

Spiders

in your home



Instead of killing them...
Let them thrive in your house

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 **FLAAR Reports**
Digital-photography.org

Most people use brooms to sweep away spider webs.

Most people stomp on any spider they see in their home or office.

But at FLAAR, in our home and office we have a policy of not destroying spider webs outside nor inside. Inside we have spiders of many species. Most do not weave the traditional “spider web” (the traditional spider webs are all outside). Inside the spider species create a sizeable mass of puff-ball like material around the edges of the room lights or around any of the framed photographs on the wall.

The spider itself lives behind the framed photos, or in a hole where the electrical light fixture sticks out of the ceiling. The spider comes out of their hole when an insect gets caught in their web and causes the web to vibrate.

When we find cockroaches, we put them into the spider web and this seems to make the spiders very happy.

The spider web mass over my desk is about three or more years old. The spider gets larger every year. I was not aware that a spider lived more than a year, but we believe it is the same identical spider all these years.

It’s young come down on a line of silk. When I see tiny baby spiders in front of me (as I sit at my desk which is physically under the main nest on the ceiling), I catch the silk strand on my finger and then move the youthful spider to a good place in different parts of the house so they can make their own nests elsewhere.

The primary advantage of helping the spiders survive is that they catch mosquitoes and flies in the house. So the spiders provide a service.



Other Spider species are outside

Many species of spider spin their webs outside in our ethnobotanical garden. We raise medicinal and other utilitarian plants of the Mayan people in our garden (so we can study the plants and so we can photograph their flowers with high-resolution digital cameras).

Any spider webs we find outside we try to avoid knocking them down. Spiders are a part of nature and deserve the right to survive.



Spiders

in your garden



This spider we found outside our home/office today (October 2, 2014). It was in the center of a traditional web of beautiful concentric circles.

The spider was a bit over 1 cm long and a bit less than one cm wide. On one side this photogenic creature has this yellow "arrowhead" design. This is Guatemala City, elevation about 1500 meters. It is the rainy season currently.

This photograph is by graphic design student Sophia Monzon. Guatemalan students have access to all the photography equipment and experience of FLAAR. With more modern and hence better equipment and computers which can handle high-resolution images, we can train even more capable Guatemalan students.

Canon camera, macro lens, macro flash, with a gray background paper from Savage Universal (photo studio background paper company), courtesy of Hayward Richard Pressman, Sylvester Hank, and their capable team of managers whom we see at Photokina and the leading expos in the world of photography equipment.

We also raise stingless bees

Several species of wasps have their nests on the windows of our office. We never pry the nests off the windows. The nests tend to be on the outside of the windows, so the wasps rarely fly inside.

We also raise stingless bees. This hive has been here over two years. We also raise many flowers to keep the bees happy.

Several species of butterfly live, breed, and reproduce in our research garden surrounding our office. We plant species of flowering plants that we know the butterflies like. This attracts the butterflies and also provides leaves for the larvae to feed on.



We have several species of tiny snakes

The neighbor burnt down much of our garden one night while he was trying to burn out the “vicious snakes” which lived under the roots of these plants on his side of the property line.

We rescued as many of the snakes as we could, and moved them over to the portion of our garden which did not get burnt. We also gently tried to tell the neighbor that the snakes were totally harmless. Clearly there needs to be more public education about being understanding about animals and not exterminating them simply because they are different than we are.

Snakes were pictured in art of the Mayan civilization for over a thousand years. Quetzalcoatl is the most famous “snake,” the feathered serpent (of both Aztec and Maya mythology). A snake is featured as a messenger in the Popol Vuh (the sacred book of the Mayan culture of Guatemala, preserved in the Newberry Library, in Chicago). In my PhD dissertation about 30 years ago I included the Popol Vuh messenger snake.

Today, now that the Internet makes it possible to have information more readily available, we would like to move forward on a project to show the chapter-by-chapter action and drama of the Popol Vuh

in full-color PDFs, with high-res photographs

and with cartoon characters we are developing

in several coffee table book

one on plants mentioned in the Popol Vuh

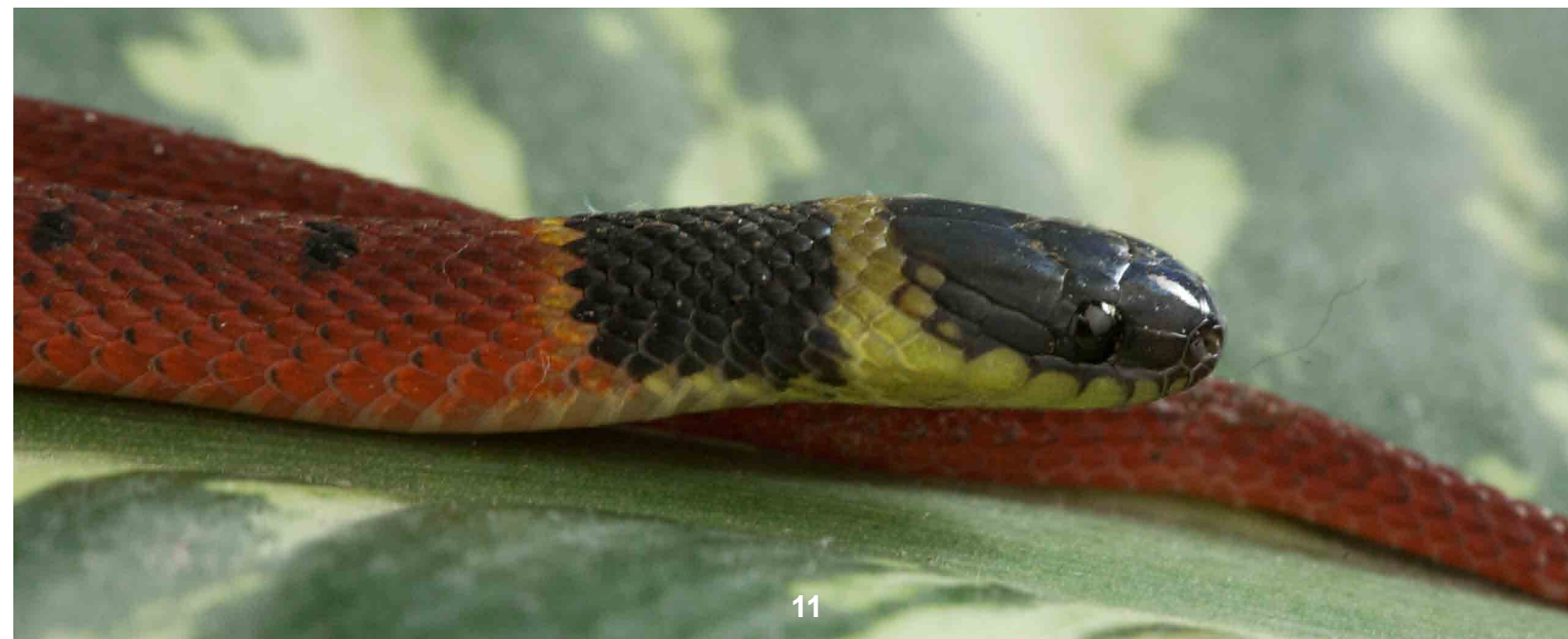
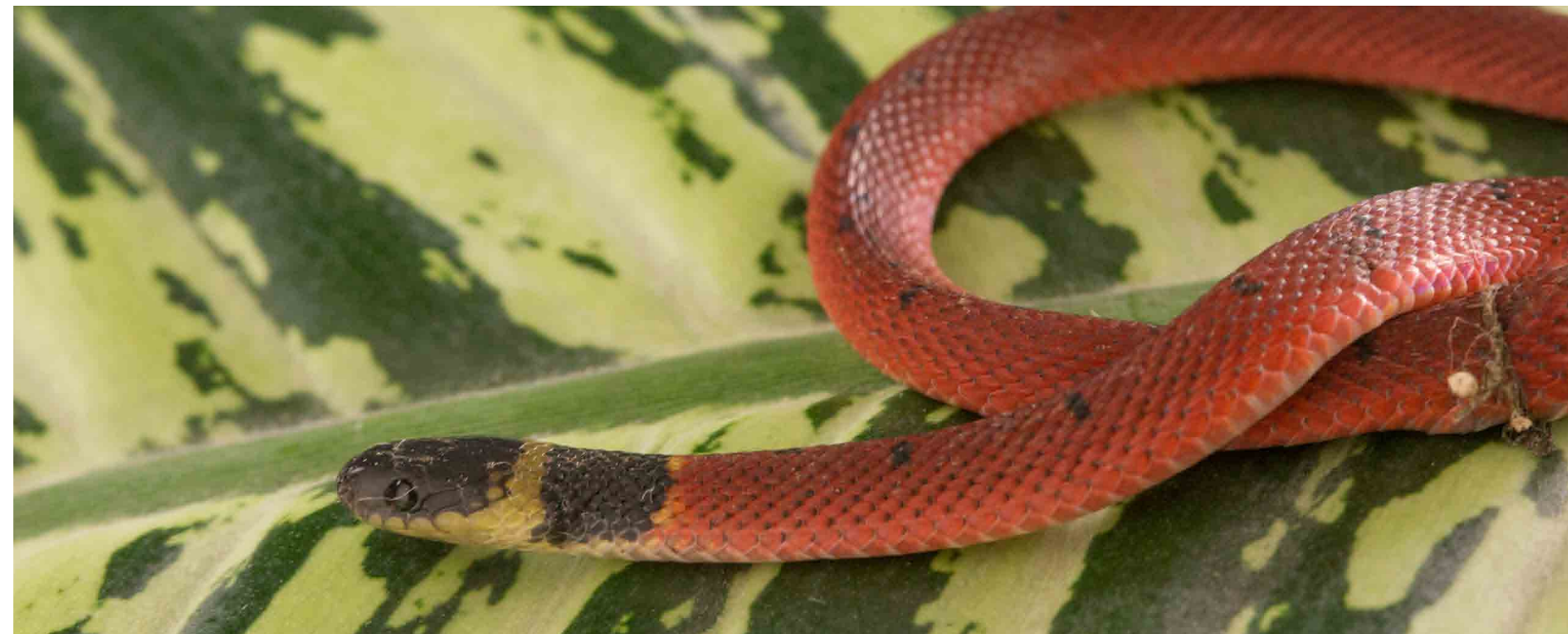
one on animals, insects, reptiles in the Popol Vuh

one on caves as the entrance to Xibalba (their version of Hell)

one on demons, devils, and deities of ancient Mayan religion

For the cartoon characters (which we develop ourselves, with a Mayan flavor), we have Mayan-speaking students as illustrators. But we need the Wacom pen tablets, computers, software, etc. to provide to the students.

For the books and PDFs, yes we have basic camera equipment, and we fortunately have excellent photographers in-house on staff, but we just attended Photokina digital photography technology expo in Germany and now have a list of what equipment would improve our photography.



In closing, spiders in caves

Caves are the entrance to Xibalba, fully described in the Popol Vuh manuscript. The stories in the Popol Vuh go back about 2500 years. To help bring the stories within the Popol Vuh back to life, we go out into the jungle-covered Karst areas of Guatemala and search for caves which have the features described in the Popol Vuh traditions.

A few weeks ago we discovered two cave spiders, about 60 meters into the cave. Here are photographs of them.

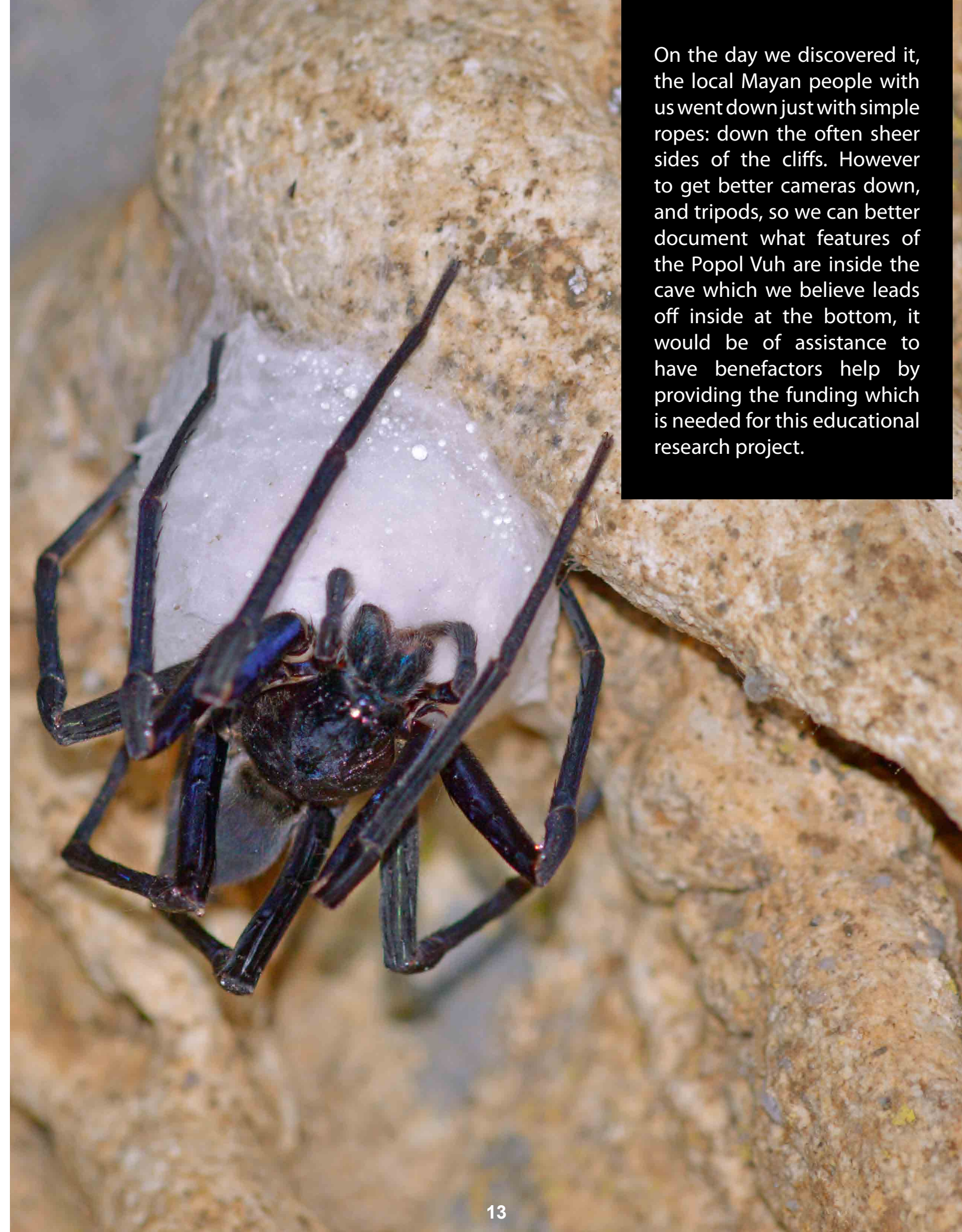
I estimate the solitary spider is the male, guarding the female with her eggs. I estimate the spider on top of the egg mass is the female.

We did not touch them, because we did not want to cause problems with the reproductive cycle documented by the eggs.

These caves are in the K'ekchi' Mayan speaking area of Guatemala. We recently were the first people in the world to photograph a remote and previously undiscovered cave system near one of the villages.

This cave can be entered only by climbing to the top of a mountain. The "entrance" is the entire top of this mountain, which is hollow! It is a sinkhole-like geological situation, but larger than any sinkhole I have seen in-person in the 50 years I have been in Guatemala.

It would help to have the new technology of portable drones so we can send cameras down into the sinkhole and we would like to be able to hire and bring in a fully-equipped team to rappel me down so I can take my camera equipment down to the bottom of this frankly fascinating geological marvel.



On the day we discovered it, the local Mayan people with us went down just with simple ropes: down the often sheer sides of the cliffs. However to get better cameras down, and tripods, so we can better document what features of the Popol Vuh are inside the cave which we believe leads off inside at the bottom, it would be of assistance to have benefactors help by providing the funding which is needed for this educational research project.



Here are Guatemalan spiders which remind me of Daddy Long Legs in the USA. I found these two spiders living in the bathroom.

The two spiders were about 20 cm from each other. Only when I saw the enlarged photograph did I realize that one of the spiders was protecting a mass of eggs.

This is the same situation as we found in the remote cave in Alta Verapaz: one spider cares for the eggs and the other spider remains about 20 to 50 cm away (I would assume as a guard).



The photos in the bathroom are quick snapshots only; these are not stacked focus.

We do not allow any spider inside or outside to be killed. And we do not allow any spider web inside the office to be brushed away, cleaned away or otherwise damaged.

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