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*Passiflora manicata* (Juss.) Pers., 1807 - San Gabriel, Carchi (Ecuador)

### THE GENUS *PASSIFLORA* Linnaeus, 1753.

The genus *Passiflora* Linnaeus, 1753 known also as the passion flowers or passion vines, belongs to the family Passifloraceae including more than 530 species. They are mostly perennial lianas or herbaceous vines, with some being trees, shrubs, or even annuals. They are more common and differentiated into Central and South America, but some species also live in North America, Australian Region and Asia.

Pollination is mainly carried out by insects, birds, bats and some species are currently considered protocarnivorous plants. Often, *Passiflora* are cultivated for ornamental purposes, food and medication.

The wide morphological variation is likely to result from the diversity of the habitats as well as from co-evolutionary relationships with many organisms (protective ants, butterflies, pollinators) and plant communities providing *Passiflora* physical support and access to sunlight.

Because of particular biology and distribution, *Passiflora* species, and Passifloraceae in general, can be considered excellent indicators of biodiversity in the Andean region.

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#### 1) *Passiflora pinnatistipula* Cav., 1799

Ecuador, Cotopaxi, Sigchos, 3,100 m, 12.V.2010 (photo G. Onore). This species lives in humid Andean valleys at altitudes between 2,500 and 3,800 m above sea level. Often it is also cultivated for its fruits which are edible. *P. pinnatistipula* is pollinated by hummingbirds, bats, and is often visited by Hymenoptera and Diptera; it is also capable of self-pollination. It's an endangered species due to the destruction of its original habitat.



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#### 2) *Passiflora arborea* Spreng., 1826

Bosque nublado Otonga, San Francisco de Las Pampas, 7.VIII.2011 (photo G. Onore). It is one of the few arboreal species of *Passiflora* and lives mostly in the rainforest between 1,000 to 2,300 m above sea level. It is found also along the rivers and in the most degraded areas, such as the edges of pastures and roads. A species of the genus *Anastrepha* Schiner, 1868 (Diptera, Tephritidae) uses the fruits of this plant for larvae development.



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Cover. *Passiflora manicata*: San Gabriel, Carchi, Ecuador, 2,700 m above sea level, 7.VII.2011 (photo G. Onore).