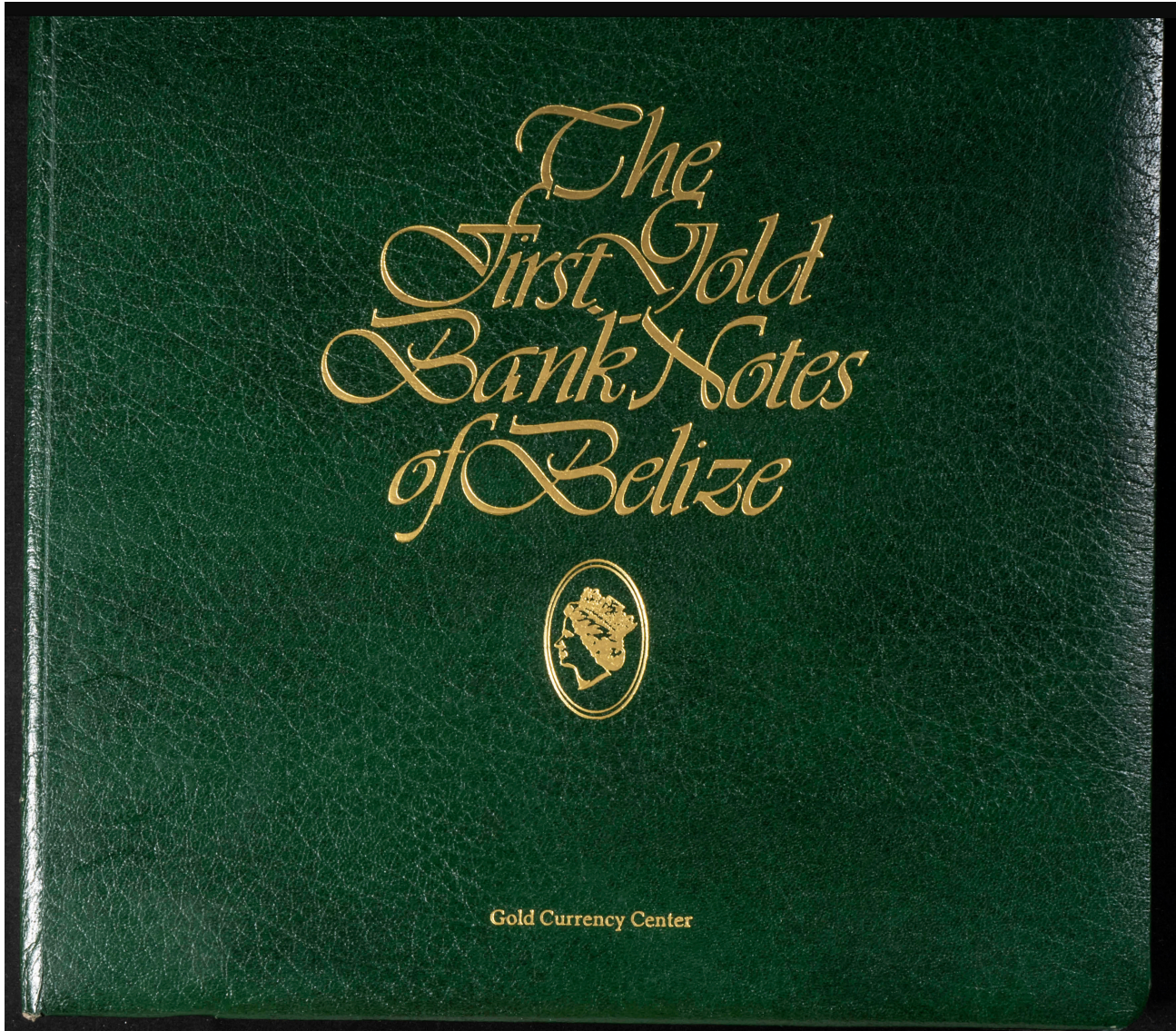
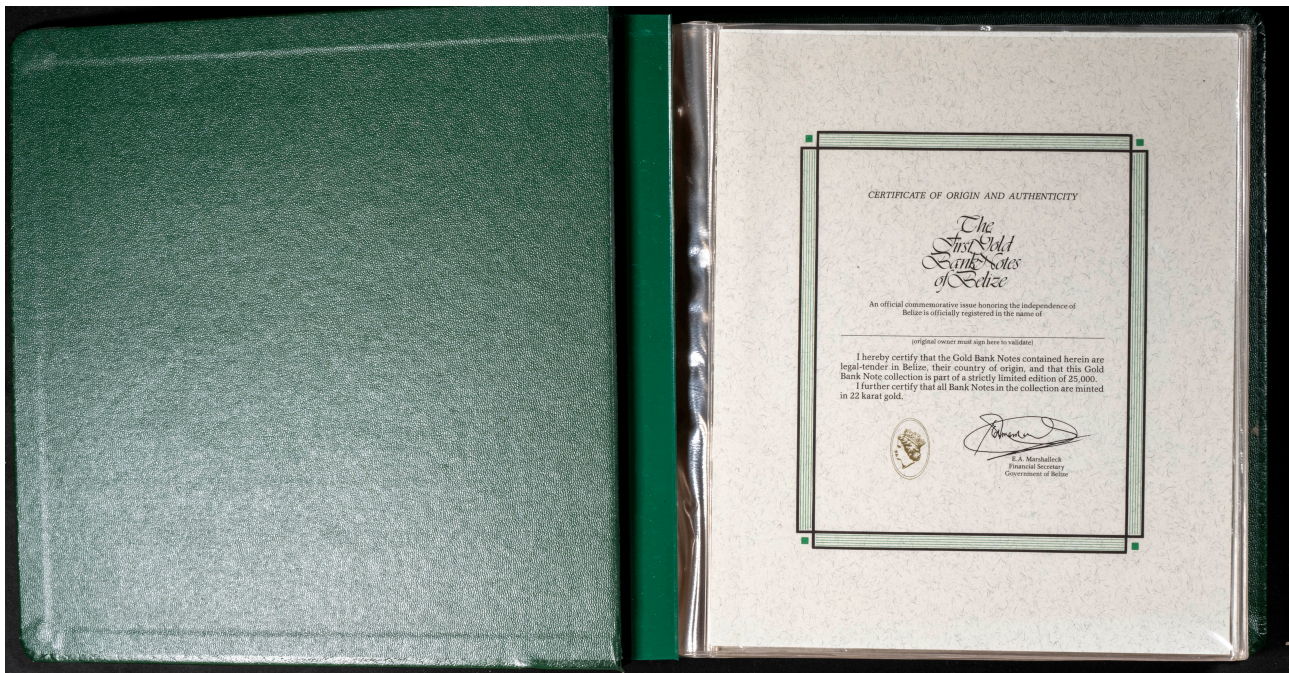


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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGIN AND AUTHENTICITY

The First Gold Bank Notes of Belize

An official commemorative issue honoring the independence of Belize is officially registered in the name of

original owners must sign here to validate

I hereby certify that the Gold Bank Notes contained herein are legal tender in Belize, their country of origin, and that this Gold Bank Note collection is part of a strictly limited edition of 25,000.

I further certify that all Bank Notes in the collection are minted in 22 karat gold.



*[Signature]*  
E.A. Montalvo  
Financial Secretary  
Government of Belize



The First Gold Bank Notes of Belize



Blue Heron

Forests are among Belize's most important natural resources. During the 1940's and 1950's, the cutting and exporting of precious tropical woods such as cedar, mahogany and rosewood was the nation's leading industry. However, large tracts of timberland were becoming seriously depleted by the commercial loggers.

With the introduction of improved forest management, the destruction has been halted. Today, only about 4% of Belize's timber - amounting to about 49 million cubic feet - is being harvested each year. In addition, large areas of woodland have been set aside for the enjoyment of man and as a refuge for local wildlife.

For many migratory North American birds, Belize's forests provide a winter refuge filled with an abundance of the small creatures, nuts and fruits that are their favored diet during the nesting season.



The blue heron, however, pictured on this 1-dollar Gold Bank Note, settles in the vast, open areas of swamp land, where the food supply of fish, frogs and small reptiles is plentiful.

The great blue (*Ardea herodias*) is the largest American heron, standing 32 inches tall with a wing span of six feet. Each year, flocks of these stately birds fly to Central America from the United States and Canada. In flight, they stretch their long legs straight out behind them and curl their heads between their shoulders.

Blue herons nest in groups, in trees and bushes near the swamp area. Females typically lay 4 to 6 pale green eggs. However, only a small percentage of the nestlings will survive, since they do not learn to fly for several weeks. Those who do defy the odds can live up to 20 years.



The First Gold Bank Notes of Belize

For hundreds of years, Belizeans have lived off the bounty of the sea. Staples of the local diet include red snapper, grouper, lobster and shrimp. Other tasty native specialties are conch chowder and conch fritters.

There is no shortage of fishing grounds in Belize. Fresh water enthusiasts find the estuaries and mudflats teeming with bonefish, tarpon, crayfish and snook. In fact, the most recent attempt to land a world record snook have been made in Belize.

Offshore, sport fishermen regularly report record catches some weighing more than 450 pounds. The prime fishing seasons are from September to November and from February to April when thousands of gamefish pass through Belizean waters during their annual migrations. Among them are the great billfish, marlins and sailfish.

Blue-Striped Grunt



The First Gold Bank Notes of Belize

Smaller salt water gamefish such as the barracuda, crevalle, rockfish and amberjack can be caught throughout the year. The blue-striped grunt (*Harmilonotus lineatus*), which is pictured on this 2-dollar Gold Bank Note, is one of dozens of edible species. A blue and yellow striped fish up to 18 inches long, it lives close to the shore. Local anglers use drop fishing equipment, since the blue-striped is a bottom feeder.

Grunts get their name from the peculiar pig-like grunting sound they make when grinding their teeth. More than 100 members of the grunt family have been identified in warm oceans throughout the world, where they typically travel in large schools. Several of them exhibit the unique habit of approaching each other and "kissing." Scientists have not yet determined the reason for this unusual behavior.



Since large amounts of hardwood were first exported to Great Britain in the 17th century, the economy of Belize has been based on agriculture. There are about two million acres of arable land in the country, only a small percentage of which is presently under cultivation. In the Orange Walk district in northern Belize, large plantations produce sugar for export. Orange and grapefruit groves have been established in the Caye district of western Belize. Along the riverbanks of the Stann Creek district, running along the coast of southern Belize, bananas are grown commercially.

In recent years, Belize has been capitalizing on the export value of the bounties of the sea. This is important trade in fresh and frozen lobster, fresh and salt-dried scale fish, conch and shrimp. The United States is the primary market for these

popular seafoods. Other kinds of fish exported by Belize are the exotic tropical varieties seen in aquariums. One of the most sought-after species in this group is the yellow damselfish (*Pomacentrus pinnatus*), depicted on this 2-dollar Gold Bank Note. It is a small fish, seldom growing to more than six inches long, with a deep body and a forked tail. Its coloration, like a ray of golden sunshine, is spectacular. In addition, the yellow damselfish is especially interesting to watch.

Yellow Damselfish

Usually seen in large, skittering schools, the fish are exceptionally active and quick in their native habitat, they dart in and out of the coral reef, searching for plant matter or small animals suspended in the water to feed on. They are territorial, and aggressive in defending their area.



## The First Gold Bank Notes of Belize



Curassow

Education is one of the major concerns of the government. In recent years, many new schools have been built and other facilities have been expanded. The curriculum now requires that all children between the ages of 4 and 14 attend school. Despite these efforts, however, the country still lacks skilled technicians and professionals. It is hoped that local graduates offers more to the country. English speaking countries where there are greater advancement opportunities. Another problem is the discrimination among large segments of the population to accept new ways. Change comes very slowly among the 20% of the population who are of Indian descent. They have a different culture and speak their own language. The customs of the Indian people are still very much a part of the life of the country.



One of the most fascinating neighbors of the Indians is the curassow (*Crax rubra*) pictured on this 5-dollar Gold Bank Note. About 28 inches from tail to beak, the curassow looks much like the American turkey. Adult males have a bright yellow crest on their heads that can be raised or lowered at will to show alarm or attract hens during mating season. The male's body is black and white underparts, while the female is a less spectacular brown. In Belize, the curassow is called *pore del monte*, or mountain peacock. The large birds are easily tamed, and consort freely with other domesticated animals. Indians raise them for food along with chickens and pigs. Curassow meat tastes somewhat like American fowl, but with a more gamey flavor. Curassows were named for the island of Curacao in the Dutch West Indies, although none of the species has ever been found there.

## The First Gold Bank Notes of Belize

Although it covers less than 9,000 square miles of land, Belize has a greater diversity of wildlife than almost any nation. Native fauna ranges from the giant mountain tapir and voracious crocodile to the marjary, the rarest of the American cats. Naturalists ascribe this unique variety of creatures to Belize's location, in the geographic "heart" of the Americas. Thousands of years ago, it was part of an ancient land link to South America, the West Indies and North America. Its rivers and forests still shelter many animals and birds who migrated at that time from both the north and the south.



One of the most fascinating indigenous animals is the Belizean ocelot (*Felis pardalis*), pictured on this 3-dollar Gold Bank Note. Similar to the ocelot found in the United States, it measures about 4 feet long and 16 inches at the shoulder. A nocturnal predator, it spends most of its time on the ground, stalking mice, wood rats, snakes, lizards and young deer. It is also at home in the trees, preying on birds and monkeys. During the day, ocelots find refuge in thickets or cool caves. The base color of the ocelot is pale grey to brown. Its black spots vary in size from small on the legs and paws to large blotches on the body. The animal's nose is pink and its eyes are large and translucent. Litters of two or three kittens usually resemble their parents in base color and the patterns of dots and blotches. Ocelots can become tame and affectionate pets in their early years. Mature adults, however, are unpredictable and sometimes revert to their natural instincts. In the past, many ocelot kittens were shipped to pet shops in the United States. That practice has been halted since ocelots have come under the protection of the Belizean government.

Ocelot



## The First Gold Bank Notes of Belize



Hibiscus

Located at the base of the Yucatan Peninsula, Belize is a land of dramatic contrasts. Several rivers cross the small country, dividing it into different topographical regions. In the south, the Mayan Mountains rise to the south, gradually giving way to forest-covered plateaus, lowland plains and mangrove lagoons farther north. The climate is subtropical, with clearly defined dry seasons. Yet, between north and south, the amount of rain varies by more than 100 inches annually. Also, while average temperatures range from 70 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit, the sun-warmed days melt into breeze-cooled nights.



The hibiscus is distributed in hibiscus, pictured on this 10-dollar Gold Bank Note, which blooms in gardens, parks and along the banks of rivers throughout the year. A member of the mallow family, hibiscus shrubs and trees have glossy dark leaves and spectacular trumpet-shaped blossoms. Notably every known color is represented among the flowers of more than 150 identified species — ranging from white, pink and blue to brilliant shades of gold, crimson and orange. Typically, they have five petals, but they may be single, semi-double or double. Hibiscus flowers last only a day or two, whether left in the garden or picked. Since it makes little difference whether or not they are put in water after being picked, the blossoms are frequently used for table decorations and other decorative purposes.

## The First Gold Bank Notes of Belize

The history of United States-Belizean relations dates back to 1847, when Christopher Hemphstead opened the first U.S. consular office in Belize in Foster House. During the U.S. Civil War, the American consul also monitored Confederate gun-running activities in Belize City. Again during Prohibition, the consul kept a close watch on each time a whiskey ship passed through Belize when granted full independence by Great Britain on September 21, 1981. The United States maintains a full embassy in Belmopan, which includes Peace Corps officials. There is also the U.S. Agency for International Development, as well as a U.S. military liaison office.



Cooperation between the two countries takes many forms. One area in which U.S. government agencies, Peace Corps workers and private groups are helpful is the promotion of wildlife conservation. For example, at the turn of the century, the United States launched a campaign to stop the slaughter of the snowy egret (*Egretta thula*), featured on this 10-dollar Gold Bank Note. Today, Belize is continuing that campaign by placing the bird under government protection. The long-legged snowy egret measures about two feet from tail to beak. It has a sharp beak and powerful talons that help it capture fish, crustaceans, insects and small reptiles in the marshy areas where it lives. During the mating season, the egret develops long, silky plumes that, in the past, were highly prized as "bosoms" and had decorations for fashionable women. Hunters wantonly killed thousands of snowy egrets for their plumes before public pressure and effective government measures put an end to the practice.

Snowy Egret

