

Bernoullia flammea

Mapola, canté

as seen from the Central Acropolis



Natural Beauty at **Tikal**



More than Art & Archaeology

Tikal also offers Learning about remarkable trees & their flowers



Bernoullia flammea
Mapola, canté





Bernoullia flammea flowers attract many hummingbirds and lots of creatures which pollinate the flowers (such as local bees of the Maya area) (Mirtha Cano, personal communication, 2013).



At age 17 I first visited Tikal as a tourist. I returned the next year and spent another week at Tikal. One of my roommates at Harvard had a relative who was doing his dissertation with the University of Pennsylvania Projecto Tikal. So I was able to meet the archaeologists during my visit.

After they noticed that I had been to Tikal twice, and stayed a week each time, they asked if I wanted to be a student assistant the following year. So I took a year-off and went to Tikal at age 19.

During twelve months, aside from discovering the Tomb of the Jade Jaguar and doing my thesis at Harvard on this royal burial, I began to learn about the rain forest.

Several years later I started the Yaxha Project as research for my PhD dissertation. I devoted five seasons to the area of Lake Yaxha and Lake Sacnab (an hour's drive from Tikal). During these five years I was able to encourage the government to create a national park.

As you can imagine, during five seasons living on the shores of Lake Yaxha, I developed even more curiosity about the world of plants and animals. I can still vividly remember when a lost baby anteater wandered into camp. It had lost its mother. It was the size that would fit in your two open hands.

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Tikal reports

Bernoullia flammea
Mapola, canté
Great plaza Ballcourt
& Temple I

Bernoullia flammea Mapola, canté
Temple V

Bernoullia flammea
Mapola, canté

Temple III

More than Art & Archaeology
The University of Pennsylvania, The University of Texas at Austin, & The University of Cambridge

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Now, decades later, I am still learning about insects, birds, flowers, and trees. I have set as a goal to raise awareness around the world about the value of preserving the eco-systems of Guatemala. And especially to show the entire world the frankly spectacular natural beauty of the national park areas of Guatemala.



Tikal & Guatemala offer memorable flora and fauna, and this FLAAR Report is a photo essay to document one of thousands of plant species.

This tree is far more than just a pretty flowering tree: this tree produced one of the more popular and fragrant spices and flavoring of pre-Columbian Mesoamerica.

Tikal is also the home to molinillo, Rosita de cacao, another favorite spice of the Classic Maya. We have been searching for this tree for several years, and courtesy of biologist Mirtha Cano and her team of forest caretakers have located one molinillo tree. It had one single remaining flower the day we were there.

There are other plants at Tikal which were used for spice; other plants were basic food; other trees were used for constructing the homes and even palaces and temples. Yes, not all Classic Maya buildings were of stone. The graffiti of Tikal clearly show thatch-roofed buildings.

We hope you enjoy the views of the orange-red flowers. We put a lot of effort to get have the special macro and lighting equipment to Tikal the time of year that they flower.

If you are enjoying this color photo essay at home, we hope you will share this PDF of our web site, www.maya-ethnobotany.org with your family and friends.

We also offer comparable quality of photography of fauna: www.maya-ethnozoology.org.

We thank the administration of Parque Nacional Tikal

The photography is facilitated by the administration of the Parque Nacional Tikal. We appreciate the hospitality and have learned a lot about the local plants from biologist Mirtha Cano and her capable team who help take care of the forest.

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