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Beautiful Belize
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FREE

| DECEMBER 2015 | VOL. 03 # 10 |



#YOLO - San Pedro's Ultimate Party Boat

~ Sargassum: the golden rainforest of the sea ~ Keeping Belize Wild

~ Orange Walk's Taco Festival: Flavor Sensation!

Jump onboard the YOLO: San Pedro's Ultimate Party Boat!



Nothing says San Pedro quite like a day on a party boat with a group of your best buds. We're talking boozin' and cruisin' - and even snorkeling at famous reserves like Hol Chan Marine Reserve and Shark Ray Alley. For an unforgettable experience, look no further than the YOLO!

Janelle and I were invited on a day trip to Caye Caulker and you know we didn't have to be asked twice!



At 8AM we were at Fido's Dock along with 34 other passengers and the crew booked for that day. Manager Kevin and the rest of the friendly crew greeted us with big smiles! Let's NOT beat around the bush, the first thing that caught my eye was the fully stocked bar! I mean they had everything from premium vodkas, tequila, rums, beers, juices, sodas, wines and
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Jump onboard the YOLO

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fresh juices. The cocktail menu, with a series of signature drinks made to order, sure caught my eye!

After all passengers were on-board, Kevin gave us a briefing on what the day had in store: our first snorkel stop would be at Hol Chan Marine Reserve, followed by Shark Ray Alley. Snorkelers were advised not to consume alcoholic beverages, but the rest of us? Well, drink as much as your little liver desires.

While the swimmers got acquainted with the underwater world, we ordered up our first round of drinks, (Traveller's Rum, of course) Drinks in hand, soca music pumping, it was easy to slip into the party mood. Needless to



say after the first couple rounds, there was plenty of selfie-taking and newly found friendships! You know what they say, *"the best friendships are built on rum?!"* (Or was it trust?) Hmmm. Either way everyone was loving the start of this day.

And, we loved it even more when the crew laid out a sumptuous buffet! On the menu: French toast, ham quiches, fresh tomato and cabbage slaw, tender stewed chicken breast strips and curry

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Belizean Arts Gallery

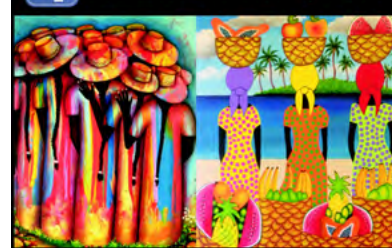
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Jump onboard the YOLO

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potato hash. I'm typically not a big eater on board a boat, but this meal had me going back for seconds.

We finished in perfect time to dock at Caye Caulker. We had two hours to "Go Slow" and explore the village. Some opted to shop around for souvenirs, but the rest of us headed to the Lazy Lizard at the Split. Just like no one turns down a trip on the YOLO, no one comes to Caye Caulker without having a glass or two of the famous Lizard Juice!

Some of our new friends rented paddle boards and took advantage of the beautiful turquoise waters of the Split, while others lay out on the dock to sunbathe. The others? Well, they continued the party!

Before we knew it, it was time to head back to the boat. I thought everyone would be pretty tired from a full day of partying, swimming and shopping but little did I know the party was just starting! An open bar meant the guys started ordering shots (after shots). Pretty soon, we were all doing the "Nae Nae" on deck! What a wild, fun day it was!

This is what a vacation to San Pedro is all about! For those looking to have a crazy blast, joining a group of like-minded friends on a boat all to yourselves is the perfect recipe for some F-U-N. After all, You Only Live Once!

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Keeping Belize Wild

Submitted by: Dr. Marisa Tellez

IUCN/SSC-Crocodile Specialist Group's Vice Regional Chair, Latin America



Belize is a melting pot of magnificent and unique creatures. From the graceful swimming manatees, to the beautiful aeronautical macaws to the majestic and powerful jaguar, Belize is home to some of the world's most prized wildlife. Yet, the rarity and beauty of Belize's animals can cause us to forget our manners, disrespecting the animals and their environment... and sometimes the livelihoods of

the local community. How so you may ask??? Well, here is a little story for example...

You are on vacation and absolutely excited to see some real wildlife! You ask people where you can see some animals, and some locals point you into the direction of a place where you can see various bird species and crocodiles. You are totally thrilled to see crocodiles; and you know from TV they love chicken! You



and your family head to the spot. You see Warning Signs and Private Property signs, but figure it has to be ok to go on the prop-

erty since this is a known spot for birds and crocodiles. As you head to the waters edge, the crocodiles



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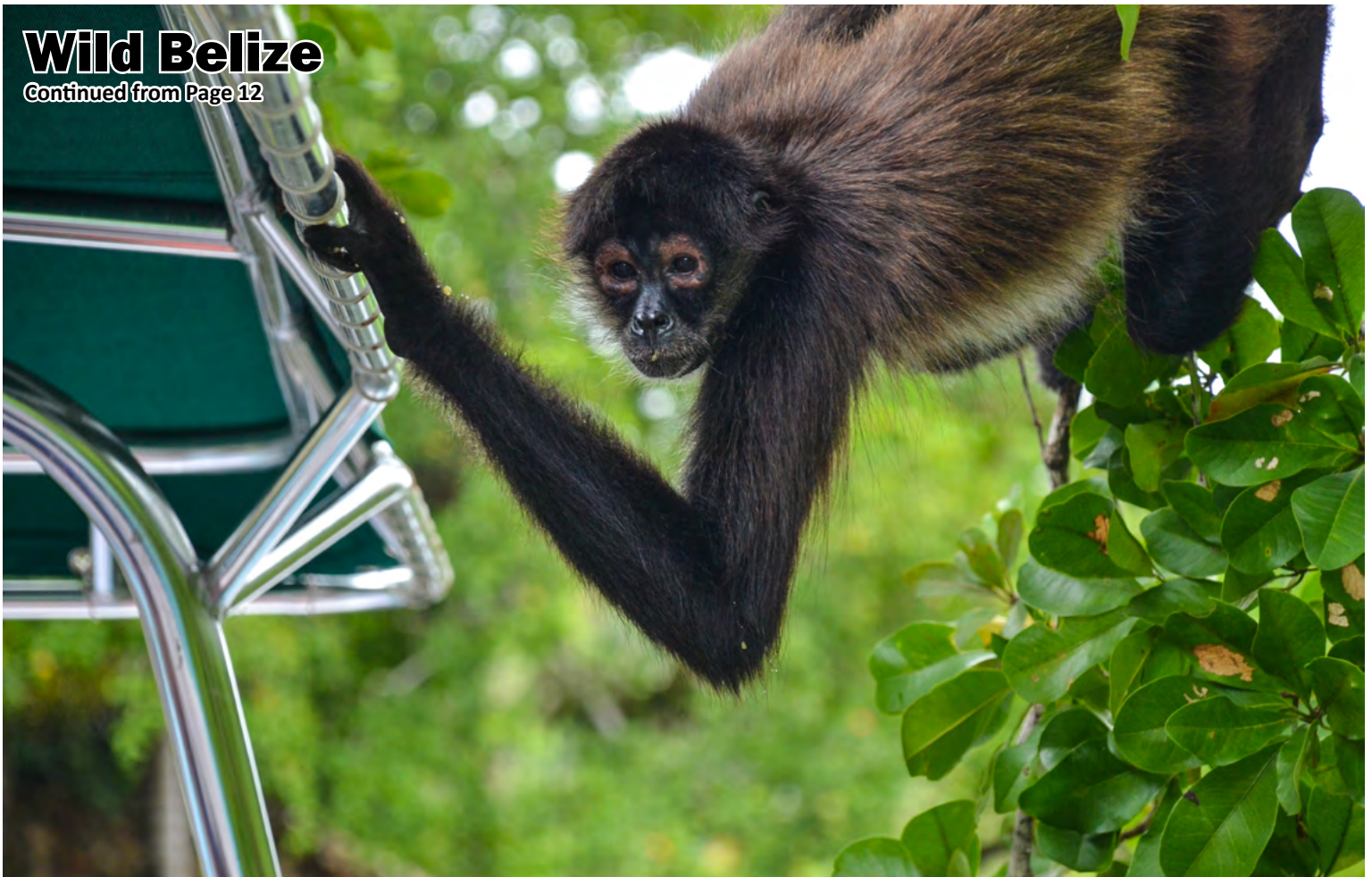


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Wild Belize

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seem curious. You are excited to get close and personal with these apex predators, and the crocs are getting closer, and closer, and THEN...

This may sound like a make believe story, but this is an all too familiar story with guests visiting our country. And, this scenario relates not just to crocs, but many other locations with various animals across the country. Tourists taking tourism into their own hands can be very dangerous, and many times, tourists do not realize they are breaking the law. For one, trespassing can make you cross paths with local authorities and who wants to pay a fine while on vacation? Secondly, approaching wild animals and fathoming the thought to feed them is illegal in Belize... as well as internationally. So feeding these animals is not only breaking national law, but also international law. In addition, feeding wild animals causes them to lose their fear of humans, which can result in aggression or make them more vulnerable to poachers.

Altering animal behavior can negatively affect the ecosystem, as well as cause issues for the local community.

Needless to say, your decisions good and bad can have a direct affect on the Belizean wildlife. So how can you respectfully enjoy the wildlife in Belize? Here is a simple Dos and Don'ts Guide to remind you how to ensure Belize's wildlife continues to be part of the Hidden Jewel of the Caribbean:

Dos	Don'ts
Do view wildlife from afar. Binoculars or using the zoom on cameras are a great way to see wildlife "up close" without disturbing nature.	Don't harass the wildlife. It's illegal and could cause aggressive behavior of the animal towards you or another person.
Do respect animals and their habitats. Keep quiet and enjoy viewing one of the magnificent creatures in Belize!	Don't litter, make loud noise, or tease and chase animals. Would you like someone to come into your home constantly trashing and bothering you???
Do see wildlife from a designated facility, or at one of the beautiful national parks or reserves!	Don't trespass on private property to see wildlife. Paying a hefty fine will probably put a damper on your vacation!
Do use a booklet or tour guide when visiting a park. It's a great way to make you aware and educate yourself on the local wildlife you may see, which will only enhance your experience!	Don't go off track on trails in parks as this puts you and the animals in danger, as well as disturbs the flora ecosystem.

Are you interested in learning more or helping out Belize's wildlife? You can contact one of the many wildlife organizations in the area while you are visiting to find out more. Or, if you have any concerns, you can contact the local authorities, or the Belize Forest Department (804 3280), or the Belize Wildlife Network (0800 822 8888). Together, we can ensure Belize stays wild for future generations!

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Sargassum Seaweed: the golden rainforest of the sea!

The Sargassum seaweed is upon us, in fact it's been here for quite a while now. And truthfully there's really no indication of just when the influx of seaweed will halt. We know that the smelly mounds are not the neatest beach accessory, and it certainly puts a damper on sunbathing and dips in our lovely Caribbean Sea. But you see the thing is, it's not just our little island town. In fact, much of the Caribbean region is being affected, including popular Mexican vacation destinations as well. Several times daily, mounds of the large masses wash ashore and settle on our beaches. While our hoteliers, town councilmen, and volunteer groups work hard to remove as much of the seaweed as possible. It's a natural phenomenon, so that means there really is no way to stop the course of nature.

That said, it's good to keep in mind that the Sargassum is NOT all bad! Yes, sometimes good things DO come in stinky packages, and while we may not like the stuff, it actually has tons of environmental benefits! We did a little research and discovered quite a few interesting facts and benefits of our resident aquatic weed. Check out a few below:

Our Sargassum comes from the Sargasso Sea, which is over two million square miles in size, and it is completely distinct from its surrounding waters both oceanographically and ecologically.

It supports roughly a million tons of plant life, which provides



habitat for over 100 species of fish and 140 species of invertebrates, and many of them occur nowhere else.

The Sargasso Sea level is three feet higher than the surrounding waters, and the waters are warmer and saltier.

It consumes carbon and produces oxygen in huge quantities. It has been called the Golden Floating Rainforest of the ocean.

Sargassum is a natural habitat for micro marine organisms that feed on larger sea creatures. It is a nursery for juvenile fish.

Juvenile turtles use the floating mats for feeding and protection.

Tuna and trigger fish along with several other species hunt and hide under the masses.

Seabirds feed on fish that develop habitats within and beneath the sargassum.

The Sargassum that washes up on the beach is a natural fertilizer that releases tons of organic carbon that benefit the environment and provides nutrients to our beaches.

The masses also create a new habitat for many organisms that feed from the weeds. These smaller organisms in turn feed plenty of

insects and invertebrates.

Sargassum can be used as organic landfill to expand surface areas of eroding beaches (Kudos Build a Beach volunteers!)

Although it is easy for both residents and travellers to view Sargassum as a nuisance, until local and regional research provides us (the Caribbean, not just Belize) with methods to effectively live with the pesky weed, (or the tides change) let us appreciate the many ecological benefits of our floating visitor.



Making the most of Sargasso seaweed, a fashion accessory perhaps?

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Orange Walk Tacos Festival: a celebration of culinary delights!



hundreds of years ago. Tacos in hand, we watched the thrilling game, positive that the Mayas of yesteryear would approve our snack choice!

I'm definitely looking forward to next year's festival. Orange Walk has the title of best tacos in Belize, and they certainly proved worthy of that label! The festival is traditionally held in November, so be sure to book the date when it's announced, and come hungry!

When I heard that there was going to be a Tacos Festival in Orange Walk Town, I was ready to get off the island in any possible way: via plane, boat or even kayak! I was prepared to jump on a bus or ride a bicycle up north to Orange Walk if I had to! We're talking Suga City Tacos! (Orange Walk is locally referred to as Suga City for their sugar cane production.) The north district is known for this culinary specialty; and finally, after only hearing about this festival, I actually could attend! I smiled the entire boat ride from Ambergris Caye to Belize City, and then on the bus to Orange Walk, excited to eat my body weight in tacos!



were indeed in 'Taco Land.' The smell of the spices, the hot handmade corn tortillas, fresh toppings...Oh man! I was in heaven. I didn't travel all the way there just to watch my diet, so you know I indulged in Suga City's best! Chicken, pork, sausage, fried, grilled, toasted, roasted, pibil, you name it, I tasted it. To my added delight, organizers even had a cultural presentation of the Maya ball game 'Pok-ta-pok'. Agile players showed how the game was played



This year was the fifth anniversary of the festival and it was held in fun style on Sunday, November 22nd at the Banquitas House of Culture in Orange Walk Town. The Banquitas House of Culture is nestled in a pleasant riverside park complete with amphitheater, underneath which the taco booths were spread out. To add to the perfection of the event, my hotel was mere feet away and perfect for when I needed to roll my stuffed self easily to my room!

People from all corners of Belize and even abroad gathered; ready for some fine eating! We

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