

Quetzals: A Lifeline

2nd in the Slay Animal Saga

By Emilia Hunter

Quetzals are known for... Being unknown. In the modern world, not many people know, or have even heard of the Quetzal. Many people dismiss it. Valerie Swee was reportedly saying “BRO ITS JUST A TINY PEACOCK MIXED WITH A PARROT” in the Newspaper Club GC. Many people take one look at a beautiful quetzal and assume that they are just “A TINY PEACOCK MIXED WITH A PARROT.” But, Quetzals are so much more than that. Quetzals are named after gods. Resplendent quetzals are the symbol of Guatemala. Quetzals are a lifeline.



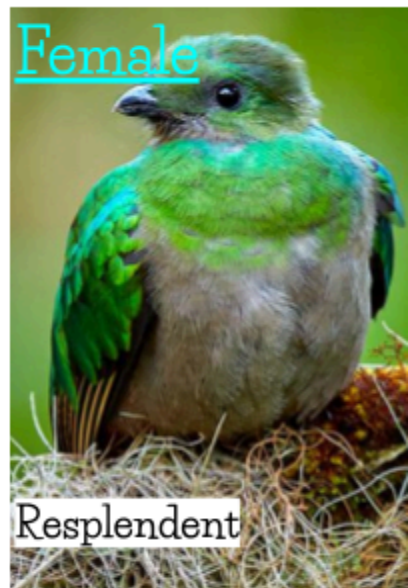
Diet and Habitat

Quetzals are often referred to as the ‘Gardener of the Jungle’ because of how much they impact their homes. Quetzals live in stretches of protected jungle called the cloud forests, which extend from Mexico to Panama. The cloud forests are very moist and diverse, and if the name was any hint, they are full of mist and clouds. Quetzals mainly eat fruit, but also eat small frogs, insects, snails, and lizards. Not only that, but Quetzals love avocados! They eat the whole avocado first, before spitting out the pits. This process is helping spread the avocado tree along the whole of the cloud forests, like how a gardener spreads seeds along the length of a garden bed.



The Mayan legend of Red

Tecún Umán was a Mayan hero prince. In this legend, he was the last ruler of the Quiche Maya before the Spanish took over. Before the battle, he had made friends with a male Quetzal. When Tecún Umán died fighting the Spaniards, the quetzal swooped down from the trees and bathed himself in the prince's blood, as a show of honor and remembrance. That is why male quetzals have red chests.



Feather Facts!

- During mating season, male quetzals grow tail feathers that can measure up to 1 meter in length
- The scientific name for Quetzals is *Pharomachrus mocinno*
- There are five species of quetzals, the white-tipped quetzal, the crested quetzal, the golden-headed quetzal, the resplendent quetzal, and the pavonine quetzal
- The word 'quetzal' comes from the word 'quetzalli', which is Nahuatl (Aztec) for "large brilliant tail feather"
- Quetzals must nest in old or rotting wood because their beaks and talons are not strong enough to penetrate live wood

Quetzalcoatl

Quetzalcoatl is the Aztec equivalent of the Mayan 'Quetzal Serpent'. In the Aztec language, Nahuatl, the word Quetzalcoatl means 'Feathered Serpent.' Quetzalcoatl plays a key role in many Aztec myths, including one where he creates the universe. Not only this, but he is the god of wind, creator of books and the calendar. He was even used as a symbol of death and resurrection. He is the son of the other creator gods Omoteotl. He was known throughout the Aztec world for many things, including his quetzal-ness.

Quetzals and Us

Like many animals, Quetzals have been in contact with humans for quite some time. In ancient Mesoamerica, some nobility would wear the quetzals splendid feathers on their head dresses. But, it was a crime to kill a quetzal, so how did they get the feathers? They would capture the quetzal, pluck its tail feathers and set it free. In some

Mesoamerican languages "Quetzal" meant "sacred" or "precious." In Mayan cultures, the quetzal was a symbol of wealth and freedom. Even today,



quetzals are important. Guatemalan money is called ‘the quetzal’ because of how in the Mayan days, the quetzal's tail feathers were used as currency.

Quetzals:

Quetzals may be known for being unknown, but they don't have to be. They are beautiful, shining birds with so much rich history and lore surrounding them and their glorious feathers. They are so much more than just “A TINY PEACOCK MIXED WITH A PARROT.” Quetzals are gardeners. Quetzals are currency. Quetzals are a lifeline.

Learn more about the incredible Quetzal:

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

[Source 3](#) (go here if you want to hear a quetzal, just scroll down to ‘Songs and Sounds)

[Source 4](#)

[Source 5](#)

[Source 6](#)

[Source 7](#)

[Source 8](#)

Please appreciate these quetzal photos :)

