

A lively Eco-community in the Jungle

## BETTER IN BELIZE NEWSLETTER



### OUR FIRST QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER!

Welcome friends to our first Quarterly newsletter. The idea of this newsletter was created when I, Gene DeMarco found myself searching online or calling current owners to find out what was happening at BiB. Since I currently do not live at BiB, I found it hard to get up to date information on what was happening at BiB. I decided to dedicate some of my time to create and organize a newsletter. With the help of our current owners, residents, and visiting partners, I believe this newsletter will benefit many. I encourage everyone to participate simply by emailing me ([DeMarco.gene@yahoo.com](mailto:DeMarco.gene@yahoo.com)) or the HOA board at ([bibhoaboard@gmail.com](mailto:bibhoaboard@gmail.com)) with any current events, tips, information, or interesting facts so that I can include them in the newsletter.

### QUICK FACTS/ REMINDERS

- The HOA board is currently working on the HOA fees due for property owners for 2018. They are expected to be finalized soon.
- A reminder for owners to register for BiBowners.com if they have not already. There is a wealth of information that can be found there. This includes audio recordings of each monthly meeting, and other community documents. It also helps owners keep in touch with each other and make new friends!
- Belize is banning single use plastic items by 2019. Click here to learn more. <https://belize-travel-blog.chaacreek.com/2018/03/belize-plastic-free-future/>
- Anyone who wants to contribute to the Belize Scholarships can learn more in this newsletter.

The Immigration Headquarters has been relocated. You still turn off the highway at the Shell Station and take the first right, but instead of taking another right down the hill to the old building, continue on for a couple of blocks and the new headquarters is on the left next to a supermarket.

Belize Immigration has been experimenting with allowing people to extend their passports at border entry points, and some people last month were able to extend theirs at the Benque Border, which made the long trip to Belmopan unnecessary for them.

However, I was at Immigration in Belmopan yesterday (Feb 20) to extend my passport and was told that they are no longer processing passports at Belize entry points because, as of February 20, they haven't gotten all of the procedures worked out yet.

So the latest information (as of Feb 20) is that people at BIB should contact the Belmopan offices to set up an appointment. They still process walk-ins, but that could be a long wait and it is recommended that you contact them for an appointment.

Be sure you arrive on time. In the past I have encountered a wait of up to an hour or more before the appointment slot came open, but yesterday I was ten minutes late due to road construction and was scolded twice for being late.

After extending your passport, you should make an appointment for the next visit. The extension fee for people who have been here for less than a year is \$50BZ, but if you have been here for more than a year, the fee will be \$100BZ.

Since you must pay in advance, if you opt for a date two months hence, you will have to pay the two-month fee in advance, in cash, so take enough money.



Immigration office has relocated

## Some interesting websites below

<https://www.cahalpech.com/blog/10-belizean-dishes-every-traveler-to-belize-must-taste/>

<http://worldtravelbuzz.com/how-to-survive-belizean-rainforest/>

<https://www.belize.com/cayo>

## Quick facts in and around BiB:

Submitted by Sandy Smith



Having just come through a super long rainy season we are just beginning to crawl out from under our mildewed covers so to speak. Our forest trails have been well maintained and are terrific for short hiking excursions.



A nearby "convenience" store has opened up about 2 miles from us on hydro rd. Elizabeth runs the place, she is a super neat lady with excellent English skills. She sells basic necessities and it is so nice to pick up a few needed things close to home.

Scarlet macaws have been in the neighborhood. It is great to see them making a comeback in the area.



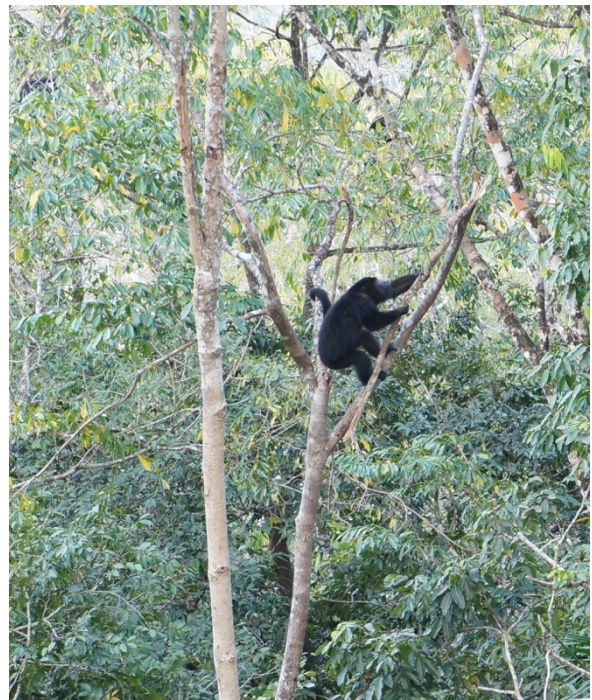
We regularly have house parties and potlucks with rotating hostesses which we all enjoy very much. Last month we had our 1st full moon bonfire of the year. Home gardens are getting well established and we enjoy sharing plants and cuttings with each other.

We have turned the old chicken coop at the milpa into a dog park which the neighborhood dogs are loving.

My husband Tim has had a flurry of requests for building house signs. Everyone names their house and signs are going up. Contact Tim or Sandy at [Sprout33@gmail.com](mailto:Sprout33@gmail.com) for more information.

Constant building is happening. We have staked out a spot for our community center which will be constructed this year.

We have installed a first aid kit and fire extinguishers in our new HOA office near the entrance. Next month we will be the proud owners of a defibrillator.



## All About the Building Process at Better In Belize

So, are you ready to build or prepare your lot for building? We are so excited to welcome new neighbors! One of the main roles of the property owners association is to review building plans and make sure that everyone is following the rules we all agreed to in the Covenants (CCRs) when we bought our lots.

The CCRs help give us guidelines to keep the community in line with our environmental mission. They offer the framework that helps our neighborhood blend into the natural surroundings, and leave a minimal impact on the land. It's a good idea to review the CCRs, and we have them on our owner website in case your copy is hard to locate. (bibowners.com – when you are logged in, look in the upper right menu under Community Documents)

When you are ready to build, or even to prepare your lot in any way, you need to contact the EAB and let us know your plans. The best way to do that is to send an email to [eab@bibowners.com](mailto:eab@bibowners.com)

We will conduct an on-site review, and compare your plans against this checklist, created from the CCRs:

### EAB Plan Review Checklist

- Allowable building footprint: 10% of gross parcel footage, up to 2000sq ft including porches, decks, patios and balconies
- 10' set back on all sides, except one driveway and one walkway
- Max 3 accessory structures not to exceed 3% of total lot sq footage or 750sq ft, whichever is smaller, including garages
- 2 stories plus basement max, basement = 30% of walls below grade
- Roof designed for rainwater catchment, no asphalt or gravel, or composition shingles
- Rooftop solar collector for power must be low profile, prefer generator contained for noise abatement. Wind power only in special circumstances.
- Cistern or water catchment, hidden from public view where possible (NOTE: this rooftop surface can be used for rain catchment in case of spring drying up with addition of cistern.)
- Septic system for waste with grey water holding tank/leach field
- Aesthetic exterior in harmony with surroundings (paint color, etc)
- Approved tree removal plan only
- Shielded outdoor lighting, if any, non-intrusive of neighbors or wildlife, down-lighting.
- Passive cooling, no window AC
- Pools (optional)

It helps to submit all this information with your initial request for review, but if we need more information, we'll let you know ASAP. Once we've confirmed everything is in compliance, and have approved any needed tree removal or site preparation, you'll be sent a formal response and you are ready to build!

There are also rules in the CCR about making sure your construction process has minimal impact on the neighborhood. Be sure to review those as well. Most are common sense things like keeping the site clean, not putting materials or debris on common property, roadways, or other people's lots, and making sure

workers have a place to use the restroom and get drinking water during the work day. Construction should be completed within 18 months at most, and site cleanup needs to be done right after the build is complete.

We also love to answer questions ahead of time. If you are not sure if something you are planning meets the requirements, or if you'd like some suggestions, send us an email. With at least 25 houses built now, or almost built, we have a great deal of experience about what works best in our environment. The POA and EAB Boards are here to serve you, and we LOVE when we get a new house to add to our amazing ecovillage!

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### Meet Gene & Bonnie DeMarco, Owner lot 82



Hello everyone. How did we found Bib? Bonnie and I got married in 2012 and decided to honeymoon in Belize. While on our honeymoon, we fell in love with BiB and before we left had purchased 2 parcels! We have returned since then and are happy to see all the progress going on since our initial visit. The community is really coming together and the vision is coming into focus.

We plan on building a beautiful home on lot 82 and enjoying Belize in the future. We currently reside in Connecticut, USA and look forward to our “Belize Years” and enjoying all the people and sounds of BiB.

If you have not seen the videos I have made of our recent trips, click on the link and you can sit back and enjoy them. Finally, if you have not yet figured it out, I am the person who is volunteering my time to help create this newsletter. I'm not an author or editor, so please excuse any grammar errors I have made here.

I hope everyone enjoys this issue and future issues. I encourage anyone to email me information, interesting facts, pictures, articles or anything else that pertains to BiB. Also each quarter I would like to “Feature an Owner” or include a smaller “Profile” of an owner like I have done here. If you are interested, please email me a little about yourself and your story.

Please send to [DeMarco.gene@yahoo.com](mailto:DeMarco.gene@yahoo.com) or [BiBhoaboard@gmail.com](mailto:BiBhoaboard@gmail.com).

#### **VIDEOS**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8v5pazqKm2U&t=13s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwGgY17JPdM&t=16s>

# A remedy for Mould

Hello fellow BIB property owners. My wife, Mari and I had our Earthbag home (lot 107) built by Jorge Rosale in 2014 and have been coming down to Belize since that time. I'd like to relate an early learning experience that may help other owners. We have a couple of walls 'clad' with split trunks of the Give and Take Palm (*Cryosophila stauracantha*) and soon began to notice that a fine coating of mould/fungous was growing on the surface of the wood. We also noticed a fine coating of mould over the wood furniture which could easily be removed with oiling, but was persistent and required emptying out the cabinets each time in order to oil and remove the mould. Many solutions were tried on the wooden walls; detergent, bleach, hydrogen peroxide, but the problem persisted and the whitish covering of mould was there each time we came back. In my medical practice back in Canada I utilize iodine both topically and internally as an anti-microbial. During our time at BIB I decided to try a little experiment and made a weak solution of iodine, placed it in a spray bottle and sprayed down the wooden walls with it and left it till the next visit which was a few months away. On our next visit, I inspected the walls and found that there was no longer any mould growing. Fantastic results. Since then we have used a light coating of the iodine solution on the cabinetry and wood frames with the same great result. Mould problem solved. The only down side is that the iodine solution can stain fabrics and floors if it gets on them and needs to be repeated every 3 to 4 months. The solution I use is a small bottle of iodine (the type used for skin cuts and scrapes) mixed into 1 litre of water. In Belize I've found Iodine at Farmer's Market in Spanish Lookout.

While on the subject of Iodine one of the practices we have gotten into whilst in Belize is to treat all of our insect bites with a solution of Iodine, DMSO and peppermint oil. The DMSO is a wonderful solvent/carrier and penetrates into skin; it's also has anti-inflammatory properties on its own. There are a number of tropical diseases that are found in Belize; one of the common endemic ones is Leishmaniasis which is a single celled organism carried in a sandfly bite which can cause a non healing skin ulcer. Leishmaniasis can be treated medically by topical means as well as the anti fungal ketoconazole. I have found that by treating every bite with a little dab of the above mentioned solution/lotion we have not contracted any Leishmaniasis. The thinking here is that if one is bit by a sandfly with the Leish organism, the topical iodine will kill it before it can do any harm to the skin cells. Prevention is always preferable to treatment.

Submitted by Francesco Anello, MD/BiB Owner

FEATURED OWNER: Lot 30 Tom, Iria and Merlin



Greetings fellow neighbors at BIB! Somehow we all found this little Gem of an eco community. I'd like to share with you a bit of our family's story of how we got there, and we're excited to hear yours!

We're a family of 3 from Canada: Tom, Iria (pronounced ear-ya) and our 13 year old son Merlin. Our passions include things like herbal medicines, mushrooms, permaculture, aromatherapy, glassblowing, sustainable living, and ecovillages.

We have been drawn to ecovillage living for many years now. When we lived on Saltspring Island, on Canada's West coast, we co-founded an ecovillage society named SEEDS (Saltspring Ecovillage Education and Development Society). The mission was to educate ourselves and others about how we can live more sustainably and

how ecovillages can play an important role in helping us all get there. We did a lot of community outreach by organizing Sustainability Expos, facilitating work parties on farms, volunteering on natural building worksites and setting up an Ecovillage table at the local farmers market. One of the most fruitful things we were able to do at that time was to take part in an international Ecovillage Conference. It was held over a few days and presented founders of successful ecovillages from all over the world. There were many workshops on a variety of topics ranging from community building to ownership & governance to organic farming. The lessons we learned from all of their collective experiences are so valuable and we are so grateful we were able to attend. We were also able to study with David Holmgren, one of the founders of the Permaculture movement. This has given us a good foundation of knowledge about working with natural systems. Now it looks like we will finally have the chance to put into practice all the things we have studied and learned!

We discovered Belize in 2008 when we went on a much needed escape from the Canadian winter. We settled for a few months in San Ignacio where we rented a crooked little cabin just outside town. We had packed up a bunch of our glassblowing supplies and left them with Tom's mom in Canada, so as soon as we found our cabin she shipped it all to us and we worked for the winter making our glass products that we would sell the following summer in Canada. Our son Merlin went to preschool in San Ignacio and we made some good friends during our stay.

While we were having dinner one evening at Smiths Family Farm we met some Canadian folks who were looking for the perfect piece of land for an ecovillage. It turns out one of them was Looey looking for the BIB land! We wished them well and after a few months returned to Canada to continue working on building our glassblowing business, hoping to eventually buy a piece of land and realize our dreams of living in an ecovillage.

Last April we made plans to return to Belize for a vacation. When we told

Tom's aunt about our plans, she said "hey, you guys should check out this one ecovillage close to San Ignacio". We were delighted to discover that BIB was there and had so much potential. We immediately made plans to visit and made a down payment on lot #30. As soon as we arrived at BIB we fell in love with the place. The jungle was so alive, the flowers so abundant and beautiful, the birds songs were constantly gracing our ears. We took the waterfall tour and realized what an amazing, pristine, rugged landscape it was. We loved that there was a huge garden space with a greenhouse, chicken coop, raised beds and so much more... it felt like home.

We plan to return next April to survey our property and make plans for our buildings. Our plan is to first build a water catchment system and a small cabin. This will serve as a simple place to be while we build our main home, and can be used as a guest cabin in the future. Every day we dream and talk about how our house should look, or what trees we will want to plant, which veggies we will want to plant in the garden. It's been hard to wait! We're planning on a work very hard in the next 2 years so we can save enough to



build our little jungle dream. We're so excited! It's the only thing keeping us going while we freeze our butts off in the Canadian winters!

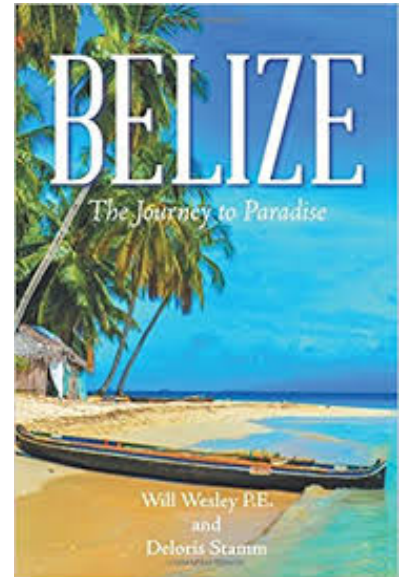
Another thing that we are very excited about is meeting all of you. It sounds like we have a very eclectic group of amazing people here, and an opportunity to build something great! We can't wait to hear your stories and eventually meet you in person.

All the best,  
Irja, Tom and Merlin

Ps If you want to follow our stories on Instagram you can find us @elfintom and @irjapixie

*Thank you Iria for this wonderful story!*

# Attention All Readers



There is a new book just published about the Paradise Hotel/Resort in Placencia. The book depicts how the owners purchased and renovated their hotel and the journey along the way. I found it to be a great read and would recommend it.



# Belize Scholarships

The scholarship committee is trying to get a jump on fundraising for our Belize Scholarship students this year. Last year we were very late, waiting hopefully for more donations to come in, so we're trying to start earlier this year.

We raised \$2777 (that's \$1388 US dollars) from generous donors last year, so we were able to help eighteen students in seven families from the countryside surrounding Better in Belize with scholarships that paid most of their expenses for supplies, tuition and fees. This took a huge burden off their families, some of whom have no ready cash except what they can rake in by selling produce from their farms at the Saturday and Benque Markets, hawking their fruits and veggies from store to store, or finding outside jobs such as fencing, sewing, laundry, mending roads or construction jobs that may take them away from their families for weeks at a time.

Although some schools have free lunch feeding programs, we're told that older/larger students need additional food to make it through the school day. So when your donation helps defray school expenses, it also helps families free up money to feed those growing bodies so the kids can focus on schoolwork.

Did you know there are children in our district whose families don't make enough income to allow them to send their children to school without our help? School costs can run from \$275 BZ for a kindergartner to more than \$500 BZ for a high school student, and must be paid up front before a child is accepted by the school. *Some families have five or six kids.* We know of heartbreaking cases where some of the children in a family could not attend school due to insufficient funds. Children left behind have limited opportunities since subsistence farming and homemaking may be the only skills they develop. If they don't have an opportunity to learn how to read or do math, they won't be adequately equipped to earn additional income during hard times.

Your help can have a huge impact on the life of a child and his or her future. It doesn't take much - imagine the difference the loose change you pay for your Starbuck's Latte could make to a child in our neighborhood if it were applied to a scholarship!

There's no need to wait until you actually live at BIB. Your help is needed now. Go to [BelizeScholarships.com](http://BelizeScholarships.com) and become a child's hero. Our scholarship committee is totally volunteer and no money is diverted to cover wages, gas or supplies, so every dollar of your donation goes to the students and/or their schools for supplies, tuition, fees and in some cases uniforms.

We'd be over the moon if you could make this a regular yearly donation. Thanks so much for all you do!

Renie Brady

Feet-On-The-Ground Factotum & Fundraiser/ [BelizeScholarships.com](http://BelizeScholarships.com)

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Please help me with any information you can offer to help keep this newsletter fun and interesting. Please send me any of the following:

- PHOTOS
- ARTICLES
- YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH BIB OR BELIZE
- OFFER TO BE A FEATURED OWNER! (Send to [DeMarco.gene@yahoo.com](mailto:DeMarco.gene@yahoo.com) or [BiBhoaboard@gmail.com](mailto:BiBhoaboard@gmail.com))
- WEBSITE LINKS
- NEWS ON BIB AND BELIZE

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Our first journey is to find that special place for us.  
(Earl Nightingale)



A special thanks to Looey Tremblay and all that has made BiB a place where we look forward to going, an escape and a place we can call home. We can't thank you enough!