guan** *Penelope purpurascens*—Only a fleeting glimpse of a single bird was had on the trip, by Bob and possibly a couple others in the van, the day we drove the unpaved road towards Gallon Jug on our way into Chan Chich. Its scarcity was a bit surprising, since the species is often seen in this area.

**Great Curassow** *Crax rubra*—This imposing species was observed on the grounds of Chan Chich and along the surrounding roads on three separate days—strongly sexually dimorphic, we often saw mated pairs together, allowing us to compare the very different males and females.

### **PARTRIDGES, PHEASANTS, AND ALLIES: Phasianidae (1)**

**Ocellated Turkey** *Meleagris ocellata* (E)—A stunning bird, with beautiful, iridescent plumage, one of only two turkey species in the world. Conservation efforts in the Chan Chich Reserve have greatly increased Ocellated Turkey numbers in recent years, and we literally saw hundreds of birds during our stay.

### **GREBES: Podicipedidae (1)**

**Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps*—A common species, yet never really abundant in Belize, we saw a few individuals and pairs diving at Crooked Tree Lagoon and in the New River near Lamanai.

### **PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae (12)**

**Rock Pigeon** *Columbia livia* (I)—Seen our first day in Belize, when a few small flocks were noted near the international airport in Belize City. (Is there a city in the world this species hasn't infiltrated?)

**Pale-vented Pigeon** *Patagioenas cayennensis*—A close relative (along with the following two taxa) of North America's Band-tailed Pigeon, we recorded this largely arboreal species at Crooked Tree Lodge, and later in the forests surrounding Lamanai, mostly as birds passed overhead.

**Red-billed Pigeon** *Patagioenas flavirostris*—Our best views were had near Lamanai Lodge, where we saw this stout, rufous-plumaged species perched high on open *Cecropia* branches near Indian Church Village.

**Short-billed Pigeon** *Patagioenas nigrirostris*—A flyover of this species was seen at Chan Chich Lodge, and then another one later at Laguna Seca. Very similar to Pale-vented Pigeon, this species is distinguished by its uniform brown-vinaceous underside when observed in flight.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* (I)—A pair of birds were noted near the international airport on our arrival day in Belize. Belize certainly doesn't need any more of this introduced pest.



**Plain-breasted Ground-Dove** *Columbina minuta*—Differentiated from Common Ground Dove (which surprisingly we didn't see) by its non-scaled pattern on the breast and head, we saw this species in Crooked Tree Village, at Beck's B&B, and also on the grounds of the Lamanai Mayan ruins.

**Ruddy Ground-Dove** *Columbina talpacoti*—Common during the first half of the trip, seen daily at Crooked Tree as well as Lamanai (around Indian Church Village), this is a very widespread species in the Neotropics.

**Blue Ground-Dove** *Claravis pretiosa* (HO)—The distinctive, mournful call of this uncommon species was heard in the distance on two mornings at Chan Chich. Typically, a difficult bird to spot.

**Ruddy Quail-Dove** *Geotrygon montana*—Kelly and Bob had a decidedly unsatisfying glimpse of a single bird, during a final morning walk with Luis along the Old Sylvester Road at Chan Chich, when it suddenly lifted off from the trail ahead and then immediately veered into the forest shadows.

**White-tipped Dove** *Leptotila verreauxi*—Often a species that's commonly seen in Belize, we ended up hearing the steady coo of this species more often than seeing it on this tour. We noticed just a few birds foraging on the ground at Crooked Tree, Lamanai, and Chan Chich.

**Gray-headed Dove** *Leptotila plumbeiceps*—A close relative of the preceding species, we saw this shy dove in the understory around the Mayan ruins at Chan Chich.

**White-winged Dove** *Zenaida asiatica*—Common in the American Southwest, we only saw scattered individuals of this robust dove species, mostly from the car the day we drove from Lamanai to Chan Chich.

### **CUCKOOS AND ALLIES: Cuculidae (2)**

**Groove-billed Ani** *Crotophaga sulcirostris*—Not all that common in terms of numbers, yet this species seemed ubiquitous, nonetheless—it was seen by the group every day, usually in small flocks, which were nonetheless conspicuous, as the birds were often seen sunning in roadside vegetation.

**Squirrel Cuckoo** *Piaya cayana*—A striking species, this large cuckoo can nonetheless be difficult to spot when sitting motionless in the canopy. We were fortunate on this tour, seeing birds on six separate days. The large tracts of uncut forest in Belize may contribute to a healthy population of Squirrel Cuckoos.

### **NIGHTJARS: Caprimulgidae (3)**

**Lesser Nighthawk** *Chordeiles acutipennis*—An abundant U.S. species, Lesser Nighthawks are transients in Central America and infrequent in Belize during the winter months. We had early evening glimpses of a couple birds swirling along the New River near Lamanai.

**Common Pauraque** *Nyctidromus albicollis*—With one of the most characteristic night-time calls of the New World tropics, it wasn't hard to locate pauraques most evenings. Once dark, birds emerged from their roosts and set down in the open, often on paths or roads, where they had the unsettling habit of suddenly lifting off in an explosive flutter if disturbed. "Pauraque encounters" were part of the evening fun at Chan Chich.

**Yucatan Nightjar** *Antrostomus badius* (E)—One of our perks at Lamanai were the after-dinner wildlife-spotting excursions on the New River, and finding the endemic Yucatan Nightjar was one of our goals. Not to be disappointed, we had close-up looks at a bird one night, perched on a low branch overhanging the water.

### **POTOOS: Nyctibiidae (1)**

**Northern Potoo** *Nyctibius jamaicensis*—This was another of our nocturnal target species at Lamanai. We initially saw the distinctive, orange eye-shine of several distant potoos, as Eduardo played his spotlight across the mangrove thickets along the New River. But soon afterwards we hit the jackpot, when we came across a bird perched on an open snag just a few feet from the boat—sweet!

### **SWIFTS: Apodidae (2)**

**Vaux's Swift** *Chaetura vauxi*—A flock of this resident swift species was spotted overhead during our stay at Chan Chich, during one of our walks through the forest along the entry road to the lodge. Essentially indistinguishable in flight from Chimney Swift (a passage migrant in Belize), our ID is based on the facts that (1) Chimney is a spring transient that doesn't typically arrive in Belize until late March, and (2) it's reportedly less likely than Vaux's Swift to forage over heavily forested habitats.

**Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift** *Panyptila cayennensis*—Thankfully, a more distinctive species in flight (with its white throat and acerose tail) than Vaux's Swift, we spotted Lesser Swallow-tailed Swifts overhead at Lamanai, and later above the Upper Escarpment near Chan Chich.

## **HUMMINGBIRDS: Trochilidae (12)**

**White-necked Jacobin** *Florisuga mellivora*—Males are among the most common and easily recognized hummingbirds in Belize, with white and navy-blue plumage—we saw many at the Chan Chich feeders.

**Long-billed Hermit** *Phaethornis longirostris*—Another common species seen at Chan Chich, its tapering white tail, mostly rufous-bronze plumage, striped face, and distinctly curved bill combine to make this large hermit unmistakable.

**Stripe-throated Hermit** *Phaethornis striigularis*—A few of the group had brief looks at this smaller relation of the preceding species, perched in the open during a walk at Indian Church Village west of Lamanai Lodge.

**Purple-crowned Fairy** *Heliostyris barroti*—The only hummingbird in Belize with a pure white underside, an elongate body, and a short black bill. We saw a single female, near the small, brushy river (really a creek) that runs behind Chan Chich.

**Green-breasted Mango** *Anthracothorax prevostii*—Most commonly seen offshore in Belize, on the cayes, Green-breasted Mangoes will also head inland along the major rivers. We saw male and female birds near Crooked Tree Lagoon, and also in the forest surrounding Lamanai (not far from the New River).

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird** *Archilochus colubris*—A well-known breeder in the U.S., and a spring migrant species in Belize, a female bird was spotted near the main lodge area at Lamanai on two separate days.

**Canivet's Emerald** *Chlorostilbon canivetii*—A quick look at a single male bird was had by Bob and one other in the group, near the pond at Crooked Tree Lodge on our first day of the pre-trip extension. This is a well-marked, regionally endemic species, with a distinctly forked tail and black-tipped red bill.

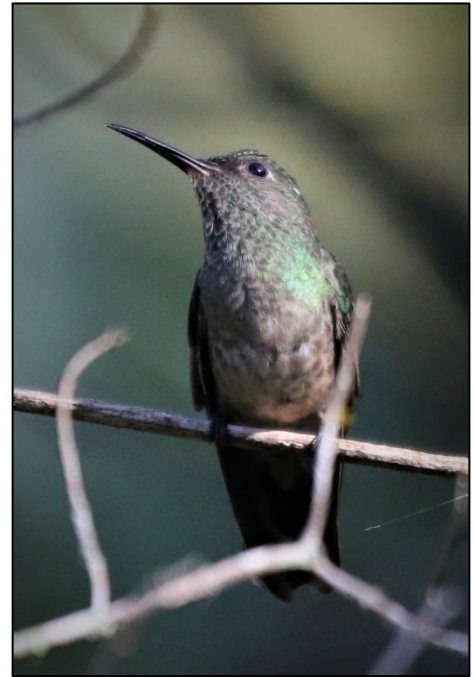
**Scaly-breasted Hummingbird** *Phaeochroa cuvierii*—An overall greenish, plainly-patterned species, distinguished from female White-necked Jacobin by the dark spots on the underside (interspersed with gray, not white), the white post-ocular spot, and the buffy flanks. Seen perched along forest trails on our last full day at Chan Chich.

**Wedge-tailed Sabrewing** *Campylopterus curvipennis*—Picked up by Eduardo, Kelly, and a few of the group during our last morning walk at Lamanai, out by the crocodile pond—a brilliant male with a visible purplish-violet crown.

**White-bellied Emerald** *Amazilia candida*—A smaller species that was fairly common at the Chan Chich feeders, and seen most days there. However, its feeding forays were often brief, as it was easily bullied by the larger Long-billed Hermits and White-necked Jacobins.

**Rufous-tailed Hummingbird** *Amazilia tzacatl*—The most abundant hummingbird of the trip, seen every day but one. Birds were especially common at Crooked Tree and Lamanai.

**Buff-bellied Hummingbird** *Amazilia yucatanensis*—Bob and the group almost missed this species at Beck's B&B, after our perception had been dulled earlier in the day by the overwhelming numbers of similar-appearing Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds on the property. Initially dismissed as a Rufous-tailed, the bird in question eventually perched in perfect, late-afternoon light, highlighting its distinctive, yellowish-beige abdomen. You never know when a little scrutiny will pay off!



## **RAILS, COOTS AND ALLIES: Rallidae (3)**

**Russet-naped Wood-Rail** *Aramides axillaris*—A large, uncharacteristically confiding species (for a rail), we had good looks on two days of foraging birds at the Lamanai Mayan site, and later near the Lamanai Outpost compound. (Formerly known as the Gray-necked Wood-Rail.)

**American Coot** *Fulica americana*—A species that's abundant at home in North America, but not so much in Belize. We recorded a couple of small, rather unimpressive flocks on the water at Crooked Tree Lagoon.

**Ruddy Crane** *Laterallus ruber* (HO)—One of several small rails in Belize, and like similar species elsewhere in the world, nearly impossible to see. Calls were heard in late afternoon on both days at Crooked Tree Lodge, but there were no sightings.



### **SUNGREBE: Heliornithidae (1)**

**Sungrebe** *Heliornis fulica*—An unexpected view of this wary species was had by a few of the group (along with Luis, our Chan Chich guide), as we walked the perimeter of Laguna Seca late one afternoon. Gazing down at the water from a forested slope, we were surprised to see a Sungrebe swim out into full view, unaware of our presence. Typically a shy bird that hugs vegetated shorelines, it was fascinating to see it swimming nonchalantly across an open lake.

### **LIMPKIN: Aramididae (1)**

**Limpkin** *Aramus guarauna*—We saw scattered individuals on four days of the tour, including birds along the lagoon at Crooked Tree Lodge, by the shoreline at the Lamanai Mayan site, and at Laguna Seca (while on an outing from Chan Chich). The species was vocalizing at Crooked Tree in the evening—a very eerie call.



### **JACANAS: Jacanidae (1)**

**Northern Jacana** *Jacana spinosa*—Well-adapted to their aquatic environment, we watched adults (with young) at New River and Crooked Tree Lagoon, as they deftly maneuvered across floating debris and aquatic vegetation with their amazing, over-sized feet. A beautiful bird, especially when they reveal their bright yellow underwings in flight.

### **SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES: Scolopacidae (2)**

**Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla*—A transient species in Belize, we identified a pair of birds by their small size and yellowish legs, as they anxiously worked their way along the edge of the New River by Lamanai.

**Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius*—The only other small shorebird on our trip list, we saw a lone Spotted Sandpiper bobbing along near the Lamanai Mayan site (by the river), and another in Crooked Tree by the lodge.

### **GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae (2)**

**Laughing Gull** *Leucophaeus atricilla*—A distant glimpse was seen of a few circling birds as we departed the international airport on our arrival day—this species was seen best by those who arrived early and stayed a night or two in Belize City by the ocean.

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia*—Birds were seen cruising over Crooked Tree Lagoon on both days of our visit there, their large, orange-red bills unlike those of any other tern occurring inland in Belize.

### **STORKS: Ciconiidae (2)**

**Jabiru** *Jabiru mycteria*—The largest stork in the world, with some individuals approaching five feet, Jabiru extends to Argentina and Brazil in the south, reaching its northern range limit in Mexico near Belize. We saw two birds each day in Crooked Tree Lagoon, feeding well away from the shore in the shallows.

**Wood Stork** *Mycteria americana*—Wood Storks were seen in flight over Crooked Tree Village several times on both days of our stay, and we also had excellent views of birds (adults and first-years) as they foraged along the edge of Crooked Tree Lagoon during our morning boat excursion.

### **FRIGATEBIRDS: Fregatidae (1)**

**Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens*—A couple birds were seen soaring overhead shortly after some of us left the international airport on our way to Crooked Tree. Generally a marine or littoral species, not seen again during the tour.

### **ANHINGAS: Anhingidae (1)**

**Anhinga** *Anhinga anhinga*—A common inhabitant of Crooked Tree Lagoon, those of us staying at Crooked Tree Lodge saw this cormorant relative multiple times. Generally a coastal species, we were surprised to later see an Anhinga well inland at Laguna Seca, not far from Chan Chich.

### **CORMORANTS: Phalacrocoracidae (1)**

**Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus*—Same scenario as Magnificent Frigatebird and Laughing Gull (above). We had quick glimpses after leaving the international airport on the way to Crooked Tree.

**Neotropic Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*—More common inland (as opposed to the preceding species, which is coastal), Neotropic Cormorants were seen by the group most days, including birds at Crooked Tree Lagoon, New River Lagoon, and Laguna Seca.

### **PELICANS: Pelecanidae (1)**

**Brown Pelican** *Pelecanus occidentalis*—A few birds were seen on the water at Crooked Tree Lagoon, swimming and occasionally diving.

### **HERONS AND EGRETS: Ardeidae (11)**

**Bare-throated Tiger-Heron** *Tigrisoma mexicanum*—A beautiful species, we saw adults as well as juveniles (with their camouflaged plumage) along the shoreline at Crooked Tree Lagoon, and later a pair of birds were seen further inland at Laguna Seca.

**Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias*—Several birds were seen during our morning birding excursion on the water at Crooked Tree, as well as in the reedy wetlands across the river from Lamanai.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba*—Said to be the most widespread species of bird in the world (found on all continents except Antarctica), we saw several Great Egrets wading in the marshes at Crooked Tree and Lamanai.

**Snowy Egret** *Egretta thula*—Also common at Crooked Tree Lagoon, we saw a number of Snowy Egrets perched here as well as along the upper New River (the afternoon we boated into Lamanai).

**Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea*—Another fairly common wader seen during the tour, mostly at Crooked Tree, where it was often perched in shrubs along the shoreline during the day, but also commonly walked the edge of the lagoon near Crooked Tree Lodge in early morning.

**Tricolored Heron** *Egretta tricolor*—Also most commonly seen at Crooked Tree Lodge, where we watched the species competing with Little Blue Herons for hunting space in the shallows near shore.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*—Seemingly everywhere in the Neotropics, we saw Cattle Egrets most days, typically grouped up in farm fields with (*you guessed it*) herds of cattle.

**Green Heron** *Butorides virescens*—Another common heron during the tour—technically a wader, though seldom seen getting its feet wet. We saw dozens of Green Herons perched in vegetation (just above the water) at Crooked Tree Lagoon, and also along the swampy margins of the New River near Lamanai (where we had a marvelous view of a roosting adult one night, during our evening boat trip).

**Black-crowned Night-Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*—One bird was seen along Crooked Tree Lagoon on our first morning, while on the boat—initially mistaken for a sub-adult Boat-billed Heron.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea*—A single bird was observed hiding in vegetation along the banks of Crooked Tree Lagoon—we spotted it from the water.

**Boat-billed Heron** *Cochlearius cochlearius*—Recorded on several days, including sightings at Crooked Tree and along the New River. Best views were had during our boating excursion on Crooked Tree Lagoon, when several birds were spotted perched within a dense patch of mangroves in an apparent rookery.

### **IBIS AND SPOONBILLS: Threskiornithidae (3)**

**White Ibis** *Eudocimus albus*—Common in the Crooked Tree area, seen flying overhead as well as foraging along the banks of the lagoon and its tributaries—family groups with both juveniles and adults were present.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*—This species was not as common as White Ibis (with which it occasionally was seen in mixed flocks)—we saw it at Crooked Tree Lagoon as well as near Lamanai.

**Roseate Spoonbill** *Platalea ajaja*—Only seen at Crooked Tree Lagoon, while we were boating, this beautiful, pink wader was mostly perched in open trees, giving us some excellent, early morning photo ops against clear blue skies.

#### **NEW WORLD VULTURES: Cathartidae (4)**

**King Vulture** *Sarcorampus papa*—Seen far overhead each day at Chan Chich, the black and white wings unmistakable in flight, even at great heights.

**Black Vulture** *Coragyps atratus*—Visually, one of the most common species in Central America, we saw hundreds of circling Black Vultures every day of the trip.

**Turkey Vulture** *Cathartes aura*—Whether there are more Black Vultures or Turkey Vultures in the Neotropics is a matter of debate—it seemed that the two species were equally abundant during our trip.

**Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture** *Cathartes burrovianus*—A close relative of the former species, Lesser Yellow-Headed Vultures are far less common, at least in Belize. Only observed on our second day at Crooked Tree, we saw a pair of birds.

#### **OSPREY: Pandionidae (1)**

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*—Lone birds were seen several times at Crooked Tree Lagoon, as well as along the New River during our stay at Lamanai Outpost.

#### **HAWKS, KITES AND EAGLES: Accipitridae (10)**

**White-tailed Kite** *Elanus leucurus*—The distinctive hovering flight of White-tailed Kite was spotted in the fields surrounding Crooked Tree Village, as well as near Indian Church Village west of Lamanai.

**Black Hawk-Eagle** *Spizaetus tyrannus*—Seen only while we were at Chan Chich, we recorded this uncommon raptor flying high over the lodge grounds, as well as on our outing to the Upper Escarpment.



**Ornate Hawk-Eagle** *Spizaetus ornatus*—Considerably rarer than the preceding taxon, we had impressive views of this species directly overhead, as it soared across the Upper Escarpment site managed by Chan Chich Lodge.

**Black-collared Hawk** *Busarellus nigricollis*—A fairly common marsh raptor across much of the Neotropics, this species patrolled the shallow waters of both Crooked Tree and New River Lagoons, its distinctive white, black, and rust-colored plumage immediately recognizable.

**Snail Kite** *Rostrhamus sociabilis*—Jet black, and the most common raptor on the lagoons we visited. Distinguished from the following species by the white rump patch and its orange legs and beak, which is prominently hooked (used to extract Apple Snails from their shells, the preferred food of Snail Kite).

**Great Black Hawk** *Buteogallus urubitinga*—Unlike the previous species, which hovers and glides low over marshes and shallow inlets, we watched Great Black Hawks (at least 15-20 birds seen at Lamanai and Crooked Tree) as they mostly perched above the water, searching for frogs, reptiles, and small mammals.

**Roadside Hawk** *Rupornis magnirostris*—The most common hawk in Belize (and in much of Latin America, for that matter), this smallish species does indeed regularly perch along roadsides on utility wires or treetops. We had repeated looks at adult birds most days of the trip, especially near Lamanai and at Chan Chich.

**White Hawk** *Pseudastur albicollis*—We had a distant look one day at Lamanai, then had marvelous close-up views of a perched adult, right within the Chan Chich compound near our casitas. An elegant species.

**Gray Hawk** *Buteo plagiatus*—Observed overhead our last day at Chan Chich, on a final early morning birding walk before we headed to the Gallon Jug Airport for our charter flight back to Belize City.

**Short-tailed Hawk** *Buteo brachyurus*—Most easily seen of the several *Buteo* species occurring in Belize, we only recorded this small raptor twice, soaring above Crooked Tree and again at Lamanai.



### **OWLS: Strigidae (2)**

**Middle American Screech-Owl** *Megascops guatemalae*—A known regular on night drives at Chan Chich, a lone bird was seen perched close to the road (in the forest understory) between the lodge and Gallon Jug. (*The populations of this species in Belize were formerly known as Vermiculated Screech-Owl.*)

**Mottled Owl** *Ciccaba virgata*—Seen on the same night drive as the preceding species, Mottled Owls were observed perched on posts near the farm fields and pastures of the Gallon Jug Estate.

### **TROGONS: Trogonidae (4)**

**Slaty-tailed Trogon** *Trogon massena*—We were fortunate to find all four Belizean trogon species during the trip. Slaty-tailed was most common, seen several times at Chan Chich. Most notable were a pair of birds that had become habituated at the lodge (where they spent time feasting on figs and other small fruits that were just beginning to ripen).

**Black-headed Trogon** *Trogon melanocephalus*—One of two yellow-bellied trogon species in Belize, Black-headed was seen on three days, in trees near Lamanai (which was our only trogon sighting outside Chan Chich), and later on in the forests at Chan Chich.

**Gartered Trogon** *Trogon caligatus*—Also with a yellow underside, and similar to Black-headed, Gartered Trogon was only seen once, on our first morning at Chan Chich. (*Previously known as Violaceous Trogon.*)

**Collared Trogon** *Trogon collaris*—The most difficult of the trogon species in Belize to locate, we were fortunate to find a well-hidden Collared Trogon one afternoon, during our outing to Chan Chich's Upper Escarpment. Reminiscent of Slaty-tailed, with a comparable carmine chest and belly, our views were of a stunning male bird perched quietly below the canopy.

### **MOTMOTS: Momotidae (1)**

**Tody Motmot** *Hylomanes momotula*—Luis picked up the distinctive call of this shy species, the smallest and most unique of the motmots, while we visited a set of Mayan ruins situated above the Chan Chich lodge area (on our last full day of the tour). He finally spotted it in the forest understory below, resulting in prolonged scope views as the tiny bird sat alone on an exposed liana.

### **KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae (4)**

**Ringed Kingfisher** *Megaceryle torquata*—The most common kingfisher of the trip, we recorded this species most days (multiple birds were seen at Crooked Tree and Lamanai, and a few at the Chan Chich lakes). This is the largest of the American kingfishers, and very vocal—similar in overall appearance to the next species (but with a seriously larger bill).

**Belted Kingfisher** *Megaceryle alcyon*—Also common, this smaller relative of the previous species (and well known in the U.S.) was limited to marshy and riverbank areas at Crooked Tree and Lamanai.

**American Pygmy Kingfisher** *Chloroceryle aenea*—Usually hard to see, we had great luck during our after-hours excursion on the New River, with Eduardo at the helm, who located a sleeping bird in the mangroves. Zipping our lips, we were able to quietly drift in for pictures, capping off a nocturnal encounter with a species that rarely permits such a close approach.

**Green Kingfisher** *Chloroceryle americana*—Common at Crooked Tree and New River Lagoons, often seen chasing prey from overhanging branches and sometimes from docks and beached boats. We scrutinized the various birds we saw, hoping to pick out at least one Amazon Kingfisher from the bunch, but no luck.

### **PUFFBIRDS: Bucconidae (2)**

**White-necked Puffbird** *Notharchus hyperrhynchus*—A nice sighting of this species at Lamanai was followed several days later by an unrivaled view at Chan Chich, of a damp bird sitting mere feet above us, on a power line in





the staff residential area. Apparently just waking up, the bleary-eyed puffbird sat without moving, seemingly oblivious to the commotion it was causing below as we jostled for camera position.

**White-whiskered Puffbird** *Malacoptila panamensis*—Seen by the group on two of our days at Chan Chich, White-whiskered Puffbirds sit unobtrusively and wait patiently for large insects to fly their way. They often perch in the shadows, where their cryptic coloration makes sightings even more difficult, so we were pleasantly surprised when Luis pointed out not one, but a pair of birds in the understory near Laguna Seca.

### **JACAMARS: Galbulidae (1)**

**Rufous-tailed Jacamar** *Galbula ruficauda*—A loud jabbering during a walk at Chan Chich, at the same spot where we saw the Tody Motmot (above), drew our attention to an agitated Rufous-tailed Jacamar, as it flew back and forth along some Mayan stonework. A gorgeous species (fancifully said to resemble a cross between a hummingbird and a kingfisher), the heavy shadows and the bird's perpetual motion limited our opportunities for decent photographs.

### **TOUCANS: Ramphastidae (2)**

**Collared Aracari** *Pteroglossus torquatus*—Our views of this species, and we had several, were restricted to the days we spent at Chan Chich. Like many toucan species, the few perched birds we spotted favored partially-closed canopy sites high in the trees, and consequently weren't always easy to see.

**Keel-billed Toucan** *Ramphastos sulfuratus*—Conversely, our visual encounters with Keel-billed Toucan, the National Bird of Belize (and a nice choice for that), were not so problematic. In addition to several flyovers, we also managed nice looks at birds perched in open trees along the New River, on the afternoon we enjoyed our "sundowners" on board the Lamanai "cocktail barge."

### **WOODPECKERS: Picidae (9)**

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** *Sphyrapicus varius*—A single bird was spotted during our walk at the Lamanai Mayan site—a migratory species often seen on offshore cayes, and uncommon on the Belizean mainland.

**Acorn Woodpecker** *Melanerpes formicivorus*—Occurring from the Pacific Northwest south to Ecuador, Acorn Woodpeckers are resident in the Caribbean Pine-White Oak forests of Belize. Birds were common around Crooked Tree Village, and a few were also seen on the savannah across the New River from Lamanai.

**Black-cheeked Woodpecker** *Melanerpes pucherani*—The most common woodpecker in the Chan Chich area, we saw birds on several trees on the lodge grounds, and also along the forest margins near Gallon Jug.

**Yucatan Woodpecker** *Melanerpes pygmaeus* (**E**)—The smallest woodpecker in Belize (think Downy Woodpecker in the U.S.), and a Yucatan endemic to boot, Kelly and a few others in the group had brief glimpses of this diminutive species in scrubby second-growth forest at Crooked Tree Lodge. Some also had a look at a bird along the shoreline when we toured Crooked Tree Lagoon by boat.

**Golden-fronted Woodpecker** *Melanerpes aurifrons*—One of the most common and widespread species in Middle America (occurring from Oklahoma to Nicaragua), we saw several birds over the course of the trip, on five different days. A morphologically complex taxon with multiple races, the subspecies in Belize lacks the golden nasal tufts that give the bird its common name.

**Pale-billed Woodpecker** *Campephilus guatemalensis*—A large, red-headed species with a contrasting dull white beak (related to the presumed extinct Ivory-billed Woodpecker)—at least a few of the group saw birds at Lamanai one day, and again at Chan Chich. A stunning woodpecker.

**Lineated Woodpecker** *Dryocopus lineatus*—Similar in appearance and closely related to the Pileated Woodpecker of the U.S. and Canada, Lineated is a similarly widespread (and fairly common) species, extending from Mexico south to Argentina.



We saw two or three birds drumming as they worked high in the trees at Lamanai, and then a single bird was picked up at Chan Chich.

**Chestnut-colored Woodpecker** *Celeus castaneus*—We had wonderful looks at this exquisitely plumaged woodpecker at Chan Chich, just after breakfast one morning, mid-way up a tall tree not more than 20 steps from the main lodge building. This species only occasionally makes our species lists for Belize, so this was a very nice pick-up.

**Golden-olive Woodpecker** *Colaptes rubiginosus*—A widespread species throughout the Neotropics, and fairly common in Belize, this species oddly managed to elude us until the last morning of the trip, when a bird was seen and heard at Chan Chich.

### **FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae (5)**

**Collared Forest-Falcon** *Micrastur semitorquatus*—Saying we were surprised to encounter this secretive species at Lamanai one morning would be a serious understatement. Rarely seen, though frequently heard around dawn and dusk, Eduardo and the rest of us were astonished to see a mature adult, perched quietly and very visible in the lower subcanopy, during a visit to the local Mayan site. It pays to be at the right place at the right time.

**Laughing Falcon** *Herpetotheres cachinnans*—Seen (but not heard) from the boat at Crooked Tree, we later were serenaded by the incessant braying of a Laughing Falcon at Lamanai, which appeared periodically at different perches by the lodge and also in Indian Church Village. Known to be a snake-eater, this species is a reputed favorite with the locals.

**American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius*—A single bird was kiting over the airstrip at Gallon Jug, while we waited for our charter flight back to Belize City on our last morning.

**Apomado Falcon** *Falco femoralis*—We had a brief and less than satisfactory peek at this species in Crooked Tree Village, but later (on our last full day at Chan Chich), we had distant but extended views of a bird perched on a communication tower at Gallon Jug. The scope was a necessity, and offered some clear looks.

**Bat Falcon** *Falco rufigularis*—Some trips you miss out on Bat Falcon altogether, and other times (such as this tour) you see them seemingly everywhere. We had Bat Falcon on five different days, with a particularly nice view of a bird perched at the Upper Escarpment site (during a visit there with our Chan Chich guides).

### **PARROTS: Psittacidae (5)**

**White-crowned Parrot** *Pionus senilis*—A common species, we saw White-crowned Parrots most days of the tour during our stays at Lamanai and Chan Chich. There were some nice views of perched birds near Indian Church Village, though most observations were of overhead flocks.

**Red-lored Parrot** *Amazona autumnalis*—Also very common and widespread in Belize, we had several instances of perched birds and flyovers (primarily at Chan Chich).

**Yellow-headed Parrot** *Amazona oratrix*—Typically a parrot of the pine savannahs, we saw small groups around Crooked Tree Village and later on the grassy savannah across the river from Lamanai. Reportedly an exceptional mimic of the human voice, the species is heavily impacted by illegal collecting for the pet trade.

**White-fronted Parrot** *Amazona albifrons*—This species was seen throughout the tour, almost always in flight (one small group was seen perched in the canopy at Chan Chich near the first bridge).

**Olive-throated Parakeet** *Eupsittula nana*—Easily recognized by their (nearly) uniform green plumage and long, narrow tails, this stream-lined parakeet was seen almost daily. In addition to many fly-bys, we had exceptional close-in views of birds perched in shrubs at Crooked Tree, during our morning walk with Robert (our guide from Beck's B&B).

### **ANTBIRDS: Thamnophilidae (2)**

**Barred Antshrike** *Thamnophilus doliatus*—One of the easier antbirds to find, most of us saw adult males in woodlands near Crooked Tree Lodge, and then later in the underbrush along one of the back roads at Lamanai. A highly vocal species with a memorable song.

**Dusky Antbird** *Cercomacroides tyrannina*—Some of the group had a glimpse of this dark, plainly-colored species (male only) as we walked one of the trails through the Mayan sites at Chan Chich. Not uncommon in Belize, but like most members of this family, not easy to see.

## **OVENBIRDS AND WOODCREEPERS: Furnariidae (7)**

**Olivaceous Woodcreeper** *Sittasomus griseicapillus*—Exhibiting distinctive coloration for a woodcreeper (i.e., uniformly olive-gray underneath, versus the often streaky rufous-brown), we immediately recognized this species when we saw it edging up several tree trunks in the forest at Chan Chich.

**Tawny-winged Woodcreeper** *Dendrocincla anabatina*—Seen just once, on a tree near one of the Mayan temples at Lamanai. This one of the woodcreepers that follows Army Ant swarms (also see Northern-barred Woodcreeper, below).

**Wedge-billed Woodcreeper** *Glyphorhynchus spirurus*— Easy to recognize based on size alone, this is the smallest of the woodcreeper species, with a comparatively tiny, slightly upturned bill (so almost *Xenops*-like). We had a look at a single bird as it gleaned insects from tree bark, on the grounds of Chan Chich Lodge.

**Northern Barred-Woodcreeper** *Dendrocolaptes sanctithomae*—A distinctive woodcreeper in Belize, uniformly reddish-brown and covered with horizontal black pinstripes, we recorded this species at Lamanai on our walk with Eduardo near the ponds. Army Ants were present, suggesting the bird may have been attracted to their activity (“ant followers” don’t prey on the ants themselves, but rather the frightened insects flushed out by the marauding swarm).

**Ivory-billed Woodcreeper** *Xiphorhynchus flavigaster*—The easiest large woodcreeper to find in northern Belize, we saw several birds at Lamanai and later on at Chan Chich. The long, stark-white bill, and the overall size distinguish this species from other woodcreepers in Central America (but see Streak-headed, below).

**Streak-headed Woodcreeper** *Lepidocolaptes souleyetii*—Like a dwarf version of Ivory-billed Woodcreeper (nearly 2 inches smaller), we had a glimpse of one bird high in a tree the day we arrived at Chan Chich.

**Plain Xenops** *Xenops minutus*—Reminiscent of a small woodcreeper (see Wedge-billed, above), but with different behavior. Unless visiting an ant swarm, woodcreepers usually stick to tree trunks and heavier branches, while this species forages like a chickadee, maneuvering out on tiny twigs and investigating leaf clusters for insects. We saw birds in the woods by Crooked Tree Lodge, as well as in the forest at Lamanai.

## **MANAKINS: Pipridae (2)**

**White-collared Manakin** *Manacus candei*—This distinctive species was seen by some of the group during our stay at Chan Chich, near the lodge as well as in the forest near Laguna Verde.

**Red-capped Manakin** *Ceratopipra mentalis*—First picked up along the forested road we drove down from Chan Chich’s Upper Escarpment, Kelly and a few others saw this colorful species again (the next day), in the tangled understory on the back side of the Chan Chich Lodge compound.



## **COTINGAS: Cotingidae (2)**

**Rufous Piha** *Lipaugus unirufus*—This was another of the gems we spotted the day of our visit to the Upper Escarpment with the Chan Chich guides. A very difficult species to find, we had good looks at a single bird in the canopy, which Luis managed to spot *as he drove (slowly) down the hill!* Impressive.

**Lovely Cotinga** *Cotinga amabilis*—On a roll now, we stopped again (just past the Rufous Piha site, above) when something bright turquoise caught our eye, high in the canopy. It was a spectacular male Lovely Cotinga, one of the rarest and most colorful birds in Belize! We spent 30+ minutes as everyone tried for a decent photo, and we also had clear scope views when the bird moved into the open. Another amazing find by Luis.

## **BECARDS AND TITYRAS: Tityridae (3)**

**Masked Tityra** *Tityra semifasciata*—A beautiful black-and-white species, featuring a large, distinctive patch of bare pink skin around the eye, we spotted several tityras at both Lamanai and Chan Chich (most of them visible on leafless branches in the mid or upper canopy).



**Cinnamon Becard** *Pachyramphus cinnamomeus*—Chan Chich is one of the best places to see this reclusive becard, which frequents forest edge habitats. A sexually monomorphic species, unlike other becards in Belize (which are strongly dimorphic), we saw a pair of birds in the forest along the access road into the lodge property.

**Gray-collared Becard** *Pachyramphus major*—Considered a rare species in Belize, Kelly and Eduardo spied a single female in open broadleaf forest during our last morning at Lamanai (before our drive to Chan Chich).

### **SHARPBILL AND ALLIES: Oxyruncidae (1)**

**Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher** *Myiobius sulphureipygius*—Recorded by Kelly during one of her solo treks along the forest trails at Chan Chich. Not closely related to Tyrant flycatchers, this is a striking species that moves and flits in the manner of a redstart, and is occasionally seen at ant swarms.

### **TYRANT FLYCATCHERS: Tyrannidae (23)**

**Ochre-bellied Flycatcher** *Mionectes oleagineus*—A widespread species in Latin America, we saw Ochre-bellied Flycatcher in forest openings at Lamanai and Chan Chich. Unusual for a flycatcher, the preferred food of this species is mistletoe berries, though it also takes small insects.

**Northern Bentbill** *Oncostoma cinereigulare* (HO)—One of many difficult-to-spot flycatchers in Belize that populate the gloomy forest understory, we heard several birds at Chan Chich, but no one had a visual.

**Common Tody-Flycatcher** *Todirostrum cinereum*—Quickly recognized by its bright yellow underside, black head, and contrasting white iris, we heard this species several times at Crooked Tree Lodge, and at least a couple in the group had brief looks at birds skittering through the hedgerows along the road to the village.

**Eye-ringed Flatbill** *Rhynchocyclus brevirostris*—A single bird was observed by Kelly and possibly others in the group, as it perched quietly in the understory near the river trail at Chan Chich.

**Yellow-olive Flycatcher** *Tolmomyias sulphurescens*—Common at both Lamanai and Chan Chich, seen during our early morning birding walks—this is a flycatcher that prefers forest gaps and edges. A highly variable species, there are 17 described subspecies over its broad geographic range (from Mexico to Argentina).

**Yellow-bellied Tyrannulet** *Ornithion semiflavum*—Despite our efforts to nail this bird, we only had fleeting glimpses in the treetops, at both Crooked Tree and Chan Chich. This is a species that keeps on giving later in the evening, as you massage your sore neck from all the time you spent craning for a look.

**Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet** *Camptostoma imberbe*—Happily, this particular tyrannulet tends to stick to the lower strata, and can often be seen in the understory out in the open. A few of us had a quick look at a pair of birds along the Old Sylvester Road, early on the last morning of our stay at Chan Chich.

**Yellow-bellied Elaenia** *Elaenia flavogaster*—Typically a flycatcher of open country, where it tends to perch conspicuously in shrubby habitats, birds are recognized by their prominent, bushy crests, which are often raised. We discovered the species at Lamanai on our last morning, and also picked it up at Laguna Verde near Chan Chich.

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** *Empidonax flaviventris*—A migratory North American breeder that is a winter resident in Belize, we spotted two or three birds actively feeding on the lodge grounds at both Lamanai and Chan Chich.

**Least Flycatcher** *Empidonax minimus*—Also a migratory species in Belize, seen by our group under the same circumstances as the preceding species.

**Vermilion Flycatcher** *Pyrocephalus rubinus*—An abundant species in the U.S. Southwest, and similarly plentiful in Belize (where it is resident), both male and female birds were commonly seen in open areas around Lamanai and (especially) Crooked Tree. Always stunning no matter where you see it.

**Bright-rumped Attila** *Attila spadiceus*—A truly bodacious forest flycatcher, with a bull neck, massive bill, and blood-red eyes, perched birds were seen twice in the understory at Chan Chich, both times near the small river that runs behind the staff quarters.



**Rufous Mourner** *Rhytipterna holerythra*—Seen by Kelly, Bob, and Luis very early on our last morning at Chan Chich, along the Old Sylvester Road. The bird was in the mid-canopy and flew soon after being spotted.

**Dusky-capped Flycatcher** *Myiarchus tuberculifer*—Another Belizean resident species that also resides in the Southwest U.S. (it's migratory there), we saw and heard birds at Crooked Tree Village, near Lamanai (by Indian Church Village), and also at Laguna Verde at Chan Chich.

**Great Crested Flycatcher** *Myiarchus crinitus*—An overwintering species in Belize that breeds in the eastern U.S. and Canada, we saw Great Crested Flycatcher several times at Crooked Tree and Lamanai, perched in semi-open broadleaf forests.

**Great Kiskadee** *Pitangus sulphuratus*—A common resident species that is as conspicuous as it is gregarious, calls of the Great Kiskadee were ever-present, part of the background ambiance at nearly every birding stop. We spotted kiskadees daily, in a wide range of habitats.

**Boat-billed Flycatcher** *Megarynchus pitangua*—Quite similar to the preceding species, but with a larger bill, Boat-billed Flycatcher is more locally distributed in Belize. We only saw birds in open country, mostly in the farm fields just west of Indian Church Village during our stay at Lamanai.

**Social Flycatcher** *Myiozetetes similis*—Perhaps even more abundant than Great Kiskadee, this ubiquitous species was also seen every day of the trip, though not usually in heavy forests.

**Tropical Kingbird** *Tyrannus melancholicus*—A truly pervasive Neotropical species, Tropical Kingbirds are comfortable just about anywhere, from deserts and open forests to tropical scrub and farmland, and occur from the U.S. to southern South America. Quite possibly the first bird most of us noticed after clearing customs and stepping outside in Belize City, and the last we saw before boarding the plane to fly out—if you only remembered one bird from the trip, this was probably it.

**Couch's Kingbird** *Tyrannus couchii*—With plumage virtually identical to TK (above), the only reliable way to separate the two species is by voice. The distinct call of Couch's Kingbird was heard one morning at Crooked Tree Lagoon, so it made the list!

**Eastern Kingbird** *Tyrannus tyrannus*—A common transient that moves through Belize in spring and fall (on its way to and from South America), a few of the group saw a single bird perched on a fence wire at the Gallon Jug airport the day we flew home.

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** *Tyrannus forficatus*—We saw two or three birds briefly in farmland at Crooked Tree Village, and again in the fields at Gallon Jug (on our drive out to Laguna Seca). These were winter visitors, on their way north to the Texas-Oklahoma area to breed.

**Fork-tailed Flycatcher** *Tyrannus savana*—An amazing and graceful resident species in Belize, we had several sightings. Our best encounter involved a stunning display of multiple birds, flying together late one afternoon over the marshy channels and savannah east of the New River Lagoon (while we were settled comfortably on the infamous Lamanai "cocktail barge" for happy hour).

## **VIREOS: Vireonidae (7)**

**Rufous-browed Peppershrike** *Cyclarhis gujanensis* **(HO)**—Often seen at Crooked Tree Lodge, this trip we had to settle for a song, emanating from just beyond the main pond in the heavy broadleaf forest by the west fence.

**Green Shrike-Vireo** *Vireolanius pulchellus* **(HO)**—Our last morning at Chan Chich, before breakfast, Luis graciously accompanied Bob and Kelly on a life-bird search for this species and Rose-throated Tanager, in dry forest along Old Sylvester Road. While the tanager was a no show from the start, many cheerful whistles from a Green-shrike Vireo were soon heard nearby! Yes, it's here! But exuberance soon turned to despair, then eventually sour grapes, as the bird proved to be a master of avoidance. Better luck next time!

**Tawny-crowned Greenlet** *Tunchiornis ochraceiceps*—We had brief views of this tiny, elusive species in the forest understory at Lamanai, on our final walk with Eduardo at Lamanai.

**Lesser Greenlet** *Pachysylvia decurtata*—A common yet very inconspicuous small vireo, we were alerted to their presence at both Lamanai and Chan Chich by their short, piercing calls. Birds were seen (though not particularly well) in the forest canopy at both lodges.

**White-eyed Vireo** *Vireo griseus*—An overwintering species in Belize, this songster is a common breeder in eastern North America. We saw several active birds feeding at Crooked Tree (near the small back pond), at Lamanai in open forest and dense scrub, and also in the understory near the back cabanas and by the pool at Chan Chich.

**Mangrove Vireo** *Vireo pallens*—This is a common resident species in Belize, and not necessarily tied to mangrove habitats. We had good looks in hedgerows outside Crooked Tree Lodge, along the New River Lagoon at Lamanai, and near Laguna Verde at Chan Chich.

**Yellow-throated Vireo** *Vireo flavifrons*—This species has a very similar migratory strategy to White-eyed Vireo, i.e., breeding in eastern North America and then overwintering in the Neotropics. Inland it's scattered in Belize, and we saw just a few birds on one of our days at Lamanai Outpost (in the low trees near the back parking area). It is more common at the coast and on the cayes.

### **CROWS AND JAYS: Corvidae (2)**

**Brown Jay** *Psilorhinus morio*—A very abundant species in Belize, its raucous calls were heard daily during the trip. We saw many birds at each of our lodging destinations on the tour.

**Yucatan Jay** *Cyanocorax yucatanicus* (E)—A target species for most birders in northern Belize, we first saw this stunning Yucatan endemic during our forays at Crooked Tree with Robert, and then again on the pine savannah across the river from Lamanai. The birds we located were in family groups.

### **SWALLOWS AND MARTINS: Hirundinidae (5)**

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow** *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*—A year-round resident in Belize, and also a common summer breeder in the U.S., this was the most common swallow on the trip—seen most days.

**Gray-breasted Martin** *Progne chalybea*—Locally common across Belize, this species moves into the Yucatan Peninsula area to breed in spring and late winter, then retreats south in the summer and fall. We had good looks at flying and perched birds at Crooked Tree, and later saw flocks over the open areas at Laguna Verde near Chan Chich.

**Tree Swallow** *Tachycineta bicolor*—Another of the overwintering species in Belize that moves north in the spring to breed in the U.S. and Canada, we saw scattered flocks of Tree Swallows at Crooked Tree, above the New River Lagoon, and then at Laguna Verde near Chan Chich.

**Mangrove Swallow** *Tachycineta albilinea*—Far and away the most abundant of the five swallows we encountered, tiny Mangrove Swallows were with us most days. Our best views were of birds that religiously followed our boats on the water, at Crooked Tree Lagoon and on the New River at Lamanai, often landing on our bow as we chugged along.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*—This is a common seasonal transient in Belize that breeds further north, although occasional winter residents are reported. We saw two birds over the Gallon Jug Airport on our last day of the trip, as we waited for our charter flight.

### **GNATCATCHERS: Polioptilidae (3)**

**Long-billed Gnatwren** *Ramphocaenus melanurus*—Seen by a few of the group at Lamanai in heavy understory, during the last morning walk we had with Eduardo before driving on to Chan Chich. A very secretive species.

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** *Polioptila caerulea*—This is a resident breeder in parts of northeast Belize, with North American migratory populations found elsewhere in the country in winter. We saw birds at Crooked Tree and Lamanai—based on our location, it was uncertain if these were residents or migrants.

**Tropical Gnatcatcher** *Polioptila plumbea*—We had a good look at this species our last morning at Lamanai, during our walk with Eduardo out to the small crocodile pond. Birds were mostly in the subcanopy but briefly visible.

### **WRENS: Troglodytidae (4)**

**House Wren** *Troglodytes aedon*—Commonly seen in Crooked Tree Village and around the settlement at Gallon Jug (i.e., at the coffee mill warehouses and the airport administrative buildings).

**Spot-breasted Wren** *Pheugopedius maculipectus*—The loud and distinctive song of this species (often heard as a duet between males and females) is a common morning symphony in Belizean forests. Based on the vocalizations, the wrens must have been plentiful, yet the species was only seen well at Lamanai.

**White-bellied Wren** *Uropsila leucogastra*—Several of us managed to get brief looks at this species creeping through the understory during our stay at Lamanai—best views were at the Mayan site on our first morning. Another very elusive species.



**White-breasted Wood-Wren** *Henicorhina leucosticta* (HO)—This species was heard on a couple of the mornings at Chan Chich, from deep in the brush along the river trail. Another teaser.

### **MOCKINGBIRDS AND THRASHERS: Mimidae (3)**

**Black Catbird** *Melanoptila glabrirostris* (E)—Black Catbird is a Yucatan endemic seldom found inland in Belize (it's more often seen on Caye Caulker and Ambergris Caye), so we were a bit surprised when we heard it call on our visit to the pine savannah across New River Lagoon from Lamanai. Eventually the bird perched in full view, though the group was dispersed at that point and not everyone saw it. A nice find nonetheless!

**Gray Catbird** *Dumetella carolinensis*—Unlike its relative, above, Gray Catbird is common throughout Belize, but only in winter—it returns to North America for breeding. The species was noted briefly at Crooked Tree, but was common at Lamanai, where it was seen daily by the group.

**Tropical Mockingbird** *Mimus gilvus*—This vocal species was very common at Crooked Tree, especially in the village—also seen in the open fields around Lamanai and Indian Church.



### **THRUSHES: Turdidae (2)**

**Wood Thrush** *Hylocichla mustelina*—Another North American breeder, generally common throughout woodlands in Belize during the winter. Oddly, we only recorded this species on a single day, i.e., a lone bird in damp, shaded forest at the Lamanai Mayan site.

**Clay-colored Thrush** *Turdus grayi*—A fairly common, drab species seen around Crooked Tree and Lamanai, we spotted it several times skulking under cashew trees or along forest trails—it's related to our American Robin, but shyer. This is the National Bird of Costa Rica (reportedly picked more for its song than its looks!).

### **FINCHES AND EUPHONIAS: Fringillidae (3)**

**Scrub Euphonia** *Euphonia affinis*—A photo taken in Indian Church Village (at Lamanai), which was actually focused on another bird (a catbird near the donkey pens), ended up including a photo-bombing Scrub Euphonia lurking in the background! An unconventional way to make the species list!

**Yellow-throated Euphonia** *Euphonia hirundinacea*—The most common Euphonia in Belize, we saw several colorful males as well as females each day at Lamanai, plus a few birds in the forest near Chan Chich.

**Lesser Goldfinch** *Spinus psaltria*—Common in western North America, this species was first reported in Belize in 1998, with colonies at Orange Walk. We saw just a few birds during the trip, principally at Lamanai.

### **NEW WORLD SPARROWS: Passerellidae (3)**

**Botteri's Sparrow** *Peucaea botterii*—In Belize, Botteri's Sparrow is restricted to wet savannah habitat (while in Arizona it is a desert species). We saw three or four birds across the river from Lamanai, during our walk there on our last morning, in a sedge-pine-oak community.

**Grasshopper Sparrow** *Ammodramus savannarum*—A single bird was seen at the same location as Botteri's Sparrow, above. Expertly called by Eduardo, not seen by most of the group. Populations in the U.S. are migratory, those in Belize are year-round residents.

**Chipping Sparrow** *Spizella passerina*—A widespread, largely migratory species in North America, with broad habitat tolerances, the Chipping Sparrow race in Belize (which is resident year-round) exhibits far less ecological amplitude, and is tightly linked to Caribbean Pine habitat! Interesting! We saw several flocks of this species foraging among the pine trees at Beck's B&B in Crooked Tree Village.

### **NEW WORLD BLACKBIRDS AND ORIOLES: Icteridae (12)**

**Eastern Meadowlark** *Sturnella magna*—Several Eastern Meadowlarks were observed on fenceposts and similar perches near the airport administrative buildings, on our last full day at Chan Chich.

**Yellow-billed Cacique** *Amblycercus holosericeus*—Recorded early in the morning on our first full day at Lamanai, during our 6:00 AM birding walk with Eduardo. This one of the shyer cacique species.

**Montezuma Oropendola** *Psarocolius montezuma*—Dependent on tall trees to construct their pendulous nesting colonies, oropendolas tend to prefer open forest or riparian gallery sites. We saw several individual birds flying overhead on consecutive days at Chan Chich, but we never found an active nest site.

**Black-cowled Oriole** *Icterus prothemelas*—The most common oriole on the trip, and a Belizean resident species, we saw birds eight out of ten days (including the Crooked Tree extension). We had our first good looks at the Beck's B&B feeders, in Crooked Tree Village.

**Orchard Oriole** *Icterus spurius*—A familiar sight to those from the eastern U.S., this North American migrant (which only spends winter in Belize) was seen at several places around Crooked Tree Village (including the Beck's B&B feeders), and then again at Lamanai.

**Hooded Oriole** *Icterus cucullatus*—The Hooded Orioles we saw in Belize are year-round residents, although populations in the U.S. are migratory, spending their winters in the mountains of Mexico. We saw three or four of these resident birds at Beck's B&B in Crooked Tree, and a couple more at Lamanai.

**Baltimore Oriole** *Icterus galbula*—The migratory tactics of Baltimore Oriole are essentially the same as Orchard Oriole, i.e., spending winters in Belize and the breeding season in North America. Though it wasn't abundant, we recorded this species at all three of our lodge stays.

**Red-winged Blackbird** *Agelaius phoeniceus*—Not as common in Belize as in the U.S., we saw most of our birds as scattered individuals in the marshy areas across the New River from Lamanai Outpost.

**Bronzed Cowbird** *Molothrus aeneus*—A few birds were observed in pastures on our last day, as we departed Chan Chich for the Gallon Jug Airport. A much-maligned brood parasite, this species (a resident species in Belize) lays its eggs in the occupied nests of other songbirds.

**Giant Cowbird** *Molothrus oryzivorus*—Aptly named, Giant Cowbird dwarfs all other *Molothrus* species. Also a brood parasite, the same as Bronzed Cowbird (above), this species specializes in oropendolas as the host parents. We had our single look at Giant Cowbird on our drive from Chan Chich to Laguna Verde, on our last full day of the trip.

**Melodious Blackbird** *Dives dives*—There was some debate among the group as to whether the piercing whistles offered up by this species were indeed melodious. The general consensus was no. Birds were quite common at Crooked Tree and Lamanai, less so around Chan Chich.

**Great-tailed Grackle** *Quiscalus mexicanus*—This and the previous species share essentially the same sites in many areas, often in villages or urban settings, with the grackle typically as common as the blackbird. We saw large numbers at Crooked Tree Village and Lamanai, but none at Chan Chich or Gallon Jug.

## **NEW WORLD WARBLERS: Parulidae (19)**

**Note:** Except for Gray-crowned Yellowthroat, all the warblers listed below are migratory (i.e., nesting in the U.S. and Canada), and occur in Belize primarily in fall and winter. They are largely eastern North American breeders, with the notable exception of Grace's, which exhibits a complex biogeography (see the account for this species, below). Those warblers that only breed west of the Rockies tend to overwinter in western or central Mexico, or if further south, they stay more on the Pacific slope, explaining why we rarely see them in Belize.

**Ovenbird** *Seiurus aurocapilla*—Individual ovenbirds were seen strutting along shady paths at Chan Chich on two days. This is a species that enjoys its solitude.

**Louisiana Waterthrush** *Parkesia motacilla*—Limited to Chan Chich during our tour, this bird is a challenge to visually identify if the Northern Waterthrush is also in the area, which was the case for us. Luis and others at Chan Chich helped with some ID cues, but the differences are subtle, and there were certainly times you just couldn't be sure.

**Northern Waterthrush** *Parkesia noveboracensis*—By all accounts, much more common than the preceding species—we saw birds wasking along in the moist understory on at least six days (but see ID issues, above).

**Blue-winged Warbler** *Vermivora cyanoptera*—Lamanai is a good place to look for this bird, and once again the species predictably appeared where it has been seen in past years, in the thickets by the car park in back of the main lodge.

**Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia*—This is a very common species throughout most of Central America, and often seen in Belize. We recorded birds on five days, between Crooked Tree, Lamanai, and Chan Chich.

**Tennessee Warbler** *Leiothlypis peregrina*—Uncommon in winter, we saw this species on just a single day, when two birds were spotted at Lamanai near the main lodge. In Costa Rica, for example, Tennessee Warbler is one of the most common migrants.

**Gray-crowned Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis poliocephala*—Another one-day wonder for the trip, this species (the only non-migratory Belizean resident on our warbler list) was observed on our last morning walk with Eduardo, in the grass-sedge-pine savannah across the river from Lamanai.

**Kentucky Warbler** *Geothlypis formosa*—Glimpsed the last morning at Chan Chich, a single bird was skulking in the forest near the back cabanas.

**Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas*—Seen (and briefly heard) in the marshes lining Crooked Tree Lagoon, as well as in riparian brush along the New River near Lamanai.

**Hooded Warbler** *Setophaga citrina*—A common species on the tour, we saw Hooded Warblers throughout the trip, at each lodging destination.

**American Redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla*—One of the most plentiful warblers in Belize (along with Yellow Warbler and Northern Waterthrush), we saw both males and females brandishing their colorful tails in the forest understory on many occasions.

**Northern Parula** *Setophaga americana*—More common on the offshore cayes in Belize, we saw Northern Parula just once during the tour, in scrubby vegetation around some homesteads near Lamanai (in Indian Church Village).

**Magnolia Warbler** *Setophaga magnolia*—Typically not uncommon in Belize, but only seen sporadically on this trip. We recorded just a few birds at Crooked Tree, Lamanai (at the Mayan site), and Chan Chich.

**Yellow Warbler** *Setophaga petechia*—Seen repeatedly during our visit, Yellow Warblers were especially common at Crooked Tree.

**Chestnut-sided Warbler** *Setophaga pensylvanica*—Not seen until the last morning at Chan Chich, a single bird was flitting near the start of the path on the Old Sylvester Road.

**Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Setophaga coronata*—Abundant to the point of vexation in much of the U.S., yellow-rumps are not nearly as common in Belize. We reliably pick them up at the Gallon Jug Airport on most trips, and this year was no exception. Several birds were in the flowering trees near a garden area by the administration building.

**Yellow-throated Warbler** *Setophaga dominica*—Especially common near the coastline and on the cayes, but also found inland, we saw Yellow-throated Warblers at Crooked Tree near the lagoon, and also on the pine savannah across the New River from Lamanai.

**Grace's Warbler** *Setophaga graciae*—This is an interesting species, with an unusual distribution pattern. Strongly linked to mature pine forests, Grace's is a spring and summer breeder in Southwest U.S. mountains, and these migratory populations then overwinter in central Mexico. But further south, there are scattered Neotropical populations (such as those in Belize) that are made up of non-migratory resident birds, which include the Grace's Warblers we saw in the pine woods at Crooked Tree and on the Lamanai savannah. Grace's Warbler is reportedly declining, as its habitat is steadily lost to logging in the U.S. and Latin America.

**Black-throated Green Warbler** *Setophaga virens*—A bright male bird was pointed out during our walk at the pine savannah across the river from Lamanai Outpost.

### **CARDINALS, GROSBEAKS AND ALLIES: Cardinalidae (8)**

**Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra*—Summer tanagers migrate south and spend the winter in Latin America after breeding in southern North America. The species is common throughout Belize from November through February, and we saw birds on several days, including a blotchy first-year male at Crooked Tree.

**Hepatic Tanager** *Piranga flava*—Unlike Summer Tanager, populations of this species are resident in Belize, and do not migrate. Most often found in pine habitats, a single male bird was observed in the stand of Caribbean Pine and White Oak on the grounds of Beck's B&B in Crooked Tree Village.

**Red-crowned Ant-Tanager** *Habia rubica*—Individual birds of this species were located twice during our sortie into the Lamanai Mayan site. Keeping to the shadows, they were difficult to see well.

**Red-throated Ant-Tanager** *Habia fuscicauda*—More common than the previous species, and more apt to be seen at lower elevations, Red-throated Ant-Tanagers were spotted in the forests at Lamanai and Chan Chich.

**Northern Cardinal** *Cardinalis cardinalis*—A male bird was spotted our last morning at Lamanai, in low brush. Not nearly as common in Belize as in the U.S.



**Blue-black Grosbeak** *Cyanoloxia cyanooides*—A notoriously hard bird to spot, we heard and then got our best glimpses of the species (which weren't good) in tangled brush along the river trail at Chan Chich, out past the back casitas and the pool.



**Blue Bunting** *Cyanocompsa parellina*—Both male and female Blue Buntings were seen on successive days at Chan Chich, first near the pool, and then in grassy fields below the lower staff residence area. The vivid milky-blue patches on the otherwise dark blue males was striking.

**Painted Bunting** *Passerina ciris*—We picked up a greenish female bird at Lamanai (this species is sexually dichromatic, so females lack the amazing colors of the male) as we birded with Eduardo, the morning before we departed for Chan Chich.

#### **TANAGERS AND ALLIES: Thraupidae (11)**

**Gray-headed Tanager** *Eucometis penicillata*—Seen once, during a walk in the vicinity of Lamanai that included stops in Indian Church Village.

**Blue-gray Tanager** *Thraupis episcopus*—One of the most common songbirds in the Neotropics and a regular at many lodge feeders, we saw this species on several days, at each of our lodge stops.

**Yellow-winged Tanager** *Thraupis abbas*—A close relative of the preceding species, but not as ubiquitous at feeders. It often stays in the background, and is overall not nearly as common. Individual birds were spotted at Lamanai and Chan Chich.

**Golden-hooded Tanager** *Tangara larvata*—A breathtaking species, and the only *Tangara* (i.e., the largest tanager genus, famous for its dozens of brilliantly colored Neotropical species) that occurs as far north as Belize. Kelly located this beauty along the forest edge as she birded the entrance road to Chan Chich.

**Red-legged Honeycreeper** *Cyanerpes cyaneus*—Quite eye-catching, with stunning blue plumage offsetting the bright red legs, we had multiple birds on hand at Lamanai each morning.

**Green Honeycreeper** *Chlorophanes spiza*—Common throughout much of the Neotropics, though noticeably scarcer than the preceding species in Belize—we had a single record during the tour (at Chan Chich).

**Blue-black Grassquit** *Volatinia jacarina*—Locally common in the grassy lots and scrubby pastures around Lamanai, we had several clear views. Of interest was the odd breeding display of the males, who leap several feet in the air from a low perch in the grass (while madly flapping their wings), only to settle back down and then repeat the performance mere seconds later. For such a small bird, it could be very conspicuous!

**Variable Seedeater** *Sporophila corvina*—Seen one day near Crooked Tree Lodge, on a fence bordering an overgrown field. More common further south in Belize.

**Morelet's Seedeater** *Sporophila moreletii*—A very abundant species, we saw birds throughout the trip. Another of the many sexually dimorphic species in the Neotropics, we had close-up views of both the white-and-black males, as well as the more subdued, brownish-tan females. (Formerly known as *White-collared Seedeater*).

**Black-headed Saltator** *Saltator atriceps*—Superficially resembling grosbeaks, research has shown the saltators are more appropriately aligned with the true tanagers. Black-headed was seen by our group in mixed-species flocks in the trees around Lamanai Outpost, as well as at Laguna Verde at Chan Chich.

**Grayish Saltator** *Saltator coerulescens*—Spotted by Kelly in the trees between Indian Church Village and the Lamanai Lodge compound, on our second full day at Lamanai.

#### **MAMMALS (12 species recorded):**

**Proboscis Bat** *Rhynchonycteris naso*—Pointed out by our guides as we sojourned along the New River, on our trip downstream to Lamanai Outpost. It was remarkable to see the bats lined up in the open on an exposed tree trunk, evidently relying on their cryptic coloration to evade detection by predators.

**Greater Bulldog Bat** *Noctilio leporinus*—This was the large bat seen flying over New River Lagoon on the two evenings we took the boat out with Eduardo, as we searched for nocturnal biota.

**Yucatan Black Howler Monkey** *Alouatta pigra*—Seen (and certainly heard) most days of the tour, this species (and its various howler monkey cousins across the Neotropics) are the loudest mammals on earth.

**Central American Spider Monkey** *Ateles geoffroyi*—Only seen during our days at Chan Chich, lounging high in the trees, and with considerably less tendency to “act out” than the howlers.

**Deppe’s Squirrel** *Sciurus deppei*—Restricted to Central America and Mexico, this is the rufous-and-gray, mid-sized squirrel (about 20 inches long, including tail) that we saw throughout the trip, in many forested habitats.

**Yucatan Squirrel** *Sciurus yucatanensis yucatanensis* (E)—A Yucatan endemic, and a close relative of the North American Gray Squirrel (*S. carolinensis*), this species was seen in the Caribbean Pine-White Oak woodland on the grounds of Beck’s B&B—roughly the same size as the preceding species.

**Mexican Hairy Dwarf Porcupine** *Coendou mexicanus*—Spotted curled tight in a tree along a backwater slough, when Eduardo was spotlighting during our evening outing in the marshy channels near Lamanai.

**Central American Agouti** *Dasyprocta punctata*—These are the insufferably cute rodents, with the spindly legs and beady eyes, that regularly tip-toed across the lawns and through the landscaping at both Lamanai Lodge and Chan Chich. A favorite prey item for the native cat species in Belize.

**White-tailed Deer** *Odocoileus virginianus*—We saw (conservatively) a hundred or more White-tailed Deer along the miles-long straightaway (after entering the Chan Chich Reserve) that we drove along towards Gallon Jug, on the day we transferred to Chan Chich. Additional deer were seen every day after our arrival.

**White-nosed Coati** *Nasua narica*—Coatis were spotted by a few of the group during our initial jaunt into the Mayan site with Eduardo, on our first full day at Lamanai.



**Tayra** *Eira barbara*—Kelly spotted a Tayra (a very large, somewhat distant relative of weasels and martins) in the lush gardens at Lamanai, after its hiding place was disturbed by workers one morning. A very unexpected find!

**Gray Fox** *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*—At least two Gray Foxes made regular appearances at Chan Chich each day, often sauntering casually across the open areas between the cabanas. Curiously, their presence seemed to generate little, if any, fuss among the various birds (such as the many Ocellated Turkeys) that also made the Chan Chich compound their home. Perhaps the foxes aren’t partial to fowl.

## REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS (10 species recorded):

**Morelet’s Crocodile** *Crocodylus moreletii*—A common species in Belize’s inland waterways, we had several sightings of Morelet’s Crocodile, mostly during our excursions on Crooked Tree Lagoon as well as on the New River and its various channels. Although comparatively small as crocodilians go, swimming with Morelet’s Crocodile is not generally recommended.

**Green Iguana** *Iguana iguana*—Not a day went by at Crooked Tree or Lamanai without our spotting another Green Iguana, especially if we were near the water. Although indigenous in Belize, this is an introduced and unwanted pest in much of the world, including Florida, where it may eat the eggs of native birds in addition to its largely herbivorous diet.

**Black Spiny-tailed Iguana** *Ctenosaura similis*—About as common (and seen at the same locations) as the preceding species, and likewise found near water much of the time. This is also a serious pest in Florida, where these lizards consume landscape plants, invade dwellings, and threaten native birds and reptiles.

**Brown Basilisk** *Basiliscus vittatus*—This is a peculiar lizard known for rearing up on its hind legs and speeding off across open water when threatened. Only a few of our group got a peek at this species, at Lamanai and also Laguna Verde at Chan Chich. Though native to Belize, this is another introduced pest in Florida, where it's known for hanging around pools and Jacuzzis and causing trouble. Who knew?

**Rose-bellied Lizard** *Sceloporus variabilis*—We saw Rose-bellied Lizards sunning on the walkways at Lamanai most mornings. This species is related to the various Fence and Spiny Lizards of the U.S.

**Common House Gecko** *Hemidactylus frenatus* **(I)**—A widespread introduced species across the tropics of both the Old and New Worlds. Mostly nocturnal, these non-native lizards were occasionally seen hunting insects near outdoor lights at the various places we stayed.

**Meso-American Slider** *Trachemys scripta venusta*—Observed sunning on floating debris, especially near the docks where we embarked on our Crooked Tree Lagoon morning boat ride.

**Furrowed Wood Turtle** *Rhinoclemmys areolata*—A very cool terrestrial species, seen on the road one morning as some of us drove between Crooked Tree Lodge and Beck's B&B. The Furrowed Wood Turtle is a regional endemic, and only known from the Yucatan Peninsula south to Honduras.

**Giant (or Cane) Toad** *Rhinella horribilis* (or *marina*)—Another native of Belize that is a frightening invasive species outside Latin America, we saw a few of these behemoth toads at night while at Crooked Tree. They have dermal poison glands potent enough to kill a biting dog, and its tadpoles are toxic if consumed. This is the world's largest toad.

**Common Mexican Treefrog** *Smilisca baudinii*—A few of us had treefrogs in our bathrooms during the trip. They were most likely this species based on the descriptions.

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**Photos by Bob Meinke:** Red-billed Pigeon; Scaly-breasted Hummingbird; Limpkin; Black-collared Hawk; White-necked Puffbird; Lineated Woodpecker; Lovely Cotinga; Bright-rumped Attila; Tropical Mockingbird; Blue Bunting; Gray Fox