



A Natural History of Belize: Inside the Maya Forest (Corrie Herring Hooks)

By Samuel Bridgewater

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Belize's Chiquibul Forest is one of the largest remaining expanses of tropical moist forest in Central America. It forms part of what is popularly known as the Maya Forest. Battered by hurricanes over millions of years, occupied by the Maya for thousands of years, and logged for hundreds of years, this ecosystem has demonstrated its remarkable ecological resilience through its continued existence into the twenty-first century. Despite its history of disturbance, or maybe in part because of it, the Maya Forest is ranked as an important regional biodiversity hot spot and provides some of the last regional habitats for endangered species such as the jaguar, the scarlet macaw, Baird's tapir, and Morelet's crocodile.

A Natural History of Belize presents for the first time a detailed portrait of the habitats, biodiversity, and ecology of the Maya Forest, and Belize more broadly, in a format accessible to a popular audience. It is based in part on the research findings of scientists studying at Las Cuevas Research Station in the Chiquibul Forest. The book is unique in demystifying many of the big scientific debates related to rainforests. These include "Why are tropical forests so diverse?"; "How do flora and fauna evolve?"; and "How do species interact?" By focusing on the ecotourism paradise of Belize, this book illustrates how science has solved some of the riddles that once perplexed the likes of Charles Darwin, and also shows how it can assist us in managing our planet and forest resources wisely in the future.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Despite its history of disturbance, or maybe in part because of it, the Maya Forest is ranked as an important regional biodiversity hot spot and provides some of the last regional habitats for endangered species such as the jaguar, the scarlet macaw, Baird's tapir, and Morelet's crocodile...A good general introduction to the Chiquibul Forest of Belize." Ian Paulsen, GRRLSCIENTIST hosted by The Guardian, 15th January 2012

About the Author

Samuel Bridgewater is an Associate Researcher with the Natural History Museum, London, and the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. He was formerly Research Station Manager at Las Cuevas in Belize. He is a field botanist, ecologist, and ethnobotanist with more than twenty years' experience working in Brazil, Peru, and Belize. He has a particular interest in the links between plant use and culture, and coauthored *Flora Celtica*, a book celebrating the history and contemporary use of plants in Scotland. He currently divides his time between Wester Ross, Scotland, where he coordinates a landscape partnership initiative, and Belize, where he continues to conduct ecological research.

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