



INFORMATION CONTACT:
Betty Petersen, Director of Birders' Exchange
American Birding Association
4945 N 30th St, Ste 200
Colorado Springs, CO 80919
719/578-9703
bpetersen@aba.org

For Immediate Release:

**INTERNATIONAL INTERN PROGRAM
DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL AMBASSADORS FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION
MASSACHUSETTS AUDUBON SOCIETY / AMERICAN BIRDING ASSOCIATION (BIRDERS'
EXCHANGE)**

Colorado Springs, Colorado, September 10, 2009 – This summer's session marks the 5th year of a successful, collaborative effort between the American Birding Association and the Massachusetts Audubon Society: The International Intern Program - Developing Ambassadors for Conservation Education.

Vladimir Rodriguez and Elmar Requena, both from Belize, are this year's interns.

Vladimir Rodriguez is the Manager of the La Milpa Field Station in the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area in northwestern Belize. This reserve, which covers 230,875 acres, is owned and managed by the Programme for Belize. As Vladimir says, "birdwatching is natural for me." He pursues his passion for birding by teaching children and young adults in his community about birds and bird conservation. During his internship, he is learning more about North American birders, information that will help him run his field station and better serve his guests at La Milpa. He is also honing his field trip leadership skills and gaining experience with bird banding. Vladimir's outside interests include photography, sports, and history.

Elmar Requena, who has a degree in Natural Resource Management from the University of Belize, works for the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) as a Terrestrial/Freshwater Biologist. His work in southern Belize is focused on freshwater conservation issues. Elmar has collaborated with several major conservation organizations in Belize and is working to conserve and protect the environment of Toledo District. His primary goals during this internship are to learn more about the ecology of North American birds and to expand his presentation skills. Elmar is fluent in English, Spanish, and his local indigenous language, Kekchi. His other interests include sports, gardening, and music. This is Elmar's first trip to the United States.

The curriculum for this year's program is a one month, six days-a-week, intensive schedule of classes and field training exercises. The interns study bird identification - especially of North American migrants; practice field trip leadership skills; learn bird banding techniques that will help them monitor bird populations in conservation areas in Belize; participate in the creation of an "Introduction to Bird Watching in Belize" program tailored to the study and conservation of birds and their habitats; work with Newburyport, Massachusetts, school children on environmental education programs; learn the "care and feeding" of North American birders; and much, much more. All of these skills will help Vladimir and

Elmar promote environmental education, conservation, and responsible tourism in Beautiful Belize.

The Birders' Exchange extends special thanks to the Joppa Flats staff and to the more than 30 Mass Audubon volunteers who donate their time and expertise to this program. The Birders' Exchange also acknowledges the generous support of Swarovski Optik North America for donating Swarovski binoculars and spotting scopes to Birders' Exchange for every intern who has participated in this valuable program.

For additional information, contact: Betty Petersen, American Birding Association, at 719/578-9703 or bpetersen@aba.org.

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Bill Gette, Director, Mass Audubon's Joppa Flats Education Center
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