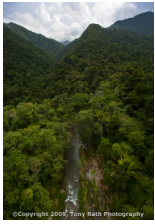


**Bladen Nature Reserve, located in the southern district of Toledo, covers some 97000-acres of wilderness and is probably Belize's most pristine protected rainforest. □**



The reserve gets its name from the Bladen Branch of the Monkey River which runs northeasterly through the area. Declared a reserve by the Government of Belize in 1990, Bladen Nature Reserve has the most stringent protected area designation, prohibiting all but research and educational activity.

### Notable Features

- This rugged wilderness encompasses a portion of the southeastern slope of the Maya Mountains with fringing limestone karst foothills at lower elevations. The slopes are covered with old-growth broadleaf forests and swiftly-flowing streams. Largely unexplored, the Bladen River valley contains massive limestone hills, rock outcrops, sinkholes, caves, and waterfalls.
- A Mayan site was recently discovered deep in the Quebrada de Oro Valley. Low rock mounds were identified along with one grouping that appears to represent tombs, courts, and an avenue.
- Lofty trees, towering palms, massive lianas, giant herbs, flowering plants, and numerous fruits attract much wildlife. At least 194 bird species have been identified including large species such as the crested guan and great curassow. Over 300 animal species thrive here including squirrel, agouti, opossum, peccary, white tailed deer and tapir, puma and jaguar.

### Visitor Experience

The nature reserve is reserved for research and education. Information concerning research, internships, volunteer and educational opportunities can gotten from the Forest Department of Belize or the Ya'axche Conservation Trust.

