



Blancaneaux Lodge

'In the Field' Expedition Series 2010



Expedition Raptor

An introduction to raptor research and conservation with Ryan Phillips, Raptor Biologist, Executive Director and founder of the *Belize Raptor Research Institute*.

Expedition Dates: August 2010 and early December 2010

7 nights/8 days based at *Blancaneaux Lodge*

A combination of easy to understand classroom seminars and 'in the field' treks to raptor 'hot spots'. Learn about the raptor research project and their focus on rare species such as Solitary Eagle, Stygian Owl, Hawk-eagles and Kites. Meet field scientists, researchers, park rangers and expert local guides. Ideal for educators or birders interested in rare neo-tropical raptors and their conservation.

Saturday, Day 1: Arrive into Belize International Airport and meet our driver for a 2-½ hour transfer to *Blancaneaux Lodge*. On arrival there is

time to settle in and enjoy the wonderfully relaxing atmosphere. The group will gather for pre-dinner drinks at the Jaguar Bar and after an early dinner Ryan Phillips will lead a roundtable introduction, giving a general overview of expedition topics and schedule.

Sunday, Day 2: Breakfast. For those that wish, there will be early morning birding before breakfast.

Morning Lecture: An introduction to Raptors of Belize.

Afternoon Lecture: After lunch, we'll take an afternoon trek to Howler Hill in order to observe a range of raptors in the field hopefully including kites and Hawk-eagles. General birding on this hike is exceptional as is the abundance of orchids. *Blancaneaux Lodge* also maintains motion sensitive cameras for jaguar research in this area.

Evening lecture: An introduction to raptor migrations through Belize.

Monday, Day 3:

For early risers breakfast will be preceded by an optional early morning birding walk with our resident guides.

Morning Activity: Visit to *1000 Foot Falls*, which along with the nearby *Bald Hills* is the habitat of Orange-Breasted Falcon, King Vulture, Black-and-white Hawk Eagle and Solitary Eagle. Return to *Blancaneaux Lodge* for lunch.

Early Afternoon Lecture: Afternoon lecture on the Stygian Owl and the study conducted by Roni Martinez of *Blancaneaux Lodge*.

Afternoon activity: Field trip to the Stygian roosting site to view the owls and to collect pellets for analysis.

Evening activity: Nighttime owl surveys in forest surrounding *Blancaneaux Lodge*.

Tuesday, Day 4: Breakfast.

Morning Lecture: Early morning lecture on the Solitary Eagle and how to survey for raptors.

Full-day Activity: We'll be heading out into the field to conduct point count surveys on Solitary Eagles. Hopefully we'll spot this extremely rare species and observe its field characteristics. We'll spend two hours at each point count station counting all raptors. Picnic lunch while in the field.

Dinner at *Blancaneaux Lodge*.

Wednesday, Day 5: Breakfast

Field Trip: A full day tour to the Maya site of *Caracol* in the *Chiquibul National Park* – one of Belize's best 'hot spots' for raptors. On arrival at the Caracol National Park rangers will describe the unique challenges they face in protecting and conserving the National Park. *Caracol* is home to resident spider monkeys and it is also possible to see the Keel-billed Motmot and Harpy Eagle using the temple tops as vantage points.

On our way back to *Blancaneaux Lodge* we'll stop at the *Rio Frio Cave* and the *Rio On Falls*.

Dinner at *Blancaneaux Lodge*.

Thursday, Day 6: Breakfast

The morning is free to relax or take optional activities.

Lunch

Field Trip: An afternoon trail walk into the adjoining *Noj Kaax Meen Elijio Panti National Park* for an afternoon of birding and orchid spotting. The area has approximately 250 species of birds and it is possible to find about 50 species of orchid. We'll show you the nesting sites of Plumbeous and Swallow-tailed Kites and we'll keep our eyes peeled for new nesting sites. There is time to swim in waterfalls and enjoy the fantastic birding as we move between pine ridge, stands of palmetto and moist tropical broadleaf habitats.

Dinner

Evening Lecture: A short lecture on Hawk-Eagles of Belize and research being conducted by BRRRI on Hawk-Eagles.

Friday, Day 7: Early breakfast

Full Day Field Trip: We'll depart early for a full day trip to the Challilo Dam and its reservoir. Upper Macal River that flows into the reservoir is the habitat of tapir, otter, Morelet's crocodile and Scarlet Macaw. Our National Park ranger guide will explain how the dam has both impacted the ecosystem and at the same time provided new habitat for wading birds. We hope to observe a wide range of raptors during the course of the day. We'll return in the late afternoon with time to freshen up before meeting for cocktails at the *Jaguar Bar*. Drinks will be followed by a farewell dinner at *Blancaneaux Lodge's Montagna Restaurant*.

Saturday, Day 8: Breakfast.

Mid-morning transfer to Belize International Airport and depart for your international flight or fly to Placencia for an extension at *Turtle Inn*.

Extend your stay:

Take a pre or post-trip extension to *Blancaneaux Lodge's* sister properties *Turtle Inn* and *La Lancha*. Snorkel or dive the barrier reef, enjoy coastal birding, visit the *Cockscomb Jaguar Preserve* or explore the ancient *Maya* citadel of *Tikal*, one of Central America's best birding destinations. Inquire for details.