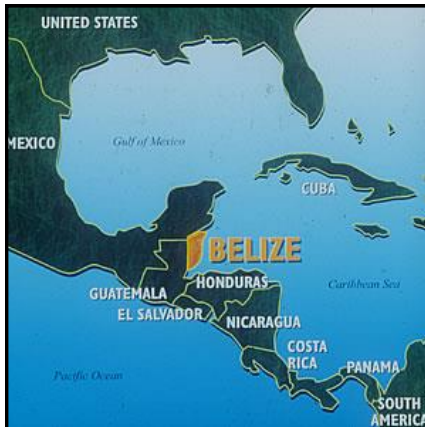


2024 Birding Belize Nov 13-20

For a birder with an interest in history, Belize is it; likewise for the amateur archeologist with an interest in nature. This 8-day/7-night itinerary takes you to this small English-speaking country, just a two-hour flight from Houston, and almost immediately into tropical forest and lagoons.



*You reach some of the finest tropical forest birding in Belize within a short time of arrival into the country. **Lamanai Outpost Lodge**, where you spend four nights, is situated on the banks of a 28-mile spring fed lagoon amid the remnants of a major Maya city. Almost 400 species of birds have been recorded within a three-mile radius of the lodge, like Keel-billed Toucan, Barred Antshrike, Blue Ground-dove, a great number of*

hummingbirds, Slaty-tailed Trogon, lots of tanagers, and wintering or migrating warblers. With luck you'll see nesting Jabiru, the largest stork, and you can expect to hear howler monkeys and see lots of butterflies. The lodge and the ruins at Lamanai are currently the #1 and #2 eBird sites in the country!

*Then, after a stop at the Belize Zoo, you head to **Black Rock Lodge**, located in the dense rainforest on the banks of the Macal River, which flows through the Maya Mountains of Belize. Over 390 species of birds are possible to sight on Black Rock's property, making it the current #3 eBird site in Belize!! On the towering cliffs behind the lodge, a resident pair of Orange-breasted Falcons have made Black Rock their home. Keel-billed Toucans, Collared Aracaris, and even the rare Northern Emerald-Toucanet are a common daily sight in the trees around the lodge. Parrots of several species announce their presence each morning and evening as they pass over the river on their way to and from their favorite fruiting trees and nesting sites. The elusive but incomparably beautiful Scarlet Macaws have even been visiting lately. Scaly-throated Leaftossers, Pheasant Cuckoo, Tody Motmot, and so many other forest species make residence throughout Black Rock's extensive trail system.*



This trip is escorted by Susan Foster, TOS member, and led by local guides from each lodge.

Day 1 - Nov 13 – Wednesday – Plan your flight to arrive Belize by 1:00 pm. On arrival, collect your bags



and go through passport inspection and customs. You will be met by a guide from Lamanai Outpost Lodge who will usher you and your luggage to the van for a 1 hour trip to the river. From there it is about another hour by boat on the New River. Be sure to have a hat, waterproof jacket, sunscreen, and of course your binoculars within easy reach. It's an open-air boat to allow for wildlife viewing and there are good chances to see Boat-billed Heron, Tiger Heron, Snail Kite, Black-Collared Hawk, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Northern

Jacana, Lesser Nighthawk, and Sungrebe, as well as manatee and crocodile along the way.

Check in to your rooms, then meet in the lodge for the first group dinner and go over the itinerary for the next few days.

Overnight Lamanai Outpost Lodge (D)

Days 2,3,4 – Nov 14,15,16 – Thursday, Friday, Saturday – Using the lodge as a base, you have 3 full days to explore the area. Your local guide will schedule according to weather and recent sightings. Places to see and bird include:

- The **Mayan ruins of Lamanai**, an extensive, largely unexcavated site that sprawls along the western shore of the lagoon. Lamanai, (Submerged Crocodile in Mayan) was occupied as early as 1500 BC and is one of the largest Mayan sites in Belize, with over 800 structures deep in the forest.



possible to see many birds typical of the hardwood forest here and from the Peten of Guatemala, such as Keel-billed Toucan, Collared Aracari, Pale-billed, Chestnut-colored, and Golden-olive woodpeckers, various woodcreepers, Tody and Lesson's motmots, curassows, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Slaty-tailed, Black-headed and Gartered trogons, Yellow-bellied Tyrannulet, Black-cowled Oriole, Blue Bunting, Tawny-Crowned Greenlet, and the tiny Tody Motmot.

- **Indian Church**, an agricultural area not far from the lodge.

These growing fields or *milpas* and the second growth scrub in the area along with some savanna may show you a group of birds not found in forest, such as White-tailed Hawk, saltators, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Red-legged Honeycreepers, Hooded Orioles some of the Yucatan specialties like Yucatan Flycatcher, Yucatan Jay, and Yucatan Woodpecker, Grasshopper and Botteri's sparrows, maybe a Jabiru.

- One morning, very early, start with dawn coffee, muffins, and juice in the dining room before heading out by boat to explore **the New River** and surrounding waterways. Be on the lookout for species such as the Jabiru, Sungrebe, Grey-throated Chats, Purple Gallinule, Least Bittern, Yucatan Jay, Yellow-Lored and Yellow-Headed parrots, and a variety of herons and kingfishers.
- **Bird jungle trails**, grassland, broadleaf and pond habitats in comfort on a Polaris Ranger. Depart late afternoon and after dinner in search of Middle American Screech-Owls, Mottled and Barn owls, Common Pauragues and Yucatan Poorwills. This area of diverse habitat is home to Stub-Tailed Spadebills, White-bellied Wrens, Blue



buntings, Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, Red-throated Ant-Tanager, Green-backed Sparrow, the White-collared Manakin and the Bat-Falcon.

- Begin with dawn coffee, muffins and juice prior to a short boat ride over to a **pine savannah**. Hike the savannah in search of endangered Yellow-headed Parrots, Aplomado Falcons and yucatan endemics such as the Black Catbird, Botteri's Sparrow Yucatan Jay and the Stygian Owl. Yucatan Flycatchers, Bobwhite and the Yellow-lored Parrot are often sighted.

Overnights Lamanai Outpost Lodge (B,L,D)

Day 5 – Nov 17, Sunday – On to the Maya Mountains

After breakfast this morning, get packed up and ready for drive back to Belize City where you'll meet your guide and driver to continue to the next destination, the Maya Mountains.

En route, you will make a stop at the Belize Zoo. You may ask 'why visit a zoo when you are in a country filled with amazing flora and fauna?' This question can be answered by reading *The Last Flight of the Scarlet Macaw* by Bruce Barcott. A book of inspiring environmental activities, it is the story of the late Sharon Matola, founder of the Belize Zoo. The inhabitants here are mostly injured or orphaned animals and the facility serves as an educational tool for visitors to Belize as well as locals, teaching them about their natural heritage.

Once you arrive at Black Rock Lodge, as you are getting to your rooms, look for afternoon activity at the local feeders. Settle into your rooms, then at dinner meet the local guide here.

Overnight at Black Rock Lodge (B,L,D)



Day 6 – Nov 18, Monday – Birding Black Rock Lodge (B,L,D)

This whole day will be spent birding at the lodge, both on foot and by vehicle. You start with an early walk to see and hear tanagers, honeycreepers, and others in mixed flocks, and always checking the feeders.

A pair of Orange-breasted Falcon have resided here for a number of years, and they should be visible from many spots on property. Other species along the trails you can look for are Blue Ground Dove, Roadside Hawk, Olive-throated Parakeet, Red-lored Parrot, Blue Bunting, Barred Forest-Falcon, Rose-throated Becard, Squirrel Cuckoo, and Black-cowled Oriole.

Overnight at Black Rock Lodge (B,L,D)

Day 7 – Nov 19, Tuesday – Caracol Ruins (B,L,D)

Caracol ("Snail" in Mayan) is perhaps the largest and also most historically significant Mayan site in Belize. The site covers a large plateau deep in primary rainforest and was once home to the conquerors of Tikal in Guatemala. The site was settled around A.D. 300 and was in its prime until around A.D. 650, when it went into decline. Caracol was the dominant power in the region for about a century following its great victory over Tikal in A.D. 562. The highest temple on the site is 136 ft., just higher than the pyramid at Xunantunich. Though the ruins are partially excavated, a lifetime of archeological research will be needed to excavate the ruins within 6-9 miles of the central plaza. One of the last outposts where the Keel-billed Motmot is common. Also, you may see Ocellated Turkey Crested Guan, and Great Curassow, in addition to





toucans and trogons. In addition to the birds, a variety of forest-dwelling mammals including 5 species of cats live in the area and are occasionally seen. Other notable mammals include the endangered Red Brocket Deer, Yucatan Black Howler Monkey, and Red Spider Monkey.

Overnight at Black Rock Lodge (B,L,D)

Day 8 – Nov 20, Wednesday - Drive to Belize airport for departure (B)

After an early breakfast at the lodge, you will pack up and make the drive back to the international airport. Please make departure flights after 1 pm.

This tour is escorted by Susan Foster, TOS board member and will be guided by local bird guides from each of the two lodges.

COST:

- \$2,995 per person (TOS member) in double occupancy, minimum 8 participants. (maximum 10)
- With minimum 6, \$3,195
- Plus \$100 for non-TOS members
- Single \$550. Singles are very limited. *Either a smaller room (with private bath) or a double at single rate.*
- Minimum 6 to operate, maximum 10 participants.
- To confirm your spot, please [complete the reservation form on-line.](#)
- **Deposit** \$1000 to hold space; final payment will due Aug 13, 2024.
- Cancellation: After 30 days, deposit is non-refundable. Once paid in full, from 90-60 days prior to departure, 50% penalty. Inside 60 days – non-refundable. Name changes may be allowed. There is no refund for unused parts of the tour. ***Travel insurance** to include trip cancellation coverage in addition to medical coverage and medical evacuation is required. Your tour leader will request proof of insurance.***

TRAVEL INSURANCE is required for this trip with Texas Ornithological Society. Please start here at [TravelGuard](#) but feel free to look elsewhere, like [Squaremouth](#), a comparison tool. We recommend trip cancellation coverage as well as comprehensive medical coverage that includes medical evacuation. MedEvac can be purchased separately as you'll see in TravelGuard's offerings. Also, if you are paying for your trip by credit card, check with the card company to see if they cover any insurance for travelers.

INCLUDED:

- Transportation as listed by van
- 7 nights lodging with all taxes
- Services of local bilingual bird guides
- Entry fees to parks, etc
- Meals as listed (B,L,D)
- Basic gratuities for hotels, meals, & drivers
- Donation to TOS
- Escorted by TOS member Susan Foster

NOT INCLUDED:

- International airfare (to/fr Belize International BZE)
- Drinks
- Gratuities to local guides*(See suggestions)
- **Travel Insurance – required by TOS
- Personal expenses

**Suggested tipping for guides:*

Local bilingual bird guides will be with you throughout. We recommend tips of \$15-20 per day, to be given on your final day with each guide.

TOS board member Susan Foster is a retired teacher and spends most of her time in the pursuit of all things birds. She spent 30 years as a resident of Laredo, Texas, enjoying the unique avifauna of the Texas/Mexican border. In the past decade or two, she has led bird tours in and around South Texas for the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, Laredo Birding Festival, Rockport HummerBird Festival, the Aransas Bird and Nature Club, the Audubon Outdoor Club, The Birdiest Festival, and the Texas Ornithological Society, as well as given presentations on how-to eBird for the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies. She was a founding member of the Monte Mucho Audubon Society and is currently leading tours for Nature Ninja Birding Tours as well as serving as a Regional Director and Secretary of the Texas Ornithological Society. Originally from Massachusetts, she spends her time birding in Colorado in the summer and all around Texas and beyond the remainder of the year. Susan currently lives on the coast in Rockport, Texas.



***Lamanai Outpost Lodge** is very comfortable, with spacious rooms with private bath, mini-fridge, and verandah. Delicious food is served in the dining room which overlooks the forest and the river, with Wi-Fi available in the sitting area of the lodge.*



***Black Rock Lodge** is in the dense rainforest on the banks of the Macal River flowing through the Maya Mountains of Belize. Over 390 species of birds are possible to sight on Black Rock's property. The cabins are one room structures built to take advantage of the fresh mountain breezes. All cabins come equipped with hammocks, Wi-Fi, and have paved walkways. Rooms have ceiling fans and screened windows, en suite hot water showers, verandas with hammocks, and most have views of the river. The restaurant is well known, and most ingredients come from their own farm, including dozens of different fruits, goats offering cheese and milk, even grow their own coffee!*

Special diets can be accommodated at either lodge with advance notice.