



The Toledo Howler

Newspaper of the Toledo Chapter of the Belize Tourism Industry Association

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FREE

Maya Day 2010

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Maya Day 2010	1
An Evening with Paul Nabor	1
Destinations: Monkey River	2
Calendar of Events	3
Wat's Cookin'?	3
Restaurant Guide	4
Natural History: Caribbean Spiny Lobster	4
Map of PG	6
Birding with Lee Jones	6
Tour Operator: Cotton Tree Lodge	7
BTIA Members List	8
Accommodation: Coral House Inn	9
Transport Schedules	10
Arzu on Medicinal Plants	11
Southern Voices Interview: Alistair King	12
Photo Op	13
Craft Focus	14
ACES Crocodile Sanctuary	15
Map of Toledo	16
Classified Ads	16

Tumul K'in Center of Learning in Blue Creek Village will again be hosting the Maya Day celebrations with an exciting variety of competitions, games and activities spanning more than a month. Last year's events were a great success and this year promises to be even better.

Fund raising events prior to Maya Day will include a barbeque sale in Central Park in PG on January 30th. Help support this cultural event by bringing the whole family to enjoy finger-licking good chicken and pork. Sale starts at 10am.

There will also be a Maya dance on February 27th from 6pm to midnight. Harp and marimba artists from across Toledo will be featured, including The Tumul K'in Boys. Ladies, take out your traditional clothes and dancing shoes and get ready to show off your skills. Although not confirmed as we go to print, it is anticipated this will take place at the Sports Complex in PG. There is a \$10 entrance.

A football marathon is planned for February 28th at Julian Cho Technical High School.

Matches kick off at 10am. Please come and support these fund raising activities.

On March 16th, the famous



Professional Chaj Chay players from last year's exciting game

Torch Run begins at Lubaantun Mayan site with an incense-filled spiritual ceremony giving praise for life, earth and well being. This event should commence around 4:30pm at the site. Runners will then carry the torch through San Miguel, Silver Creek, Big Falls, Dump, Mafridi and ending at Tumul K'in in Blue Creek. The torch signifies the light of the world.

The thrilling Fire Ball Game takes place on March 16th and 28th at the end of each day's activities. In this game, young men compete with hockey

stick-like clubs attempting to score goals with a ball blazing in flame. Be ready to move if the flaming ball flies in your direction!

Central Park in PG will be the venue for a Harp & Marimba Competition on March 20th. The best district musicians will be here so don't miss this musical extravaganza. The top three bands will then compete on March 28th at Tumul K'in for the crown.

The Chaj Chay Ball Game continues to be a highlight of the annual Maya Day celebrations. This is a game of speed, strength, endurance and accuracy which has been played since ancient times. The reenactment of this ancient sport is truly exciting. The ball game will once again take place at the Sports Complex in PG. Entrance is \$5 per adult and \$3 per child.

And last but not least, Maya Day itself on March 28th — a full day of cultural games, competitions, music, food & drink at Tumul K'in Center of Learning in Blue Creek Village.

[See Calendar of Events, Pg 3]

An Evening with Paul Nabor

On January 29th, the Sports Complex in PG rocked to the beat of the best traditional Paranda in Belize. The event was organized by the Battle of the Drums Secretariat led by Darius Avila of PG Town. In celebration of Paul Nabor's 82nd birthday and a homage to the

Paranda sound in general, the Battle of the Drums Secretariat hope to make this an annual event at the end of each January.

Groups performing on Friday night included The Garifuna Collective, Lirisi Peini Group, Mario and the Umalali Group, Adrian 'the Doc' Martinez, Nurse Hazel Cayetano and

the Libana Chango Group, Luwaruguma Peini Group and many more.



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Destinations: Monkey River

When it comes to the “forgotten district” Monkey River Town may just be the most forgotten part. In fact many people forget that Monkey River lies in Toledo District. Given its proximity to Placencia, its center of gravity tends to be to the north. Most tour operators in Placencia run a Monkey River tour and two village tour operators also offer the trip.

When The Howler visited Monkey River Town just before Christmas, we took the three hour trip upstream with Percy Gordon the self-styled

fishers flashing low over the water offered a glimpse of the endless diversity here.

Going up stream the boat stops on the left bank where the local tour guides association manages a jungle property. Several troops of howler monkeys live and forage in the canopy. We saw two troops and more than a dozen individuals including a mother carrying a baby on her back as she



Spotting wildlife along Monkey River



White Ibis at the river mouth

King of the Howlers. Percy is bound to remember to let you know that he was featured in an article in Esquire magazine and also in Jack Hanna’s wildlife show on howler monkeys and manatees. He will be able to add The Toledo Howler to that list now.

Like most of the local guides, he has a wealth of stories about the river from his childhood growing up there and living so close to the bush which has always provided a source of food, medicine and shelter.

The early morning sun brought out numerous small crocodiles and slider turtles to warm themselves on branches and sandy shoals on the bends of this deeply meandering waterway. Half a dozen kinds of heron, osprey and other raptors and king-

hung upside down and munched leaves and fruit.

He points out the medicinal plants and explains their uses. A sliver of wood cut from the gumbo limbo tree brings instant relief from a few annoying ant bites. Make sure you

look on the ground so that

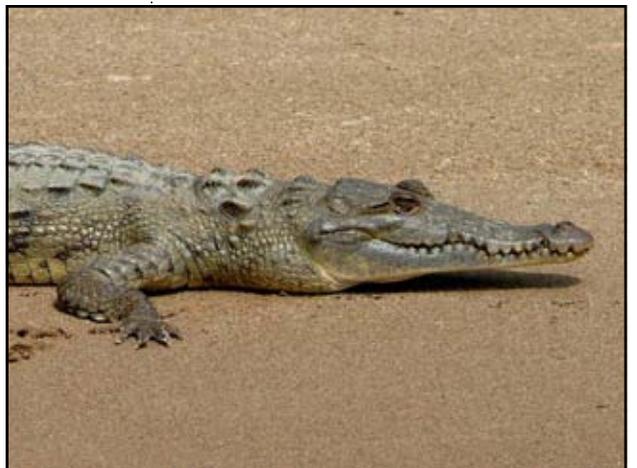
you can jump passing columns of ants that march restlessly through the undergrowth and across the trails.

Visitors will also be offered the chance to drink water from a vine or suck the fruit of the hog plum. And if they are really keen, after watching all those reality survival shows, they can plunge a finger into a termite nest and suck the termites off it for some free protein. The Howler decided that discretion was the better part of valor and settle for a brownie instead.

There is also a nighttime Croc Watch tour. The larger crocodiles emerge from the water and watch motionless

on the banks. Other animals may come down to the water’s edge to drink and roosting birds can be found by their eye-shine in the beam of a headlamp.

The tour guides of Monkey River are at home with their environment and keen to protect it. This is one trip not to be missed.



Crocs bask on the sandy banks

Bookings can be made directly through:

Monkey River EcoTours at monkeyriverecotours@gmail.com or speak to the owner Ralph Zuniga on 720-2029 or Natural Adventure Tours at sunsetinn@btl.net or speak to Clive Garbutt on 720-2028

Enquiries can also be made by e-mail to monkeyriverguides@gmail.com

Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Venue / Time	Other Info
30 January	Maya Day fund raiser: Barbeque Sale	Central Park, PG / 10am-3pm	
27 February	Maya Day fund raiser: Maya Dance	Sports Complex, PG / 6pm–midnight	\$10 entrance
27 February	Toledo Community College Fair Booths, games, football marathon, food & drink, etc	Union Field, PG	\$1 entrance
28 February	Maya Day fund raiser: Football Marathon	Julian Cho Technical High School / kick off 10am	Registration fee for teams. Food & drink available
16 & 28 March	Fire Ball Game Follows Torch Run & Maya Day activities	Tumul K'in, Blue Creek Village	\$2 pp
16 March	Torch Run Commences with Mayan spiritual ceremony	From Lubaantun to Tumul K'in / 4:30pm	
20 March	Harp & Marimba Competition	Central Park, PG	
27 March	Chaj Chay Ball Game	Sports Complex, PG	Adults \$5 Children \$3
28 March	Maya Day 2010 Cultural games, competitions, music & food	Tumul K'in, Blue Creek Village / all day	
21-23 May	Toledo Cacao Fest		

Wat's Cookin'?

Barracuda Fish Cakes with soy sauce dip

1 lb barracuda steaks
 2 medium potatoes
 1 cup bread crumbs
 1/4 cup fresh chopped parsley
 2 tbsp grated Parmesan cheese
 1 tsp salt
 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
 2 eggs
 Oil for frying

Boil and mash potatoes. Set aside. Boil the fish until it flakes easily. Drain and flake fish with a fork. Be sure to remove all bones. Mix the flaked fish, the potatoes, and the rest of the ingredients together well

by hand. If the mixture is too crumbly, add another egg. If too sticky, add more bread crumbs.

Form the mixture into round cakes about 1/2" thick by 2" in diameter. Spread oil in frying pan and heat pan on medium high setting. When oil is hot, add fish cakes and fry about 2 minutes on each side until golden brown. Drain on paper towel.

Soy sauce dip:

2 tbsp soy sauce
 4 tbsp water
 1 tsp sugar
 1 tsp sesame seeds
 1 tbsp chopped spring onions

Mix all ingredients together and place in a small bowl for dipping fish cakes. Enjoy!

Recipe contributed by the kitchen at The Lodge at Big Falls.

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Restaurant Guide

Name	Address	Cuisine	Phone	Opening Hours
Coleman's Cafe	Big Falls Village, near the rice mill	Belizean	720-2017	Daily: 11:30- 4pm & 6- 9pm [Reservations Preferred]
Earth Runnins' Café and Bukut Bar	Main Middle Street, PG	Belizean/ International	702-2007 600-9026	Wed-Sun: 7am-2pm & 5-11pm
Gomier's Restaurant and Soy Centre	Alejandro Vernon St, near PG welcome sign	Vegetarian / Seafood	722-2929	Mon-Sat: 8am-2pm & 6-9pm. Closed Sundays
Grace's Restaurant	Main St. PG	Belizean/ International	702-2414	Daily: 6am-10pm, including holidays
Hang Cheong Restaurant	Main St, PG	Chinese	722-2064	Daily: 10am-2pm & 5pm-midnight
The Lodge at Big Falls	Big Falls Village, near the rice mill	International/ Belizean/ Middle Eastern	671-7172	Daily: 11:30am - 2pm & 6:30 - 9pm [Reservations Required]
Machaca Hill Lodge	Wilson's Road	International	722-0050	Daily: 6am-10pm Reservations required
Mangrove Restaurant	Cattle Landing, by the curve	Belizean / International	722-2270	Daily: 5pm-10pm. [Reservations preferred]
Marenco's Restaurant & Ice Cream Parlor	57 Main St, PG	Belizean/Seafood/ Ice Cream/ Snacks & pastries	702-2572	Mon-Sat: 9am-2pm & 5-10pm. Sundays: 5-10pm
Marian's Bay View Restaurant	Front St, south of the market by the sea	East Indian/ Belizean	722-0129	Mon-Sat: 11am - 2pm & 6 - 10pm Sun & Hols: noon - 2pm & 7 - 9pm
Martina's Kitchen	BTL parking lot, PG	Belizean	623-3330	Mon-Sat: 7am-3pm. Closed on Sundays
Mom's Restaurant	Queen St, PG, by the park	Belizean	620-1607 661-1359	Mon-Sat: 6 am-2 pm & 4-9 pm Closed Sundays
Rainforest Cafe	Big Falls Village, just south of the bridge	Belizean	669-0080	Daily: 10am-10pm
Reef Bar & Restaurant	Front St, upstairs by the market	International/ Belizean	625-8652	Daily: 10am-2pm & 4pm-midnight. Closed on Tuesdays
Sho's Local Restaurant & Grocery Shop	Entrance to Blue Creek Village	Belizean/ Catering	668-6540	Mon-Sat: 7am-8pm. Closed Sundays. Group reservations required
The Snack Shack	BTL parking lot, PG	Breakfast & lunch/ Snacks, shakes, juices & pasties	702-0020	Mon-Sat: 7am - 4pm. Closed Sundays
Waluco's	Opposite TIDE pier in Hopeville	Belizean/East Indian/Seafood/ Catering	670-3672	Mon-Thurs: 7am-2pm & 5-10pm. Weekends: 7am-late

The Caribbean Spiny Lobster

The Caribbean spiny lobster, *Panulirus argus*, is a common inhabitant of the Port Honduras Marine Reserve (PHMR) but in recent years numbers have declined. They get their name from the small spines that cover their shell and protect them from predators, such as octopus, turtles, Nassau grouper and sharks. Unlike their European and American relatives, spiny lobsters lack the large pinching claws used for catching prey. Instead, they use chemical sensors and a complex nervous system to detect prey. Spiny lobsters inhabit coral reef areas and hide in protective holes, crevices and recesses during the day. At night they come out into the open to forage, where they feed upon slow moving animals such as snails, clams, mussels, small sea urchins, small crabs, shrimps and worms.

Spiny lobsters are an important commercial species in Belize and to help protect the population numbers there is a closed season from February 15th to June 14th. During this time, it is illegal to catch them. Spiny lobsters mate between March and June and the



closed season ensures that mating occurs. Females typically lay 200,000 to 300,000 eggs which are bright orange in colour and attach to hook-like hairs on the small legs beneath her tail. But on average only one or two will survive to adulthood. Eggs hatch after approximately three weeks into larvae which live in the water column and are transported by oceanic currents. During this phase they can grow from 2mm to 34mm in length and after six to twelve months they begin their migration back to near shore areas where they settle in algae and sea grass beds. Spiny lobsters reach maturity at around 3 years of age when they migrate to the reef

where they will spend their adult life and begin to reproduce.

If you are snorkelling or diving in PHMR in the next few months keep your eyes open for spiny lobsters, you may see a female carrying her bright orange eggs or if you are really lucky spot a small juvenile lobster in the sea grass. In order to help protect the population of spiny lobsters in PHMR there are a few rules we

can follow. Please remember: don't take lobsters during the closed season, don't take undersized lobsters (less than 3inch cape length) and don't take females bearing eggs. If you would like more information about spiny lobsters please call into the TIDE offices or contact us by email or phone.

Contributed by

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Tel: +501 722-2274.

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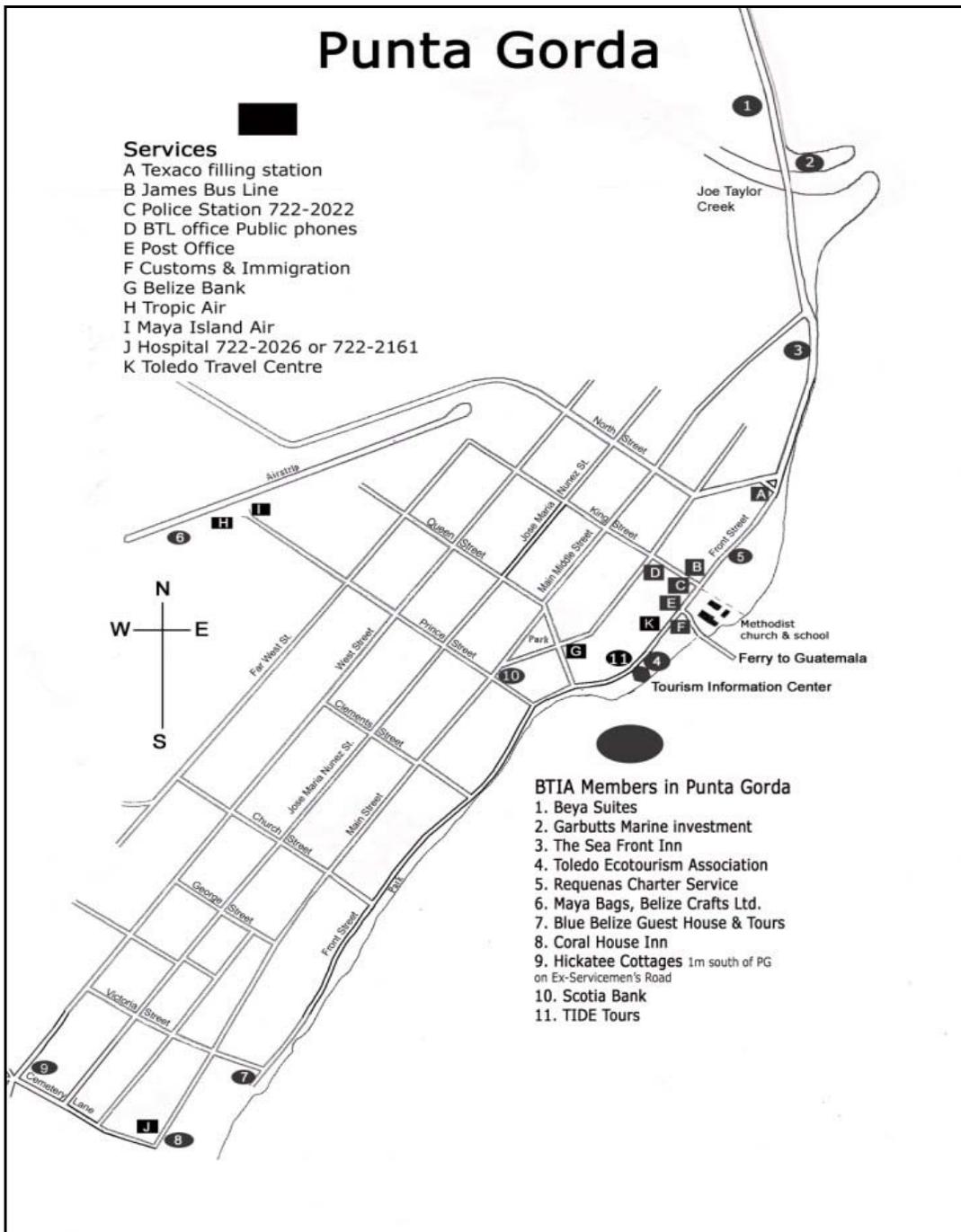


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How Do I Join BTIA?

Visit www.btia.org to read about BTIA and all the other membership benefits and to download an application form. Complete the form and hand it in to Shieba chun at the Tourism Information Center on Front St.

BTIA meets monthly on Wednesdays at the Tourism Information Center on Front Street. Be a part of BTIA and make a practical contribution to the economic development of Toledo District.

Birding with Lee Jones: Highlights of the PG Christmas Bird Count

H. Lee Jones is an experienced environmental consultant and research biologist based in Punta Gorda, Toledo. He is the author of "Birds of Belize" the definitive guide to birding in Belize and the Annotated checklist of the birds of Belize.

A near perfect storm of events almost derailed the count this year but we prevailed and ended up with a respectable number of species, everything considered. Some areas had light rain nearly all day while other areas were rain free. Aguacaliente Lagoon was flooded and inaccessible. Added to that, three of our trusted leaders were unable to make it for personal reasons. Nevertheless we ended up with 234 species. Our 27 wet and exhausted participants enjoyed a warm and cordial rendezvous at Nature's Way after the count to exchange stories of their day's adventures. In the 3 days that followed, we added 10 more species. These don't actually count toward the total but get an honorable mention.

Perhaps because Aguacaliente was inaccessible, Piedra Lagoon (the small round pond by the highway about 1/2 mile southeast of the Dump) was teeming with egrets and herons all week. More than 300 Snowy Egrets blanketing the trees and swirling low over the pond, were reminiscent of giant snowflakes.

When I visited the pond three days after the count, a Roseate Spoonbill (missed on count day) added a soft pink ac-

cent to the swirling mass of egrets. It remained perched on a dead branch beside the highway allowing us to take a number of close-up photographs.

Highlights on count day included an obliging Ornate Hawk-Eagle found by Robin Nightingale along Joe Taylor Creek in November and, remarkably, still present for the count on January 3rd. Also a pair of Painted Buntings feeding on a calaloo plant in Steven Choco's yard in Big Falls. The ever-reliable Black and White Owl, which has been hanging out at The Lodge at Big Falls for several years now, turned up for the count.



But the rarest bird of all was not found until 3 days after the count. At Cotton Tree Lodge, feeding with Red-legged Honeycreepers, Yellow-throated Euphonias and Baltimore Orioles on oranges beside the dining hall, were 3 Shining Honeycreepers. This stunning blue and black species with bright yellow legs is normally found high in the Maya Mountains. In 17 years in Belize, I have only seen it once near Union Camp, a strenuous two day hike into the mountains from San Jose village. Seeing three of these little jewels at eye level and

only a few feet away was definitely an experience to remember!

Next year's count will be on Sunday 2nd of January 2011. So start brushing up on your birding skills and join us. Everyone, even novices willing to learn, is welcome. Our experienced leaders are always eager to see new faces and share their knowledge.

Tour operator: Cotton Tree Lodge

Cotton Tree Lodge opened its doors in 2007. Since then, they have developed a variety of interesting tours and activities to entertain and illuminate visitors.

Located on the banks of the Moho River, south of Punta Gorda, Cotton Tree offers kayaking and horseback riding onsite.

Offsite tours are arranged daily based on demand and weather conditions. Their 'core' offsite tours include many well known Toledo destinations such as Blue Creek Cave, Lubaantun Mayan site and Rio Blanco national park. Cotton Tree also focuses on cultural and agricultural tours to local plantations, villages and homes. These include a tortilla making workshop with Mayan women in the village of Santa Ana and a medicinal plant walk with a knowledgeable Mayan guide.

Cotton Tree has also become well known for chocolate. The owners of the lodge were the founders of Cotton Tree chocolate which is produced in a quaint little factory on Front St in PG. Although the factory is separately owned now, Cotton Tree offers



A ripe cacao pod

a tour of the facilities which allows for plenty of tasting. This place may not look quite like Willie Wonka's factory but the results are just as yummy!

Still on the sweet subject of chocolate, Cotton Tree also offers groups a



Peeling cacao beans

week of workshops and excursions designed to give guests a fun and practical chocolate making experi-

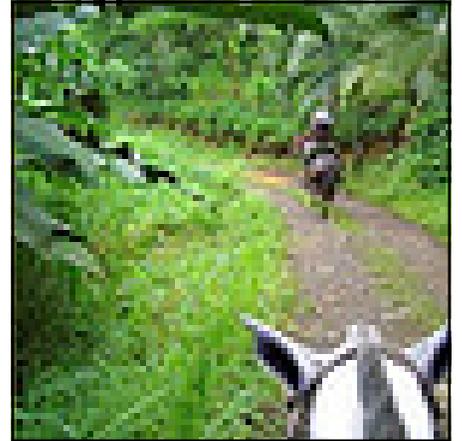


Making chocolate takes plenty of elbow grease

ence 'from bean to bar'. By the end of the week, participants will know everything from the optimum conditions for planting cacao seedlings to roasting, conching, molding and packaging the final product.

For those guests who want a more physical challenge (or perhaps just a chance to walk off all that chocolate!) Cotton Tree have tours to less accessible destinations such as Tiger Cave near San Miguel Village and the remote Pusilha archaeological site. Good walking shoes and plenty of stamina are required for these excursions.

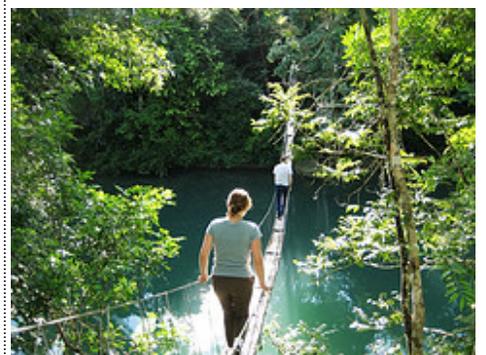
Cotton Tree also offer special trips which can be arranged by request and generally incur an additional cost. These include snorkelling at the Snake Cayes, private fishing or birding trips, diving on the reef and sail-



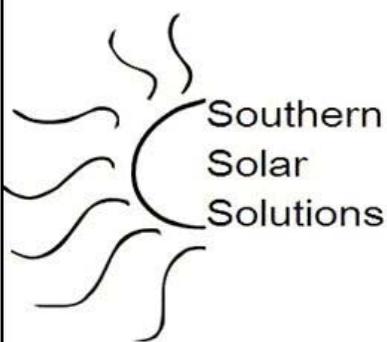
Horseback riding along jungle trails

ing trips in the Bay of Honduras and the Rio Dulce in Guatemala.

For more information contact Cotton Tree Lodge directly on: (501) 670-0557 or email: info@cottontreelodge.com. Check out their website at: cottontreelodge.com



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Paul Nabor's, King of Paranda's birthday bash at the PG Sports complex

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Beya Suites	info@beyasuites.com	722-2188	Lisa Avila
Blue Belize Guest House & Tours	info@bluebelize.com	722-2678	Dan Castellanos & Rachel Graham
Coral House Inn	coralhousebelize@yahoo.com	722-2878	Rick & Darla Mallory
Cotton Tree Lodge	chris@cottontreelodge.com	670-0557	Chris Crowell
Cuxlin Ha Retirement Village	cuxlinha@hotmail.com	501-614-2518	Dona Lee Scafe
Dem Dats Doin	demdatsdoin@btl.net	501-722-2470	Yvonne Villoria
Garbutt's Marine Investment Co.	garbuttsmarine@yahoo.com	604-3548	Dennis Garbutt
Hickatee Cottages	cottages@hickatee.com	662-4475	Ian & Kate Morton
The Lodge at Big Falls	info@thelodgeatbigfalls.com	671-7172 / 614-2888	Marta & Rob Hirons
Machaca Hill Lodge	info@machacahill.com	722-0050	Brian Gardiner
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The Sea Front Inn	larry@seafrontinn.com	722-2300	Larry & Carol Smith
Sun Creek Lodge	suncreek@hughes.net	600-8773/614-2080	Bruno & Melissa Kuppinger
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Tranquility Lodge	info@tranquility-lodge.com	677-9921	Sheila & Rusty Nale
Tumul K'in Center of Learning	tumulkin_tourism@yahoo.com	608-1070	Rosemary Salam

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- ◆ BTIA Tourist Information Center, Front St in Punta Gorda
- ◆ Tropic Air and Maya Island Air terminals throughout Belize
- ◆ Business premises of BTIA members in Toledo (see list above).
- ◆ Tropic Air office in Puerto Barrios, Guatemala.
- ◆ Requena's Charters office in Puerto Barrios, Guatemala.
- ◆ Placencia Tourist information Center, Placencia Village
- ◆ Gas stations on Southern and Western Highway
- ◆ Online at:
 - www.belizefirst.com;
 - www.ecoclub.com;
 - www.ambergriscaye.com
 - www.expatsbelize.com
 - www.thelodgeatbigfalls.com
 - www.tidetours.org
 - www.guidetobelize.info/en/media/toledo-howler-newspaper.shtml

Accommodation: Coral House Inn



Looking up to the Inn from the path that leads down to the water's edge

When Rick and Darla Mallory set off from Boise, Idaho in their '69 VW Camper in 2002 PG was in fact their destination. It was the end of the road and they are the kind of people who want to see what's there. Eight years later the now forty-year-old camper can still be seen collecting the groceries or ferrying guests to Coral House Inn back and forth from the airstrip.



Rick & Darla by the pool at Coral House

The '02 road trip ended with an extended stay in PG and saw Rick and

Darla volunteering about town for a year. Looking for somewhere to rent they happened upon a dilapidated two-story house opposite the hospital and right next to the cemetery. The local kids hurried past stopping only briefly during the season to pick mangoes from the branches of the old tree hanging over the wall. The jungle was re-taking the yard between the house and the sea.

They slowly settled in and made the place liveable and began to enjoy the view across the Gulf of Honduras; so much so that a year later they were the owners of what was to become Coral House Inn.

Between December 2003 and January 2005 when they opened, Rick and Darla transformed it into one of the most elegant guest houses in southern Belize. They kept the sixty-year-old marbled floor tiles, kept the internal structure largely intact but otherwise remodeled extensively and added new spaces, like the dining room, keeping them in harmony with the original architectural design.

Part of the refurbishment included the pool that was gathering dust and other stuff besides. Now there is a large stone lounging area around the pool, a bay-leaf palm thatched bar and unrestricted views of the sea. The view from the guests' verandah on the second floor is even better. Bicycles and wireless internet come free. In the ground floor lounge area there is a small gift shop with local crafts and a book exchange for travelers to renew their reading supplies.

The re-modeling included the design and installation of a waste water garden along one side of the property. This now includes thickets of heliconia and ginger and a passion fruit vine that drapes a shady arbor. On the other side

of the property the next lot contains historic graves of early confederate settlers in Toledo from the Pierce, Parish and Watson families. In front of the house a grassy area runs down to the gate by the sea where a series of steps give guests access to the water.

They have four rooms with combina-



Elegantly tiled and decorated bedrooms

tions of queen and full-sized beds. Prices range from BZ\$165-200 double occupancy. They also rent Sea Glass Cottage next door; a self-catering single bedroom house with kitchen, bathroom and living area with prices ranging from BZ\$250 per night to \$200 for stays of eight nights or longer.

Rates at Coral house Inn include a continental breakfast of bread or toast, fresh tropical fruit, coffee, tea and juices. The optional cooked breakfast is extra. The bar works on an honor system after the hosts have retired for the evening.

While being at the far south end of Main Street Coral House is just a few hundred yards from shops and restaurants; a short walk or bike ride away from the inn. It is an ideal place to stay for visitors who want to base themselves in Punta Gorda and strike out on their adventures from there.

Contact:

Tel: 722-2878

E-mail: coralhousebelize@yahoo.com

The Added Touch

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TRANSPORT SCHEDULES

Schedule of Flights from Punta Gorda To Belize City and from Belize City To Punta Gorda

Flights stop at Placencia & Dangriga

Depart Punta Gorda	Arrive In Belize City	Service Provider	Depart Belize City	Arrive In Punta Gorda	Service Provider
6:45am	7:45am	Maya Island Air	8:00am	9:00am	Maya Island Air
7:00am	8:10am	Tropic Air	8:30am	9:30am	Tropic Air
9:30am	10:30am	Maya Island Air	10:00am	11:00am	Maya Island Air
9:40am	10:50am	Tropic Air	10:30am	11:30am	Tropic Air
11:30am	12:30pm	Maya Island Air	12:30pm	1:30pm	Tropic Air
11:35am	12:40pm	Tropic Air	2:30pm	3:30pm	Tropic Air
1:35pm	2:45pm	Tropic Air	2:30pm	3:50pm	Maya Island Air
4:00pm	5:00pm	Maya Island Air	4:30pm	5:30pm	Maya Island Air
4:00pm	5:00pm	Tropic Air	4:50am	6:00pm	Tropic Air

Schedule of Buses leaving Punta Gorda

Departs from Punta Gorda	Arrives in Belize City	Service Provider	Type of Service
4:00am	10:00am	James Bus Line	Regular
5:00am	11:00am	James Bus and Usher's Bus Line	Regular
6:00am	11:00am	James Bus Line	Express
6:00am	12:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular
8:00am	2:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular
10:00am	4:30pm	James Bus line	Regular
12noon	6:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular
1:30pm	7:30pm	Usher's Bus Line	Regular
2:00pm	7:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular
3:00pm	8:30pm	James Bus Line	Regular
5:00pm	To Dangriga	El Buen Pastor	Daily

Boats To Puerto Barrios and Livingston, Guatemala

Service Provider	Dep. Punta Gorda	Arrive In Puerto Barrios	Dep. Puerto Barrios	Arrive In Punta Gorda
Requena's Charter Service	9:30am	10:30am	2:00pm	3:00pm
Pichilingo	2:00pm	3:00pm	10:00am	11:00am
Marisol	4:00pm	5:00pm	1:00pm	3:00pm

Boats to Livingston depart on Tuesdays and Fridays at 10 a.m.

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Arzu on Medicinal Plants: Wild Yam

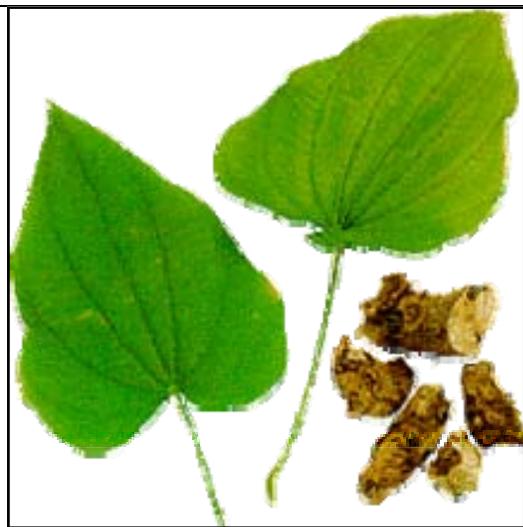
Aside from its jungle habitat, there is nothing wild about this plant. If there were ever a misnomer in the plant medicine kingdom, Wild Yam would win the prize. The rhizome root and vine grow slowly and quietly within the rainforest climate of southern Belize, and continue to do so quite peacefully – at least we hope. Increasing popularity has placed the Wild Yam in great demand, and it is unfortunately being over-harvested towards possible extinction. Until recently, the Wild Yam was the sole source of the hormonal material used to make pharmaceutical birth control pills. It was never replanted, and the population has not been returned to the rainforest.

The large yam looking root is quite unlike any other yam you may have ever seen. It is of wood consistency, inedible, and non-natives are actually frightened when they come across one in their newly purchased farm or field. Unknowingly, they end up burning one of nature’s most gentle healers, discarding it as firewood.

Wild Yam has a sweet bitter flavor with very warming energy. Its bio-

chemical constituents are comprised of saponins that are precursors of the female hormone progesterone. Saponins are plant components that have a direct medicinal effect on certain organs of the human body when taken internally. The medicinal saponins in Wild Yam help heal the liver, gallbladder, kidneys, spleen, and pancreas. The hormone precursors support the ovaries, uterus, and fallopian tubes; improving and toning the entire female reproductive system.

Wild Yam has anti-inflammatory and anti-spasmodic properties, and is known as Colic Root or Rheumatism Root by native healers. Historically, it has been used to treat gallstones pain, menstrual cramps, arthritic and rheumatic pains, abdominal and intestinal cramps, and colic. Naturopathically, Wild Yam is used in natural hormone replacement therapy as an alternative where progesterone is the problem. This medicinal plant is known to balance female hormones as it stimulates the production of natural progesterone; making it the



Wild Yam (Dioscorea Villosa)

perfect modern day herb for alleviating menopausal symptoms, uterine pains, cramps, PMS, and regulating the female menstrual cycle.

Traditionally, midwives use Wild Yam to treat after pains, infertility, threatened miscarriage, and other problems of childbirth. It is also used effectively but less frequently for chronic gas or flatulence problems. Wild Yam also contains a high amount of zinc, so it can serve as a nutritional supplement where

Continued on page 12

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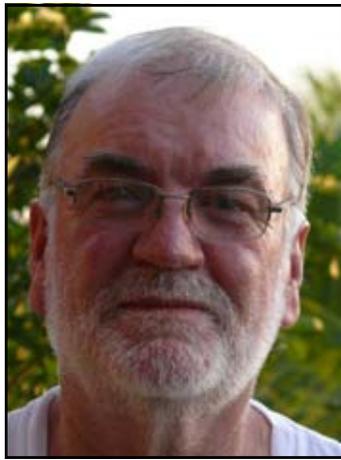
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Southern Voices

Alistair King



Alistair King is the owner of the two Texaco stations in Big Falls and Punta Gorda and of Fabrigas which supplies commercial gases throughout Belize. He has been a member of the board of directors of TIDE (Toledo Institute for Development & the Environment) since 2000 and chairman since 2005.

How long have you or your family lived in Belize? I've been here forty-eight years from the age of twelve. My father was the managing director of Caribbean tobacco company. But I'm definitely Belizean. As is my wife Edna and our children.

What are the most significant changes you have seen in Toledo in your lifetime? Well, the road is now paved and we also have "city" power and water. Significant investments in tourism have also come along. I have also seen many failed projects although some of them left their mark. When Esso Ventura and the British Army were here every available hand was hired. Employers had trouble finding workers.

What makes you optimistic about the development of tourism in Toledo? Well the potential may not be as good as it seemed ten or fifteen years ago. There has been a lot of environmental degradation as a result of local agricultural practices. Despite this I think tourism is probably the way to go to achieve development.

What could the government do to promote tourism in Toledo? The laws are all in place to protect the environment and fisheries but nobody seems interested in enforcing them. The government needs to pay special attention to taxes on tourism and help Belize stay competitive and not overtax the industry. The Bladen Nature Reserve is a great asset for local people and tourism with pristine primary forest. The government needs to rethink its co-management agreements because it is not clear enough who has responsibility and if foreigners can use areas then local people should also be able to do the same.

What could PG Town council do to support tourism development? The town council needs to clean up the dump down the Water Hole road. It is a complete disgrace with chemicals leeching into the groundwater. They should construct some public WCs and fix the dock so that visitors arriving and departing by boat can do so safely. They should have a permanent qualified health inspector

If a tourist had time to visit one place only, where would you recommend they go? The Blue Pool in the Bladen Nature Reserve. The river makes a right hand bend there and has a sandy beach just like on the cayes. A beautiful spot which should be more accessible for locals and visitors alike.

Reef of rainforest? Which do you prefer? Rainforest. I'm much more of a mountain man. I love to be in the mountains and to see the game.

What is your favourite season or month of the year? I love these cool months. In January you are getting out of the rain and into the dry and it is relatively cool. Projects often start early in the year because the dry season lies ahead.

What is your favourite village in Toledo? Big Falls because I have lived here so long and it is a big part of my life.

What was your most memorable encounter with wild animals?

I used to see many animals from this verandah looking west to the hills. We would sight jaguar and other cats and lots of deer. Also yellow jaw tommy goffs. And we always saw jabiru (*the largest bird in Belize*). But not so much these days.

What herbal medicines do you use? I drink serosi sometimes and I use red mangrove bark on the dogs to treat mange. You boil the bark in water and then sponge them down with it.

What is your favourite local food? Rice and beans and stewed chicken. I am a creature of habit.

Is Toledo still the "forgotten district" or just unforgettable? It is much more accessible but in many ways it is still forgotten. The government does not divide resources evenly.

How can the needs of conservation and tourism and economic development be reconciled? I know all three can be reconciled to work for the benefit of the district, however, for this to happen the politicians, the NGOs and the Government would have to make some big changes. Responsible investors are not exactly knocking down the door to get into the district, so we need to be careful in how we handle the "vetting" of them. I have been on both sides of the fence.

The Government has the ultimate say in most decisions but in many cases, especially in the co-management areas, they seem to be afraid to make decisions. Most responsible investors cannot afford to wait until these quarrels between NGOs and GOB are sorted out.

The NGOs, not all, but most I would say, need to be much more diplomatic in their handling of potential investors. Some of them have become very arrogant, feeding their own egos at the expense of the communities, running to the press with one sided stories. Some of the investors are equally arrogant but you can't fight arrogance with arrogance.

The politicians, aspiring ones and serving ones need to ask themselves, is it about the environment or is it about me and my political ambition. So it can work, but people have to change.

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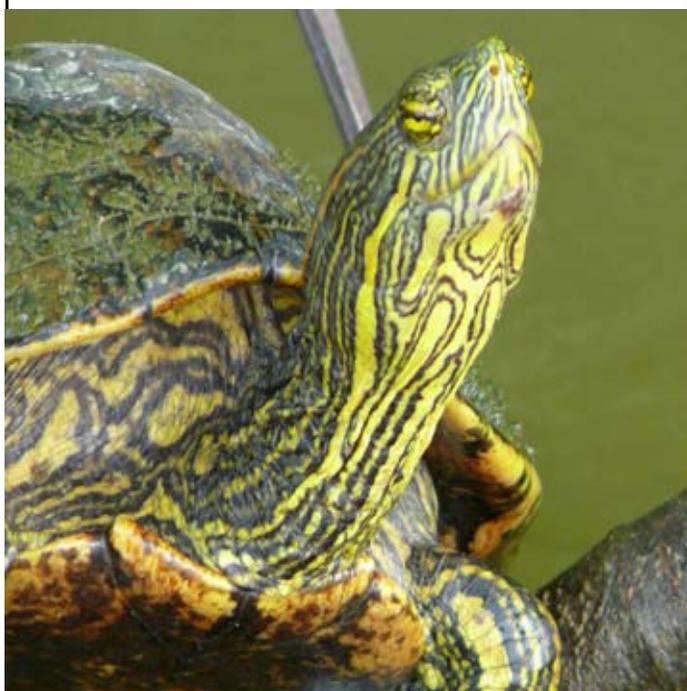
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Wild Yam *continued from page 11*

this mineral is lacking. **For chronic liver or chronic gas problems:** combine two ounces of wild yam and one-ounce skunk root or sarsaparilla root in four pints of boiling water. Add half an ounce of ginger and half an ounce of anise seeds after it has boiled for twenty minutes. Turn off flame and allow steeping for a few minutes. Strain and take one cup as a tea after meals. **For gallstones:** combine one ounce each of wild yam root, china root, skunk root, and yellow ginger (turmeric). Simmer all ingredients in four pints of water for twenty minutes. Strain and Drink one cup daily until condition clears.

*Listen to Ana Arzu's "Mountain Spirit Speaks" on Wamalali Radio 106.3FM Tuesdays & Thursdays at 6.30pm
Contact 600-3873*

Photo Op:



*Close up and personal
a Slider Turtle (Trachemys scripta)
greet the new day along Monkey
River in northern Toledo. Photo by
Jenny Hirons.*



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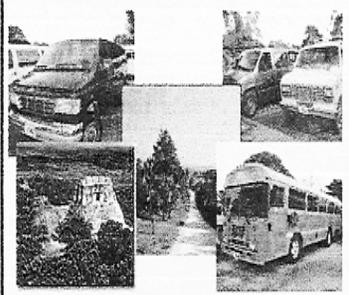
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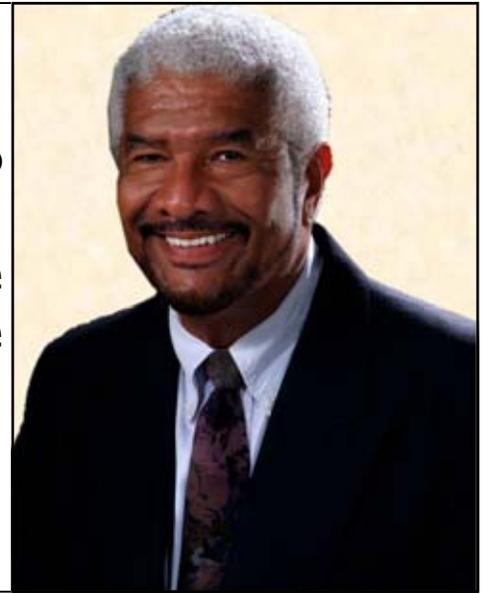
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makes it a great base for scuba divers. Its beauty & strategic location make it a great choice for a quiet family retreat, tourist resort, or residential and/or recreational subdivisions



Craft focus: Maya Ant & Bee Group

Most members of the Toledo BTIA Chapter are either providers of accommodation or tours. Uniquely the Maya Ant & Bee group is a craft collective based in Punta Gorda. There are eight members and they came together because they thought they could make more impact as a group than individually.

Although called the Ant & Bee group they do not make honey.

The name comes from the fact that both ants and bees are successful co-operative creatures and the group wanted to emulate that success.

They make a variety of basket work, woven cuxtals, purses and headbands, carved rosewood bowls and salad sets and traditional Mopan Maya blouses, shirts and skirts with finely embroidered border stitching (see picture). The stitching can be geometrical but patterns include embroidered representations of many birds and animals.

They are able to produce to order **staff uniforms** for hotels and lodges and offer a range of styles and color choices. They are able to offer high quality and reliable delivery times since they are all work together to fulfil their orders.



Mopan Maya embroidery

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Ofelia Cal, Marta Cuz and Catalina Coc

PG Crocodile Sanctuary to the Rescue

On December 23rd, while monitoring the biodiversity of the Rio Grande River, three TIDE rangers rescued an injured and starving American crocodile. The creature was partially blinded because one of its eyes had been slashed. The rangers brought the young croc to the ACES* sanctuary where owners Cherie and Vince Rose administered antibiotics for the injuries. They also force-fed the creature small fish and shrimp.

The young croc is now eating on its own and has gained 10 ounces. (* American Crocodile Education Sanctuary).

The bad news is that because of the loss of one eye, Cherie and Vince say the young animal is unlikely to survive in the wild. They hope to send the croc to the Wildlife Discovery Center near Chicago where it will be taken care of and also play a role in raising awareness of Belizean wildlife and hopefully encourage funding for crocodile conservation.

Cherie, a Biologist, and Vince, a crocodile expert, have rescued 36 crocodiles since they opened their sanctuary in 2006. These have included both American crocodiles and the more reclusive

Morelet's crocodiles. So far Vince and Cherie have been able to release ten of these animals back



The rescued baby croc—destined to become an ambassador for crocodile conservation?

into the wild in uninhabited areas of the Sibun National Forest. One rescued croc now resides at the



Maximum respect: Vince Rose needs to be careful of those powerful jaws.

Belize Zoo.

Another recent rescue involved three mature American Crocodiles that were going to be shot on Am-

bergris Caye in northern Belize. Having been used as an attraction for years and fed by locals and tourists, these large predators had come to associate humans with food. Protected under the Belize Wildlife Protection Act, it is illegal to feed or catch crocodiles. Since these animals had become accustomed to being fed (illegally) by humans, they also ceased to fear them. When crocodiles no longer fear humans, they become a serious threat to them.

Almost 12 feet in length, these ambush predators were living underneath homes in Ambergris and looking for easy meals. Five local dogs had been eaten in the previous few months! ACES hope to release 'the Ambergris three' back into the wild soon.

With only 10-20,000 American crocodiles left in the world, they are as threatened as polar bears. The pristine mangrove shorelines of Belize are one of their last strongholds.

To visit the ACES sanctuary, or to report croc-human conflicts, call 665-CROC (2762). The sanctuary is open to the public and entrance is US\$12.50 per person, half price for Belizeans. Help ACES

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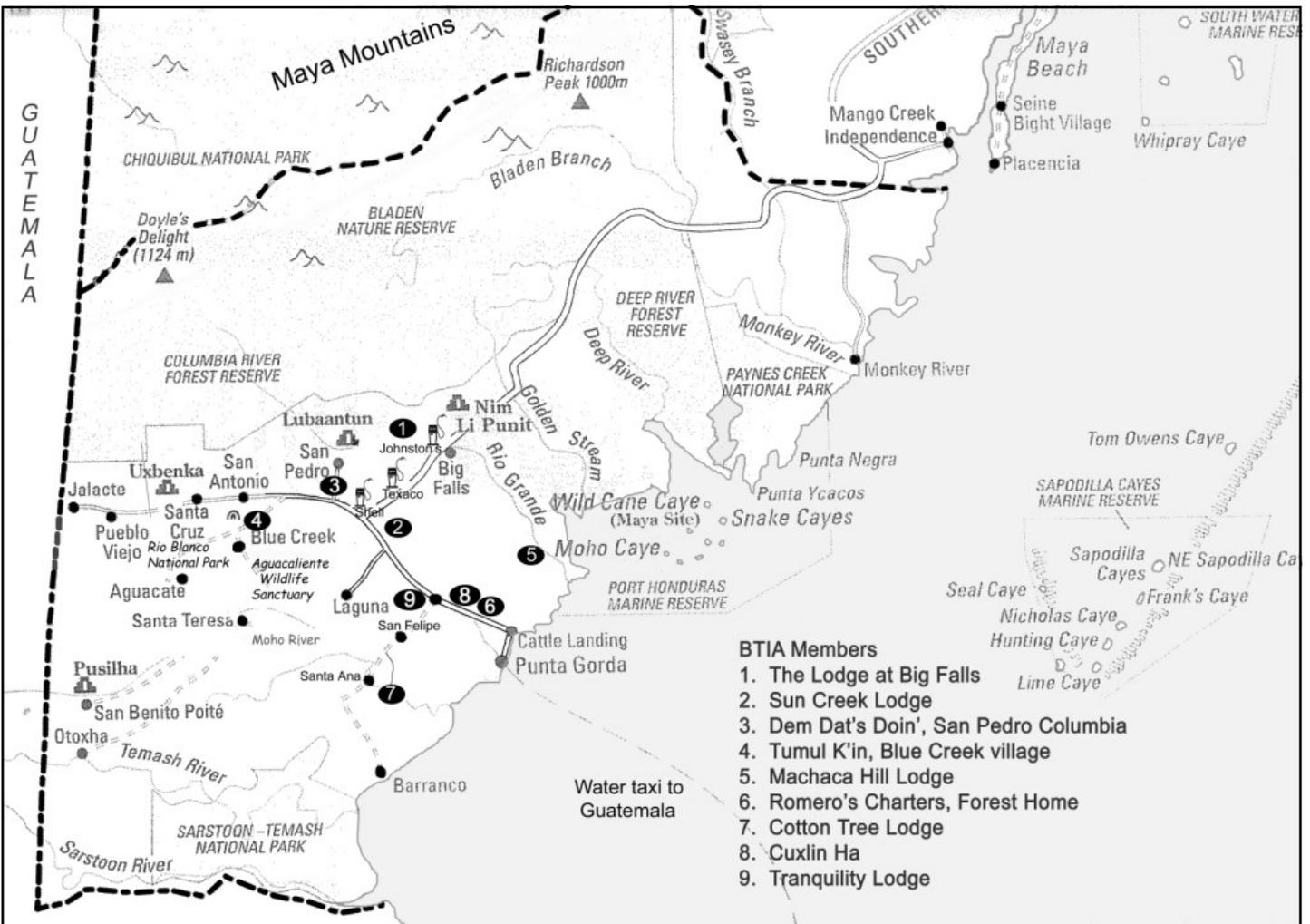
Contact Sulma Hernandez for more information about volunteering, stall concessions, sponsorship and advertizing opportunities. Full programme details in April's edition of The Toledo Howler.

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