

Summer
2024

LONG-TERM TURTLE SURVEY IN THE JUNGLE

Belize, Central America



Aerial view of the BFREE Reserve.

Join the Belize Foundation for Research & Environmental Education (BFREE) and the Turtle Survival Alliance–North American Freshwater Turtle Research Group (TSA-NAFTRG) to participate in a long-term population monitoring project for freshwater and terrestrial turtle species located within BFREE's Privately Protected Area in southern Belize. The BFREE Privately Protected Area is a 1,153-acre reserve that adjoins the largest tract of rainforest north of the Amazon. It's an incredible hot spot for biodiversity where tapirs, howler monkeys, jaguars, and harpy eagles are often spotted and is the last stronghold for many endangered species.



Participants will be supporting researchers in the fourth annual survey of a 10-year monitoring project to provide basic demographic and population information. Turtles will be captured using various methods, including hand capture and baited traps, and will be given unique identification marks and injected with passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags for future identification. You'll be joined by herpetologists and experts in the field from both the US and Belize. From 2021-2023, the BFREE and TSA-NAFTRG Team marked, measured, and safely released 836 turtles. Turtles found included White-lipped Mud Turtle, Tabasco Mud Turtle, Scorpion Mud Turtle, Narrow-bridged Musk Turtle, Mexican Giant Musk Turtle, Central American Snapping Turtle, Furrowed Wood Turtle, and the Meso-American Slider—representing eight of Belize's nine freshwater turtles.



We look forward to you joining us in Belize for the July 2024 BFREE and TSA-NAFTRG Turtle Survey in the jungle!

DATES

- July 8 - July 18, 2024
- Participation is on a first-come first-serve basis.
- Participants are required to book their own transportation to BFREE, including international airfare to the Philip Goldson International Airport (BZE) and domestic airfare to Savannah (INB). *Travel itinerary TBD.*



ITINERARY

- **Day One:** Arrive at BZE by 1:30 PM, fly to INB (*flight schedule TBD*). Transportation provided from INB to the BFREE Field Station. Settle into rooms and unpack before dinner.
- **Day Two:** Tour the BFREE Facility and familiarize yourself with the various trails and facilities. Free time to relax and swim in the crystal-clear water of the Bladen River or explore one of BFREE's many conservation initiatives, including the Hicatee Conservation & Research Center (HCRC), a captive breeding facility for the critically endangered Central American River Turtle (*Dermatemys mawii*) locally known in Belize as the Hicatee.
- **Day Three - Nine:** Turtle surveys throughout BFREE's 1,153-acre private reserve. *Note: Surveys are primarily performed by foot and through trapping.*
- **Day 10:** Breakfast followed by hike out of BFREE and transfer to Hokey Pokey water taxi for 20 minute boat ride to Placencia. Overnight in Placencia hotel.
- **Day 11:** Taxi to airstrip for a domestic flight back to BZE.

REQUIREMENTS

- Able to hike 7+ miles a day in 90-degree weather
- with 100% humidity.
Able to lift and carry 40 lbs. for periods of time.
Willingness to get dirty and to put long days in.
- It is *recommended* that participants be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

INFORMATION

Turtle Survival Alliance and Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education will host an informational virtual meeting in 2024 for all confirmed Participants prior to survey commencement.

Meeting Date: TBA

COSTS

The costs are \$1,750 per participant.

Cost Includes:

- Double occupancy in the Hammock, which features an open-air veranda connecting six private rooms and double occupancy at a beach hotel in Placencia.
- Linens, pillows, and blankets provided.
- Three chef-prepared meals per day.
- Guided night hikes and tours of BFREE's conservation programs
- Round-trip 4x4 transportation from Savannah Airport (INB) to the BFREE Field Station and back on the day of departure.
- Fees paid to this program not only support your participation in critical turtle research for Belize but also have a direct impact on the country's next generation of conservation leaders. Funding from this TSA-NAFTRG-BFREE research program helps to support Belizean participation in scientific research at BFREE.
- Note: Meals on Day 10 in Placencia are not included in program costs.

INQUIRE

Space is limited for this incredible opportunity; make your commitment today to secure your spot. To qualify for this program, read the Booking Terms and Conditions on the next page.

CONTACT

To reserve your spot or for questions, please contact Eric Munscher at emunscher@turtlesurvival.org **and** Bridget Nelson at bnelson@bfreebz.org



BOOKING TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Participants must agree to all terms and conditions of booking before registering for this program. This program is coordinated by the Belize Foundation for Research & Environmental Education (BFREE).

Covered Costs.

Participation in the 2024 Turtle Survey at BFREE is **\$1,750 per person**. These covered costs per person include accommodations, meals, and guided tours of BFREE. Program Fees Do Not include the following: international airfare to BZE, roundtrip domestic airfare with Maya Island Air to Savannah (INB), soft drinks and beers, or gratuities/souvenirs—at your discretion.

Deposit and Final Payment.

A \$500 USD Non-Refundable initial deposit will secure your spot on the trip, or you may choose to pay in full. The remaining balance is due 60-days before the retreat start date. Failure to make payment by the applicable due date may forfeit your booking on the trip and be treated as a cancellation. If a booking is made less than 60-days before the trip start date, the full amount must be paid at the time of booking.

Payment Schedule.

The \$500 deposit is due for all participants by **Monday, April 1, 2024**. Final payment for Participants is due by **June 7, 2024**.

Cancellations.

Cancellations made by participants should include a formal refund request sent by email to bnelson@bfreebz.org. According to the outline below, approved refunds by BFREE will be returned to the participant.

- Refund requests more than 60-days before the program start date will receive a full refund minus the \$500 deposit.
- Refund requests more than 30-days before the program start date will receive a 50% refund minus the \$500 deposit.
- Refund requests less than 30-days before the program start date are non-refundable.
- Cancellations 30-days or less to the program start date due to events directly relating to COVID-19, specifically international travel restrictions and border closings, will receive a 50% refund minus the deposit.

BFREE is not liable for additional costs incurred due to cancellation, including flights, lodgings, activities, meals, etc. BFREE strongly recommends that all participants purchase travel insurance (medical, COVID-19 coverage, and trip cancellation) to protect you in case of any unforeseen emergencies. BFREE shall, in its sole discretion, have the right, upon written notice to the participant and without further liability, to terminate a program. Participants will be refunded following the Cancellation policy outlined above. BFREE is not liable for any loss or damage suffered by you, including but not limited to the loss of the Deposit and/or Full Payment, as a result of a Force Majeure Event and/or the cancellation of a Program due to a Force Majeure Event.

Travel to BFREE.

International flights should arrive at the Philip Goldson International Airport (BZE) no later than 1:30 PM on the first day of the program. On the program's final day, international departure flights should not depart BZE before noon.

COVID-19 Policy.

It is *recommended* that participants be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.