

# The Bladen Passage



Kelly Marlin in one of the many caves of the Bladen Nature Reserve

Volume 2 Issue 1

A Newsletter From Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education Oct. 2011

## LIGHTS...CAMERA.....ACTION!

*The Fosters Create BFREE's Documentary Film Series by Jacob Marlin*

It was August 1993...Kelly and I had just driven all the way from Ohio to Belize in our 1971 Toyota Landcruiser, beginning the adventure that led to BFREE. In those first few weeks and months, we heard a lot about two wildlife documentary filmmakers, Richard and Carol Foster, who just happened to live within a few short miles of where we were staying at the time. Rumor had it that Richard had a room full of live snakes for a film they were working on, and Carol was an amphibian biologist to boot! Needless to say, I was eager to meet them as I have been passionate about reptiles and amphibians basically since birth! Driving up to their property was like entering the world of Dr. Doolittle and a set from the movie Mosquito Coast. There were dozens of naturalistic enclosures occupied by vampire bats, a jaguar, ocelots, tree frogs, blue-morpho butterflies, and a host of other creatures. The whole place seemed to be a series of inventions, creatively constructed outbuildings, landscaped natural habitats, movie sets and outdoor research labs, all working harmoniously, held together **and powered by Richard and Carol's sheer will!** All this was located 30 miles from the nearest anything with no power lines; we were impressed to say the least.

Richard and Carol were welcoming hosts and were happy to spend a bit of time hearing our story about how we had come to Belize to help conserve and protect the Bladen Nature Reserve in the southern part of the country. I can only imagine what they must have been thinking about us and our plan.....*a couple of young foolish idealists who had no idea what they were doing and that chances of setting up a remote field station in the Bladen were slim to none. But they didn't show it and instead offered to be of help if we ever required any assistance. As they put it, "The Bladen Nature Reserve is one of the most spectacular and important forests in the country, and must be protected."*  
(continued on pg. 2)

### Newsletter Update

In our continuing effort to inform loyal supporters of BFREE, our newsletter will now be published regularly. The newsletter will feature a more in-depth look at the exciting programs, research and activities throughout the year. Guest writers as well as regular BFREE staff will contribute articles. In addition, you will receive quick updates each month. Follow us on Facebook at Bfree Belize!



Over the course of the past 18 years, we have been lucky enough to become good friends with the Fosters. They have believed in us and our mission from the very beginning and they have helped us along the way in so many instances, too many to name here. Throughout this time, the Fosters have been involved in numerous conservation and wildlife productions, winning accolades for their outstanding work and doing much in their own right to promote conservation in Belize and elsewhere. Those of you who enjoy National Geographic Explorer, Discovery Channel and BBC wildlife documentaries likely have seen their Emmy award-winning films. They will soon be offering wildlife film making workshops open to the public, so keep checking their website for more information.

Last year, we asked the Fosters if they would help us to produce a film about BFREE and our mission to help save the Bladen Nature Reserve and the greater Maya Mountains of Belize. That original idea morphed into a series of short films: *BFREE Educational Programs*, *The History of BFREE*, and *The BFREE Community-Based Harpy Eagle Conservation Program*. The Fosters spent many weeks at BFREE, traveling all over Belize, and hiking deep in the rainforests of the Bladen this season working with our staff, student groups and colleagues, filming at length to collect material for all three films at the same time. It has been a real treat to watch these professionals in action and see how far they will go to get the perfect shot. The first film to be produced will be the *Educational Programs* film, then *The Harpy Eagle*, followed by *The History of BFREE*. With the hard work and commitment of the Fosters, we hope to have all three films produced and available to the public during 2012. The purpose of these short films is to promote and highlight the many aspects of BFREE and to document and share with the broader public the importance and value of the Bladen Nature Reserve for all of us on this ever-shrinking planet. If you have any suggestions and are interested in supporting this effort, please contact me to see how you can help.

***The Fosters are documentary film makers specializing in natural history and the environment. Working out of their jungle studio they have made films for the major networks including National Geographic and BBC, They are highly experienced at bringing to the screen the intricate hidden stories of natural behavior. They have worked all over the world winning multiple awards for their work. Living with the rainforest and the barrier reef at their doorstep, they have opportunities to find and film material not easily achieved by visiting filmmakers. They are currently using their skills to highlight the threats to the environment and nature by man and climate change--subjects to which they are passionately committed. You can check out their website at [www.wildlifefilmproductions.net](http://www.wildlifefilmproductions.net).***



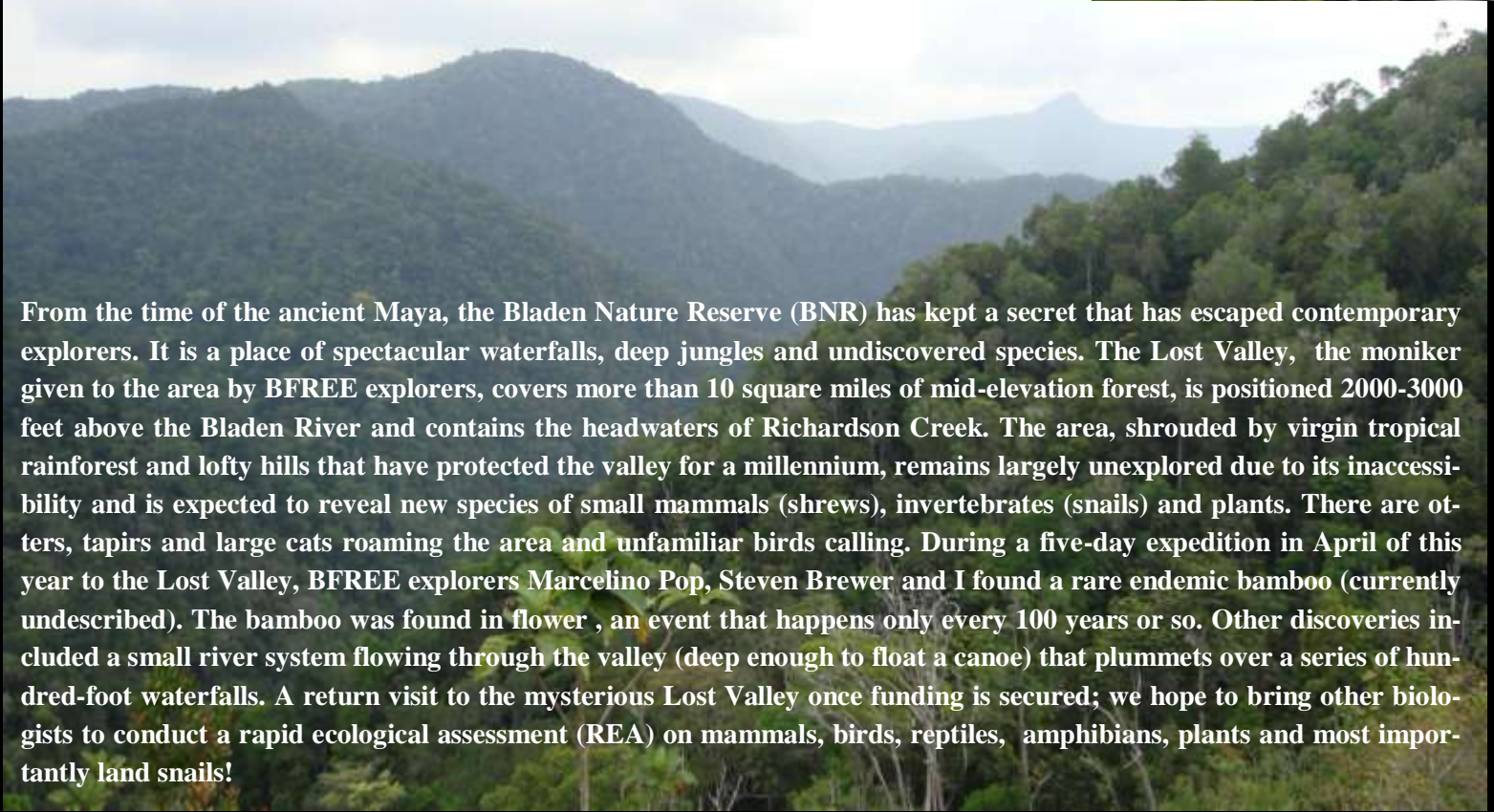
Richard (shown here with BFREE Avian Team Member Liberato Pop) went to great lengths, climbing treacherous terrain to film both the adults and juvenile Harpy eagles and the BFREE Avian Team as they went about their important research work.

# The Lost Valley, Bladen Nature Reserve, Belize

By Dan Dourson



orchid



From the time of the ancient Maya, the Bladen Nature Reserve (BNR) has kept a secret that has escaped contemporary explorers. It is a place of spectacular waterfalls, deep jungles and undiscovered species. The Lost Valley, the moniker given to the area by BFREE explorers, covers more than 10 square miles of mid-elevation forest, is positioned 2000-3000 feet above the Bladen River and contains the headwaters of Richardson Creek. The area, shrouded by virgin tropical rainforest and lofty hills that have protected the valley for a millennium, remains largely unexplored due to its inaccessibility and is expected to reveal new species of small mammals (shrews), invertebrates (snails) and plants. There are otters, tapirs and large cats roaming the area and unfamiliar birds calling. During a five-day expedition in April of this year to the Lost Valley, BFREE explorers Marcelino Pop, Steven Brewer and I found a rare endemic bamboo (currently undescribed). The bamboo was found in flower, an event that happens only every 100 years or so. Other discoveries included a small river system flowing through the valley (deep enough to float a canoe) that plummets over a series of hundred-foot waterfalls. A return visit to the mysterious Lost Valley once funding is secured; we hope to bring other biologists to conduct a rapid ecological assessment (REA) on mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, plants and most importantly land snails!



A rare bamboo in flower



Marcelino

This is what happens after 5 days in the jungle!





# Creature Feature

By **Dan Dourson, Resident Biologist**

The magnificent king vulture



## Large Dynastine Scarab Beetles of the Maya Mountains

Among the largest insects in the world, beetles in the subfamily Dynastinae include such giants as *Dynastes hercules* which can grow to over 15 centimeters (6-7 inches) in length. There are roughly 800 species recorded from the New World, most occurring in tropical rain forests. The subfamily contains many species displaying remarkable sexual dimorphism, the males generally having horns and protuberances on their head and pronotum. These features are used in battle to defend small individual, reproductive, and feeding territories (Hogue 1985). The massive larva feed on rotting wood and pith of various trees including palms and may act as significant nutrient recyclers (Ratcliffe 2003), and several species may be indicative of old growth forests. Research has also shown that scarab beetle (like dung beetles) assemblages can help predict areas of endemism (Schuster and Cano 2006).



Life-size

A male (top) and female (bottom) *Megasoma elephas*, clearly showing the sexual dimorphism between the two.

Brett Ratcliffe



*Dynastes hercules*

(photo by Johnnie Chong)

One of the top competitors for the largest bug on earth, the Hercules beetle, *Dynastes hercules*, (above photo) can reach nearly 7 inches in length. Right image shows the enlarged horn (top) and shorter curving protuberance horn (bottom). The dense setae (hairs) on the underside of the horn are thought to provide a grip on slippery surfaces and are used when males battle for dominance (pers. comm. Ratcliffe 2011). The horns of these large beetles are believed by some indigenous people to act as an aphrodisiac, however there is no scientific basis supporting this claim. Some also believe that the beetles are capable of cutting limbs off of trees using their enlarged horns as saws, a false but interesting story.



Rene Limoges

*Dynastes hercules*



*Megasoma elephas*



*Enema endymion*



*Spodistes mniszehi*



*Strategus fegurtha*

For their size, members of this family are the strongest animals on earth, a number of species capable of lifting 850 times their own body weight, the equivalent of a human lifting over 60 tons. Hogue (1985) reported that a Hercules beetle he kept in a bird cage would escape at will by simply prying apart the steel bars! A comprehensive biodiversity inventory of the Dynastinae of Belize including Mexico and Guatemala is currently in preparation (Ratcliffe and Cave 2008). (Four beetle photos here by James Kitson)

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT

By Judy Dourson

## MARCELINO POP

Living in the jungle, six miles from the nearest paved road, 25 minutes from the nearest town, and out of cell phone service is **not everyone's idea of an optimum workplace.** Many who aspire to work at BFREE find these conditions to be too much; it's a commitment only a few are willing to make.

Marcelino Pop, our featured staff member, has gone to great lengths to combine family and career during the five years he has been employed at BFREE. During the week, he lives in staff housing on BFREE's campus and on the weekends he returns to his wife and children in the Kek'chi Maya village of Golden Stream. In the summer, when BFREE closes from late July till September, Marcelino often brings his family back to BFREE in order to get quality time with them. In fact, they have being stranded for a few days as the waters of the Bladen River spilled over its banks and he has some harrowing stories!

Marcelino is without a doubt one of the most dedicated staff members to work at BFREE. Always willing to help out at a moment's notice, he is someone you can always count on! When Dan and I first came to BFREE in 2006, he was shy and reserved...a man of few words. Through the years, he has grown into a confident young man revealing a fun-loving, prankster personality. If a practical joke is in the works, you can bet Marcelino (along with Dan or Jacob) has something to do with it! He makes living and working at BFREE a lot of fun!

In addition to having a wry sense of humor, Marcelino is accomplished carpenter. Under the direction of Jacob Marlin, BFREE's director (an accomplished carpenter and builder as well), Marcelino has surpassed his mentor and gone on to design and build amazing furniture and structures at BFREE. His latest buildings include the completion of Steven Brewer's private residence (also known as the Botany House) with help from his brother Thomas, BFREE's Rainforest Science Cooperative Science Lab and the remodeling of the BFREE dining room. A dining table with tree trunks for legs is but one of many unique pieces of furniture found throughout BFREE that have been created by Marcelino.

As busy as he has been with all the construction at BFREE, Marcelino still manages to find time to oversee and maintain our solar systems, water systems and other general maintenance with the help of an assistant.

So next time you are at BFREE enjoying the comforts of the dining room, the lights powered by solar, or laughing at a practical joke, you can thank our dedicated employee, Marcelino!





# The Rainforest is Our Classroom!

Judy Dourson, Director of Educational Programs

## Returning Partners Breathe New Life Into Field Courses

Variety is the spice of life and BFREE was brimming with variety this past field season even as it welcomed four previous educational partners back to Belize. Familiar faces brought fresh ideas and creative topics making my job as Director of Educational Programs anything but tedious!

January welcomed the return of venerable partner, **Sterling College of Vermont**. New co-instructor Dr. Charlotte Rosendahl, marine ecologist, joined instructor Farley Brown to teach “Tropical Ecosystems” with an emphasis on expanding and continuing the watershed research previously conducted by Farley. Students designed mini-research projects both at BFREE and at Hunting Caye Marine Reserve in the Sapodilla Cayes. Through the outstanding instruction and leadership of Farley and Charlotte, students developed a strong understanding of the connectivity between the headwaters of the Bladen and the Belize Barrier Reef. We look forward to their return in 2013!

**University of North Carolina at Wilmington** returned to Belize in March after a two-year hiatus, with a new interdisciplinary, innovative course combining art, architecture and avian environments. Dr. James Rotenberg and Dr. Vibeke Olsen were co-instructors of the course titled *Preservation of Mayan Architecture and Avian Environments*. Participants in the course were from a variety of disciplines with biology students studying alongside art history and architecture students. This course crossed other barriers by opening participation to individuals of the Wilmington community. The course included visits to numerous Mayan archaeological sites throughout Belize and western Guatemala. At each site, biology students focused on documenting bird species found there, as well as other animal species. Art history students focused on the levels of preservation and restoration at each site and comparing the period through examination of the art and architecture. This cornucopia of ages, interests, and individual challenges produced great rewards and made this class a resounding success!



Above: Caitlin Walsh (UNCW) handles her first tarantula. Top Right: Temple at Tikal. Top Left: Dr. Rotenberg (UNCW) bird watching with students. Bottom right: Dr. Olsen (UNCW) with students atop a temple at Tikal.

Dr. Elaine Szymkowiak, along with instructor Chris Tanner of **St. Mary's College in Maryland**, returned to BFREE in March for 5 days of Tropical Ecosystems studies. This year's course was facilitated by BFREE Staff Member Martha Cholum, local Belizean from Trio Village, who proved to be an excellent guide. Students reveled in the plant and animal diversity at BFREE, hiking the trails, climbing the tower and netting for birds and bats with BFREE researchers, making this course a resounding success once again. While St. Mary's was at BFREE, Martha shared with Dr. Szymkowiak her dream of developing a Culture Night and before the end of the season, with the financial support of St. Mary's College, BFREE staff members were able to purchase fabric to make indigenous costumes and a CD of traditional Kek'chi music now used as they perform skits and dance. Culture Night is now included in all of our programs, complete with local Mayan food, dress, and dance! Thanks to St. Mary's College for facilitating a new educational experience that will be part of future courses. *(Pictured right: Solana, Martha and Maya in full Mayan regalia).*



March was a busy month for BFREE as we welcomed yet another field course alumnus, **Lincoln Memorial University's** interdisciplinary course, *Art and Ecology*. Professors Elissa Graff and Jessica Evans refined their 2010 course by revising the itinerary to include a visit to Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary and Lamanai, as well as two service projects. Two returning students developed lessons on conservation and ecology topics that were taught to children in the village of San Miguel during the homestay portion of the course. Whitney Gibson taught students in Standard 1 the difference between rainforests of Belize and the temperate forest of eastern Tennessee through songs and art. Kelly Scharffbillig exposed students in Standard 5 to the impacts and environmental disaster of the introduction of the lionfish to Belize's barrier reef. A second service project was conducted on Hunting Caye as students participated in a beach clean-up and subsequent impromptu art project. This innovative course will be featured in a manuscript written by Elissa and Jessica entitled "Experiential Learning-Merging Art with Biology" in International Journal of Social Sciences next year.



Natalie Campbell (LMU) talks to students in San Miguel.



LMU study at the BFREE lagoon



Elissa Graff (L) & Jessica Evans (R) hike on the BFREE entrance road.

Dr. Maarten Vonhof of **Western Michigan University**, and graduate assistant Michael Bulchalski returned to BFREE in July of this year to lead another exceptional *Tropical Biology* field course. The WMU course is a perfect example of how to engage students in the basics of research as students observe, question, develop hypotheses and then set about testing those hypotheses in the tropical rainforest setting. The challenge of the rains in July proved to be worth the



Logan measures a bat wing to determine species.

soggy shoes as the wildlife sightings were abundant...including the rare daytime sighting of a mother margay and her two babies in a tree near the cacao! One student, Logan Rowe, was so motivated to work with bats, he got the necessary vaccinations prior to arrival so he could work with Maarten and Michael (both bat biologists) to net bats while at BFREE.



Jake "tubes" a fer-de-lance for WMU students



## BFREE Welcomes University of Belize Wildlife Biology Students

In keeping with our mission to promote conservation of the Bladen Nature Reserve, BFREE hosted 50 **University of Belize** wildlife students in early May for a three-day intensive workshop on field survey techniques. Instructors Dr. Santos Chicas and Pio Saqui teamed up with BFREE researchers and scientists along with volunteers from Ya'axché Conservation Trust (co-managers of the Bladen Nature Reserve) to present the field experience. Friendly competition among group leaders made the event even more fun! Omar Sierra, a local volunteer from Placencia, took students to the Bladen River to study macroinvertebrates. Gail Stott, YCT botanist, used a collecting pole to teach about plant survey techniques while Dan Dourson, BFREE's resident biologist, took his group to Forest Hill to collect and catalogue land snails, proclaiming "Snails Rule!" Jacob Marlin, BFREE Executive Director, shared his passion for reptiles and amphibians, taking his group snake and frog hunting while Maartin Hofman, YCT mammalogist, netted bats by night and trapped small mammals by day. William Garcia, BFREE's Lead Avian Technician, wowed the Avian group mist-netting and banding some of Belize's most stunning bird species

and teaching the group about data collection. Just feeding a group this size was a logistical feat for BFREE's kitchen staff, but in true BFREE style, everything went off without a hitch. These future Belizean biologists were able to apply knowledge gained in the classroom, making this a productive, learning experience!



## New Field Courses Join the BFREE Family

**Emory and Henry College** (a member of the Appalachian College Association, which encompasses 35 private educational institutions across five states in Appalachia) joined seven other ACA schools to collaborate with BFREE in the development and implementation of yet another unique, immersion field course for university students this May. Dr.

Laura Hainsworth and Dr. Ed Davis, co-instructors for the course, developed a biology course, "Belize: Environment and Sustainability" that looked at the relatively intact environments in Belize and the challenges facing the country as it further develops as an ecotourist destination. While this course was in progress, our dining room was in the middle of an extreme makeover (getting a new thatched roof). Students and teachers took time out of their study schedule to volunteer to help carry bay leaf for the remodeled dining room roof (pictured right). Thanks EH! Emory and Henry students also got an extra peek into "Hollywood" when they were met at the airport by the cameras of Richard and Carol Foster, who were filming BFREE educational programs in action. The Fosters followed the group, recording research projects as well as the fun. When the BFREE educational film is released, you might want to get an autograph from an Emory and Henry student!!



## Wildland Studies

Dr. Colin Young, native Belizean and Program Director of the National Protected Areas Policy Secretariat in the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, served as instructor for a unique summer course, open to students from across the USA and accredited by California State University at Monterey, from late June to early August. Colin and his students joined BFREE for five days in July for the rainforest field research portion of the course. Similar in style to the Western Michigan University field course also conducted in July, students carried out mini-research projects during their time at BFREE. These two July courses represent the pinnacle in preparing biology students for life in the world of biology as they observe, ask questions, read and research, then conduct experiments to test their hypotheses. BFREE Director of Educational Programs Judy Dourson, as well as Executive Director Jacob Marlin, were on hand to assist. Dr. Young is an outstanding instructor whose early years were spent near Bermudian Landing where his father, Fallet Young, helped develop the Community Baboon Sanctuary in Belize, a community-based conservation success. This early experience set the stage for his future work in conservation. Students who participated in this course were the recipients of Dr. Young's knowledge and experiences in Belize. For more information about Wildlands Studies go to [www.wildlandsstudies.com/belize.html](http://www.wildlandsstudies.com/belize.html).



Dr. Colin Young



Wildlands Studies participants cross the swollen Bladen River after a long hike on a muddy road!



Invertebrate research project...Sifting snails and bugs!



This photo seems to say it all.....field courses with BFREE make you want to jump for JOY! (UNCW students at Xunantunich)

## A Series of Fortunate Events Brings Eastern Kentucky University to BFREE!

By Judy Dourson

A series of fortunate events made one of my dreams a reality. Throughout my career as an educator, my goal has been to open the world of possibilities to students from eastern Kentucky through outstanding educational experiences. The dream became a reality this spring when BFREE hosted and facilitated a Tropical Ecology field course from Eastern Kentucky University (EKU). And as with many things in life, coincidences and downright luck played an important role in this dream since I am an alumna of EKU!



It all began with a chance encounter with Dr. Nick Santangelo, assistant professor of biology at EKU, in the Red River Gorge of Kentucky in the fall of 2009. Nick and I discovered we had a mutual friend, Dr. Christiane Meyer Healy, who conducted her PhD research at BFREE. What a small world! Christiane did such a great sell job on the virtues of BFREE, it was not hard to convince Nick to bring students to Belize and BFREE.

So in March of this year, I met Dr. Santangelo and his tropical biology students at the International Airport in Belize City. And in another twist of fate, BFREE's Bat Researchers, Mark Gumbert, Price Sewell and Jeff Hawkins (all EKU alumni) of Copperhead Consulting (located in the same town as EKU) arrived for their annual research trip, turning BFREE into "My Old Kentucky Home" in the rainforest!

When research projects and field courses converge at BFREE, the resulting integration enhances both the educational experience and the research. The Copperhead Crew (aka "Bat Guys") were there to continue documenting the numerous species of bats that occur around BFREE, as well as several target species including the CITES listed Van Gelder's bat and the false wooly vampire bat (the second largest bat in Belize). Along with the Bat Guys, BFREE Bird Researchers, Emily McKinnon and her husband Kevin Fraser, of **York University** in Canada were conducting research on the neotropical bird, the woodthrush. The two research projects intersected in an impromptu collaboration when the bat crew captured a false wooly vampire bat (a known predator of birds) while mist-netting. Emily and Kevin were keen to know if this large bat included the woodthrush in its diet. So, in what can only be described as the, "perfect educational opportunity", several EKU students armed with transceivers traipsed through the jungle in search of radio-tagged bats! Dedication and enthusiasm for the project led to employment as summer field technicians with Copperhead Consulting for EKU students Erin Watts and Theresa Wetzel. You just never know what opportunities will present themselves at BFREE!

As with other groups, EKU students included a homestay in the Mayan village of San Felipe and chocolate-making with Juan and Abelina Cho as the cultural part of their course. The inaugural course finished with a bang on the Sapodilla Cayes with another stroke of good luck. The normally deserted (except for the Coast Guard) island turned into a rocking place as the Coast Guard played host to Belize's Defense Minister. Students were able to rub elbows with a leading government official, sing a bit of Karaoke and play dominos with the Coast Guard in addition to studying the amazing animal life of the Belize Barrier Reef. It was icing on a perfect cake!



## RESEARCH RAMBLINGS...Migratory Bird Territory Study at BFREE



My name is Ross Kresnik, and I am an MSc student in ecology and evolution in the department of biology at York University, Ontario, Canada. For the past 2 years, I have performed a research project in what I consider one of the few remaining and truly breath taking natural ecosystems in Central America at Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education. This has been a very different experience for me given that much of my previous work in ornithology had occurred in Ontario, Pennsylvania, and Maui. My project investigates the factors that enable migratory birds to acquire territory during the non-breeding season. Factors may include breeding origin, parasite prevalence, body condition, and age/sex. The backdrop of my study is a remote rainforest in southern Belize where I work with a team of local avian technicians and where I am specifically studying the wintering ecology of the Ovenbird, a small migratory warbler. Upon arriving at BFREE last year, I was happily surprised to meet a group of local Belizeans dedicated to conservation and highly trained in a variety of avian techniques. My new birding

friends here at BFREE have not only been a pleasure to work with but they also greatly enhanced my ability to perform a high quality research project. Much of my research involves examining several aspects of territorial patterns in the Ovenbird. I am able to do this using very small radio-transmitters that allow me to track a bird over a 2-3 month period. Given that this was my first experience performing research in a dense jungle, I quickly learned from the avian technicians the benefits of a machete (and how to properly use it) while performing this tracking-based research. I also learned a great deal about the local flora and fauna of Belize from my assistants, which for a wildlife researcher is incredibly exciting! BFREE offers a unique opportunity for a scientist to study organisms in a natural setting, and despite the occasional run-in with a not so friendly tapir, or stumbling upon the bright red, yellow, and black of a coral snake, it has become a home away from home. I encourage anyone with a passion for the outdoors to visit this beautiful research and educational centre in the heart of the Maya Mountains.

## INTRODUCING BFREE'S NEWEST TEAM MEMBER....Heather Barrett

When I joined BFREE as the Director of Organizational Development on September 1st of this year by no means was that the beginning of my interest or personal investment in BFREE and its mission. In 2009, I first traveled to Belize with my partner, James, where we celebrated the New Year in the rainforest with the Marlin family, the Doursons, other BFREE staff, several researchers and a group of 11 undergraduate students from a small university in Kentucky.

My memories of that trip are in my encapsulated images of the students. For most, it was their maiden voyage out of the U.S. and for some, the first time traveling outside their home state. Every experience was new and provoked a reaction; the landscape, the biodiversity, the night hikes, the observation tower, even the outhouses and solar showers played a role – all at once stimulating and overwhelming. Giggles and stories late into the night in the bunkhouse reflected the pure joy that freedom and exploration can create. I left with a strong sense of BFREE's ability to inspire and educate by providing access and opportunity in a truly wild setting that felt amazingly safe and even nurturing. I knew that I wanted to be a part of an organization that could offer something so unique, even if only in a small way.



Over the past two years, I've followed the happenings of BFREE through updates from the Marlins and others during social gatherings. Although I wanted to help, I wasn't sure how to contribute other than the occasional financial donation. Then, in early 2011, Jacob Marlin, BFREE's Executive Director, approached me to ask for advice about hiring a new employee. After many discussions and months of planning, it was decided that I would be that person.

My professional experience includes developing and managing grant and state-funded programs both at the University of Florida and at Tulane University. Prior to that, I spent eight years working with First Union National Bank in North Carolina, while putting myself through college and paying back the associated loans. As an undergraduate, I studied fine arts with a concentration in photography, and as a graduate student, I focused my efforts on museum administration and

non-profit management. A creative and curious person by nature I am also very strategic and organized. Over the years I have tried not to limit my career choices to one area of expertise, focusing instead on refining key interpersonal, administrative and business skills that cross all disciplines. This has allowed me to explore my interests working as a consultant and volunteering in a variety of organizations both for-profit and non-profit including Elderhostel, Earth Bound, Big Brothers/ Big Sisters, Rwanda Sustainable Families and New Orleans' Job Corps.

My goals for BFREE are to increase the operating capacity and raise awareness of our efforts and progress. We plan to do this, in large part, by initiating collaborations between BFREE and community partners throughout the United States and Belize; by identifying new members for our Board of Directors and Advisory Committees; by focused marketing and fundraising including a membership drive; and by creating new job, volunteer and internship positions both in Belize and in Gainesville. In strengthening our infrastructure and our community partnerships, BFREE will be better positioned to increase our efforts and, hopefully, our impact. I'm thrilled to be on board and look forward to meeting other friends and supporters of BFREE!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Lubee Bat Festival

**October 29, 2011**

BFREE staff will attend this event to promote BFREE and its research efforts including the recent bat research by Copperhead Consulting and Biodiversity Research Institute in the past few years.

### Membership and Capital Campaign

**November 1-30, 2011**

Coming in November....BFREE's First Annual Membership and Capital Campaign! We cordially invite you to become a member of our organization as we further our efforts to preserve and protect the rainforest by providing unparalleled environmental education, research initiatives, conservation efforts and community outreach activities. Funds raised during this campaign will be used to build capacity for BFREE through much-needed job creation, facilities and road improvements and upgrades including some new construction increasing our ability to serve. Your involvement throughout the years is greatly appreciated and with continued support, we will accomplish these goals.

### Dr. Ron Caldwell and Crew

**Dec. 11-23, 2011**

Lincoln Memorial University Professor Dr. Ron Caldwell, along with undergraduate research student Sara Collins will be in Belize and at BFREE to continue their research on land snails. Joining them for his first visit to Belize will be Professor John Hoellman, whose research interest is crayfishes. This is his baseline trip for further study.

### Otterbein College

**January 12-21, 2012**

Otterbein College will be returning to Belize and BFREE for a newly revised course with Dr. Halard Lescinsky and professor Dr. Michelle Acker. The course combines ecology and psychology. The group will spend time at BFREE, in the Mayan village of San Felipe and in a Garifuna village, Barranco.

## BECOME A MEMBER OF BFREE!

### Membership categories

Student: \$25

Individual: \$50

Institution: \$100



### Charitable Contributions

Join BFREE in its effort to promote conservation, research, unparalleled environmental education, and sustainable livelihood strengthening.

### Red-Eyed Tree Frog

\$0-\$99

### Howler Monkey

\$100-\$250

### Fruit-eating Bat

\$251-\$499

### Scarlet Macaw

\$500-\$999

### Jaguar

\$1000-\$2499

### Harpy Eagle

\$2500+



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Gainesville, FL 32607

Your donation can be made online through PayPal at [www.bfreebz.org](http://www.bfreebz.org)

We kindly thank you for your support!