

# **Very Important!**

**Please read this handbook very carefully from cover to cover. It includes a great deal of information that you will need to insure the success of your Belize field trip.**

## **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

**All Guests are picked up at ICE Factory Dock when heading out to South Water Caye.**

## **NEW BELIZE LAW – June 2009:**

**All Children 16 years or younger traveling without a parent/legal guardian must have a notarized letter of permission from his or her parent/legal guardian.**

## **International Zoological Expeditions, Inc.**

**210 Washington Street  
Sherborn, MA 01770  
ph 508-655-1461 or 1-800-548-5843  
fax 508-655-4445  
e-mail: ize2belize@aol.com  
Website: <http://www.ize2belize.com>**

**Mail Box 231  
Dangriga, Belize  
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**PLEASE!**

**Important Numbers You Need To Know!**

**IZE Office, U.S.A**

Phone: .....508-655-1461 (8:00 – 4:00)  
Emergency Phone: .....508-655-5252 *during non-working hours only!*  
*This is a home phone, and may not be attended.*  
Email: .....[ize2belize@aol.com](mailto:ize2belize@aol.com)  
Or .....[ize4belize@aol.com](mailto:ize4belize@aol.com)  
Fax: .....508-655-4445

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### **INTRODUCTION**

We would like to thank you for your interest in joining with IZE for our Tropical Ecology and/or Marine Biology Expedition to Belize. We truly expect that you will have the experience of a lifetime and know that you will all come back with a better appreciation and understanding of two of the greatest ecosystems our planet has to offer, the coral reefs and rainforests of the tropics. We urge you to ask lots of questions and to get as deeply involved as you care to. For many of you, this is your big chance! Look, listen, participate and have lots of fun. To this end we have written the following information to try and further explain in detail, the conditions, what is covered, what is not, how you will be living, safety, transportation, weather etc... Please take a few moments out of your hectic schedule and read on. This contains very important information.

### **ABOUT IZE**

Since 1970 IZE has been hosting groups in Belize which makes us the oldest, most experienced outfitter in the country of Belize. One thing for sure is that our sites, the rain forest at Blue Creek, and the barrier reef system at South Water Caye, are among the best that Belize has to offer. Both our field-station sites at Blue Creek and South Water Caye were chosen by the JASON FOUNDATION for their live JASON 5 broadcasts in 1994. As part of our arrangement with JASON, a beautiful canopy skywalk system was built at our site in Blue Creek. Unfortunately, this system was damaged by hurricane Iris in October of 2001 and is no longer useable.

### **SAFETY**

IZE maintains an impeccable safety record. Since 1970 IZE has shown many tens of thousands of people the wonders of Belize without a single major incident. This is not just by luck, but rather by a combination of good fortune and strict safety policies which we implore all of our guests to abide by. We simply will not tolerate any individuals who act in an irresponsible manner as to jeopardize the safety or well being of themselves or any of the other group members. IZE reserves the right to terminate any person's stay without refund for any actions that would put at risk the safety of the group. Alcohol abuse and the use of illegal drugs will certainly be cause for termination. No minors may consume alcoholic beverages....period!

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### **Safety considerations at Blue Creek**

1. Only drink water and eat food provided for you at the IZE fieldstation. While visiting with the local Mayans, you may be offered food and drink. Unless they are served freshly cooked and hot, it would be best to graciously pass with a very polite “No thank you”.
2. Never leave the station area without checking with staff or chaperones.
3. Do not travel off on forest trails alone.
4. Never step over logs (step on top and then off) or place hands or feet where you can not see.
5. Learn to identify Warre Palms and avoid touching them.
6. Never walk out at night without a flashlight.
7. Do not enter any caves without guides.
8. Never go barefoot.
9. Shake out all shoes and clothing before putting them on. Scorpions and tarantulas are common but their stings are not serious unless you are allergic. Please let IZE Staff know of any and all allergies that you may have.
10. Possibly the most dangerous threat you'll have will be the sun. Be prepared, the sun is intense and you will easily burn. Bring plenty of sun screen and reapply it often.
11. Use life jacket when out on boats.

### **Safety considerations at South Water Caye**

1. Except at immediate beach area, NEVER wade barefoot.
2. Do not swim at night unless you are on an organized night snorkel/dive.
3. Do not walk on the reef or step on any living coral.
4. Never, never, never, never, ever swim in water over your head without IZE supervision.
5. Never swim alone; the buddy system is required at all IZE sites.
6. Use plenty of sun screen and reapply it often.
7. Use a life jacket when traveling in any boats.
8. Get out of the water during electrical storms.
9. Report any scrapes, cuts, etc.. and get them treated.
10. Some marine animals are venomous; do not handle organisms unless told to do so.

### **Other things you should know**

1. Do not touch any living coral; you will kill any polyps you contact and may weaken the colony.
2. No collecting of any living shells.
3. Please respect the property of others; do not trespass. Check with the station manager for private property boundaries.
4. Please conserve water. Fresh water is a precious commodity on the Caye; don't waste it!
5. The electrical system is 110V at both Blue Creek and South Water Caye and is available 24 hours/day for recharging your digital camera and/or computer batteries. **Please, no hairdryers or curling irons. Use lights sparingly and shut off when not in use.**

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### **Documentation**

**A current passport is necessary.** A birth certificate will not do. US citizens do not need a Visa for Belize - **All Others should check with** their Belize Consulate Office. Guatemala requires a tourist card from everyone. They may be obtained at the Guatemalan Consulate offices or purchased in Belize at the border. Non-US citizens be sure that your papers are in order for re-entry into the US if returning there. Re-Entry fee from Guatemala to Belize by air is \$25.00 US per person. You may be asked by Belizean Customs the purpose of your visit, the length of your stay and your address while in Belize. Tell them you are there to study Biology for the total length of your stay with IZE (International Zoological Expeditions) and you will be staying at the IZE sites in Belize. **If you are not a US citizen you should check with the Belize Consulate about a visa. You can call them at 800-624-0686 or the Belize Embassy in Washington, DC at 1-202-332-9636.**

### **Health**

Vaccinations - No vaccinations are **required** for entrance into Belize or Guatemala. We urge you however, to consult your physician for his or her advice in this respect. In particular you should ask about the advisability of anti-malarial medication, gamma globulin and typhoid and Hepatitis A and B shots and updating your tetanus shot.

Throughout the course of the expedition you will have several orientation meetings discussing health and safety precautions. If you have any physical or medical limitations you must advise IZE before beginning your expedition.

### **Insurance**

It is recommended but not required that all participants should carry an active health and trip cancellation insurance policy. Low cost trip cancellation and baggage insurance is available for your expedition. Many of our guests choose Travelex. You can look at their policies by visiting [www.travelex-insurance.com](http://www.travelex-insurance.com)

### **Mailing Address**

Your mailing address will be IZE, Mail Box 231, Dangriga, Belize, Central America. Tell your correspondents not to abbreviate Central America or your letter will end up in California. An airmail letter takes about one week if all goes well. A surface letter may take up to 4 weeks or longer for delivery!

### **Emergency Contact**

Participants may be contacted in an emergency, by telephone through our IZE Belize office. The telephone number is 011-501-670-7076 / 011-501-670-5030 / 501-670-5030. You can also contact South Water Caye via the internet at: [izebelize@gmail.com](mailto:izebelize@gmail.com) This is checked daily. You can also call the Sherborn, MA office at 1-800-548-5843-Monday through Thursday 8:00AM to 4:00PM EST.

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### **What's included and what's not included**

We at IZE, work very hard to keep the cost of your workshop to a bare minimum. The aim is to give as many students and their teachers the opportunity to experience the ecosystems of the reef and rain-forests before, quite possibly, they are lost forever.

Included in your workshop fee is the cost of all charter busses, guides, hotels, lodges, charter boats, meals at IZE fieldstations only, and boat trips to study sites at South Water Caye (unless otherwise provided for).

### **Not included**

The cost of meals while in transit\* or meals at the hotels (other than IZE sites), departure tax of \$36.25 US, Park Fees, Scuba diving trips and rentals, fishing trips and guides, tips or porter fees. **If applicable to your Belize Expedition, Admission to the Belize Zoo is presently \$7.50US per person.**

\*During the bus rides to and from Blue Creek we stop at small shops for cold soft drinks, snacks and lunch. In the heat food spoils quickly, so we cannot carry lunches on the bus. The airport tax will be collected by your international airline at the Belize airport at the time of your departure. These incidental costs should run no more than \$90.00 to \$110.00. It is advisable however that each participant carry along about \$200.00 - \$350.00 or more for spending money. **More if you are planning on diving!!**

### **Park fees are not included**

The Belize Fisheries Department charges Park Fees for the South Water Caye Marine Reserve to support the sustainable management of the reserve.

The rate are as follows:

- Student group park fees are \$10 US per person for a stay up to 10 days.
- Adult fees are \$15 US per person for up to 10 days.
- Daily fees are \$5 US per person a day

### **Refunds**

**REFUNDS ARE NOT MADE - at all**, unless of course the trip is canceled by IZE. The reason we have such a **NO REFUND** policy is because these workshops are run on such a tight budget that if anyone cancels it would absolutely affect the cost for every other participant and we can not raise the rates in the 11th hour. For a small fee, you can purchase trip cancellation insurance and we strongly recommend you do so. Please contact the IZE office for a trip cancellation insurance application.

### **Money- \$1.00 US = \$2.00 Belize dollars**

US dollars are accepted almost everywhere we visit. It is best to use Barclays (free) or American Express travelers checks. Travelers checks are not always accepted at some of the smaller shops, so make sure you have some cash with you. You will lose slightly on the exchange when using travelers checks. Visa & MasterCard are accepted at most sites and are accepted for purchases and to pay for any diving on South Water Caye. **NOTE: Always have a good supply of small bills (ones & fives) so you can use for tipping the Mayan porters carrying your bags at Blue Creek, if you so choose.**  
**US Coins are not accepted in the country of Belize.**

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### **What if ???**

What if I miss my flight?

If you should miss your flight and will not make it to Belize by your scheduled arrival time ( at the Belize International Airport ) on the first day of your trip you **MUST** call our office in Belize at 670-7076 / 670-5030 or 501-670-5030. You will then have to make arrangements to meet the group.

### **This is what you do:**

Find out when you will arrive in Belize and where your group will be from your itinerary(always carry it with you). If they are on South Water Caye, you will have to make flight reservations for Dangriga (currently \$44.50US).

Once in Dangriga, you will have to make contact with the South Water Caye office 670-7076 / 670-5030 or 501-670-5030. To head out to the island you will have to pay for the boat transfer which is currently \$150 US one way.

If your group is at Blue Creek, you will have to fly to Punta Gorda (approx. \$90US). You can make your reservations by calling either Maya Airlines at 226-2435 or Tropic Air at 226-2012.

Once in Punta Gorda, you will have to call Carlos Galvez at 011-501-722-0032 for a taxi to Blue Creek (\$75.00).

**Please note: this is expensive and can be a hassle, so try not to miss the plane.**

**Reminder:** Belize is 2 hours behind Eastern Standard Time (only one hour between October and April because there is no daylight savings in Belize).

### **Important Numbers for Groups or Individual Travelers**

IZE Belize office 011-501-670-7076 or 011-501-670-5030

Ft. George Hotel 011-501-223-3333 or Belize Zoo 011-501-220-8003

### **Telephone Notes**

011-501-670-7076 = 011 (international) 501 (country code) 670-7076 (number). When dialing from the U.S. you would use the entire number as listed. When dialing from within Belize, you drop the international 011 and the country code 501.

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### **ACCOMMODATIONS - IZE Fieldstations - Living conditions are field conditions.**

#### **BLUE CREEK**

There is one main fieldstation with several cabins of various sizes. All cabins except one are equipped with single bunk style beds with mattresses and pillows. One cabin is equipped with a double bed. **You will need to take along your own sheets or light sleeping bag and pillowcase.** Since most workshops are filled, you will not be able to have your own cabin and all will have to share accommodations with other members of your group. The cabins are nothing more than sleeping areas with no bath or toilet facilities. The showers and toilets are in the fieldstation. You may also use the river for bathing as long as you use biodegradable soap. Be prepared - conditions may be hot, humid, muddy and down right wet. After all it is a true rainforest and heat, humidity, and lots of rain are what rainforests are all about. You may want to consider making a rule among your bunk mates to leave all muddy shoes outside the cabin on the deck. **Clothing seems to never really get dry so bring lots of talc powder, extra sneakers, plastic bags for wet clothing and waterproof containers for your cameras.**

If the rains are heavy and last a long time, the river will flood and become quite muddy and turbulent - **DO NOT SWIM! DO NOT GO INTO THE CAVES!** Use common sense and think about everything you do.

#### **MAYANS AT BLUE CREEK**

In the past many of our clients have asked what they could bring as gifts for the Mayan children. The best items would be pens, pencils, notebooks, paper, crayons, children's storybooks and any educational items you may no longer need. **Before handing out any gifts, please speak with the IZE manager at the Blue Creek Site. This is very important!!! Also, never ever try to trade your gifts for Mayan Crafts. The Crafts are an important source of income in the village of Blue Creek. Please respect the Mayan Culture.**

The Mayan Children and Adults will be on hand to carry your bags into the **Blue Creek** site. ***Porter fees are approximately: Small Bags, Large Bags (\$5.00 - \$10.00 US per bag).***

**Trivia** - On the island, alas there is no mud! The rains are not as severe as they are at Blue Creek. South Water Caye gets about 60" of rain per year; Blue Creek gets over 200" per year.

#### **SOUTH WATER CAYE**

On the island the lodge will sleep 34 people in two rooms, dorm style. It is attached to the dining hall, lecture hall and lab and surrounded by a wrap around porch to catch the sea breezes. There is an attached bathroom for the males and one for the females. We have a second lodge for smaller groups. We also have cottages that might be available for use by group leaders as well as a smaller lodge for students for those groups that exceed 32 people.

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### **CONSERVATION WHILE AT SOUTH WATER CAYE**

- 1) Do not pick anything, including coral, dead or alive.
- 2) No spear guns or slings may be used
- 3) Please do not capture hermit crabs or lizards on the island
- 4) If you are fishing please keep only what you can eat for the day.
- 5) Do not purchase turtle shell or black coral crafts and jewelry.
- 6) Do not touch any living coral, their polyps will die when touched.
- 7) When snorkeling, do not stand or lean on the coral.
- 8) When walking out to the reef, step onto sand and not live coral. Also do not stand on the reef crest.
- 9) Do not tear hermit crabs or snails from their shells.
- 10) Secure all of your trash, plastic and cigarette butts properly. Do not discard paper and plastic waste in the water or beach.

We do appreciate and thank you for keeping your impact on this area to a minimum.

### **Take with you Photographs and Memories ⇒ Leave Behind only Footprints**

#### **Hotels**

Your workshop may include accommodations at the Ft. George Hotel, por another fine hotel located on the waterfront in one of the nicest areas of Belize City. Only the room accommodations are included in your package and are booked 4 persons to a room. **All beds must be filled and double beds must sleep two.** Meals and taxes must be paid for by the group and are not included in the package.

#### **Meals**

The food is good and plentiful with local Caribbean fruits and vegetables and typical Belizean dishes. Meals are generally served buffet style and our breads are home baked. Juice or kool-aid is served with every meal. **Anyone with special dietary needs or requests - contact IZE 508-655-1461 prior to departure. Also, be sure to speak with the managers when you reach IZE field stations.**

**Local diet** - Like most Caribbean countries, the diet in Belize stresses corn, rice, beans, chicken, fish and fruits.

**Expedition Food** - If you imagined eating cold, unsavory foodstuff out of tin cans, you will be pleasantly surprised. Most of our meals will be hot and balanced. A typical **breakfast** might include fruit, eggs, bacon, OJ, coffee (instant), tea and journey cakes or fry jacks. **Lunch** might be a hot plate of rice and beans, fried fish or a sandwich. **Dinner** - chicken, beef or fresh sea food. **Take notice** - Beans and rice are the primary foods of Belize so get ready!!!

**Tipping** - Is a personal decision. Throughout the country, service staff can be tipped for a job well done. When deciding on a tip, the same basic formula you would use in the States will do in Belize.

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### **The Water**

All **Drinking Water** at IZE sites is **Purified Water**. It is **VERY SAFE!!** For other water usage on South Water Caye, the water is rainwater collected from the roof. It is stored in a large cement vat beneath the field station and periodically pumped into a 500-gallon overhead vat. It's fed from there to the sinks and showers. Toilets are flushed with well water. Water at Blue Creek is pumped from the river and should not be used for drinking or brushing teeth. **PLEASE DO NOT WASTE WATER.** Very little rain falls between February and June. Never let water run excessively. When you take a shower, get wet, shut the water off, soap down, and then rinse. This will help us, in our efforts, to conserve this very precious resource. Thank You.

### **The Weather and what to wear**

The weather is, for the most part, hot! Sometimes very hot and humid. Lightweight summer clothing should make up the majority of the clothing you take along. Loose fitting, cotton clothes are best. **During the months December through March**, cold fronts from Canada, called NORTES, may arrive unexpectedly and the temperatures can plummet all the way down to 65°. I know what you're thinking - Wow! All the way down to 65°!! Let me warn you that after temperatures close to 100°, 65° will feel mighty nasty, so take along at least one set of warm clothes, such as jeans and a nice thick sweatshirt or sweater.

Daytime temperatures will range in the 90's the evenings will be in the 70's. Rain is always possible at any time. March starts the dry season with daytime temperatures in the upper 80's to low 90's and evening temperatures in the upper 60's. The rainfall in March is usually less than one inch. The height of the dry season is the months of April and May. Daily temperatures exceeding 100° are not uncommon. The rainfall is usually less than one half inch. The months of June through October are the wettest with as much as 31 inches of rain falling in any one month at our rainforest field station in the Toledo District. The rain often comes in heavy downpours followed by bright sunshine daily. This is the time of year when the wildlife is most active. Rain gear and waterproof footwear should be part of your wardrobe. **Please read the equipment check list provided.**

### **Insects**

Not very often, but once in a while, biting insects may come around, especially if the wind stops at South Water Caye or it has been overly wet at South Water Caye or Blue Creek. A little insect repellent will do the trick. Long gauze or light nylon pants will also be helpful for wearing at all sites at nighttime if the bugs are bothersome. **Windows are not screened at South Water Caye so it is recommended that you bring a mosquito net.**

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### **Transportation - The Boats**

It takes about 45 minutes for the crossing from Dangriga to South Water Caye. Dress to get wet with sea spray if the weather is windy or the seas are rough. There is no protection from the sun or rain on these boats. On occasion the seas may be too rough for safe passage and the captain may opt to postpone your trip, either to or from the island. This does not happen often but please be patient and understanding if the winds are not in your favor. It is for your own safety. The trip can be very enjoyable and it is often possible to spot sea turtles, dolphins and even a shark or two.

### **Transportation - The Buses**

Once in Belize, ground transportation is usually by chartered buses which are not airconditioned, unless otherwise noted. Roads can be rough and dusty so be prepared.

### **Snorkeling**

You will be able to snorkel from both the shore and from one of our boats during your trip. We recommend that you bring your own snorkel mask, fins and snorkel for proper fit and safety since these are personal items. We have a limited supply of this equipment for rent on the island.

### **SCUBA Diving**

Scuba diving is available when you are on the island. IZE contracts with an experienced Independent PADI Dive Operator in Belize. If you are certified, you must have with you your certification card or you will not be able to dive. If you are not certified, you can take the Discover Scuba course and be diving the same day, if you qualify. You can become PADI certified at our site on South Water Caye if your time here allows. Diving is not included in our packages. Check out the Diving information for pricing on our web site at: [ize2belize.com](http://ize2belize.com). Equipment can be rented from the island. If you are under 18, you must bring a signed dive form from our web site to be allowed to participate in dive activities.

### **Recreation**

Swimming and sunbathing sites are available at both our fieldstations. Also available are kayaks for your enjoyment. All boats must be checked out with an IZE Staff member. You will be financially responsible for the boats you use if you damage them, and you must wear a life jacket at all times — **Them's the Rules!!!** We also have a volleyball court at South Water Caye and afternoon games are fast becoming a ritual. At Blue Creek there is a soccer field and the students are welcome to try their luck against the local Indians. **Please be sure to drink plenty of liquids!**

Usually there will be several hours each day for you to relax and enjoy yourself. At times we may work you hard but there will be many times for you to play just as hard!

Fishing at South Water Caye is great but you will need to take along your own fishing rod and gear. Rental is not available. Good size sharks can be caught off the boat dock at South Water Caye at night as well as 30 to 40 lb snappers right off the beach.

### **Quotes from past expedition members**

“Best trip I have ever had. The kids loved it too!”

“Would do it all again! Many times over!!”

“Awesome! I would love to go back!”

“I just have to tell you guys that we had a wonderful time on our Expedition! So much so, that the kids I took with me this year want our entire class to come next summer. They even want to do a major fund raiser to help those that can’t afford to go! That speaks well for you and also the people you hire to conduct the educational lessons at your sites. They were wonderful people and very caring.”

“The people at IZE have created an incredible workshop.”

“This is a trip I will never forget. I really enjoyed it. Thanks!”

“The country was beautiful, and I feel like I’ve experienced something great. I’ve seen a part of the world that I didn’t even know existed...and loved it!”

“Excellent opportunity to learn! Truly thought the students from Alaska were exposed to places they probably won’t ever see again. They learned, grew and had fun at the same time!”

“I enjoyed everything we did. It was a total and constant learning experience. I did things I’d never dream of doing without a guide. I always felt safe.”

“I think I have finally gone on the ultimate field trip”

“I learned more in two weeks than I learned all semester. I think a trip like this should be mandatory for all biology majors.”

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### **Cognitive and effective educational components**

Our primary intention is to provide a broad-based overview of tropical ecosystems and ecology. Lectures, workshops and research projects will deal with the climate, history, vegetation, animals, and human influences on the environment in Belize. We are committed to provide you with an atmosphere conducive to mutual learning and personal growth. Our expedition philosophy must be one of adaptive minds set towards openness, willingness to modify and interchange ideas, and respect for group cohesiveness.

### **Expedition goals that will be evident daily**

1. To promote understanding and appreciation of the most complex of all ecosystems — tropical forests and tropical reefs.
2. Learning scientific method and field research design.
3. Taking part in a cooperative research effort.
4. Developing appreciation of the viewpoints and lifestyles of foreign cultures — past and present Mayan civilization and present Belizean culture.
5. Understanding of ones present abilities, limitations and potentials for self-improvement.

### **LIABILITY, TERMS, CONDITIONS**

#### **Responsibility**

In organizing, managing and operation these expeditions, International Zoological Expeditions, it's agents, employees and staff give notice that they act solely on behalf of and for the benefit of the participants, on the express agreement that IZE shall not be liable, financially or otherwise, for non performance or unsatisfactory service; for injury to persons, including death; for loss of, or damage to property; for accident or delay; and/or for expenses rising from strikes, weather, quarantine, sickness, government regulation, or from any act or omission of its agent or employees, and/or airline, railroad, bus company automobile rental agency, hotel, or other supplies or service.

**IZE** reserves the right to refuse any applicant to any expedition if it deems him/her unsuited for the project for any reason. IZE reserves the right to require any participant to withdraw from an expedition at any time, if the expedition leader deems his/her acts or conduct — including use of drugs not authorized by a medical doctor and uncooperative behavior — to be detrimental to or incompatible with the interests, harmony, comfort, or welfare of the expedition. Should such a withdrawal occur, IZE will notify parents or guardian (if the student is under 21) and return the student to the point of departure of the expedition, at which time any and all responsibility on the part of IZE will cease.

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### **Suggested Reading List**

**Humann, Paul. 1992 The Reef Set. New World Publications.**

**Beletsky, Les. 1999 Belize and Northern Guatemala. Academic Press.**

**Kricher, John. 1989 A Neotropical Companion. Princeton University Press.**

Dobson, Narda. 1973 A History of Belize. Longman Caribbean

LaBastille, Anne. 1993 Birds of the Mayas. West of the Wind Publications

Kaplan, Eugene. 1982 Coral Reefs. Peterson Field Guides.

Myers, Norman. 1992 The Primary Source. W.W. Norton Company.

Littler, Littler, Bucher, Norris. 1989 Marine Plants of the Caribbean. Smithsonian Institute.

Peterson Field Guide Series. A Field Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Central America. Houghton Mifflin Co.

De La Haba, Louis. 1972 Belize the Awakening Land. Reprint from the January 1972 National Geographic.

Colin, Patrick I. 1978 Caribbean Reef Invertebrates and Plants. THF Publications.

Randall, John E. 1968 Caribbean Reef Fishes. THF Publications

Smith and Taylor. 1966 Herpetology of Mexico. Eric Lundberg, Ashton, Maryland

Hoervers, L. & Henderson. 1974 Reptiles and Amphibians of Belize. Milwaukee Public Museum Press

Yalden, D.W. and P.A. Morris. 1975 The Lives of Bats. Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co.

Whitlock, R. 1976 The Everyday Life of the Maya. Putnam Sons, N.Y.

Janze, Daniel. 1975 The Ecology of Plants in the Tropics. Edward Arnold publications, London.

Dobson, Narda. 1973 A History of Belize. Longman Caribbean

**We hope that we have answered many of your questions. If you still have any questions, please ask your Group Leader, OR call IZE directly. We are happy to assist.**

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## ANNOTATED CHECKLIST FOR STUDENT GROUPS

The following is a list to aid you in organizing your equipment for your expedition to Central America. **Items marked with an \* are absolute must** - you will not be able to function properly or comfortably without them.

### CLOTHING:

- \_\_\_ Trousers (Nylon) 1 or 2 pair (zip-out legs best)
- \_\_\_ Shorts - some Nylon
- \_\_\_ Underwear (cotton is best)
- \_\_\_ Shirts (at least one long sleeve)
- \_\_\_ *Sweater, sweatshirt or windbreaker - Winter Groups*
- \_\_\_ Socks (cotton)
- \_\_\_ Sturdy Hiking Boots – not leather
- \_\_\_ Sneakers -with heavy tread
- \_\_\_ Sneakers (old non leather for walking in water)
- \_\_\_ Poncho
- \_\_\_ Hat (for sun protection) & Bandannas
- \_\_\_ Bathing suits
- \_\_\_ Sandals
- \_\_\_ Towels /washcloth

### TOILETRIES:

- \_\_\_ Soap (Liquid-biodegradable)
- \_\_\_ Shampoo and rinse
- \_\_\_ Toothbrush and paste (floss)
- \_\_\_ Hair Brush
- \_\_\_ Shave gear
- \_\_\_ Small mirror
- \_\_\_ Deodorant
- \_\_\_ Hydrogen peroxide
- \_\_\_ Baby Powder
- \_\_\_ Baby wipes (quick clean-up)
- \_\_\_ Swim Ear Drops
- \_\_\_ Band-Aids
- \_\_\_ Benadryl (Topical)
- \_\_\_ Prescription medicine
- \_\_\_ Tampons, sanitary napkins if needed
- \_\_\_ Necessary medication (asprin,anti-diarrheal,etc.)
- \_\_\_ Anti-fog for glasses

**Pack all toiletries in ziplock plastic bags. No Curling Irons or Blow Dryers Please!**

**PLEASE NOTE: It is best to avoid army surplus items if traveling to Guatemala.**

### EQUIPMENT:

- \_\_\_ **Light sleeping bag or 2 sets of sheets & pillow-case\***
  - \_\_\_ Day pack
  - \_\_\_ **Flashlite or headlamp with extra batteries \***
  - \_\_\_ Photo equipment and extra film
  - \_\_\_ Insect Repellent
  - \_\_\_ Underwater Camera - disposable
  - \_\_\_ Note book or journal
  - \_\_\_ Plastic bags for wet clothes (whole box)
  
  - \_\_\_ Leather Gloves for climbing
  - \_\_\_ Binoculars
  
  - \_\_\_ **Dive skins or wet suit** (if sensitive to sun or cold)
- \_\_\_ **Mosquito netting**
  - \_\_\_ **Mask, fins and snorkel\***
  - \_\_\_ Clothesline rope & clothes pins
  
  - \_\_\_ Booties or heavy socks
  - \_\_\_ **Sun lotion - sun block\***
  - \_\_\_ **\*\*Canteen or water bottle**
  - \_\_\_ Pocket knife
  - \_\_\_ Anti Fungal Medicine  
(for athletes foot/yeast infection)
  - \_\_\_ Mesh bag (to hang wet clothes in)
  - \_\_\_ **Strong plastic bags**  
**(for wet clothes, etc\*)**

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### OTHER STUFF:

\_\_\_ **Passport \***

\_\_\_ **Visa if not U.S. citizen \***

\_\_\_ **Cash \* (at least \$300.00 more if you are diving)**

\_\_\_ **Plane ticket\***

\_\_\_ **Credit card or travelers checks**

\_\_\_ **Tetanus shot should be up to date**

\_\_\_ Beach Towel (at least 1)

\_\_\_ Sunglasses

\_\_\_ Kleenex

\_\_\_ **\*\*Snacks (avoid milk based foods-they spoil in the heat – instead bring crackers, cookies, dried fruits, trail mix, teas,etc.)**

**\*\* Beans and Rice are the staple food in this area of Belize. They may be served often! The above asterisked items may be useful to supplement your diet while in Blue Creek.**

**NOTE:** It is **VERY IMPORTANT** that you get good quality equipment and try it on first. You can sometimes rent gear on the island but it is expensive and not always available.



## **Introduction to Belize**

Belize celebrates its anniversary of independence during September. A small Central American country, it was created out of a backwater British Colony, British Honduras. This name came from the Rio Hondo at the northern border, and the Gulf of Honduras. The name was changed to Belize in 1973 in anticipation of its independence.

As to the origin of the name Belize, much is based on legend. Perhaps the name came from the Mayan "Belize," meaning "muddy water."

Some feel it is a derivative of "Belikin," which means "land that looks toward the sea." Others suggest it was named for a Scottish pirate, or perhaps is of African origin.

Belize has some 250,000 residents, making it Central America's least populated nation. It's size, 8,866 square miles, is roughly equal to that of Massachusetts. Unlike most of Central America, it has not suffered violent civil conflict or repression.

Located south of the Yucatan peninsula facing the Caribbean, it is bordered on the north and northwest by Mexico and on the west and south by Guatemala. Belize is within the northern tropics and enjoys a subtropical climate. Annual rainfall ranges from 55 inches in the north to 200 in the south, and the average temperature varies from 75° in January to 91° in July.

Belize enjoys a diverse topography. The low-lying plains in the north are largely covered with mangrove swamps, watered by numerous rivers. The Maya Mountains rise to 3,699 feet at Victoria Peak, and dominate the southern landscape. The Mountain Pine Ridge in the north is a pine-covered remnant of the oldest land surface in Central America. Except for the mountains, the predominant geological features consist of limestone and limestone sediment.

A spectacular barrier reef lies ten to twenty miles offshore. This reef fringes most of the coast and protects some 175 cayes (pronounced "kees") dotting the shallow inner coastal waters. At its greatest extent Belize is only 174 miles long and 68 miles wide.

## **Brief History of Belize**

The Spanish were the first to lay claim to the area now known as Belize, having colonized the area now known as Belize in the 16th and 17th centuries. The British, however, were the first to actually settle in the territory. Pirates sheltered inside the reef, using the small cayes as a base for attack against Spanish ships. By the late 1600's many British settled along the coast, making their living cutting logwood. They came to depend on slave labor for the harsh logging work in Belize.

Many skirmishes between the British Baymen and the Spanish arose, for the Spanish still claimed control of the area. The showdown came on September 10, 1798, at St. George's Caye when Baymen chased Spanish ships away from what had come to be known as British Honduras. The date is still celebrated as a national holiday in Belize.

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In the days of the Baymen, work crews of slaves accompanied their owners to the logging camps in the interior of Belize. According to a 1790 census, 75 percent of the territory's residents were slaves, 10 percent were whites, and the rest were free blacks. Ignored by the census were the Mayan Indian communities.

Belize society today is ethnically diverse and culturally rich. Historically it is a country of immigrants, with even most of the Mayan tracing their roots to Mexico or Guatemala. The ancestors of the mestizo population lived at one time in the Yucatan. Both groups of Black Belizeans — the Creoles and the Garifunas — trace their origins to Africa by way of the Caribbean.

Belizean Creoles are the descendants of slaves brought from Africa and the West Indies. Generally to be Creole means to have some African ancestry, but is now used primarily to identify non-Indian, non-mestizo ways of life, with a set of social values derived from the Anglo-Saxon countries.

In the early 19th century the Garifuna created a niche in Belizean society. Scattered along the Caribbean coast, the Garifuna people initially came to Belize from Honduras. The Garifunas are a cultural and racial fusion of African slaves, Carib Indians, and a sprinkling of Europeans. It is traditionally claimed that they arrived on the shores of British Honduras on November 19, 1802.

Mayan communities are found in many parts of Belize. The Mopan Maya, of the southern districts, were historically a lowland group that inhabited Guatemala. Culturally, these Maya have much in common with the traditional Maya of northern Belize. Their economy is a mixture of subsistence crops and cash crops.

The Kekchi Maya also migrated to Belize from Guatemala to escape enslavement by German coffee growers. Clustered in the south, they are Belize's poorest and most neglected ethnic group. Their language has few similarities with that of other Mayans. The Kekchi maintain contact with their ancestral communities in Guatemala.

During most of this century Creoles were the largest ethnic group, followed by mestizos, Garifunas, and Mayas. As of the 1991 census mestizos outnumbered the Creoles. This multi-ethnic country is also home to communities of German Mennonites, Chinese, East Indians, and immigrants from the Middle East.

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**A BIT  
ABOUT  
SOUTH WATER  
CAYE**

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### MAP A LEGEND

1. Vacation Cottages of local Belizean residents
2. Private property of the Blue Marlin Lodge
3. Private property
4. Private property
- 5 & 7 Private property of Pelican Beach
6. IZE/Leslie Cottage property

**NOTE:** Please respect the rights of other property owners on South Water Caye.

A. Coral Rubble Zone - A high energy zone, the water ranges from 2 to 45 feet in depth. These rubble areas extend northward for nearly five miles (almost to Tobacco Caye). It is an excellent place to snorkel with an abundance of coral and fish. Many lobsters can also be found in this area.

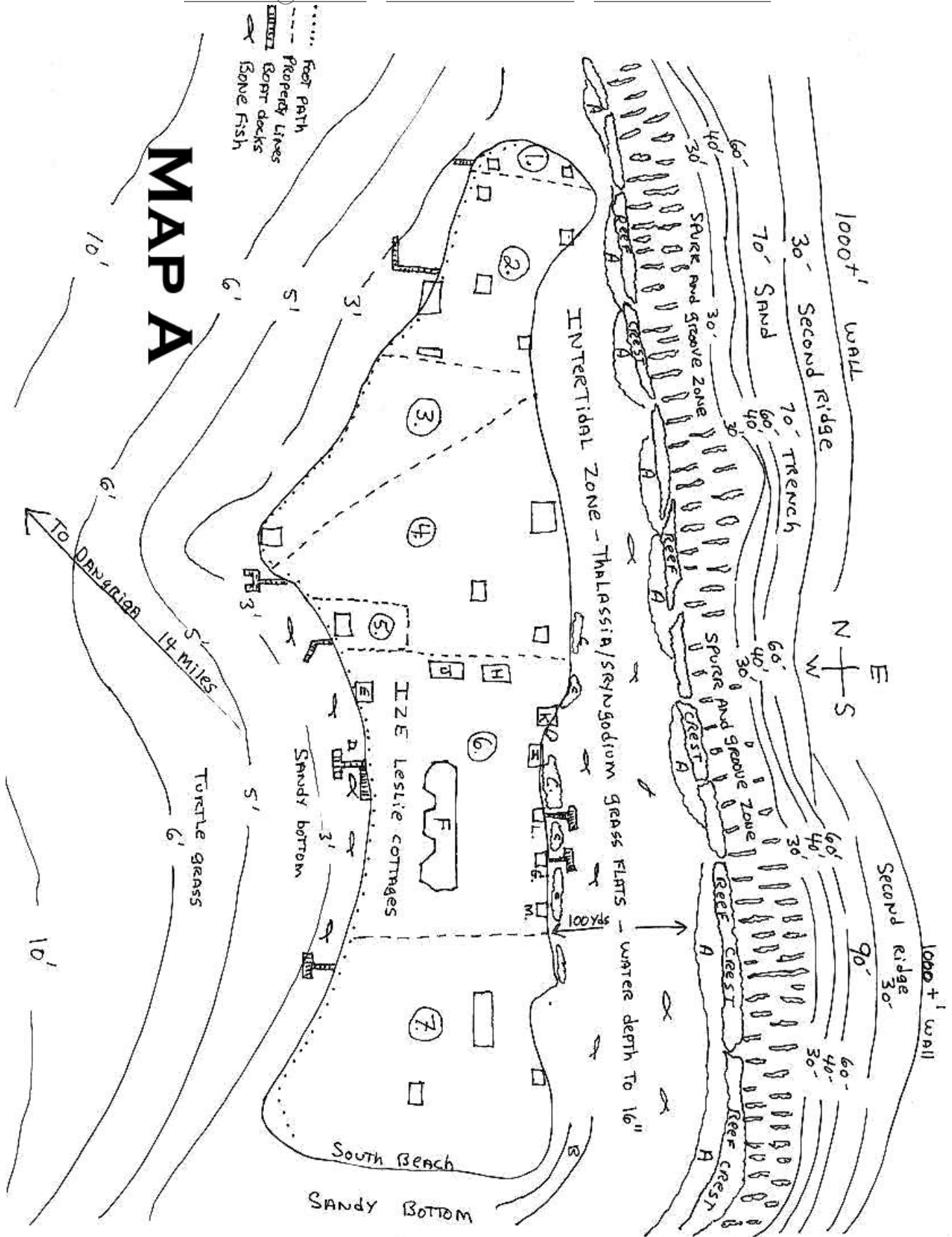
B. This is a small channel which drains the inter-tidal zone during tide changes. The depth is approximately 4 to 5 feet. This is another rubble area with a sandy bottom, laced with dead coral. It is a good place to check out your gear and become re-adjusted to snorkeling. The water is generally a bit more turbid here than out at the reef. There are lots of eels and yellow rays in this area. It is here between the channel and the beach that the water can exceed 98 degrees. The sun heats the water over the dark Thalassia flats, and this heated water drains into the channel.

- C. Clumps of Red Mangrove trees.
- D. The IZE / Leslie Cottage boat dock.
- E. Leslie Cottage, Manager's residence
- F. The IZE Marine Station Lodge, Dining area, and Lab
- G. Reef House (cabana)
- H. No longer exists
- I. Karen's Cottage
- J. Sea Belize, Dive shop and staff residence
- K. Jo's Cottage
- L. Swamp House (cabana)
- M. Mangrove Cottage

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## **Cultural and Sightseeing Trips**

### **1. Dangriga**

The town of Dangriga was formerly called Stann Creek. It is a bustling, though easygoing place that is thriving because of the successful citrus industry. A majority of the residents are of Garifuna ancestry, contributing to the cultural attraction of the city. Music and dancing are the heart of Garifuna folk culture, making drums and other musical instruments favorite souvenirs of many visitors. Cassette tapes of local artists, featuring punta and punta rock, are readily available.

Traditionally the Garifuna raise cassava to make eriba, a flat bread. An important part of Garifuna culture for centuries, this bread is often available for sale in Dangriga. An open-air market is located along the river, usually with plentiful produce and Guatemalan goods.

### **2. Blue Hole**

Along the Hummingbird Highway between Belize City and Dangriga, about 11 miles from Belmopan, is the turnoff for the Blue Hole. Not to be confused with the famous diving spot, this Blue Hole is at the bottom of a steep stairway, with blue pools and gushing water leading to a system of underground caves.

Tall shade trees surround the hole and vines dangle into the water. Wear your swimming suit for a refreshing dip in the Blue Hole. There is an admission charge of \$5.00 - \$7.50US and guests are asked to sign in at a registration station.

### **3. Belize Zoo**

Located on the Western Highway, the Belize Zoo was established in 1983. The original animals were collected for a nature film company. When the filming was abandoned, the animals had no home, so caretaker Sharon Matola started a zoo to enable Belizeans to see these unique local animals.

A visit to the Belize Zoo is fun, inspiring, and educational for Belizeans and visitors to Belize alike. A funky “down home” approach is apparent, and the animals are found in conditions simulating, as close as possible, their natural habitats. You may have to look long and hard to find some of these critters, but the experience, when you do, will be rewarding! Be sure to bring your camera!! The zoo can get very hot in the afternoon sun – wear a bandana for a sweatband.

Admission to the zoo is \$7.50 US, and a gift shop is located within the main building of the zoo, accepting cash and major credit cards.

## **Field Trips by Boat**

### **1. Twin Cayes — A Mangrove Island**

A variety of life forms make their home among the mangroves. Many organisms that live as adults on the reef grow and develop where nutrients are plentiful — around areas of mangrove growth. A complete food web is generated by the trees themselves. The detritus produced by the leaves may exceed three tons per acre per year. As the leaves drop to the bottom, they are broken down by bacterial action and fungi. Tiny Crustaceans munch on the leaves. The detritus offers a food supply to an amazing array of inhabitants, which supply energy for larger organisms in the food chain.

Twin Cayes is an island divided by an S-shaped channel. When snorkeling in the area, which has been designated a wilderness area due to its pristine conditions, care must be taken. Swim only in the channel, not along the shoreline. When examining the roots of the mangroves, take care not to disturb the life found attached to these roots.

The channel is approximately three meters deep and is covered with much. Lush turtle grass grows here, three times faster than in adjacent areas of the lagoon. Also observe the abundant *Cassiopea*, or upside-down jellyfish.

Along the roots themselves you will find algae, sponges, anemones filling every available niche. Competition for space is fierce — new substrates become fully covered within six months. Fleshy algae are more abundant on roots that have not yet reached the bottom, while the more resistant calcareous algae can survive on roots that have anchored. Crabs, lobster, urchins and fish hide among the roots.

The mean tidal range is only 15 cm, but intervening factors can cause a range of up to a half-meter. In the intertidal range observe isopods, oysters and fiddler crabs.

A few birds have established breeding grounds in the area. The green-back heron is the most commonly seen bird, while ants are the most abundant insects.

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### **2. Carrie Bow Caye - The Smithsonian**

Carrie Bow Caye lies directly south of South Water Caye and is one of the smallest islands in Belize to be inhabited. At one time it was known as Jack Ellin's Caye, Ellen Caye and Bird Caye and was a sanctuary for birds and sea turtles.

Carrie Bow was purchased, by the family that currently owns it, in 1943 and at that time it was surrounded by mangroves and had 75 mature coconut palms that had been planted earlier in the century. The mangroves were cleared when a vacation home was build on the caye, and this contributed to the ever decreasing size of Carrie Bow Caye.

Much hurricane and tropical storm damage has been suffered on this island. Hurricane Fifi, in 1974, flooded the entire caye, carrying away all of the sand, destroying all plants except for coconut palms, and decreasing the island size by about 30%.

Currently only about 15 plant species can be located on this caye due to its small size, lack of a fresh water lens, and exposure.

Carrie Bow as "discovered" by the Smithsonian in 1972, and has been home to Smithsonian researchers since that time. A visit to the caye will allow students to observe firsthand the current research that is going on.

Visitor Alert: At some times it is not convenient to the scientists to have visitors. Please ask the IZE Station Manager to make prior arrangements through the Smithsonian station manager before embarking on a trip to Carrie Bow. While there, count and identify the vegetation types; it is a perfect example of the principles of island biogeography.

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### **3. Man 'O War Caye - Frigatebird Rookery**

Man 'O War Caye is a small caye that is home to the mighty frigatebird and the brown booby. It is a nature preserve under the auspices of the Belize Audubon Society.

The frigatebirds are about three feet in length, with a wing span of over seven feet. They have a huge forked tail and a hooked beak. The frigate can perch on cannot walk, and never land at sea. By design, they are the most aerodynamic bird on earth today.

The male is all black, and the female has a white chest. The young birds have white heads and can be seen in the nest from late spring through summer. It is only during the courtship period, usually March, that the male extends his red throat pouch to attract a female.

They are notorious for their habit of pirating food from other birds; this is why they have their rookery with the brown boobies — easy prey! They actually goose the other birds and make them regurgitate their food. As you travel around the island you might see the brown boobies take wing, with the frigates close behind.

The frigates are silent while flying, but are quite noisy at their rookery. Males can stay at sea, soaring for weeks on end, but return inland when a storm is approaching, usually with winds of at least 50 knots.

Notice the guano on the leaves of the trees, and an occasional clumsy, dead frigatebird hanging from the branches. The fertilization provided by the guano causes the mangroves on this caye to grow taller and thicker than elsewhere. This canopy probably makes for an easier landing for the frigatebirds.

**A BIT**

**ABOUT**

**BLUE CREEK**

## **BLUE CREEK OVERVIEW**

With the Mayan Village of Blue Creek so close to the IZE field site, you will have a chance to meet many people from this community while you are studying and working at Blue Creek. This community is rich in culture and knowledge of the surrounding habitat. There is much that this village has to offer and teach, and you are highly encouraged to interact with village members. Please remember that you are from a different culture and that you are a guest. During the process of conversation it is possible for misunderstandings and confusion to be encountered by both sides. In order to ensure that interactions between you and members of the Blue Creek Community are rewarding and void of misunderstanding, please keep the following in mind:

- 1) There are many artisans from the Blue Creek Village that have created beautiful crafts for sale that should be purchased only at designated locations during organized craft sessions that will be set by your IZE leader. Please remember that your interest to purchase crafts is highly encouraged but you should buy only things that interest you and should not feel forced to buy anything that you do not want.
- 2) Plan on using either Belize or US currency for any purchases, do not plan on trading any of your belongings for crafts, unless you are asked by someone who is specifically interested in what you have.
- 3) If you and or your group have things such as books, pencils, paper, etc., that you wish to give to the Blue Creek Village please go through the appropriate IZE staff person.
- 4) Please do not leave your belongings around the field site and only IZE participants and IZE staff are allowed in your cabin. If you want to bring someone from outside of your group into your cabin please check with the appropriate IZE staff person first.
- 5) Please do not bring candy or gum to give away to people outside of your group, and do not give away money unless you are paying for a service or making a purchase.
- 6) Try to be considerate with regard to conversation, remembering that the people of the Blue Creek Community have a rich and complex culture equal to your own. Topics such as religion, and certain aspects of family life are very personal to people of all cultures which includes members of the Blue Creek Community, so respect should be taken with discussions of a sensitive nature.

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- 7) Do not walk in someone's home unless you are invited and be respectful with regard to photography.
- 8) Please do not pick any herbs or fruits, which grow around someone's house or Milpa farm. Care should be taken if you are offered any food or drink that has not been prepared in an IZE kitchen or at a designated IZE site. It only takes one small sip of water that has not been properly treated to send you to your bunk for 2 or 3 miserable days.
- 9) Do not accept as gifts or purchase artifacts, ecofacts, plants, insect or animal products. Please be appropriate with the consumption of alcohol (minors are prohibited in the partaking of alcohol beverages) and the use of illegal drugs is strictly prohibited.
- 10) There are a number of small family run stores (COOL STOPS) in the village that sell sodas and snacks. You are welcomed to visit these vendors. When arriving and leaving the field site many residents of Blue Creek village will offer portering services for transporting your baggage. You can use this service but plan on spending between \$5.00 - \$10.00 US per bag.

**Many people visit and study at the Blue Creek Research Station each year and to keep the impact on the ecology and wildlife to a minimum please keep the following in mind:**

1. Do not cut, remove, collect, or trample vegetation such as vines, shrubs, trees, and ground cover unless advised by the field station biologist.
2. Do not collect, kill or relocate wildlife such as insects, arachnids, mollusks, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds unless advised by the field station biologist.
3. Do not litter or start fires and secure all cigarette butts.
4. Replace all over turned rocks and logs.
5. Do not fish from the Blue Creek River.
6. Keep the noise level to a minimum, please use headsets while listening to music.
7. Do not flush paper products down the toilet, discard them in appropriate receptacles.
8. Please try to use only biodegradable products when bathing in the river