



Field Guides Tour Report

Belize: Tropical Birding, Short and Sweet 2018

Mar 3, 2018 to Mar 10, 2018

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For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).



A White-fronted Parrot does its best "downward dog" move during a courtship display. Photo by participant Max Rodel.

There's nothing like heading to a lovely tropical location while much of your home country shivers through a wintry blast! As friends shoveled snow and moaned about icy winds and frigid temperatures, we spent a lovely week in a tropical paradise, strolling through verdant landscapes, lolling about on boats, basking in sunny warmth and enjoying leisurely encounters with scores of showy, confiding birds.

We split our time between two lodges: the comfortable Lamanai Outpost Lodge, which spills down a hillside overlooking the placid New Lagoon, and the plush Hidden Valley Inn, tucked into an open pine forest in the Mayan Mountains. A nice variety of habitats -- forest, scruffy second growth, savanna, agricultural fields and various waterways -- lies within easy reach of Lamanai, most within a walk or a short boat ride from the lodge; other than our drive from the airport to the boat dock, we only got in a van once in four days! We ventured a bit further afield from Hidden Valley, exploring the pine forest (with its many impressive waterfalls) and the lush forested valleys that bisect it.

Along the way, we had many wonderful encounters with Belize's birds. Huge-eyed (and huge-beaked) Boat-billed Herons peered down from stream-side branches as long-toed Northern Jacanas stepped delicately across lily pads below. A Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl tooted challenges from a series of perches, scarcely larger than some of the pinecones he sat near for a while. A Double-toothed Kite moved closer and closer to where we stood. Dusk sprinkled a baker's dozen King Vultures in trees around the aptly-named King Vulture Falls. A male Pale-billed Woodpecker clung to a trunk in gorgeous early-morning sunshine. Swallow-tailed Kites swung in graceful circles overhead, and then dropped down to drink and bathe in a nearby lake. Neon-bright Keel-billed Toucans (Belize's national bird) glowed in treetops. Two huge Jabirus posed on their giant stick nest, silhouetted against a glowing sunset. A White-whiskered Puffbird hunted at eye-level along a roadside. A small but fierce Bat Falcon perched atop a dead snag right over our heads. A well-camouflaged Lesson's Motmot lurked among similarly-colored palm fronds. A Gray-crowned Yellowthroat sat atop a series of leafless bushes, singing lustily. A Mottled Owl gazed, wide-eyed, from a spotlit tree.

A little whirlwind of woodcreepers -- Ruddy, Tawny-winged and Northern Barred -- swirled above a boiling ant swarm, accompanied by a pair of Gray-headed Tanagers and a Black Catbird. A tiny Yucatan Woodcreeper investigated nearby tree branches. A pair of Hepatic Tanagers surveyed their domain from atop a towering pine. A Tody Motmot lurked in a leafy tree, calling steadily as he watched for intruders. Barred Antshrike pairs chortled from the bushes, the rusty females contrasting nicely with their "jailbird" mates. Gangs of White-collared Swifts raced back and forth in front of towering waterfalls, occasionally clinging briefly to the sheer cliff faces. A dozen Azure-crowned Hummingbirds swarmed around a flowering tree. A gang of Groove-billed Anis snuggled in a sunny bush. An out-in-the-open Mangrove Cuckoo (!!) posed on a fence rail before heading into some nearby leafless

trees for a poke around. A Yucatan Nightjar blinked on its perch and a Common Pauraque flung itself after insects. We found a pair of Yellow-lored Parrots close to some nearby White-fronted Parrots (one of which was doing its best "downward dog" moves) for a nice comparison.

And our enjoyment of all of them was vastly enhanced by sharing them with a great group of friends old and new. Thanks to all of you for your fine companionship: your stories, laughs and kind regard for each other really enhanced the trip, as did your excellent spotting. I look forward to seeing you all again someday, somewhere else in the world!

-- Megan

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Tinamidae (Tinamous)

THICKET TINAMOU (*Crypturellus cinnamomeus*) – We heard the short, clear whistles of this species while walking in the savanna across the lagoon from Lamanai, and near the ultralight "runway" on the morning of the day we transferred to Hidden Valley. [*]

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

MUSCOVY DUCK (*Cairina moschata*) – One of these big ducks dropped in to the rice fields in a flurry of black and white wings, seen by some of the group shortly after we arrived there.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Spatula discors*) – Several pairs paddled across a small farm pond in Mennonite country, distracting us briefly from the nearby shorebirds, and we spotted another drake at Lake Lolly Folly on Mountain Pine Ridge.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – A single drake floated on Crab-catcher Lagoon one morning, first spotted by Judy and Susie, and visible from the dock at Lamanai. This is a common winter visitor to Belize.

Cracidae (Guans, Chachalacas, and Curassows)

PLAIN CHACHALACA (*Ortalis vetula*) – Seen every day but the first, including a couple of pairs giving us a rousing chorus from some open Cecropia trees along the back trail at Lamanai, and a little gang that made regular raids on the feeders at Hidden Valley. This is the same species as that found in South Texas, though the subspecies "pallidiventris" is restricted to the Yucatan peninsula.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LEAST GREBE (*Tachybaptus dominicus*) – One consorted with a drake Blue-winged Teal on Lake Lolly Folly on the Hidden Valley Inn property. It proved a bit more wary than the duck (disappearing regularly behind the reeds), but everybody eventually got a look through the scope.

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Two winter-plumaged birds floated near the landing dock at the Lamanai ruins, seen on a couple of our visits there. This is a winter visitor to the country. [b]

Ciconiidae (Storks)

JABIRU (*Jabiru mycteria*) – Two on a huge stick nest near the north end of the New Lagoon were a highlight of our "sundowner cruise". [N]

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – Small numbers along the New River and around Lamanai, including the handful drying out on posts near the Lamanai ruins landing dock each day, with others on Lake Lolly Folly. This is the only regularly expected cormorant on our tour route.

Anhingidae (Anhingas)

ANHINGA (*Anhinga anhinga*) – A few scattered along the edges of the New River and its tributaries, (or soaring high above them), including one perched high in a tree near the start of the savanna trail along Dawson Creek.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – One stood hunkered among some bushes on a canal bank in the rice fields near Lamanai, and another mingled with the plentiful Great Egrets nearby. We found a third along Dawson Creek as we headed to the savanna. This is a winter visitor to Belize.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Small numbers recorded every day but one, with some nice comparisons between this species and the next in the along the edge of Crab-catcher Lagoon when we arrived at the Lamanai ruins one morning. This species is found year-round in Belize, but numbers are supplemented by migrants during the winter.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – A few in the rice fields near Lamanai (where they were vastly outnumbered by the other egret species), with another fishing near the Lamanai ruins pier one morning; the bright yellow feet of the latter were glowing like a beacon!

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*) – Including a flock of some two dozen or more scattered along the banks of an irrigation channel in the rice fields near Shipyard.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Common around Lamanai, including several dozen flashing picturesquely against the greenery as they fled down the New River in front of our boat on our way down from the airport, and others hovering attentively around the feet of livestock in pastures around Mennonite country.

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*) – Every day but one around Lamanai -- and we probably just didn't look hard enough that day! The one standing frozen on a branch along the New River, staring down into the water below, was particularly close.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – We spotted an immature bird along the New River on our journey down from the airport. It was beyond the "spotty juvenile" stage, but not quite to adult plumage.

BOAT-BILLED HERON (*Cochlearius cochlearius*) – A trio of wide-eyed birds peered down from the branches of some trees along the New River, scuttling higher as we drifted closer. We saw another sleeper bird along Irish Creek. That's some beak!

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

WHITE IBIS (*Eudocimus albus*) – Small numbers on several days around Lamanai, including a flock wheeling picturesquely overhead in the slanting, golden, late-afternoon light as we headed to the lodge on the first afternoon of the tour. We saw surprisingly few youngsters this year.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*) – Somehow, we missed these one day in the Maya Mountains; we must not have been trying very hard! Most days we saw dozens and dozens, often in big, spiraling kettles.

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Seen every day of the tour, including many rocking low over the trees surrounding Crab-catcher Lagoon, and a few perched in the pine trees around the cabins at Hidden Valley Inn.

LESSER YELLOW-HEADED VULTURE (*Cathartes burrovianus*) – We spotted a few from the boat as we zoomed south along the New River from the airport, but our best views came in the open country around Shipyard, where a half dozen or so coursed back and forth with some Turkey Vultures for comparison. Unlike its cousin, this species doesn't search for food over forested areas.

KING VULTURE (*Sarcorampus papa*) – Our first was a flyover at the Lamanai ruins (seen as we started up the pier towards the museum), but our best views came at King Vulture Falls, where we spotted a baker's dozen roosting in trees near the falls or circling on their immense broad wings overhead. This species garnered multiple votes in the "Bird of the Trip" competition.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Scattered birds on the first half of the tour, including several perched along the New River and a few flying over carrying fish.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

WHITE-TAILED KITE (*Elanus leucurus*) – Two birds perched atop a rather distant dead tree were rendered slightly wobbly by the heat haze.

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE (*Elanoides forficatus*) – WOW! Who will soon forget our fabulous encounter with the drinking, bathing birds at Lake Lolly Folly our last afternoon?! It's not often you get to see the TOPSIDE of these gorgeous birds. We had others from the Slate Creek raptor watchpoint, plus a little group of migrants over the river as we headed south from the airport on the day the tour started. This species finished atop the leaderboard in the "Bird of the Trip" competition.

BLACK-COLLARED HAWK (*Busarellus nigricollis*) – One soared over the rice fields near Shipyard, steadily gaining altitude. Even when it reached its highest point, we could still make out its whitish head.

SNAIL KITE (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*) – Fabulous views of a male perched right beside the New River on our boat trip down from the airport. He stayed put as we edged closer, giving us a great opportunity to study his wickedly hooked beak -- all the better for plucking hapless snails from their shells!

DOUBLE-TOOTHED KITE (*Harpagus bidentatus*) – This is generally a quiet, sneaky raptor that sticks to the canopy, often following monkey troops as they bounce through the trees. We lucked out, however, finding one right in the open along Lamanai's back trail. It had caught something and was happily dismembering it on an open Cecropia branch. And when it was done, it moved to an open tree right beside us on the trail to have a good look around for another tidbit. Wow!

PLUMBEOUS KITE (*Ictinia plumbea*) – At least three different birds on Mountain Pine Ridge: a pair perched along one of the little creeks we passed on our way to the Rio Frio cave road, and a single (even closer) bird nearer our lodge. We had nice looks at their long wings (which extend far beyond the tail) and those incongruously orange feet.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – A big female flap-flap-glided past as we birded at King Vulture Falls. This is a winter visitor to Belize. [b]

ROADSIDE HAWK (*Rupornis magnirostris*) – Paul spotted our first, tucked into a palm tree near the Lamanai Outpost Lodge on our first morning's walk. We saw others around Indian Church and on the nearby savanna, plus a few in the Mayan Mountains.

WHITE HAWK (SNOWY) (*Pseudastur albicollis ghiesbreghtii*) – Some fine spotting by Susie netted us our first views, of a bird perched on the far side of the valley at Thousand Foot Falls. Max spied another pair from the Slate Creek raptor watchpoint. They glided along together above the forest, their snowy plumage glowing against the verdant background. Eventually, things went all x-rated when they dropped down to a branch for a bit of baby White Hawk making. What gorgeous birds!

GRAY HAWK (*Buteo plagiatus*) – Our first, spotted on the drive from the Hidden Valley airstrip to the lodge, made its escape before everybody got a look. Fortunately, we found a more cooperative adult circling overhead near the Douglas da Silva forestry camp the next day.

SHORT-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo brachyurus*) – Regular on the first half of the trip, including a dark morph bird drifting over the Northern Highway on our way towards Carmelita from the airport, and the bully that chased a Laughing Falcon off not one, not two, but THREE different perches along the edge of the New Lagoon one morning.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

RUDDY CRAKE (*Laterallus ruber*) – We heard the loud, chattering calls of two birds several times near the dock at the Lamanai ruins. Unfortunately, they weren't at all interested in coming out where they could be seen! [*]

RUSSET-NAPED WOOD-RAIL (*Aramides albiventris*) – A sleeping bird seen on our spotlight safari was a gray, russet and black ball of feathers with one stout, orange leg.

PURPLE GALLINULE (*Porphyrio martinica*) – Another bird seen (or at least part of it was seen, not far from a wide-eyed Common Yellowthroat) on our spotlight safari; this one was tucked into the reeds along the water's edge -- but its distinctively blue feathers gave it away.

Heliornithidae (Finfoots)

SUNGREBE (*Heliornis fulica*) – One chugging along the side of the New River allowed spectacularly good views as we headed south from the airport our first afternoon; it was out along the edge for at least 90 seconds or so! We saw another, more typically wary bird along Irish Creek. It exploded from the water in a flurry of wings and quickly disappeared under vegetation at the water's edge.

Aramidae (Limpkin)

LIMPKIN (*Aramus guarauna*) – Common around the New Lagoon, though FAR more regularly heard than seen. The adult sheltering two partially-grown chicks near the Lamanai boat landing (seen on our spotlight safari) probably gave us our best looks.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – A small group of these long-legged shorebirds snoozed along the edge of a farm pond in Mennonite country, while one or two poked desultorily in the shallow water nearby. [b]

Jacaniidae (Jacanas)

NORTHERN JACANA (*Jacana spinosa*) – Great studies of several, including some still-stripey youngsters, along the New River on our journey down from the airport, with others on some of the farm ponds in Mennonite country. Their incredibly long toes are amazing!

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – A few of these pale-legged shorebirds poked and prodded at the muddy edge of a farm pond in Mennonite country, right around the toes of the snoozing Greater Yellowlegs. [b]

SOLITARY SANDPIPER (*Tringa solitaria*) – A single bird flew in and landed on the edge of a muddy farm pond in Mennonite country while we stood nearby, giving us brief views before disappearing behind a small bank. This is a winter visitor to Belize. [b]

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – A group of a half dozen or so snoozed along the edge of a farm pond in Mennonite country, while another actively foraged in the foreground. The long, slightly upswept bill of this species is often two-toned (paler gray at the base, dark at the tip) -- features that help to separate it from the very similar Less Yellowlegs. [b]

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Common around the airport, in the typical variety of colors. [I]

PALE-VENTED PIGEON (*Patagioenas cayennensis*) – Abundant around New Lagoon, where its (appropriately) pale vent helped to quickly separate it from the equally common Red-billed Pigeons. We got scope looks at a few on the savanna.

SCALED PIGEON (*Patagioenas speciosa*) – One perched in a scraggly pine along the "highway" to Caracol didn't stay long enough for everybody to see it in the scope. Though overall large and dark, like the next species, this one has a pale belly and vent.

RED-BILLED PIGEON (*Patagioenas flavirostris*) – Reasonably common around Lamanai, most typically in flight. We did find a few perched birds along the back trail, which allowed us to see their distinctive yellow bills. ("Red-billed" is a bit of a misnomer; only the very base of the bill is red while the rest is yellow.)

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Several near one of the farms in Mennonite country kept us entertained while we waited our turn to look through the scopes at the Giant and Bronzed cowbirds. This is a recent arrival to Belize. [I]

PLAIN-BREASTED GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina minuta*) – One along a wire fence beside the road in Mennonite country retreated a few yards to a nearby brush pile before being joined by a female -- and then they were so taken with each other that they forgot to be wary of us!

RUDDY GROUND-DOVE (*Columbina talpacoti*) – Our best looks came around Indian Church, where we found several small flocks foraging along the roadsides and in Mennonite country, where they gathered around several of the farm ponds.

BLUE GROUND-DOVE (*Claravis pretiosa*) – One flashed across the road in front of our van in Mennonite country, seen by a few. This is one of the larger ground-doves -- and one of the more uniquely-colored ones.

WHITE-TIPPED DOVE (*Leptotila verreauxi*) – Scattered birds seen throughout, with our best looks coming at Hidden Valley Inn, where they trundled around on the lawns under the feeders. This species is typically found in more open habitats than the next.

GRAY-HEADED DOVE (*Leptotila plumbeiceps*) – Two shuffled down one of the trails at Lamanai on our first morning there, weaving in and out of the trees edging the path.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) – Max spotted the tour's first, mooching under some bushes with the chickens near the Carmelita boat dock on the New River, though I think only he and I saw that one. We found another in Indian Church before breakfast one morning, in the same leafless tree as our mob of Red-legged Honeycreepers. This is another winter visitor to Belize. [b]

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

GROOVE-BILLED ANI (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*) – A quintet snuggled together on a branch in a tower of ivy along Lamanai's "back trail" were particularly endearing.

SQUIRREL CUCKOO (*Piaya cayana*) – Regular (in small numbers) around Lamanai, including one bounding along the branches of a tree along the driveway -- looking appropriately squirrel-like -- on our first morning. We heard its distinctive wolf whistle along the Rio Frio cave road as well.

MANGROVE CUCKOO (*Coccyzus minor*) – One on a pasture fence in Mennonite country -- pointed out by the farmer himself as he saddled his horse -- was certainly a surprise, given how open the surroundings were. It soon retreated to a nearby plantation, where it scrambled through the branches looking for prey while we watched through the scopes. Despite the fact that they're reasonably widespread and present throughout much of Central America, very little is known about the life history of this species.

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

BARN OWL (*Tyto alba*) – A very pale bird in the top of a tree along the edge of Crab-catcher Lagoon allowed super views on a couple of different nights. This is the world's most widespread owl, found on every continent except Antarctica.

Strigidae (Owls)

FERRUGINOUS PYGMY-OWL (*Glaucidium brasilianum*) – One tooting from the hedges around the main building at Hidden Valley turned out to be a real star, sitting for long minutes in several places (including right among a cluster of similarly-sized pinecones and on an eye-level branch right over the parking lot) and allowing wonderful photographs and scope studies.

MOTTLED OWL (*Ciccaba virgata*) – A night walk near Lamanai yielded very nice scope looks at one perched in a tree near the back trail (found by Erin after it flew right past us). We heard both it and its mate calling from the woods as we meandered back to the lodge after enjoying the rise of a fat orange moon.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

LESSER NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles acutipennis*) – One snoozing on a dayroost right above the New River was a highlight of our journey down from the airport.

COMMON PAURAUQUE (*Nyctidromus albicollis*) – A hunting bird entertained us during one night's dinner at Lamanai, periodically flashing up from the ground to grab something, lit by the lights in the dining room (though I'm still not sure that Susie believes us!). We had amazing views of 3-4 others on our spotlight safari, including a pair almost within touching distance along the edge of Crab-catcher Lagoon.

YUCATAN NIGHTJAR (*Antrostomus badius*) – A trio of singletons in the spotlight on our nighttime safari onto the New Lagoon. The first was facing us and very close, so we could clearly see the distinctive sprinkling of white spots along its body near the wing and its brown cheek. The other two were further away and a bit harder to see well.

Nyctibiidae (Potoos)

NORTHERN POTOO (*Nyctibius jamaicensis*) – We found at least three along the edges of the New Lagoon during our spotlight safari, picked out each time by the shine of their enormous eyes. Each had found a convenient dead snag to hunt from.

Apodidae (Swifts)

WHITE-COLLARED SWIFT (*Streptoprocne zonaris*) – Scores (hundreds?) of birds coursed back and forth across the face of Tiger Creek Falls, occasionally perching briefly on cliffs and ledges among the falls themselves. Their distinctive white collars were easy to see against the dark backdrop of trees and rock.

VAUX'S SWIFT (RICHMOND'S) (*Chaetura vauxi richmondi*) – Dozens fluttered overhead, twittering incessantly, along the Northern Highway, seen when we stopped for a look at our first Short-tailed Hawk.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

WHITE-NECKED JACOBIN (*Florisuga mellivora*) – At least two males flicked through the pink-flowering tree near the start of the Rio Frio cave road, chasing each other around whenever one passed the other's perch.

STRIPE-THROATED HERMIT (*Phaethornis striigularis*) – One flitted along the edge of the Rio Frio cave road, not far from the cave's parking lot, its long white tail feathers flashing as it investigated a series of dangling vines. This species was split from Little Hermit, which is now restricted to South America.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*) – A couple of these winter visitors (both females) were seen: one feeding in a stand of scraggly shrubs in Mennonite country, and the other in the pink flowering tree in Hidden Valley's courtyard. [b]

AZURE-CROWNED HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia cyanocephala*) – Almost ridiculously abundant on the grounds of Hidden Valley Inn, with at least 8 hovering around the feeders one morning, and a dozen or more jousting over the pink flowers in a tree in the courtyard.

RUFIOUS-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia tzacatl*) – By far the most common hummingbird of the trip, seen in good numbers on most days -- particularly at Lamanai, where they jostled around the feeders near the dining room, and rested in the hanging plant baskets. The singing bird Hugo spotted along the Rio Frio cave road (and it was amazing how tough it was to spot, even after we KNEW where it was) gave us very nice scope views.

BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD (*Amazilia yucatanensis*) – Another species seen among the pink blossoms of the big flowering tree along the Rio Frio cave road by some. The pale buffy belly of this species helps to separate it from the similar (and far more common) Rufous-tailed Hummingbird.

Trogonidae (Trogons)

SLATY-TAILED TROGON (*Trogon massena*) – A pair in the fruiting fig tree at Lamanai's sugar mill were very cooperative -- particularly the female, who sat for long minutes on an open branch low enough to save our neck muscles!

BLACK-HEADED TROGON (*Trogon melanocephalus*) – The most numerous of the tour's trogons, seen or heard most days of the trip -- including a busy trio snatching fruits from the tree right outside Erin and Kathe's cabin at Lamanai, and another pair along the Rio Frio cave road, seen shortly after we found our Collared Trogon.

GARTERED TROGON (*Trogon caligatus*) – Quite common around Lamanai, including some in nice comparison with the previous species in the fruiting fig tree near the sugar mill. This is the smallest of the tour's trogons, distinguished from the Black-headed Trogon in part by the fine black and white barring on its undertail.

COLLARED TROGON (*Trogon collaris*) – Three along the Rio Frio cave road: the first male side-on in the canopy, and another pair hunting at eye level a bit further down the road. The female is the only brown-backed trogon of the tour.

Momotidae (Motmots)

TODY MOTMOT (*Hylomanes momotula*) – Soft calls alerted us to the presence of this little motmot along one of the trails at the Lamanai ruins, and we eventually located him tucked among some leaves and vines on a branch right over the path. This species doesn't have the distinctive racket-shaped tail feathers of the next.

LESSON'S MOTMOT (*Momotus lessonii exiguus*) – We heard far more of these than we saw, but finally caught up with one gorgeous bird near the coffee grove at Hidden Valley. This was one of the subspecies of the former Blue-crowned Motmot, which was split into many species following some DNA research.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

RINGED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle torquata*) – The most regular of the tour's kingfishers, including a noisy trio that shouted and displayed over Lamanai most mornings.

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – One flew down the New River in front of our boat, then landed in a treetop as we made our way south from the airport. This is a winter visitor to Belize.

GREEN KINGFISHER (*Chloroceryle americana*) – We spotted our first on our way down the New River from the airport our first afternoon, but had better looks at one right over our boat on Irish Creek (while we were enjoying the mob at the ant swarm) and at another along Privission River on our way to the Rio Frio cave road (spotted by Erin while we checked out the Plumbeous Kite).

AMERICAN PYGMY KINGFISHER (*Chloroceryle aenea*) – One that flew in and landed right above the boat at Irish Creek gave us great views -- and then moved only a few yards away to perch again in the open. This is the New World's smallest kingfisher.

Bucconidae (Puffbirds)

WHITE-NECKED PUFFBIRD (*Notharchus hyperrhynchus*) – A calling bird just over the Lamanai museum got us scurrying quickly outside for a look. Its mate soon arrived and the pair proved quite obliging, perching on a series of big branches and eventually giving us scope views of all sides.

WHITE-WHISKERED PUFFBIRD (*Malacoptila panamensis*) – Our first was a little male along one of the trails at Lamanai, but our best views came along the Rio Frio cave road, where Hugo spotted us a confiding, eye-level bird right beside the road.

Galbulidae (Jacamars)

RUFIOUS-TAILED JACAMAR (*Galbula ruficauda*) – A showy male above the Masked Temple's courtyard drew the attention of a youngster intrigued by our excitement. This widespread tropical species is found from Mexico down to southern Brazil and Ecuador.

Ramphastidae (Toucans)

COLLARED ARACARI (*Pteroglossus torquatus*) – Common around Indian Church (where we often saw them in sizable groups) with others along the Rio Frio cave road.

KEEL-BILLED TOUCAN (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*) – Surprisingly scarce this year, with only a handful of birds seen on a handful of days. But we had great views of the ones we saw, including a pair in gorgeous early morning light in a tall tree on the edge of Indian Church. This is Belize's national bird.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

ACORN WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) – Regular on Mountain Pine Ridge, with many right around Hidden Valley Inn -- including a pair resting in a pine out the front door on our first afternoon's walk there, and others that routinely perched on a telephone pole (riddled with acorn storing holes) beside the feeders.

YUCATAN WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes pygmaeus*) – Some of the group spotted one of these regional endemics along the New River on our journey down from the airport, but the better views came on our morning in the savanna, when one little male gave us a great opportunity for study as he hitched his way around some nearby trees. We could see the small size, small beak, and distinctive golden nasal tufts that help to separate him from the next species.

GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKER (VELASQUEZ'S) (*Melanerpes aurifrons dubius*) – Regular around Lamanai, with especially nice views of one chomping on a custard apple in Indian Church and of another near the Jaguar Temple at Lamanai. This species is larger than the last, and this subspecies has red, rather than yellow nasal tufts -- hence the subspecies name: *dubius*!

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – A youngster, still lacking any trace of red on the head, lurked among the trees near the Hidden Valley Inn's parking lot while we were admiring our first Rusty Sparrow -- great spotting, Barbara!

SMOKY-BROWN WOODPECKER (*Picoides fumigatus*) – A pair near one of the temples at Lamanai was very accommodating, hitching their way up nearby tree trunks and branches. This is a pretty plain little woodpecker, with only a slightly paler cheek, a slightly darker tail and the male's red crown varying from the uniform brown plumage that gives it its name.

GOLDEN-OLIVE WOODPECKER (*Colaptes rubiginosus*) – One foraged in a viny tangle near Lamanai's Masked Temple, providing entertainment for those who'd already had a good look at the Rufous-tailed Jacamar. How about that barred belly?

CHESTNUT-COLORED WOODPECKER (*Ceelus castaneus*) – We had a super encounter with one of these gorgeous woodpeckers along a trail at the Lamanai ruins when it swept in and perched on a nearby tree trunk.

PALE-BILLED WOODPECKER (*Campephilus guatemalensis*) – A male flew in and clung to the slim white trunk of a small Cecropia tree along Lamanai's back trail, distracting most of us from our admiration of an early morning Bat Falcon (and the chachalaca serenade). Those who'd stayed back at the lodge had scope views of another in the garden among the cabins.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

LAUGHING FALCON (*Herpetotheres cachinnans*) – One along the trail to Lamanai's sugar mill played hard to get initially, flying further and further along the trail before finally perching up right in the open. We saw another being chased along the edge of the lagoon by a bullying Short-tailed Hawk, and a third perched in a dead pine along a bumpy road on Mountain Pine Ridge.

BAT FALCON (*Falco ruficularis*) – At least one hung around Lamanai Outpost Lodge, seen zooming past most mornings; our best looks came along the back trail, where we found it perched one morning for good scope looks.

ORANGE-BREASTED FALCON (*Falco deiroleucus*) – One sat in a treetop on the far side of the valley at Thousand Foot Falls; it was a tiny dot in the binoculars, but not a bad look at all in the scope. Mountain Pine Ridge is the stronghold of this declining species in Central America.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – We puzzled over a very distant bird perched in a very distant tree at the rice fields. Fortunately, we didn't have to count that one, because it (or another) soon rocketed past right over our heads, circling around two or three times to give us another look.

Psittacidae (New World and African Parrots)

BROWN-HOODED PARROT (*Pyrilia haematotis*) – A couple of birds flew past as we birded near the custard apple tree in Indian Church one morning.

WHITE-CROWNED PARROT (*Pionus senilis*) – Small groups of these noisy parrots, which have a much deeper wing flap than the ubiquitous Amazona parrots, winged past over Indian Church on several mornings. Unlike the White-fronted Parrots (which also have significant white feathering on the head) these don't show any red in the wing.

RED-LORED PARROT (*Amazona autumnalis*) – Regular throughout, including a couple perched at the top of a fruiting tree over our cabins one morning (giving us great views in the scope), another pair perched in a nearby tree in Indian Church, and some along our drive to the Rio Frio cave road. The red "headband" of this species is clearly visible, even when the bird is in flight.

YELLOW-HEADED PARROT (*Amazona oratrix*) – We heard the deep, musical babbling of this species as they flew around while we birded in the savanna, but the birds never got above the treeline, so we never saw them. [*]

WHITE-FRONTED PARROT (*Amazona albifrons*) – Regular around Lamanai, typically in screeching flocks whizzing past overhead. Our best perched views came in the savanna, where we admired several close pairs in the lovely early morning light.

YELLOW-LORED PARROT (*Amazona xantholora*) – We checked a lot of White-fronted Parrots in the savanna before we finally got a good look at a couple of these Yucatan specialties; the dark patches behind their eye -- and the small yellow lore patches -- help to separate them from their more abundant cousins.

OLIVE-THROATED PARAKEET (AZTEC) (*Eupsittula nana astec*) – Widespread throughout, with especially nice views of a pair nibbling on the pink flowers of a tree in the Hidden Valley Inn gardens one morning. This species is found throughout much of Central America.

Thamnophilidae (Typical Antbirds)

BARRED ANTSHRIKE (*Thamnophilus doliatus*) – Stellar views of a confiding pair along Lamanai's back trail one morning; the male sang from an open branch (!!) down near the water's edge, and the female could only have come closer if she had landed on someone! We saw others along the lodge's driveway on our first pre-breakfast walk, and in Indian Church. And we certainly heard their distinctive laughing song regularly.

Formicariidae (Antthrushes)

BLACK-FACED ANTTHRUSH (MAYAN) (*Formicarius analis moniliger*) – It took some patience and more than a little persistence, but most of us finally managed a glimpse or three of one as it stalked along the forest floor in the Lamanai ruins, occasionally popping up onto a branch to sing for a while. A lucky few even saw it in the scope! They look like little bantam chickens, complete with twitching tails.

Furnariidae (Ovenbirds and Woodcreepers)

OLIVACEOUS WOODCREEPER (*Sittasomus griseicapillus*) – One of these small woodcreepers hitched its way up the bottom few yards of a whole series of big trees near the Lamanai sugar mill. The small size of this species, and its combination of gray head and breast and rusty rump and tail,

help to separate it from the country's other woodcreepers.

- RUDDY WOODCREEPER** (*Dendrocincla homochroa*) – At least one hunted just above the boiling ant swarm we found along Irish Creek. This was the most uniformly-colored of the woodcreepers we saw there -- a plain rufous all over, with a slightly "punk" look to its spiky head feathers.
- TAWNY-WINGED WOODCREEPER** (*Dendrocincla anabatina*) – Another singleton above the Irish Creek ant swarm, quickly distinguished by the paler patch in its wing.
- NORTHERN BARRED-WOODCREEPER** (*Dendrocolaptes sanctithomae*) – Two argued noisily over prey items (or professed their undying love for each other -- it was hard to tell which) at the ant swarm along Irish Creek. These were the biggest of the woodcreepers at the swarm, and they're certainly well-named; those narrow black bars were clearly visible on all sides of the birds as they clung to the trunks.
- IVORY-BILLED WOODCREEPER** (*Xiphorhynchus flavigaster*) – The most common woodcreeper on the tour, seen many days around Lamanai, and along the Rio Frio cave road. The long pale bill of this one is distinctive -- and we saw it well when a cooperative bird hitched its way up the trunk of a tree outside the Lamanai Outpost Lodge dining room.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

- YELLOW-BELLIED TYRANULET** (*Ornithion semiflavum*) – We heard this one regularly around the Lamanai ruins and along the Rio Frio cave road but couldn't get an angle on the right part of the canopy to actually see it. [*]
- NORTHERN BEARDLESS-TYRANULET** (*Camptostoma imberbe*) – We heard one singing (and singing and singing) from a pine back off the track through the savanna, but just couldn't entice it out for a look. [*]
- YELLOW-BELLIED ELAENIA** (*Elaenia flavogaster*) – A pair near where we turned around on our savanna walk were satisfyingly cooperative, sitting for long minutes right out in the open. We got great looks at their distinctive crests -- and the white spot on the top of their heads.
- EYE-RINGED FLATBILL** (*Rhynchocyclus brevirostris*) – Talk about a well-named bird! We had an excellent encounter with one hunting along the edge of a trail at Lamanai; it perched again and again right in the open, allowing multiple scope studies for all.
- YELLOW-OLIVE FLYCATCHER** (*Tolmomyias sulphurescens*) – After hearing several calling around the museum at the Lamanai Mayan Ruins, we finally connected with one along the back trail; it bounced through some trailside bushes, perching repeatedly in the open. [*]
- YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax flaviventris*) – Single birds seen hunting in the forest understory on a couple of days: one near the shops at the Lamanai ruins and the second along the Rio Frio cave road. This is another winter visitor. [b]
- LEAST FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax minimus*) – One hunted from a low perch in the savanna, not far from where we found our Yellow-bellied Elaenias. This is another winter visitor to Belize. [b]
- VERMILION FLYCATCHER** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) – A handful brightened fence posts and brush piles along the road in Mennonite country, including one returning again and again to a broken stick above our Plain-breasted Ground-Doves. Talk about eye candy!
- BRIGHT-RUMPED ATTLA** (*Attila spadiceus*) – We heard the "maniacal laugh" song of this big flycatcher on several days around Lamanai, and finally caught up with one along the back trail on our final pre-breakfast walk there.
- DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*) – A couple of inquisitive birds near the Hidden Valley Inn's coffee grove let us examine them from just about every conceivable angle. This, the smallest of the tour's Myiarchus flycatchers, is also the darkest, with an all-dark undertail.
- GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus crinitus*) – A couple of these wintering flycatchers showed nicely along the Rio Frio cave road. This is the most brightly colored of the Myiarchus flycatchers we see on this tour. [b]
- BROWN-CRESTED FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*) – One at the edge of Indian Church and another in the Lamanai ruins let us study them at leisure. The large size, big bill and rusty stripe down the center of the undertail help to separate them from other Myiarchus flycatchers.
- GREAT KISKADEE** (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) – Pretty common around the Lamanai Outpost Lodge, with others along the river and in open places around Indian Church and the ruins site. Their onomatopoeic calls were a regular part of the daily soundtrack, at least on the first half of the tour.
- BOAT-BILLED FLYCATCHER** (*Megarynchus pitangua*) – Seen in small numbers through the tour, including one right in the courtyard of the Lamanai Outpost Lodge, and others along the lodge's back trail.
- SOCIAL FLYCATCHER** (*Myiozetetes similis*) – Regular throughout, with particularly nice views of those around Hidden Valley Inn -- including some in good comparison with the much larger, bigger-billed previous species.
- TROPICAL KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) – Ubiquitous, seen (and heard) nearly everywhere we went.
- COUCH'S KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus couchii*) – After hearing some distant birds calling in the savanna across the New Lagoon from our lodge, we finally connected with one along Irish Creek. It was sitting right at the end of a long horizontal branch high above the water, periodically flinging itself into the air after insects.
- FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (*Tyrannus savana*) – Plenty of these handsome flycatchers sprinkled on fence wires in Mennonite country, including a pair sitting side by side near the start of our explorations there.

Pipridae (Manakins)

- WHITE-COLLARED MANAKIN** (*Manacus candei*) – We spotted two noisy females along Lamanai's back trail. They bounced through some bushes near the end of the ultralight runway, their bright orange legs contrasting nicely with their olive-green plumage. We could hear at least one male snapping in the underbrush there, but couldn't find a view into his dance stage.
- RED-CAPPED MANAKIN** (*Ceratopipra mentalis*) – Wow! A male glowed among the leaves of the fig tree over Lamanai's sugar mill. He stayed for long minutes stuffing himself, allowing everybody to get multiple looks in the scopes.

Tityridae (Tityras and Allies)

- MASKED TITYRA** (*Tityra semifasciata*) – Small numbers around the Lamanai ruins, generally right up at the very top of a fruiting tree, with others along the Rio Frio cave road. The sound of their grunting "little piggy" calls was often the first sign that they were around.
- NORTHERN SCHIFFORNIS** (*Schiffornis veraepacis*) – We heard the very distinctive "Hey Ricky!" call of this understory skulker on several days -- once near the sugar mill at Lamanai, and again along the trail out to the Slate Creek raptor watchpoint -- but we couldn't get them to budge from whatever singing post they were calling from. [*]
- ROSE-THROATED BECARD** (*Pachyramphus aglaiae*) – A female bounced from perch to perch along Lamanai's "back trail" (near the base of the hill at the end of the ultralight landing strip) before breakfast one morning, rarely sitting for more than a few seconds at a time as she hunted for insects.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

- RUFOUS-BROWED PEPPERSHRIKE** (*Cyclarhis gujanensis*) – We heard the rich, warbling song of one from a grove of trees well across the savanna from the path where we stood. [*]

GREEN SHRIKE-VIREO (*Vireolanius pulchellus*) – We heard one singing (and singing and singing) from the far side of the valley at the Slate Creek raptor watch point, as we watched the White Hawks soaring. [✱]

TAWNY-CROWNED GREENLET (*Tunchiornis ochraceiceps*) – A little gang of these small vireos swirled through the forest along a trail at the Lamanai ruins, distracting us from our search for Worm-eating Warbler. We saw another little group along the Rio Frio cave road, and again they were part of a small mixed flock.

LESSER GREENLET (*Pachysylvia decurtata*) – First seen working along the edge of a grove of trees in Mennonite country (a small, noisy group), with others heard at Lamanai and seen along the Rio Frio cave road. This is a common species in the rainforest, but it can be surprisingly hard to spot!

WHITE-EYED VIREO (*Vireo griseus*) – Easily the most common vireo of the tour, seen and/or heard on every day but the first. The one clambering around in the same tree as our first Lesser Greenlets was particularly showy -- and distracting! [b]

MANGROVE VIREO (*Vireo pallens*) – We heard one chirring along Dawson Creek on the morning we visited the savanna, but we could entice it out for a look. We found another along Irish Creek that was only slightly more cooperative; it showed itself, but never for very long!

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO (*Vireo flavifrons*) – One near the Masked Temple at Lamanai entertained us as it whacked a giant caterpillar -- almost as long as it was -- to death on an eye-level branch. We found another along the Rio Frio cave road, which was a nice catch-up for the folks who hadn't climbed the temple. This is yet another winter visitor to Belize. [b]

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

BROWN JAY (*Psilorhinus morio*) – Another very common species, seen in good numbers just about everywhere we went. The noisy local gang around the Lamanai Outpost Lodge made for very effective alarm clocks. A few still sported the yellow beaks that show they're youngsters.

GREEN JAY (*Cyanocorax yncas*) – A few furtive -- though noisy -- birds flicked through trees edging the savanna, never quite popping out into the open.

YUCATAN JAY (*Cyanocorax yucatanicus*) – A good-sized group flapped across Dawson Creek -- one after another after another -- as we started our walk in the savanna. Some good spotting by Paul got us scope views of two perched in a dead tree later on the same walk. As its name suggests, this is another species restricted to the Yucatan peninsula.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – Abundant as we headed down from the airport on our first afternoon, with big swirling kettles of them developing over the river in several spots. It looked like many of these winter visitors were thinking about starting their long journeys north! We saw others along the road as we headed to the Rio Frio caves. [b]

MANGROVE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta albilinea*) – Regular around the New Lagoon, including a quartet that accompanied our boat on our slow "sundowner cruise", sometimes sitting right on the deck beside us.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – A single bird flapped past us as we birded on the savanna. This is generally a transient through Belize; most winter further south and breed further north, though a few hang around all winter. [b]

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

HOUSE WREN (SOUTHERN) (*Troglodytes aedon musculus*) – A pair near the fruiting custard apple tree in Indian Church disported themselves nicely, bouncing back and forth through nearby bushes and investigating brush piles along the road. If the House Wren were to be split, this subspecies would become the Southern (House) Wren.

SPOT-BREASTED WREN (*Pheugopedius maculipectus*) – Very common around Lamanai (with others along the Rio Frio cave road), though far more frequently heard than seen. We did get great looks at a pair with the Tawny-crowned Greenlets at the Lamanai ruins, with briefer views of another pair in Indian Church. They certainly are spotty!

WHITE-BELLIED WREN (*Uropsila leucogastra*) – We heard the jolly "didgeridoo" song of this species along the Rio Frio cave road, but getting good views of it proved rather more difficult. We found a pair, but they spent much of their time twitching rapidly through the thickest vines they could find -- typically at neck-breaking angles from where we stood!

WHITE-BREASTED WOOD-WREN (*Henicorhina leucosticta*) – A few caught glimpses of a pair as they twitched through a tangle of downed branches along Lamanai's back trail, but most only heard their disembodied voices -- either there or among the Lamanai ruins or along the Rio Frio cave road. [✱]

Poliptilidae (Gnatcatchers)

LONG-BILLED GNATWREN (*Ramphocaenus melanurus*) – Our first pair, along a darkening trail in the Lamanai ruins late one afternoon, proved rather skittish as they bounced from one side of the trail to the other. Fortunately, we found a most obliging pair along Lamanai's back trail on our last pre-breakfast walk there; they systematically worked their way through a dense curtain of vines, perching again and again in the open as they foraged. What little cuties!

TROPICAL GNATCATCHER (*Poliptila plumbea*) – A pair flicked through some of the taller trees along the path through the savanna, giving us great views as they foraged in treetop twigs. The dark blue cap of the male is distinctive.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

WOOD THRUSH (*Hylocichla mustelina*) – Two singletons -- one a spotty ball of feathers among the leaves, the other alert and unblinking in a tree beside the path -- were among the species we found on our first night walk at Lamanai. [b]

CLAY-COLORED THRUSH (*Turdus grayi*) – Best seen in the fruiting custard apple tree in Indian Church, where one meandered back and forth along the branches, checking out the fruits. Paul and Barbara saw others at the Hidden Valley Inn's fruit feeders.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

BLACK CATBIRD (*Melanoptila glabrirostris*) – Our first was a confiding bird along Dawson Creek, seen as we headed back to the lodge after our morning walk in the savanna. But we got even better views of another among the woodcreepers at the ant swarm along Irish Creek. This is another range-restricted species, found only on the Yucatan peninsula.

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – One poked out of a dense bush in Indian Church, checking the edge for berries. We heard their mewing calls a few times around the Lamanai Outpost Lodge and surrounding village.

TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus gilvus*) – A few scattered birds along fences, or singing from bush tops and brush piles in Mennonite country. This species is quite similar to North America's Northern Mockingbird, but lacks the white patch in the wing. It's also not known to mimic other species.

Parulidae (New World Warblers).

- WORM-EATING WARBLER** (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) – Our first was with a mixed flock in the Lamanai ruins, trailing along behind a little gang of Tawny-crowned Greenlets. We found another even more cooperative bird along the Rio Frio cave road. This is a dead leaf cluster specialist. [b]
- NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – Several wagging their way across the grassy expanses around the Lamanai ruins museum gave us great opportunities to check out the features that help to distinguish them from the Louisiana Waterthrush. [b]
- BLUE-WINGED WARBLER** (*Vermivora cyanoptera*) – A single bird moved through some small trees at the edge of Indian Church, seen by some on our first pre-breakfast walk. [b]
- BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** (*Mniotilta varia*) – Among the more common of the tour's warblers, seen multiple times on most days. We had a mix of males and females. [b]
- TENNESSEE WARBLER** (*Oreothlypis peregrina*) – A few flitted through the pink-flowering tree on the Rio Frio cave road, looking plain compared to the other species in attendance. This species feeds on nectar as well as insects, but it doesn't always pollinate the flowers while doing so; instead, it pokes its way into the base of the flower like a flowerpiercer does. [b]
- GRAY-CROWNED YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis poliocephala*) – We had good looks at some in the savanna, but our best views came at Hidden Valley's coffee grove, where we had a handsome male singing from a whole succession of small dead shrubs.
- COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Especially nice looks at a male who sat for long minutes preening on a vine near the custard apple tree in Indian Church. [b]
- HOODED WARBLER** (*Setophaga citrina*) – A couple of males: one with a mixed flock along a trail at the Lamanai ruins, the second in a dense bush near our skulking Green-backed Sparrow in Indian Church. [b]
- AMERICAN REDSTART** (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Small numbers on many days, including a showy male near the Lamanai museum on our first visit to the ruins site, another male near our White-whiskered Puffbird along the Rio Frio cave road, and a female (or young male -- it takes them two years to attain adult plumage) in the custard apple tree at Indian Church. [b]
- MAGNOLIA WARBLER** (*Setophaga magnolia*) – Probably the most common of the tour's warblers, recorded every day but the first -- including a few right at eye level in the gardens around the Lamanai Outpost Lodge's dining room. The half-black half-white undertail of this species is unique among the wood-warblers. [b]
- YELLOW WARBLER** (*Setophaga petechia*) – Scattered birds around Lamanai and along the Rio Frio cave road, including a few in the garden right outside the Lamanai dining room.
- CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER** (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) – Our first was a chestnut-less first year female with a mixed flock near the Masked Temple. Fortunately (for those who hadn't climbed the steps) we found another much closer bird -- also chestnut-less -- along the Rio Frio cave road. The lime-green back, snowy white underparts, bold white eye ring and long, often-cocked tail are diagnostic. [b]
- YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER** (*Setophaga coronata*) – A few individuals on scattered days, including a very drab young female just above our first jacanas (along the New River on our way down from the airport) and a slightly brighter bird in the garden at Hidden Valley Inn. [b]
- YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER** (*Setophaga dominica*) – Regular around Lamanai, including one with a mixed flock along the lodge's driveway, and one bathing in a banana leaf in Indian Church. [b]
- GRACE'S WARBLER** (*Setophaga graciae*) – One preened near the top of a tall pine tree at King Vulture Falls -- conveniently right at eye level from our perch at the top of the hill! It was a bit backlit (set as it was against the setting sun), but seen reasonably well through the scopes.
- BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER** (*Setophaga virens*) – One worked its way through the lower branches of a big tree near the palace complex at Lamanai, and another flicked through some pines near the overlook at King Vulture Falls. [b]
- GOLDEN-CROWNED WARBLER** (*Basileuterus culicivorus*) – A pair swirled through trees along the Rio Frio cave road, calling back and forth to each other and occasionally bursting into brief snippets of song. With some patience, their namesake golden crowns were seen nicely by all.

Thraupidae (Tanagers and Allies).

- GRAY-HEADED TANAGER** (*Eucometis penicillata*) – Two mingled with the woodcreepers at the Irish Creek ant swarm, hunting from perches right above the boiling ants.
- BLUE-GRAY TANAGER** (*Thraupis episcopus*) – A few scattered pairs around Indian Church, with others gobbling fruits from the tree in front of Susie and Judy's cabin one morning.
- RED-LEGGED HONEYCREEPER** (*Cyanerpes cyaneus*) – Fantastic views of a male quite literally glowing in a treetop in Indian Church one early morning (what a head!) with others along the Rio Frio cave road and around Hidden Valley Inn.
- BLUE-BLACK GRASSQUIT** (*Volatinia jacarina*) – Common around the open areas of Lamanai and Indian Church, including a few pairs right along the driveway our first morning. Some of the males looked pretty darn scruffy!
- VARIABLE SEEDEATER (BLACK)** (*Sporophila corvina corvina*) – A male perched low along the side of the road near one of the bridges as we returned from the Rio Frio cave. Though they look quite similar plumage-wise to the previous species, they're slightly bigger and blacker and have a stouter bill with a more curved culmen.
- WHITE-COLLARED SEEDEATER (WHITE-COLLARED)** (*Sporophila torqueola morelleti*) – Very common around Lamanai Outpost Lodge, including a few males singing from the little bushes right around the dining room. This handsome little species comes in a variety of color forms -- though the females are always a rather nondescript pale brown.
- YELLOW-FACED GRASSQUIT** (*Tiaris olivaceus*) – The last new bird of the trip, with a pair lurking in the grass and low bushes of Hidden Valley's coffee grove. Though the male made the first appearance (singing his quiet tinkling song from a dead stick), the female proved to be far more confiding -- unfortunately, as she's a lot drabber than he is!
- BLACK-HEADED SALTATOR** (*Saltator atriceps*) – A few around Indian Church on our first pre-breakfast walk, but our best looks probably came along Lamanai's back trail (where we found a trio in an open Cecropia tree) or at Hidden Valley our last morning, where a noisy group of four perched briefly along the entrance road.

Passerellidae (New World Buntings and Sparrows).

- BOTTERI'S SPARROW** (*Peucaea botterii*) – Splendidly close views of several pairs in the grassy stretches of the savanna across the New Lagoon from Lamanai -- including one singing lustily from the top of a plant spike and another preening quietly in a nearby eye-level palm.
- OLIVE SPARROW** (*Arremonops rufivirgatus*) – We heard one singing repeatedly from scrubby islands of trees in the savanna, but couldn't entice it in for a look. [✱]

GREEN-BACKED SPARROW (*Arremonops chloronotus*) – We heard the loud song of this species on several days around Indian Church, but laying eyes on it proved a bit trickier. Some saw it pretty well, while others only spotted it when it flitted from a tall grass patch to a dense nearby bush.

RUSTY SPARROW (*Aimophila rufescens*) – Our first sat for long minutes on an eye-level branch right outside the main building at Hidden Valley Inn, but we had even BETTER views of one sitting right beside the van on our way back from Tiger Creek Falls.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

HEPATIC TANAGER (*Piranga flava*) – A pair in the tall pines outside the main building at Hidden Valley were among the highlights of our first walk there, allowing us great scope studies of their grayish cheeks and dark bills. We saw others down by the coffee grove a couple of days later.

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*) – Regular around Lamanai, including both males and females foraging near the ruins museum another male in the gardens near our lodge's dining room. Unlike the Scarlet Tanager, male Summer Tanagers don't lose their vibrant color during the winter. [b]

RED-THROATED ANT-TANAGER (*Habia fuscicauda*) – A few scattered pairs around the Lamanai ruins (including one perched briefly on a nearby wheelbarrow while Eduardo introduced the site), with others along the Rio Frio cave road. Somehow, the females always seemed to be slightly more confiding!

BLACK-FACED GROSBEAK (*Caryothraustes poliogaster*) – Our first pair chortled overhead near the Masked Temple at Lamanai, flicking through the branches and allowing nice scope views. We found other equally cooperative birds in a small flock along the Rio Frio cave road.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – A group of 8 or 9 moving slowly up through a tree along the ultralight runway and then launching themselves northwards as the sun sank towards the horizon were probably starting their long journey north. They were a nice mix of males and females. [b]

BLUE BUNTING (*Cyanocompsa parellina*) – Arg! A male sat up at the very top of a tall grass clump along a road in Indian Church, but not everybody got on the right clump before he vanished back down into the greenery.

BLUE GROSBEAK (*Passerina caerulea*) – Single males seen on several days, including one along the Lamanai driveway, another in the same tree as our gang of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and another near the bottom of the Rio Frio cave road. [b]

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*) – A few flicked through the tall grasses along Lamanai's back trail, and others disappeared into a fallen tree near Hidden Valley Inn's coffee grove as we pulled up one afternoon, soon reappearing to perch high in one of the bushes nearby. This is yet another winter visitor to Belize. [b]

PAINTED BUNTING (*Passerina ciris*) – A gorgeous male dazzled as he rummaged through a weedy field near the custard apple tree in Indian Church. [b]

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*) – We spotted our first few in Mennonite country, where they hunted from wires and flashed their white-edged tails in flight. We had others in the palm savanna across the lagoon from the lodge, and around the Douglas da Silva forestry camp in the Mayan Mountains.

YELLOW-BILLED CACIQUE (*Amblycercus holosericeus*) – Our best views came on our first visit to the Lamanai ruins, when we found a little group of them along the trail out to the sugar mill. After they flew back and forth across the trail a few times, one eventually sat in the open at the upper end of a slanting branch, checking us out. We had others flash past while we were trying to get better looks at our first Long-billed Gnatwrens.

MONTEZUMA OROPENDOLA (*Psarocolius montezuma*) – Common and widespread, though in fairly small numbers. The male doing a poor rendition of a somersault display in a tree in Indian Church left little doubt as to why he wasn't getting any attention!

BLACK-COWLED ORIOLE (*Icterus prothemelas*) – Regular around the Lamanai Outpost Lodge, including some foraging in a tree right outside the dining room. This is the only yellow-and-black oriole we saw with an all-dark head and back.

ORCHARD ORIOLE (*Icterus spurius*) – A few around Indian Church, always in small groups. This is among the smallest of the orioles seen on this tour. [b]

HOODED ORIOLE (*Icterus cucullatus*) – A scattering around Lamanai Outpost Lodge (including one singing near the dining room our very first morning) with others at the ruins site. The white upper wingbar helps to separate this species from the larger Altamira Oriole (which is also present in Belize, though we didn't see one this trip), which has an orange upper wingbar.

YELLOW-BACKED ORIOLE (*Icterus chrysater*) – Our first flew past while we birded in the savanna -- a somewhat distant flurry of yellow and black. Fortunately, we had much more satisfying views of several others nibbling pink blossoms in a courtyard tree at Hidden Valley Inn.

YELLOW-TAILED ORIOLE (*Icterus mesomelas*) – A noisy trio along the road back from Tiger Creek Falls capped a nice afternoon. When they faced us, we could clearly see the bright yellow undertails that give them their name.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE (*Icterus galbula*) – One among the other orioles at Indian Church and a bright adult male near where we found our Mangrove Cuckoo in Mennonite country. This is yet another winter visitor to Belize. [b]

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Dozens and dozens -- mostly males -- chortled from the swampy edge of the New Lagoon, seen as we traveled down from the airport. We saw a few others flying past on our "sundowner cruise".

BRONZED COWBIRD (*Molothrus aeneus*) – A couple of these smaller cowbirds mingled with their larger cousins in a livestock shed in Mennonite country.

GIANT COWBIRD (*Molothrus oryzivorus*) – A handful lurked in a cow shed in Mennonite country; through the scopes we could see their red eyes. This big species is a brood parasite on caciques and oropendolas.

MELODIOUS BLACKBIRD (*Dives dives*) – Common throughout. Their loud songs were a regular part of the tour's soundtrack (and we rather enjoyed watching the "pushups" they did while singing).

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – Dozens around the airport, and almost as common in open areas around Lamanai.

Eringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

YELLOW-THROATED EUPHONIA (*Euphonia hirundinacea*) – Reasonably common, particularly around the Lamanai Outpost Lodge. Like other euphonias, this one is fond of mistletoe berries, and we saw a little gang of them gorging themselves in a mistletoe clump above the lodge's driveway.

OLIVE-BACKED EUPHONIA (*Euphonia gouldi*) – Erin spotted the first, but couldn't figure out what her colorful bird had been. Fortunately, the mystery was solved the following day, when we found another one feeding right over our heads near the "palace complex" at Lamanai.

MAMMALS

LONG-NOSED BAT (*Rhynchonycteris naso*) – One clung (head down) to a trunk over the water at the edge of the New Lagoon, seen on our spotlight safari.

- GREATER BULLDOG BAT** (*Noctilio leporinus*) – A few of these big bats coursed low over the waters of the New Lagoon, seen as we headed back at the end of our spotlight safari. They use their sonar to detect ripples on the surface of the water, scooping their prey (primarily fish) from just beneath the water's surface.
- YUCATAN HOWLER MONKEY** (*Alouatta pigra*) – We certainly heard plenty of these; their growling calls were a regular part of the tour soundtrack around Lamanai. We saw a few snoozing in a big fig tree over the Lamanai "palace" one morning, and found another small group -- with a well endowed male and a couple of adorably playful youngsters in tow -- near the ball court.
- YUCATAN SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus yucatanensis*) – We spotted a couple of these dark, arboreal squirrels on our final pre-breakfast walk at Lamanai -- one in the gardens of the hotel, and another near where we stopped to enjoy the chachalaca chorus.
- DEPPE'S SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus deppei*) – Erin spotted one of these tiny arboreal squirrels along the Rio Frio cave road.
- CENTRAL AMERICAN AGOUTI** (*Dasyprocta punctata*) – Max spotted one scurry across a walkway at the Lamanai Outpost Lodge, and another scuttled across a trail at the ruins. When you're at the bottom of the food chain, you don't spend much time out in the open!
- GRAY FOX** (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) – One trotted down the path in front of Judy, Susie and Kathe as they headed back to their cabins one evening.
- WHITE-NOSED COATI** (*Nasua narica*) – Our first was a solitary male galloping across the grounds of the Lamanai ruins one morning. We saw a parade of females and youngsters (which typically travel in big groups) galloping (in fits and starts) across the road as we headed back to the lodge from Mennonite country.
- KINKAJOU** (*Potos flavus*) – We watched a couple of these nocturnal tree climbers scramble through some lagoon-side trees during our spotlight safari. It was tough to make out much detail, but we could certainly see the branches thrashing as they hurried down the branches.
- JAGUARUNDI** (*Puma yagouaroundi*) – Mary spotted what might have been one of these small cats on the trail outside her room while heading for the dining room before sunrise one morning.
- WEST INDIAN MANATEE** (*Trichechus manatus*) – We saw dozens of the flat "footprints" left on the water's surface by the movement of the manatee's sizable tail, but unfortunately, the animal itself never surfaced. We spotted them just as we entered the New Lagoon on our journey down from the airport.

Herps

- GREEN IGUANA** (*Iguana iguana*) – We spotted one -- small, but bright green -- on a branch near one of our Common Pauragues during the spotlight safari.
- STRIPED BASILISK** (*Basiliscus vittatus*) – Some of the group saw one sprint across Dawson Creek and disappear into some stream-side vegetation, and others saw an even smaller one do the same along Irish Creek. Its ability to run on water gives this species its local name -- the "Jesus Christ lizard".
- ROSE-BELLIED LIZARD** (*Sceloporus variabilis*) – These were the common small lizards we found along trails and around our cabins, rummaging through the leaf litter and scampering over the rocks.
- SPECKLED RACER** (*Drymobius margaritiferus*) – One of these handsome snakes (black with green and pink speckles) swam under the parked airboats at Lamanai and slithered up the bank on the far side, presumably in search of its favored frog prey.
- MORELET'S CROCODILE** (*Crocodylus moreleti*) – Small numbers on most days around Lamanai, including a couple snoozing near the banks of the New River on our journey down from the airport, and a few -- little more than floating eyeballs and a snout -- along Dawson Creek. Most disappeared quickly when we stopped for a look.
- RAINFOREST TOAD** (*Incilius campbelli*) – This was the tiny dark toad we found along the road in the rice fields.
- VEINED FROG** (*Trachycephalus venulosus*) – A big one clung to a branch high in a tree along Lamanai's back trail, seen in the spotlight as we searched for owls.
- MESO-AMERICAN SLIDER** (*Trachemys venusta*) – A handful in the ponds along the ultralight runway near Lamanai.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 216 bird taxa and 11 mammal taxa