

# The Toledo Howler

Newspaper of the Toledo Chapter of the Belize Tourism Industry Association

OCTOBER 2009

YEAR 3, ISSUE 2

FREE

*Make your way to Toledo for*

## Battle of The Drums and Toledo Tourism Expo

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The Toledo Tourism Expo and Battle of the Drums will both take place on Saturday 14th November this year.

The Tourism Expo (TOLTEX) will be in Central Park in Punta Gorda between 10am and 5 pm. Stalls will feature accommodations and tours, mouth-watering food, locally made crafts and



Find out what's going on in Toledo at TOLTEX tourism related developments by NGOs in the district.

TOLTEX is organized by the Toledo branch of the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA). The BTIA, in turn, is very grateful to all the businesses who are sponsoring TOLTEX this year. Sponsors logos appear on Page 2.

There will be a raffle towards the end of the afternoon with some impressive and valuable prizes to be won. Check out the list of raffle prizes on page 2. There will also be live music in the park during the day. Tickets can be purchased in advance from the Tourism Information Center or TIDE Tours office on Front St or in Central Park on the day.

The Battle of the Drums will



There's no shortage of stalls selling T-shirts

once again be in the PG Sports Complex. Doors open at 6:30 and the event starts at 7:30. General admission tickets will be \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door.

There will be eight drumming groups taking part from Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. The Honduran band Grupo Guchelo from Baha Mar plays a distinct *contra* style unlike all the others.

Punta Gorda will be represented by Chucurru and the Tribal Vibes, the defending champions,

and Luwaruguma Peini who were previously featured in The Howler. The Ugundani Dance Group from Belize City have represented Belize in music festivals in Europe and the USA. Wageiali Drummers from Dangriga were placed second in 2077 and 2008 and will be aiming to go one better this year. The Lebeha Boys from Hopkins have produced an award winning CD and Ligemerie Ubafu from Seine Bight are well known from their performances up and down the Placencia Peninsula.

If you have been to this event in the past then you know it's not to be missed. If you haven't, then it's high time you came!

Listen to Love FM on Sunday 15 November for a live show broadcast from Beya Suites featuring a new event designed to showcase the best Paranderos.

*For a night of intense musical entertainment, don't miss the Battle of the Drums!*



BTIA's distinctive octagonal Information Center on Front street in Punta Gorda. All you need to know about Toledo is inside

Join BTIA and display your promotional materials in the information center.

Join BTIA and make a difference.

**Contact Toledo BTIA** at the Tourism Information Center, Front St., Punta Gorda Tel. 722-2531 E-mail [btiatoledo@btl.net](mailto:btiatoledo@btl.net)  
**Chair:** Dennis Garbutt, **Secretary:** Karel Kuran, **Treasurer:** Dona Scafe

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# 3RD TOLEDO TOURISM EXPO (TOLTEX)

BTIA would like to thank these organizations for their generous support of TOLTEX 2009









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(501) 722-2188.



## TOLTEX Raffle Prizes

- ✦ Round Trip Airfare, PG to Municipal for 1 - Tropic Air
- ✦ 2 Book prizes - The Added Touch, Belize City
- ✦ 2 Nights' accommodation for 2 - The Holiday Hotel, San Pedro
- ✦ 1 Night's accommodation in seaside room - The Seaspray Hotel, Placencia
- ✦ 1 Night's B&B for 2 - The Lodge at Big Falls
- ✦ MP3 Player - Dream Light Computer Center, Punta Gorda
- ✦ 1 Night's B&B for 2 - Coral House Inn, Punta Gorda
- ✦ 1 Day Trip to the Port Honduras Marine Reserve for 5 people - TIDE Tours, Punta Gorda
- ✦ 1 Night's B&B for 2 - Tranquility Lodge , Jacintoville
- ✦ A Meal for 2 - The Reef Bar, Punta Gorda
- ✦ 1 Tabletop Stove - ITVET
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# Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Venue / Time	Other Info
6 Nov	Toledo Community College Cultural Pageant	Multi-purpose Building, PG starts 6pm	\$5 entrance
13 Nov	St Peter Claver School Annual Cultural Day Junior Battle of the Drums, food, performances	School property, Main St, PG/9am–2:30pm	
13 Nov	Dellile Academy Drum Corps, Dangriga	PG Sports Complex 6.00pm	
14 Nov	TOLTEX A celebration of Toledo's cultural and economic diversity	Central Park, PG / 10am–5pm	
14 Nov	Battle of the Drums Live music event	Sports Complex, PG / 7:30pm	General Admission: \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door
15 Nov	Paranda Top Ten on Love FM: -includes live performances from local paranderos, interviews & phone-ins	Live from Beya Suites/ starting 1pm	
16 Nov	Annual Primary School Garifuna Translation Contest	Father Ring Parish Hall 2pm	
18 Nov	Cultural Awareness Day Garifuna Settlement re-enactment Parade, Dance & Music	PG Wharf/ 7:30am TCC Campus/ 8:30am–1pm	
19 Nov	Garifuna Settlement Day National Holiday Re-enactment of Garifuna arrival Re-enactment Mass Parade to Central Park & crowning of Queen followed by drumming in the park	Fisherman's Coop Pier/ 6.30am Catholic Church, PG/ 7.30am Central Park, PG /10.00am	
11 Dec	St Peter Claver School Christmas Pageant	Parish Hall, Main St, PG / starts 7pm	\$5 entrance
27 Feb 2010	Toledo Community College Fair Booths, games, football marathon, etc	Union Field, PG	\$1 entrance

## The Crafts People of Big Falls Village



With a population of around 1200 Big Falls is one of the largest villages in Toledo District. Perhaps because it is situated right on the southern highway at the gateway to Toledo the people are more entrepreneurial than in some more remote villages. A number of craftspeople make crafts and sell them further north in the resorts of Placencia and Hopkins village.

Carmen Sanchez (on the right in picture) has been making cuxtals and jippi jappa baskets for some years now and is joined in this enterprise by her daughter Nolberta who sells the crafts in Hopkins once a week. Nolberta's daughter Lelanie has not yet started but is keen to learn the family skills. Cuxtals range in price from \$15-25 and baskets from \$4-10.

To order call 661-9681 or  
e-mail [snolberta@yahoo.com](mailto:snolberta@yahoo.com)  
*Continued on page 8*



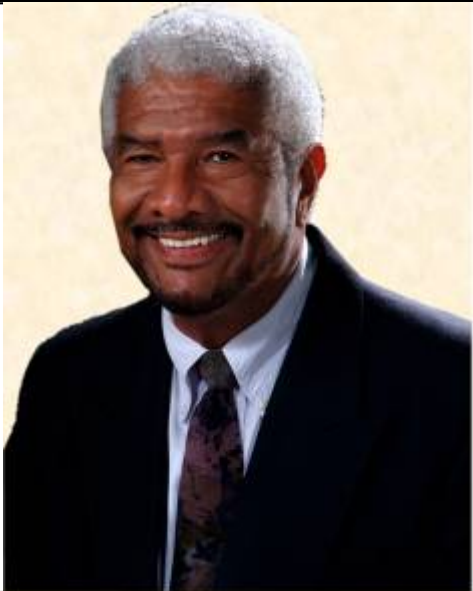
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Restaurant Guide				
Name	Address	Cuisine	Phone	Opening Hours
Coleman's Cafe	Big Falls Village, near the rice mill	Belizean	720-2017	Daily: 11:30- 4pm & 6- 9pm [ Res- ervations Preferred ]
Earth Runnins' Café and Bukut Bar	Main Middle Street, PG	Belizean/ 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/ Interna- tional	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/ Beliz- ean/ Middle Eastern	671-7172 614-2888	Daily: 11:30am – 2pm & 6:30 – 9pm [ Reservations Required ]
Mangrove Restaurant	Cattle Landing, by the curve	Belizean / Interna- tional	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. Sun- days: 5-10pm
Marian's Bay View Restau- rant	Front St, south of the mar- ket 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 Sun- days
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	603-3081 668-0119	Mon-Sat: 7am–8pm. Closed Sun- days. Group reservations required
The Snack Shack	BTL parking lot, PG	Breakfast & lunch/ Snacks, shakes, juices & pasties	702-0020	Mon-Sat: 7am – 4pm. Closed Sun- days
Waluco's	Opposite TIDE pier in Hope- ville	Belizean/East In- dian/Seafood/ Catering	670-3672	Mon-Thurs: 7am-2pm & 5-10pm. Weekends: 7am-late
All restaurants in Toledo district are welcome to appear in the Restaurant Guide. There is a BZ\$5 charge for each listing or BZ\$15 for ad- vance payment for one year (4 listings). Please contact the BTIA Tourist Information Center in PG for more information. Phone: 722-2531				

## Earthquake Damage in Port Honduras Marine Reserve

The Port Honduras Marine Reserve lies off the coast of Southern Belize and extends north from Punta Gorda Town to Monkey River, and 25 km east to include the Snake Cayes. The Marine Reserve covers an area of over 400 km<sup>2</sup> and contains a number of important ecosystems, including mangroves, seagrass beds and coral reefs, which are home to a myriad of animals and plants. These organisms live in a delicate balance with one another and their surrounding environments. Changes to their environment can have a dramatic impact on their lives. One such incident occurred in the Port Honduras Marine Reserve this year.

On May 28, 2009, a 7.3 magnitude earthquake occurred 10 km underwater, 125 km NNE of La Ceiba, Honduras. Many people across Belize felt the tremors from the earthquake, and so did the coral reefs in the Marine Reserve. SCUBA diving surveys by the Marine Biologists and Rangers from the

Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) in the days following the earthquake revealed significant damage to the coral reefs on the outer banks and surrounding the Snake Cayes. The earthquake caused the seabed to shake and these vibrations created cracks across the reef (up to 10



metres long, 12 cm wide and 25 cm deep) and triggered landslides on the reef walls, where the reef edge broke away and slipped down the wall. These areas were home to many species of hard coral, sea fans and sponges, and were known for their high numbers of Caribbean Spiny Lobster. Hundreds of coral colonies and sponges were also damaged, with many falling over or breaking apart during the tremors.

The Marine Biologists at TIDE are closely monitoring the damaged areas and are hoping that they will recover over time. If you are snorkelling out at the Snake Cayes over the next few months, keep your eyes open for any cracks or landslides and let TIDE know where you see these and if you see any new corals or sponges growing in these areas.

Contributed by  
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# Tour operator: SFI Tours



SFI's boat Wild Thing lies at anchor off the Sapodilla Cayes

The Sea Front Inn's tour operations are now being marketed as SFI Tours and managed by Roberto Echeverria one of Toledo's most experienced guides. The business is currently specializing in marine tours and multi-sport adventure tours and mainly for groups with a minimum of nine and maximum of fifteen people.

These include semi-white water rafting on the upper reaches of the Moho river from San Benito Poite down to Boom Creek village near the mouth of the Moho and inland spelunking.

At sea guests can snorkel on the reef's edge or in open water looking for whale sharks. While Belize is best known for whale sharks off Gladden Spit during the

in the blue off the Sapodilla Cayes.

His sea tours include trolling, spin casting and bottom fishing for species like barracuda, kingfish, tuna, jacks and wahoo (a kind of mackerel). SFI's marine tours also include a beach barbeque which can include grilling the "fish of the

day" caught by guests. SFI is partnering with Reef CI to offer diving adventures from the Sapodillas.

What, no fly fishing, you ask? Roberto says "no", unapologetically. There are plenty of fly fishing guides around, he says and he does not want SFI to simply duplicate existing offerings but to create new and different adventures for visitors. "SFI wants to go off the beaten path", says Roberto.

So why choose SFI? " I frankly believe that if you book with SFI then you will get a professional pioneer who will take care of every detail in a safe environment and offer an experience you won't forget."

"It is important to be able to read your client and understand their adventure level, their fitness and how far they want to be stretched."

So what are SFI's flagship tours? Roberto singles out sea tours overnighting on Tom Owens Caye at the northern end of the Sapodilla range at the

Cuxlin Ha facility there. The adventure can include snorkelling, diving, fishing or just doing nothing at all. This tour starts at US\$130 per person.

Then there are SFI's Belize and Guatemala overnight adventures. Roberto will take the guests down to the Sarstoon river on the Belize/Guatemala border where they stay in Sarstoon village at the FundaEco facility which is a community-based organization similar to the Toledo Ecotourism Association. Tours can also go straight to Livingston and up the Rio Dulce to Lake Izabal. The Guatemalan tours include beaches, culture and food as well as waterfalls fed from hot springs like the one at Finca Paraiso on the Rio Dulce. These tours start from US\$95 per



Roberto Echeverria surrounded by maps and information at his office in front of the Snack Shack in PG

person and like the others are group tours for from 9-15 guests. Tours for couples and smaller groups are in preparation.

### Contact SFI Tours

Tel: 663-4559 or 702-0020

E-mail [seatoledobelize@gmail.com](mailto:seatoledobelize@gmail.com)



The water fed from a hot springs falls at around 100 degrees Fahrenheit into the cold pool below

spawning periods from March to May each year Roberto believes that they remain in the seas around Belize throughout the year and at the end of September 2009 spotted whale sharks

## TIDE Director Warns of Risks from Cruise Tourism

The 3rd International conference on Responsible tourism took place at the University of Belmopan from October 19-23. Presentations were made by a number of prominent international speakers.

Mrs Celia Mahung the Executive Director of TIDE who attended the conference was shocked by information on Cruise Tourism in Belize. Statistics shared demonstrated that income from cruise tourism

is four times less than overnight stays despite the fact that there are four times as many cruise passengers as overnight stays. That means, for every dollar spent by a cruise ship passenger sixteen dollars come into the economy from an overnight visitor. In addition to the average \$45 per day that cruise passengers spend, there is minimal income to locals and cruise passengers rarely want to return to Belize. Obviously they do not get the time to experience what Belize has to offer during their short time off the ships and the large numbers that travel to the few destinations near the

city make traveling less rewarding. Mrs Mahung said "We should all be extremely concerned about the environmental damage right off our coastline from cruise ships as sewage waste emptied into the ocean affects the marine life that our economy depends on. It was alarming to hear that cruise tourism may extend to the southern part of Belize and I wish that our residents could become more aware of the minimal benefits of cruise tourism. I believe that we should not expand cruise tourism, but promote stay-over tours that contribute more positively to our economy."

# Accommodation: The Lodge at Big Falls

The Lodge at Big Falls is nestled along the banks of the Rio Grande near the village of Big Falls. Only 18 miles from PG along the Southern Highway, this is an easy to reach tropical getaway.

The Lodge offers six luxury thatched cabanas, all with river views. Each cabana has a private bathroom featuring a separate shower room with large window overlooking a private garden area. With saltillo tiled floors, high performance ceiling fans and large screened windows, the cabanas stay cool and comfortable year round. Each cabana sleeps up to 4 people. Guests can enjoy the early morning birdlife and evening sun-



Elegant riverside cabana with private bathroom and secluded verandah. Some cabanas have a queen and single bed; others a queen and bunk beds.

sets from the privacy of their own verandah complete with hammocks and chairs.

The Lodge at Big Falls is a full service resort. The main building includes a bar and restaurant, gift shop, tour desk and resource room. The resource room offers guests a library of books on Belize's wildlife,

Mayan culture, archaeology, tropical plants, etc. which can be borrowed during the guests' stay. Internet access is also available.



The largest pool in the district, the Lodge pool has a seven foot deep end and built-in pool seat along the side; perfect for relaxing with a chilled cocktail after a day out.

cess is also available.

The restaurant serves a full buffet breakfast or a la carte breakfast menu. Breads, sweet rolls, yogurt and juices are all homemade. The lunch menu offers homemade pizzas as well as sandwiches, salads and burgers. Kitchen staff prepare packed lunches for day tours. Dinner is a 3 course meal using local ingredients creatively and introducing numerous Mediterranean and Middle Eastern dishes to tickle your taste buds.

The Lodge's 40 foot swimming pool is a big attraction for guests and a great way to cool off after a day exploring the district. There's a pool-side barbeque area which is available for private hire when not in use by the Lodge. The pool is also open to the public in the low season.

The Lodge is uniquely positioned on a large meander of the Rio Grande and river tubing is a popular pastime with guests. Where you get

into the river and where you get out are only 150 yards apart but, by river, will take 30 to 40 minutes. The float takes you past a riverside pool where local hot springs empty into the Rio Grande. Stop here for a dip in the warm, soothing water on your way downstream. You will also pass the Big Falls 'laundromat' where local Mayan women wash their clothes and bathe their children... as well as catching up on village gossip.

Other onsite activities include kay-



The coolest way to enjoy the jungle. Riverside wildlife includes kingfishers, otter, toucans, coatimundi, etc.

aking, guided bird walks, ping pong, badminton and horseshoes.

When not busy with the Lodge, owners Rob and Marta Hirons also write and edit The Toledo Howler newspaper on behalf of the local branch of the Belize Tourism Industry Association and enjoy sharing the knowledge with guests.

**For more information and reservations: Phone 011-501-671-7172 or Email: [info@thelodgeatbigfalls.com](mailto:info@thelodgeatbigfalls.com). See the website at: [www.thelodgeatbigfalls.com](http://www.thelodgeatbigfalls.com).**

## The Added Touch

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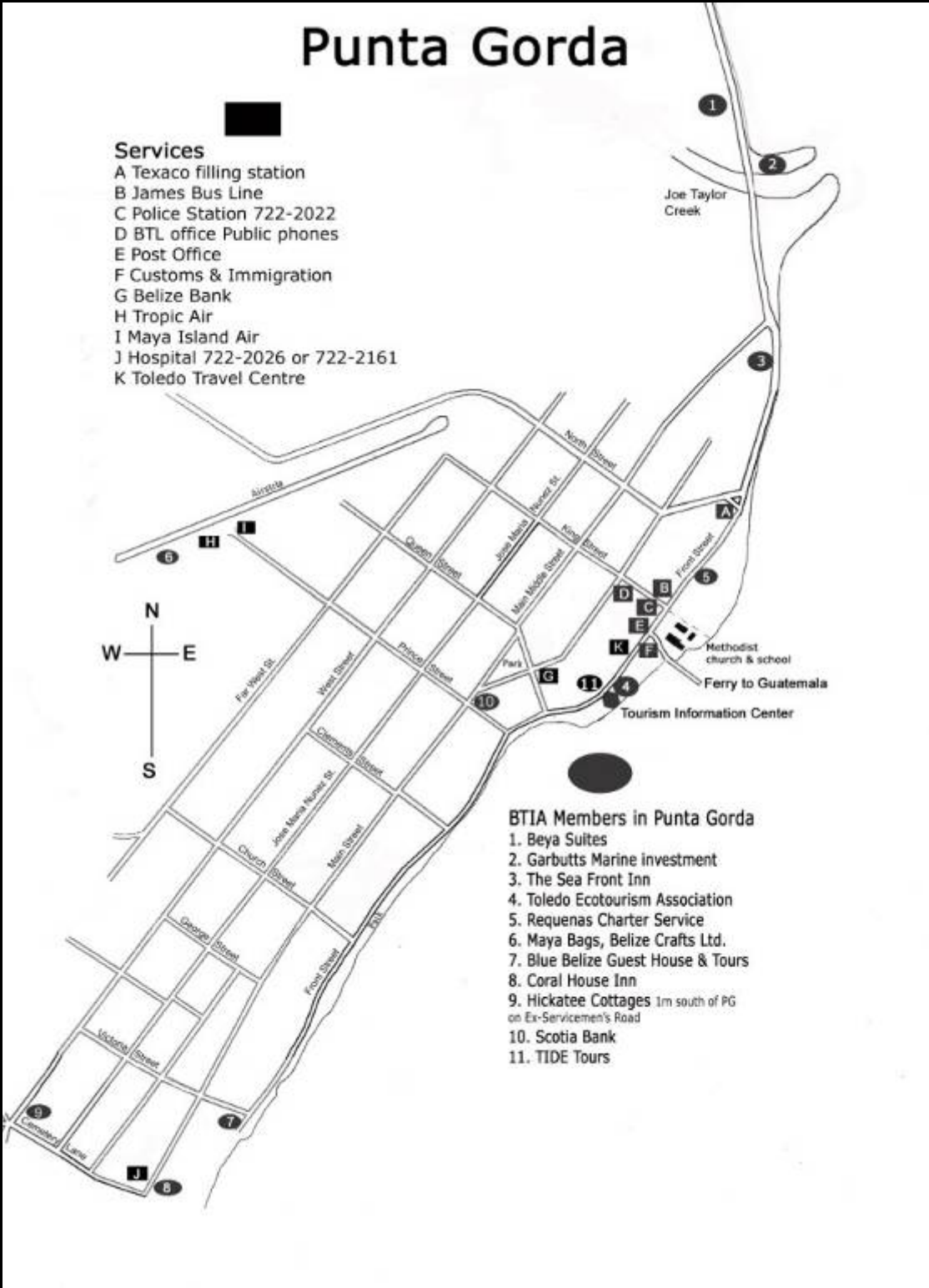
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[www.theaddedtouchbelize.com](http://www.theaddedtouchbelize.com)



**Join BTIA and Put Your Business on the Map**

BTIA is businesses working together to promote Toledo district as a tourism destination. Join now and get a **FREE** blank copy of the PG town map. Use the map to produce your own promotional literature for your business.

The BTIA membership year runs from January to December so apply now to put your business on the map from the beginning of 2010.

**How Do I Join BTIA?**

Visit [www.btia.org](http://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.

# The Crafts People of Big Falls Village *continued*

Continued from page 3

Next door to Carmen and Nolberta, their neighbors and relatives Santa and Linda Sanchez make baskets, cuxtals and embroidery work. When Santa's daughter-in-law Ofelia is not sculpting doughnuts for local sale she gets involved in the family business by hand carving calabash gourds.



Husband Jose Sanchez also uses his own craft skills to make fine rosewood bowls and salad spoons and forks.

They travel each week to sell to tourists and resorts in Hopkins village in Stann Creek District.

To order or visit call 669-9041

At left, Silveria Cholom holds a rosewood bowl and spoon and fork set made by her husband Juan. Silveria also makes weekly sales trips to Hopkins and Placencia.



Linda Sanchez and her mother Santa Sanchez display baskets and rosewood bowls



BTIA TOLEDO MEMBERS 2009

Business Name	Email	Phone	Contact Person
Belize Crafts Ltd, Maya Bags	belizeexecutivedirector@mayabags.org	722-2175	Desiree Arnold
Beya Suites	info@beyasuites.com	722-2188	Lisa Avila
Blue Belize Guest House & Tours	info@bluebelize.com	722-2678	Dan Castellanos & Rachel Graham
Carlo Wagner	stcharlespg@btl.net	722-0193	Carlo Wagner
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
Maya Ant and Bee Group	Loctn. Indianville, Punta Gorda		Agapito Shal
Requena's Charter Service	watertaxi@btl.net	722-2070	Julio Requena
Romero's Charter Service	rcharters@btl.net	722-2625/2924	Frances Romero
Scotia Bank	elvis.perez@scotiabank.com	722-0098/0099	Elvis Perez
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
TIDE Tours	info@tidetour.org	722-2129	Karel Kuran
Toledo Eco-Tourism Association	teabelize@yahoo.com	722-2531	Vicente Sackul / Reyes Chun
Toledo Tour Guides Association	info@toledotourguides.org	665-6778	Bruno Kuppinger
Tranquility Lodge	info@tranquility-lodge.com	677-9921	Sheila & Rusty Nale
Tumul K'in Center of Learning	tumulkindevelopment@yahoo.com	608-1070	Esther Sanchez Sho

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Where to get your copy of  
The Toledo Howler

- ♦ 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  
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[www.ecoclub.com](http://www.ecoclub.com);  
[www.ambergriscaye.com](http://www.ambergriscaye.com)  
[www.expatsbelize.com](http://www.expatsbelize.com)

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.							

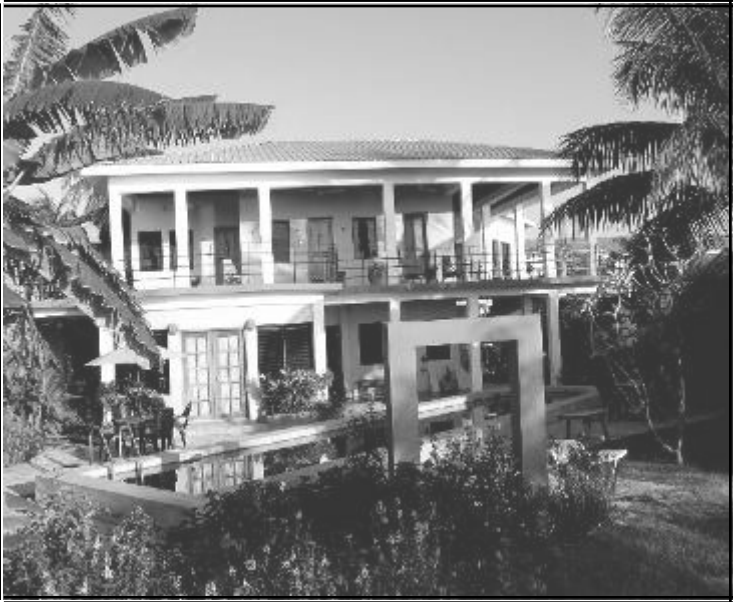
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# Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve

Most visitors to Belize miss out on the chance to visit the Sapodilla Cayes Marine Reserve (SCMR), however, this site is truly one of the hidden treasures in Toledo. The SCMR is located about 35 miles from Punta Gorda town and consists of seven unique cayes, each with a distinct personality and attractions. The seventh caye is Seal Caye to the west of Lime Caye, but not shown on the map. While the majority of the visitors to the SCMR come from neighboring Guatemala and Honduras, a number of local tour guides from Toledo and Placencia use the islands and the beautiful blue waters as a dive, snorkel and fly fishing destination.

The SCMR was declared a marine reserve in 1996 and protects the J-shaped hook of the southern terminus of the Belize Barrier Reef. The SCMR is co-managed by the Fisheries Department and the Southern Environmental Association (SEA) who are responsible for on-site management and enforcement. Although the reserve was declared in 1996 there was no on-site management until 2001 and SEA took responsibility for the day-to-day management of the park in March 2009 from the Fisheries Department.

Most visitors to the SCMR start off their visit at Hunting Caye, the administrative center for the reserve and all visitors should check in with the rangers at the caye. Hunting Caye is home to the Be-

lize Fisheries Department/Southern Environmental Association, Belize Coast Guard, Port Authority and the University of Belize's Living Reef Center Station. The island also has a series of public buildings including showers and toilets.

also hosts excursions from Guatemala especially during the holiday season. The caye has beautiful white sand beaches perfect for soaking up the rays. Visitors can also explore the northeast-

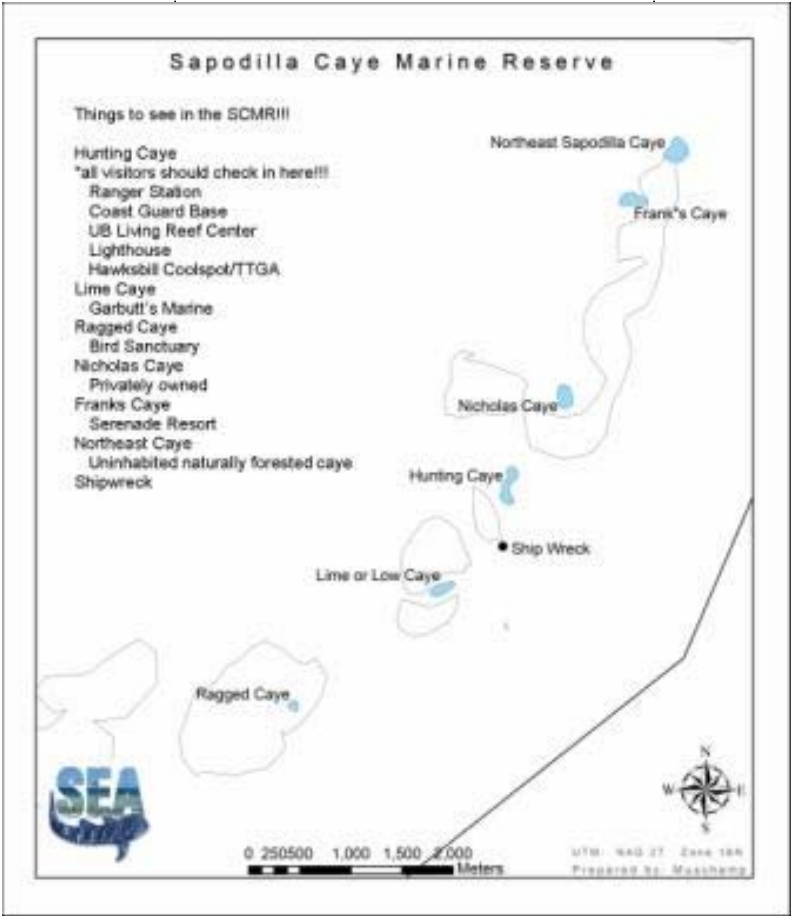
ern section of the caye which is home to a large number of green iguanas. If you are lucky enough to be out when Miss Sanny (Sandra Williams) is in kitchen, a sunset meal on Lime Caye is the perfect way to end a long day in the sun.

A trip to the SCMR would not be complete without a dip in the beautiful blue waters. Numerous unique SCUBA and snorkel sites are easy to access in the SCMR, some boasting gorgeous coral reefs. Many visitors also enjoy a snorkel trip to the sunken metal steam ship home to a vibrant array of reef fish like blue tang, French grunt and stoplight parrotfish. The waters of the SCMR are also a fly-fishers dream home to the grand-slam of Tarpon, Permit and Bonefish.

The unique location and beautiful scenery make a visit to the SCMR a memorable experience to any visitor. Call the SEA office in Placencia for more information about the reserve at 523-3377 or talk to the BTIA office in PG or contact your hotel for more information about how you can experience this beautiful and rarely visited part of Toledo.

**Contributed by**

Jocelyn Rae Finch, Science Coordinator, Southern Environmental Association, Placencia Village 523-3377 & Punta Gorda Town 722-0125



The small number of island residents can often be found lounging under the shade of the large strangler fig, playing basketball, walking the beach or listening to music in a hammock at the Hawksbill Coolspot (Bar and Restaurant) run by the Toledo Tour Guide Association.

The other popular tourist destination in the SCMR is Lime Caye. The Garbutt family has built a small kitchen and series of guesthouses perfect for an overnight getaway on the island. Lime Caye

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# Arzu on Medicinal Plants: Sorosi



Sorosi, *Momordica Charantia*

Sorosi grows all year long, easily and abundantly in the tropical climate of Belize. The plant is a delicately green slender, climbing annual vine with long-stalked leaves and yellow, solitary male and female flowers. The fruit looks like a warty gourd, sometimes round like a melon but usually oblong and cucumber like depending on the variety. The young fruit starts out emerald green, and turns orange-

yellow as it ripens. Once the oblong fruit matures, it splits into three valves that curl backwards, exposing rows of bright red seeds. The plant looks sweet but do not let it fool you; every single parts of it, including the colorful fruit, taste very bitter.

Belizeans take their Sorosi very seriously. Local and indigenous people grow it in their homes, farms, and gardens to use as food and medicine. The fruit/and or leaves are stewed in a spicy sauce or added to beans, soups, and other dishes (try parboiling it first with a dash of salt to remove some of the bitter taste). It is served in some local restaurants and is actually quite tasty.

Medicinally, the plant is a “catch all” “heal-all” panacea, with a long history of use by indigenous healers. Sorosi tea is used to cleanse the blood of bacteria, viruses, parasites, poisons, cholesterol and sugar. The tea made from the whole plant is used against digestive disorders, for measles, hepatitis, and to relieve feverish conditions. It is used as a poultice topically for sores, wounds, skin infections, and external worms

and parasites. The Sorosi fruit, known as Bitter Melon, Bitter Gourd or Karela is used to treat tumors, diabetes, rheumatism, malaria, inflammation, menstrual problems, fevers, worms, and to induce labor. The root is a reputed aphrodisiac.

Recent scientific investigations have established that the fruit of the Sorosi (Bitter Melon/Gourd) is highly beneficial in the treatment of diabetes. It contains an insulin-like principle, known as plant-insulin, which has been found effective in lowering the blood and urine sugar levels. Garifuna people have always used Sorosi to treat “sweet blood”. Native people include Sorosi liberally in the diet of diabetics, and of anyone healing from a chronic disease. The Sorosi fruit can be prepared by boiling the cut up pieces in water. The best way to use it is to take the juice of about four or five Sorosi fruits every morning on an empty stomach. You can also grind the seeds of the fruit into a powder and sprinkle on your food. Before you do so however, take a few seeds of this magical plant and return them to the earth for growth and prosperity.

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## Southern Voices

Darius Avila is a business consultant and, with his wife Lisa, the owner of Beya Suites guest house. He is also the president of the Battle of the Drums Secretariat and the new president of the Toledo Association of Businesses.



### How long have you or your ancestors lived in Belize?

I'm a descendant of the Garifuna who first arrived in a small group from Honduras in 1823. They were followed by a larger contingent in 1832. I'm a Palacio on my mother's side of the family and they arrived here in the mid-1800s.

### What are the most significant changes you have seen in Toledo in your lifetime?

Transportation. We went from having only boat access to the rest of the country to now having paved roads and airlines. Secondly, there has been the racial transformation among ethnic groups. As a child there was little intermarrying and the different groups kept to themselves. Now we have learnt to bridge our differences and pursue common interest together.

### What makes you optimistic about the development of tourism in Toledo?

I recognize as an accountant that the tourism business is cyclical but I am very optimistic that tourism in Toledo will boom in the years to come, the main reason being that in Toledo we have so much to offer.

### What could the government do to promote tourism in Toledo?

They could assist us in building the infrastructure in different tourism sites. For example in the marine reserves things like tent platforms and palapas on isolated cayes. Inland improvements to visitor centres to accommodate larger groups and proper bathroom facilities. Co-managers of protected areas need more financial and other support so that carrying capacity levels can be adhered to.

### What could PG Town council do to support tourism development?

The town council needs to put in place a plan for the development of tourism in PG town. A big part of that should be to improve the face of PG?

### If a tourist had time to visit one place only, where would you recommend they go?

I'd say West Snake Caye. It is just breathtaking and I've seen the reaction of tourist and Belizeans after visiting it for the first time.

### Reef or rainforest? Which do you prefer?

That's a hard one but I think I prefer the reef. I was born and raised right here in PG so I'm a coastal town boy and grew up fishing and swimming and enjoying the sea.

### What is your favourite season or month of the year?

February. It has a particular significance being the peak of the tourism season and besides it's the month of St. Valentine which means love and sharing.

### What is your favourite village in Toledo?

Barranco definitely. My mum's from there so I have a particular affinity for Barranco. My mum would take us there for holidays as a kid. It was a time when I could eat all the fruits I wanted without bothering to buy them.

### What was your most memorable encounter with wild animals?

I've really never had a bad experience with wild creatures except for the occasional jellyfish sting..

### What herbal medicines do you use?

My wife sometimes boils sorosi to make a drink. The plant is well known to help build blood and protect the body against infections.

### What is your favourite local food?

It's a garifuna dish hudutu.

### Red beans or black beans?

Red beans. I just can't handle those black beans but my real favourite is pinto beans which are also grown in the villages.

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### Is Toledo still the "forgotten district" or just unforgettable?

Speaking about Toledo as "forgotten" is a philosophical kind of thing. If you are forgotten it is because you have contributed to that. Toledo is certainly unforgettable but if it is in some way forgotten then it is partly because we as a people have allowed others to forget us.

### What's new in the Battle of the Drums this year, Darius?

We felt that last year's nine bands was too many. This year we are restricting it to just seven bands and have re-organized the show to allow more interaction between the MCs and the audience and allow for more creativity in the performances. The bands are being asked to focus a large portion of their presentation on jankunu and chumba. Chumba is a like a pantomime, a play without words and that is where they can be more creative.

Thanks, Darius.

You're welcome, Howler.



# Punta Gorda: The Ultimate Birding Hot Spot by Lee Jones

Since this column has been dubbed “Birding Hotspots in Toledo District”, I suppose it is only appropriate to write a column about the ultimate Toledo birding hotspot—Punta Gorda. Consider this, on the annual Christmas Bird Count, more birds are recorded in Punta Gorda than on any of the other three counts in Belize and any of the more than 2000 Christmas Bird Counts in North America north of Costa Rica. Now, that’s what I call ultimate! So, what is a Christmas Bird Count? The Christmas Bird Count was the brain-child of Frank M. Chapman who organized the first CBC in 1900 as an alternative to a sport at the time called the “Side Hunt”. The objective of the Side Hunt was to see who could shoot the most kinds of birds during a traditional Christmas Day hunt. The objective of the more eco-friendly CBC was to record as many birds as possible without shooting them. So, on Christmas Day 1900, 27 intrepid souls across the United States and southern Canada recorded 90 species of birds and about 18,500 individuals on 25 counts. One hundred and nine years later, in 2008, more than 60,000 participants on 2124 counts from Alaska to the Amazon and Hawaii to the West Indies recorded an incredible 65,600,000 individuals of nearly 2300 species. Mr. Chapman surely never envisioned his bird count becoming the immensely popular event that it is today. Organized by the Belize Audubon Society, the first count in Belize was conducted in 1972 near Belize City. Belmopan joined Belize City with its first count in 1975. The third count was begun in Gallon Jug, Orange Walk District, in 1990. With the addition of Punta Gorda in 2000, four of

the six districts in Belize are now represented. Since its inception, the PG count has consistently recorded more birds than the other three Belize counts, tallying more than 250 species on average. The results of all 2000+ CBCs are published each year online at <http://audubon.org/bird/cbc/> and in a special issue of the National Audubon Society called *American Birds*. Why should you care? Information from the CBC has been used by ornithologists and ecologists to assess long-term trends in early winter bird populations. These trends have been correlated with changes in the local and regional environment, including the effects of deforestation, development, and climate change. CBCs over the years have also reflected the increases in local bird populations following the creation of wildlife reserves, parks, and other protected areas. While the counts in Belize are more recent, we are already beginning to see some trends, both positive and negative, from changes in the Belize landscape on local bird populations. Christmas Bird Counts, despite their name, do not have to be conducted on Christmas Day; in fact they sel-

dom are. The rules state that they can be conducted any time between 14 December and 5 January. **The Punta Gorda count this year will be on 3 January.** In addition to Punta Gorda Town, the 15-mile diameter count circle extends north to Big Falls, west to Aguacaliente Lagoon, and east to the Rio Grande. Cotton Tree Lodge, which is conveniently located near the center of the circle, has agreed to host the count this year, with the tally of the count’s results and the traditional post-count dinner to be held at the lodge at the end of the day. For more information about the Christmas Bird Count, you may contact me at [lee\\_jones@att.net](mailto:lee_jones@att.net). The CBC is strictly voluntary. No one is paid to participate, not even the person responsible for organizing the count and compiling the results. People participate because it is fun, enjoyable, and for many a learning experience. It is

an opportunity for the amateur to make a contribution to the science of Ornithology while having a good time in the process. So, please join us on this year’s count—even if you don’t know a pelican from a Belikin. We will hook you up with someone who does. More eyes + more ears = more birds. It’s that simple. We certainly don’t want the Belize City gang to beat us out this year like they did last year for the first time ever! Only you can help PG regain its claim as the ultimate birding spot!

*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 Bay-Breasted Warbler in winter plumage is a regular fall migrant through southern Belize

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# Wat’s Cookin ?

## Hudutu

Two dishes, poached snapper in coconut milk (sere) and mashed plantains are served together to make hudutu, a delicately-flavored fish dish, a Garifuna specialty which traces its roots to the South America and Africa.

**Ingredients**

**Hudut**

- 5 or 6 green plantains
- 1 ripe plantain

**Sere/Lasus**

- 1 coconut
- fish
- salt
- black pepper
- oregano
- basil (bay leaf)

**Method**

**For the Sere:** scale and clean the fish; slice each fish in half from ribs down. Use the bottom (tail half) of the fish for this dish (keep the top half to make fish stock or soup). Score the skin, set aside. Put coconut milk into a 4-quart pot, add sugar, salt, chicken stock and shredded coconut. Bring to simmer, remove from heat, allow to cool a bit then strain (pressing through strainer to extract all of juice, discard rest.) Put the snapper into a shallow pot, cover it three-quarters of the way with the coconut milk and simmer the fish for 15 minutes, basting the top (exposed portion of the fish) as it cooks. After 15 minutes, gently turn the fish over and remove the pot from the heat. Let sit for 5 minutes to finish cooking. Serve the fish in a soup bowl with a portion of the broth, along with a bowl of Foo Foo (see below) which is added to the broth as the dish is eaten.

**For the Hudutu:** peel and cut the plantains into 3-inch pieces; place into a medium-sized pot; cover with water and add a tablespoon of salt. Bring to a boil, then lower heat to simmer; cover the pot and cook for 20 minutes until the green plantains are tender. Remove from heat, drain, cool enough to handle. Mash the plantains to the consistency of mashed potatoes. Serve with the sere. Mix the mashed plantains into the coconut broth as you eat the fish. *Scrumptious!*

## Toledo Tour Guide Association

The TTGA has finally found a permanent home occupying space alongside BTIA in the Tourism Information Center on Front Street. The association will act as a collection center for guides’ documentation before sending it up to BTB for renewal. They will also be disseminating information about training available for guides and get the guides involved in conservation projects, such as clean up campaigns and educational projects in schools. The TTGA desk is staffed by Evelyn Neiro who will be there on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8am until noon. Evelyn can be contacted on 660-3974

## GOSS CHOCOLATE Hot Cocoa Recipe

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons of 100% natural Goss cocoa powder
- 8 ounces of hot water, soy milk or cow’s milk
- 1 tablespoon of sugar or honey, more or less to your taste

Put 2 tablespoons of cocoa in a cup. Carefully add hot water or milk and stir mixing well. add sweetener to taste. Try adding a little vanilla extract or cinnamon for fancy hot cocoa. Adults try a shot of rum for real treat

## Hot Mocha

Ingredients --same as above, substitute hot water for hot coffee, add cocoa powder, cow or soy milk, sugar, and stir well.



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## Photo Op: The Northern Potoo



The Northern Potoo is a nocturnal bird that is so well camouflaged, it can sleep with confidence on dead branches and stumps in the open during the daytime. This one was spotted by Julie Puryear on Front Street in Punta Gorda. The picture was taken by Roberto Echeverria of SFI Tours. So well spotted, Julie. You get five points and Roberto another five points for this great photo. The camera was as close to the bird as it appears.

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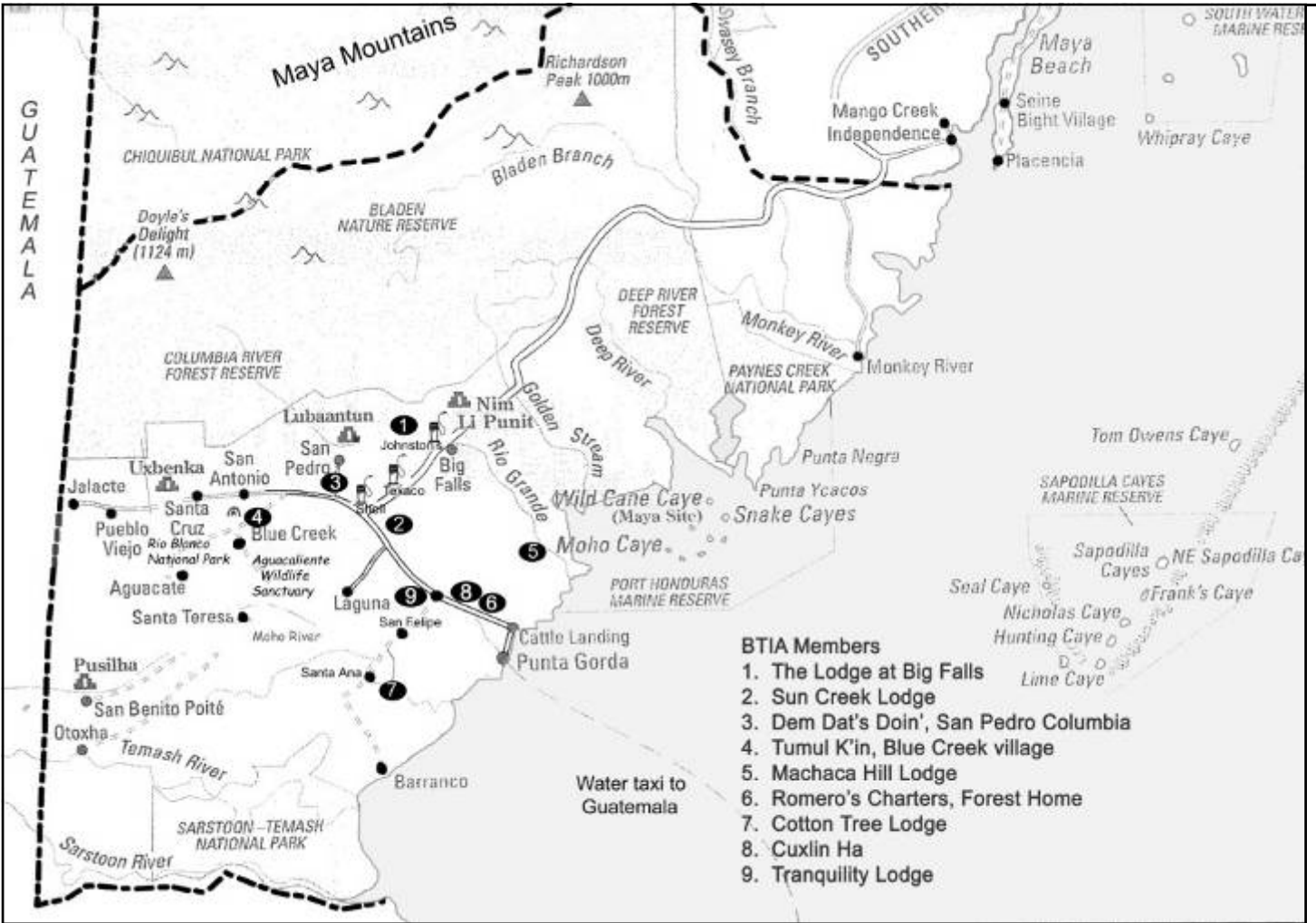
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