

BATWATCH Nicaragua II

January 4 to 16, 2013

Batwatch trips are a new concept in bat appreciation worldwide, whereby a small group of participants will spend time in one area, studying and identifying bats. These tours are designed to accomplish the following:

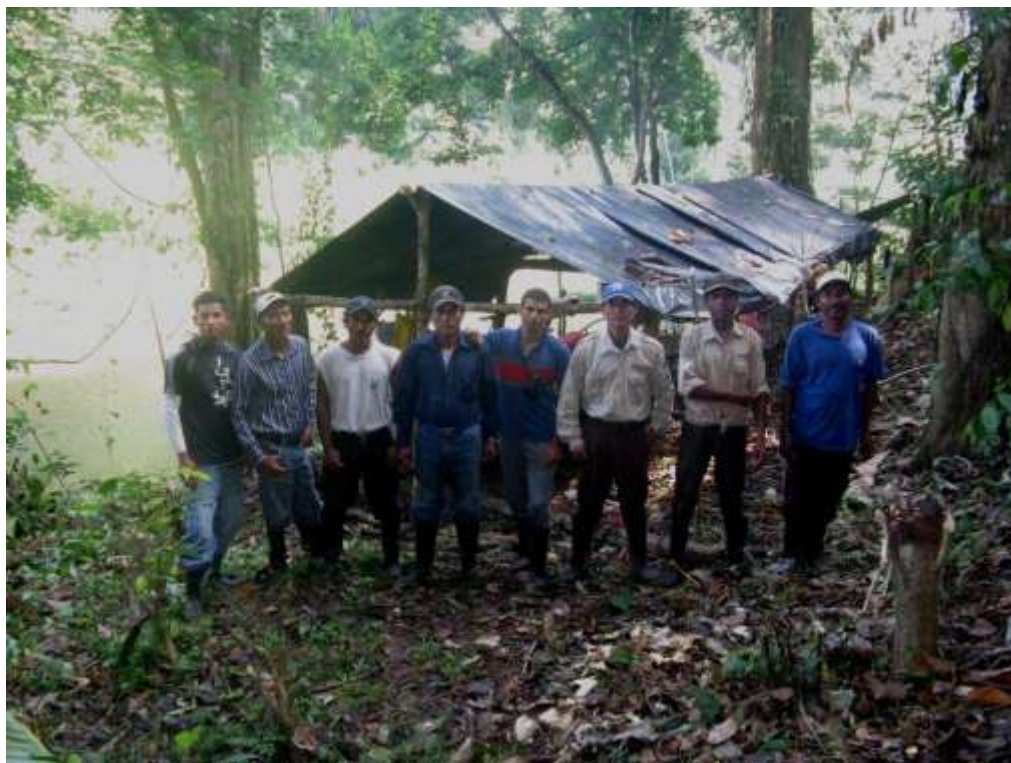
- Increase the knowledge of bats in a poorly known region, thus contributing to their conservation and the local awareness of bats.
- Bring in expertise and funds to national parks and to local bat biologists.
- Allow bat enthusiasts a chance to get to know a region and its bats through hands-on study including surveying for roosts, use of bat detectors and capture-release. Local bat biologists and international experts will be on-site providing information and lectures on bats.
- Based at a single locale, Batwatch trips are a relatively inexpensive way of learning more about bats worldwide.



Nicaragua has a high diversity of bats with over 100 species known, but there have been very few detailed studies of bats in the larger national parks. On our first **Batwatch Nicaragua** in **2011**, based at Refugio Bartola, we encountered 40 species, including new records for Nicaragua. We also gathered new data about several very poorly known bats, including **Smoky Bats**, *Cyttarops alecto*, shown above.

For **Batwatch Nicaragua II** we will be traveling to the largest and most remote national park, **Bosawas**, located in the north-central region of the country. This park has about 10,000 km² of forest with a very high botanical diversity and a very rich fauna. About 700 species of birds have been recorded here, including Harpy Eagle, Resplendent Quetzal, and Scarlet Macaw. Mammals are also diverse, and both Jaguar and Puma roam the forest. The bat fauna has been little studied, and local bat biologists are anxious to visit the region, but have been unable to do so for lack of funds. Traveling in the interior of Bosawas is only possible on foot or by boat. We will be entering deep into the reserve by boat, at the most accessible time of year, early dry season, when the high water levels should allow us good access. Our trip will enable Nicaraguan biologists including **Arnulfo Medina** the opportunity to enter the one region they have not yet explored. Together we will conduct an important initial survey of bats and other small mammals.

This trip is not a comfortable or easy journey and should not be undertaken by the faint-hearted. We will spend many hours traveling by boat, and we will need to bring our own hammock or small tent and sleeping gear. For some of our stay we will occupy basic dwellings, and at other times we will have a large tarp under which to hang our hammocks (shown below). We will be fed a diet of local food, primarily beans and rice. This will be cooked for us, but our camp areas will be primitive and lack basic amenities. We will bathe in streams and rivers. We can expect to spend long hours in the field by day and by night, locating bat roosts, setting nets and recording our data. Nonetheless, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to visit a truly remote area and make a substantial contribution to the biology and conservation of bats in Central America.



Batwatch Nicaragua II 2013

Daily Itinerary

January 4. We will meet in **Managua** at **Hotel Casa Naranja** (or similar). This is a small, comfortable hotel in very pleasant old colonial building with a tropical garden. All arriving flights will be met by Hotel Casa Naranja staff and you will be transferred to the hotel. We hope to be able to go to **Masaya Volcano** tonight to survey bats emerging from lava tubes. We will eat dinner in a local restaurant on our way back to town.

January 5. We leave early for the long but scenic drive to **Wiwili**. We head north on the main highway from Managua, branching off at Sebaco towards Jinotega. We'll be climbing into cloud forest and lower montane habitats. After passing a beautiful lake, Lago de Apanas, the road narrows and eventually becomes a dirt track, taking us to Wiwili, a small town with a frontier-like atmosphere, on the edge of Bosawas Natural Reserve. See

<http://www.flickrriver.com/places/Nicaragua/Nueva+Segovia/Wiwil%C3%AD/>

for images of the people and area. Some of our local staff will stay in Wiwili to arrange boats and gather supplies.



Bat-netters will press on to **Kilambé Massif Natural Reserve** where we will be able to set nets in secondary and mature forest around camp. This will be our first introduction to the wilderness in the area. The hostel here (shown on left) can only accommodate 6 people in a small dorm, so some will be staying in hammocks on the porch tonight.

*Overnight in Hospedaje
Kilambé*

January 6. Today we board boats for the trip into Bosawas, a two-day journey. We spend the morning traveling, arriving into **Peñas Blancas** in the afternoon. This is a small community with no road access. Here we will set nets in the secondary forest around the village and we should encounter a good range of bats.

Overnight in Peñas Blancas in basic dwellings

January 7. We have a long boat trip today, and we will be crossing some areas where the water may be shallow, although at this time of year we should be able to use the

motors throughout. We arrive at **Arangdak** in the late afternoon and set up our nets in the forest that surrounds us.

Overnight in Arangdak in basic dwellings



January 8-13. After breakfast we head to the first **Lakus River Station**, about 2 hours boat ride. This area, called **Supawas**, consists of dense primary forest with huge trees and an understory of palms. We will spend at least two nights surveying bats in this beautiful and pristine area.

We will also move about 5 minutes upriver to the second Lakus River Station called **Yapuwas**. Here the forest will be about a 10 minute walk from camp. This area differs in having bamboo, not palms, in the understory, with a mix of large and smaller trees. Here we could encounter a different array of bat species, adding to our list for the reserve.

Our days in this region will be spent roughly as follows:

After breakfast, we will divide into teams and set out into the forest in search of bat roosts, netting sites and anything of interest that we may encounter, be it a mixed flock of birds, a tree-frog, a den of a nocturnal mammal, or a beautiful plant. Most of our energy, however, will be concentrated on looking for **roosting bats** in hollow trees or

branches, under fallen logs, in tents of large leaves and the local palms, and under banks or in crevices. We should encounter various tent-making bats, and in mature forest we have a good chance of finding roosts of some of the large carnivorous bats such as *Vampyrum spectrum* or *Chrotopterus auritus*. We will also examine termite nests for *Lophostoma* species, and search out small gleaners in crevices and hollow logs.



After lunch we will have some free time to relax and make notes before we split up again into two or three teams to set up nets and traps at different locations in the forest. We should be able to set our nets and return for dinner before opening them at dusk, or we may choose to eat very late. Some nets will be set around prospective roost sites; high nets raised on rope will be set across a forest trail or clearing for **free-tailed bats**. Other nets may be positioned over water or even across the river using a canoe to navigate and check the net. Here we should catch **Greater Fishing Bats** (pale form shown above) and other species.

Different teams may choose to close their nets at different hours during the night, with some teams maintaining nets open throughout the night. We will rally at an appointed hour for a show and tell, so that all participants can see and learn about the bats captured each night. We will also take measurements, weight, and reproductive data that can be used by our local biologists in their reports of the bats of the region.

Five nights in primitive camps, with hammocks under a tarp

January 13. We start our journey back today, arriving at Arangdak in time to continue netting and bat searches tonight

Overnight in Arangdak in basic dwellings

January 14. Today we continue on to Peñas Blancas and once more we will set out at night in search of bats, for our last night of netting in the Bosawas area.

Overnight in Peñas Blancas in basic dwellings



January 15. Today we have a long travel day, returning by boat (style of motor boat for all travel is shown above) to WiWili and then by land to Jinotega, where we can enjoy a nice meal and a night in relative comfort in a hotel.

Overnight in hotel in Jinotega

January 16. We return to Managua in the late morning. Flights home can be arranged for after 12 noon today, or the following day (an extra charge for a hotel in Managua will be added if you are staying until January 17).

Tour Leaders and Assistants

Fiona Reid. Author of mammals of Central America and southeast Mexico, tour guide and leader of numerous nature tours and bat workshops worldwide

Arnulfo Medina. Nicaraguan bat biologist specialising in ecology of bats and small mammals and their use of corridors, coffee plantations and second growth.

Milton Salazar. One of Nicaragua's top biologists and expert on herps and other animals of the country

Local Guides. We will be accompanied by local residents at each site. They will be equipped to show us trails and tracks and also tell us about their lives in this wilderness.

BATWATCH NICARAGUA II

Cost per person: US \$ 2,150.00 from Managua, Nicaragua
Flights are not included in the cost of the tour.

A deposit of **US \$1,000.00** per person is required to reserve a space on this tour.
Please complete the attached reservation form and mail your check,
payable to **Fiona Reid**

TOUR COST INCLUDES:

Accommodation based on double occupancy in Managua and Jinotega
Very basic accommodation and camping in Bosawas.
Ground transportation and boat transfers
All meals from dinner on Jan 4 to breakfast on Jan 16
Park entrance fees and local guides
Activities listed in the itinerary
Tips to local guides, hotels and drivers
Services of tour leaders and local bat workers

TOUR COST DOES NOT INCLUDE:

Round-trip airfare from your home to Managua
Airport departure taxes
Alcoholic beverages, sodas, bottled water, and other bar drinks
Phone calls and items of a personal nature
Optional activities / travel insurance
Airport transfers if not travelling with group
Additional transportation required due to any emergency situation

THIS TOUR IS LIMITED TO 12 PARTICIPANTS
THE TOUR WILL OPERATE WITH A MINIMUM OF 8 PASSENGERS
(a small group of 8-9 will be charged an additional \$200 per person)

Cancellation Policy

In the event of a cancellation, you must notify Fiona Reid immediately and in writing. The tour price is quoted as a package. No partial refunds or credits will be given for services not used.

Cancellation fees will be charged per person as follows:

<u>Prior to Departure</u>	<u>Amount</u>
More than 120 days	\$100 administration fee
90 – 120 days	100% of deposit (\$1,000.00)
Less than 90 days	Full tour cost, unless we can resell your space

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Level of Difficulty – high

We will have long hours in uncomfortable boats. We will be walking on forest trails each day. These may be muddy and/or steep and on ground that is rough or uneven with tree roots and other obstacles. Some trails may be difficult and may be unsuitable for some clients, especially as they will be traversed at night after bat netting. Accommodations will be basic or non-existent and food will be very simple. To get maximum enjoyment out of this trip you will need to be self-sufficient, used to camping and “roughing it” and have a good level of fitness and stamina.

Travel Insurance

We strongly recommend that you purchase insurance to cover both trip cancellation and medical emergencies. It is important to get coverage for flight cancellation on medical grounds. We can suggest a suitable insurance company upon registration. If you have your own coverage, please be sure it includes a provision for emergency evacuation.

Flight Information for Nicaragua

We will notify you of the recommended group flights and itinerary for Fiona and other leaders when the tour has been confirmed as operating.

Please do not book your tickets until the trip has been confirmed as operating.

Travel Documents

You will require a passport for your trip. Please make sure that it is valid for six months after the date of your tour. It is advisable to take a photocopy of the information page of your passport and your air tickets, keep them in a separate part of your luggage and leave a copy with your contact person at home. In case of loss, this will make it easier to replace.

Meals

Food in Nicaragua is good, with staples of beans and rice, and fresh fruit, salads, and vegetables, as well as fish, chicken and beef. In rural areas, food is mainly beans and rice. Water is not drinkable in the areas we are visiting so we will use bottled water.

We will be stocking up with additional supplies in Wiwili, but I suggest you bring snacks

such as nuts, granola bars, energy bars and some hard candy (useful for gifts) from home. Bar drinks and sodas are not included in your tour costs.

Airport Departure Tax

Check with your airline for information. Departure taxes may be included in your ticket cost. Taxes, if applicable, are not included in the tour fees.

Health Requirements

For your protection, in the unlikely event of exposure to a tropical disease or health problem, please consult your physician for recommendations. We cannot prescribe specific medical precautions to be taken. The decision regarding which precautions to take must be made according to your judgment and on the advice of your physician and on information posted on the CDC website. There will be some mosquitoes and chiggers, so you will need insect repellent. We may also encounter large emergences of non-biting insects.

Tipping

Gratuities for hotel services, drivers, local guides and boatmen are included in the tour fee.

Smoking

Tour participants are not permitted to smoke in close quarters with the rest of the group. Smoking is not permitted on boat or bus excursions or on the trails.

Electricity and Internet

There will be little or no electricity or internet for most of this trip. Your own cell phone may pick up a signal at a limited number of sites during our travels.

Climate

The climate will be warm to very warm by day and slightly cooler at night. It is important to be prepared for showers or heavy rain at all times. Rubber boots and a raincoat or poncho (and possibly a small, folding umbrella) are definitely advised for this trip. More details about what to bring will be provided after you register.

Please Note:

1. The itinerary described in these notes is intended as an example only. In the event of weather changes, changes in airline schedules, logistical arrangements, or other problems, our leaders may make changes in the published itinerary.
2. The tour cost does not include extra expenses incurred because of weather and logistical delays, or delays of scheduled air arrivals.
3. This tour requires a minimum of 10 paying passengers. If the trip has fewer than 10 passengers, we will apply a small-group fee of \$200 per person, or we may cancel the tour.
4. If, while on tour, any personal limitations prevent you from fully participating in the advertised activities, thus impeding the progress of the trip or the enjoyment of others, we reserve the right to make the decision to withdraw you from the tour. In this case, you will be returned to the hotel in Managua at your own expense.