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# Preserving Tradition and Native Bird Populations: The Feather Distribution Project

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**N**ote: The place names in the first section of this article are modern. Archaeologists do not know the ancient name of the town we now call Pueblo Bonito ("beautiful town" in Spanish). We do not know the ancient names for what we call Chaco Canyon and New Mexico. We do not know the names by which the ancient inhabitants of these places referred to themselves. We usually refer to them as Anasazi. But Anasazi is a Navajo term meaning "ancient ones" or "ancient enemies," and the Navajo had not yet arrived in the Southwest from their homeland in interior northwestern North America at the time when the first part of this account takes place. Indeed, the Navajo did not migrate into the Southwest for another 400+ years. Finally, archaeologists do not know the term the ancient inhabitants of Chaco Canyon used to refer to the winter solstice, or if they named or numbered the years.

What we do know is that they built Pueblo Bonito and about 10 other large pueblos in and adjacent to Chaco Canyon plus hundreds of smaller villages and hamlets in the canyon and its immediate environs. They also built several dozen more large towns in the surrounding area. We do know that they worshiped the sun and used its apparent movements along the horizon to create a solar calendar by which they planned and implemented the religious, economic, and political activities that structured their lives. And we know that they kept and used macaws and parrots for ritual activities. The remains of more than 400 macaws have been found at archaeological sites in the American Southwest; objects with macaw feathers still preserved have also been found; and macaws and parrots are the most common animals depicted in murals discovered at Pottery Mound, New Mexico, Awatovi, Arizona, and at

other ancient towns and villages.

We know from Pueblo oral histories and myths that birds have been important to these peoples from the distant past to the present. The Hopi of north-eastern Arizona recount how birds helped lead them from the Underworld into this, the Fourth World.

Archaeological excavations also confirm the importance of birds in ancient Pueblo life. The Pueblos domesticated turkeys from wild turkeys perhaps 1,500 years ago. Turkey burials in which the (now) skeletal remains are adorned with jewelry and other grave goods attest to the importance of the turkey, as do the remnants of turkey feather robes and numerous artifacts made from turkey bones.

Most birds — eagles, hawks, ducks, and a wide variety of others — were obtained locally, but the majority of macaws and parrots were imported (The Military Macaw [*Ara militaris*] and the Thick-billed Parrot [*Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*], however, were indigenous in what is now southern Arizona and northern Mexico. Curiously, they were less utilized than more distant species).

Casas Grandes in Chihuahua, Mexico, a large, urban site that was destroyed in the 15th century, was a major breeding and distribution center for Scarlet Macaws (*Ara macao*). Blue-and-Gold Macaws (*Ara ararauna*) were also present at Anasazi sites. The skeleton of at least one Lilac-crowned Amazon Parrot (*Amazona finschi*) has been excavated in the Southwest and might be the most distant import. In summary, birds and their feathers were critical resources for Pueblo life, especially for religious ceremonies, and they still are today.

**Winter Solstice,  
Pueblo Bonito, Chaco Canyon, NM**  
Shortly before daybreak, the old

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man, wrapped in a turkey feather robe, stands in the small, second story room in the southeastern section of the village and gazes out through the diagonal window in the wall. He is the Sun Priest, and he waits patiently for Father Sun to climb above the horizon. Sun Father's appearance today marks the winter solstice sunrise and signals the start of the New Year as Sun Father begins his journey back toward the north and the warmth of summer. The year has no number, but this solstice sunrise occurs about 500 years before an Italian man known as Columbus, in service to the Spanish royal court, discovers the continent on which the Sun Priest's village stands. Sunrise today takes place more than 550 years before the first Spaniards enter this part of Nueva España (New Spain) that they will refer to as Nuevo Méjico (New Mexico). By our calendar, the year is sometime between A.D. 950 and 1000, and the date is December 21st.

Father Sun arrives in a flash followed by a burst of brilliant light. He has kept his promise and returned to start the New Year. His son, the Sun Priest, is pleased. He recites his prayers of welcome, pulls his robe tightly around himself for warmth, and then turns to begin a short walk to the north section of Pueblo Bonito. Here he enters a room where several Scarlet Macaws perch. Sun Father needs to be welcomed and thanked properly in ceremonies from now until the summer solstice in June, and the beautiful red feathers of the Scarlet Macaw are needed for this purpose. The long tail feathers are especially prized.

## Cochiti Pueblo, NM (July 14, 1968)

I have just finished watching the Corn Dance at the Cochiti Pueblo Feast Day along with hundreds of other people, Anglos and Indians alike. Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*) and Blue-and-Gold (*Ara ararauna*) Macaw tail feathers were prominent on several ceremonial objects, testimony to the fact that the Pueblos continue to use these feathers in traditional religious ceremonies as they have for more than 1,000 years.

As I prepare to leave, a short, wiry, late middle-aged man approaches. I know him; he is a good friend of one

A & Z Exotics, Waddell, AZ  
 A to Z Exotic Birds, Chapin, SC  
 Adventures in Birds, Houston, TX  
 Albuquerque Aviaries, Albuquerque, NM  
 Allen's Aviaries, Rutherford, CA  
 American Bird Center, Goulds, FL  
 American Bird Products, Locust Grove, VA  
 And Feathers Bird Studio, Chicago, IL  
 Animal Crackers, Greendale, WI  
 Animal Environments, Carlsbad, CA  
 Aves International, Rancho Pales Verde, CA  
 Avian Acres Exotic Bird Farm, Flemington, NJ  
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 Avian Resources, San Dimas, CA  
 Aviary of Naples, Naples, FL  
 B & C Aviary Toys, Port St. Lucie, FL  
 Baker, Joseph III, Kurtistown, HI  
 Bell's Exotics, Inc., Wrightsville, GA  
 Bird Crazy, Inc. San Diego, CA  
 Bird Fever, Indianapolis, IN  
 Bird Gardens, Beaverton, OR  
 Bird Mart Pet Shop, Boquero, PR  
 Bird Times, Greensboro, NC  
 Birdeez Nutrition Center, Chandler, AZ  
 Birdlady's Babes, Atascadero, CA  
 Birds & Beasts, Yorba Linda, CA  
 Birds Nest, Gurley, AL  
 Blackstone Aviaries, Escondido, CA  
 Blue Skies Aviary, Toledo, OH  
 Boston Exotics, Action, MA  
 Boundaries Unlimited, Inc., Gotha, FL  
 Breeder Bird, Sylmar, CA  
 Brennan, Sandra & Martin, Edgewood, NM  
 Brinsea Products, Inc., Titusville, FL  
 C & F Parrot Farm, Chorus Christi, TX  
 Cagemasters, Inc., Loxahatchee, FL  
 Calderin, Victor O., Coral Gables, FL  
 Cedar Hill Aviary, Northbranch, NY  
 Clarkson, Sunny, Phoenix, AZ  
 Clifton Bird Farm, Mesa, AZ  
 Corners Ltd., Inc., Kalamazoo, MI  
 Country Critters, Patchogue, NY  
 Creative Bird Accessories, CT  
 Crystal Parrot, Southampton, MA  
 Cattlebone Plus, Fallbrook, CA  
 Denise's Parrot Place, Mercer Island, WA  
 Di Vinci, Ltd., Las Vegas, NV  
 Diamante Ranch & Aviaries, Bulverde, TX  
 DiLorenzo, Ronald, Endicott, NY  
 Exotic Birds, Richard Gilmore, Graham, TX  
 Expandable Habitats, Rockton, IL  
 F & D Exotics, Princeton, FL  
 F M Brown's Sons, Inc. Sinking Springs, PA  
 Family Farms Equines & Exotics, Nuevo, CA  
 Fancy Publications, Los Angeles, CA  
 Fantastic Feathers, Port St. Lucie, FL  
 Featherhaven Exotics, Smithfield, NC  
 Feeding Tech, Nineveh, IN  
 First Flight, Belleville, IL  
 For Pet's Sake, Decator, GA  
 Fouts, Barry G. & Pat, Lakeland, FL  
 Fox's Feather Farm, Watsonville, CA  
 Franklin, Judy, Northfield, IL  
 Frey, Dr. Walter H., Idabel, OK  
 Friedman, Alan P., Baltimore, OH  
 Garlington, Monica  
 Ginny's Jungle, Andover, NJ  
 Grady, Rosemary, Woodbine, IA  
 Graze, Timothee B., Clinton, CT  
 Grein, Marie, Queen's Village, NY  
 Hand-raised Exotics/Bebe Turck, West Hurley, NY  
 Harris, Catherine Gorka & Howard, Stockton, CA  
 Hartfelder, Mineka, Saginaw, MI  
 Hauer, Sandy, Dover, PA  
 Hessler, M. Jean, Costa Mesa, CA  
 Hidden Forest Wildlife Art Gallery, Fallbrook, CA  
 Hill Country Aviaries, LLC, Dripping Springs, TX  
 Hookbill Aviaries, Center Ridge, AR  
 Huntington, Sally & Vince, San Diego, CA  
 Jaax, Nancy, Myersville, MD  
 J E R Birds, Inc., Ocean Grove, NJ  
 Jaax, Nancy, Myersville, MD  
 Jungle Enterprises, Homestead, FL  
 Just Parrots, Lexington, SC  
 Karcher, David, Newville, AL  
 Kaytee Products, Inc., Chilton, WI  
 Kellogg's Inc, Madison, WI  
 Kennedy, Robert L. & Jami, Canyon Country, CA

Kissies Workshop, Plant City, FL  
 Kookaburra Pets, Carrollton, TX  
 L'Avian Plus Pet Products, Stephen, MN  
 L/M Animal Farms, Pleasant Plain, OH  
 LGL Ecological Research Associates, Bryan, TX  
 Lafeber Company, Cornell, IL  
 Lape, Kristine, Hillsboro, OR  
 Le Page, Jim & Mary Ellen, Redwood Estates, CA  
 Lima's Exotic Birds, Woodland Hills, CA  
 Limon, Jeff, San Antonio, TX  
 Little Friar Aviary, Philadelphia, PA  
 Living Design, Inc, Worthing, SD  
 Livingston Animal & Avian, Lutz, FL  
 Lyon Electric Co., chula Vista, CA  
 M & M Artistic Designs, Houston, TX  
 M & S Aviaries & Pet Supplies, Bandera, TX  
 Magic Zoo, Rough and Ready, CA  
 Marshall, Patrick & Nanette, Spring Branch, TX  
 Marshall, Shirley, Jacksonville, FL  
 McCabe, E.P., Jr., MD, San Antonio, TX  
 Morning Star Aviary, Ragley, LA  
 Moyer, Donna, Mohnton, PA  
 Mt Olympus Aviaries, Salt Lake City, UT  
 Northcoast Bird Adoption & Rehab, Twinsburg, OH  
 Norton, David, Tacoma, WA  
 O'Connor, Mike & Sharon, Glendale, AZ  
 Old World Aviaries, Austin, TX  
 "P" Patch, The, Benton, MS  
 Parrot Domain, Fredricksburg, VA  
 Parrot Jungle and Garden, Miami, FL  
 Parrot Perch Aviaries, Las Vegas, NV  
 Parrot-dise, Anderson, SC  
 Pasadena Parrots, Inc., Pasadena, CA  
 Patty's Parrots, Booneville, MS  
 Perches by Bear, Sayk Village, IL  
 Pet Power, Inc., Phoenix, AZ  
 Pettin' Place, Reno, NV  
 Picture Perfect Parrot, Berea, OH  
 Poole, Cheryl & Rober, West Monroe, LA  
 Pretty Bird International, Inc., Stacy, MN  
 Prevue/Hendryx, Chicago, IL  
 Proetto, Miguel, Argentina  
 Queen, Robert, Sr., & Virginia, Riverside, CA  
 R & M Aviaries, Hunlock Creek, PA  
 R & R Bird Gardens, MO  
 RLI Enterprises, Salt Lake, UT  
 Rain Forest Exotics, Inc., Conroe, TX  
 Rhynd., Doug & Phyllis Perris, CA  
 Richardson, Colleen H., Eden, MD  
 Robinson, DY Anna, Austin, TX  
 Rolf C. Hagen, (USA) Corp., Mansfield, OH  
 Ronie's for the Love of Birds, Sandy, UT  
 Roth, Janice, Baltimore, MD  
 Royal Bird & Supply Co, Lincolnton, NC  
 Saddleback Farm, Rossville, TN  
 Santa Barbara Bird Farm, Santa Barbara, CA  
 Saunder's, W. B., Stockton, CA  
 Saunder's, W. B., Owings Mills, MD  
 Scarlet Orchard Aviaries, Otis Orchards, WA  
 Schults Bird Farm, Langhorne, PA  
 Schwartz, Judy, Brookesville, FL  
 Sharp, Mac, Plant City, FL  
 Skyline Garden, Jamul, CA  
 Snell, Robert & Rosalie, Buffalo, MO  
 Spence, Susan, Richmond, VA  
 Steger, Barbara, Lexington, KY  
 Stuart, Carolyn & Thomas, Alvin, TX  
 Sugarcreek Bird Farm, Bellbrook, OH  
 Sun Seed Company, Bowling Green, OH  
 Sunshine Bird Supplies, Miami, FL  
 Swan Creek Supply, Saginaw, MI  
 T & M Birds, St. George, UT  
 Torrey's Parrot Place, Spokane, WA  
 Tradewinds Exotic Birds, Terry, MS  
 Tucker Farms, Estancia, NM  
 Up At Six Aviaries, Bosque, NM  
 Urban Bird, New York, NY  
 Valera, Elizabeth, Chicago, IL  
 Verde Squirts Aviary, Long Beach, CA  
 Waterloo Wings Stained Glass, Chelsea, MI  
 Web Ranch Bfmstrs & Birds, Mooreland, OK  
 Weinberg Int/NEKTON USA, Tarpon Springs, FL  
 Whilhit, Mike, Garland, TX  
 Willow Creek Aviary, Richland, WA  
 Wyl'd's Wingdom, Norfolk, VA  
 Yale University Press, New Haven, CT  
 Yvonne's Swings and Things, Rochester, NY  
 Ziegler Bros, Inc., Gardner, PA  
 Zupreem, Mission, KS

of my graduate school professors. We discuss the dance briefly, and then he asks, "Can you get us macaw feathers?"

"No. I don't know where to get them. Sorry."

"It's okay. Possibly you will think of something."

### Ottawa, IL (February 2, 1982)

I am in the Hillside Pet Shop to buy rawhide chew bones for my Brittany Spaniel. In one corner is a sign, "Corby's Corner," and beneath it is a Scarlet Macaw. The floor is littered with feathers. The question from 1968 pops into my mind.

I pay for the bones, introduce myself, and ask, "What do you do with Corby's feathers?"

"Why?"

I explain that Pueblo Indians in New Mexico and Arizona use macaw feathers for their religious ceremonies and have for more than 1,000 years. The shop owner tells me he throws away the feathers. I ask him to save them for me and he agrees. I leave the store with a couple of dozen Scarlet Macaw feathers and a few Amazon

parrot feathers.

Later that year, while on a research trip, I visit the Cochiti man who first requested the feathers. After mutual greetings, I hand him a package containing several hundred macaw and parrot feathers. He opens the package, and his eyes widen as he sees the contents. He takes a breath from the feathers to absorb their spiritual power, thanks me, and says, "You thought of something." The Feather Distribution Project has begun.

### The Feather Distribution Project, Springfield, IL (1998)

The Feather Distribution Project is now well into its 17th year of operation. To date, it has provided some 4,500,000 macaw, parrot, and wild turkey feathers to Pueblo tribes in New Mexico and Arizona for use in traditional religious ceremonies. The feathers are provided free-of-charge, as gifts. Nothing is asked in return. The Project neither buys nor sells feathers though it does reimburse donors' shipping costs. Because the Pueblos are generous and appreciative peoples,

they sometimes reciprocate by giving jewelry or other items to the Project. These are distributed to those who donate feathers: the zoo workers who collect molted feathers, bird club members, breeders, turkey hunters, and others. The Project is not operated for financial or material gain.

What began as a response to a request by one man from one Pueblo has developed into a national network. Feathers arrive from various sources around the U.S. Macaw and parrot feathers come from zoos such as the Aquarium of the Americas and the Audubon Zoo (both in New Orleans), the Brookfield Zoo (Chicago), and the Belle Isle Zoo (Detroit); bird clubs such as the Kentuckiana Bird Club in Louisville are major contributors, as are organizations of bird clubs such as the Bird Clubs of Virginia. The Tropics Exotic Bird Refuge and other sanctuaries provide molted feathers; breeders and bird owners also donate large numbers of feathers, and some, such as G & G Aviary in Springfield, IL have done so for more than 10 years. Corby is now 72 years old, and his feathers are still being sent to the Pueblos. No macaws or parrots are killed or otherwise harmed to provide feathers, although several owners whose birds died have provided their feathers. Of the 4,500,000 feathers the Project has distributed, about 2,000,000 are macaw and parrot feathers.

Zoos also donate wild turkey feathers, but turkey hunters, especially members of The National Wild Turkey Federation, donate most of them. These donations conserve a resource that would otherwise be wasted as a byproduct of hunting. The Project has distributed about 2,500,000 wild turkey feathers and will surpass 3,000,000 feathers by the end of 1998.

All the macaws and parrots traditionally used by the Pueblos are now threatened or endangered and protected by CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna), and a federal permit is required to import them. The Project does not need an importation permit because we do not import birds or feathers; the vast majority of macaw and parrot feathers come from captive bred and raised

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*Pueblo Bonita, Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, as seen from the top of the cliff on its north side. The room for observing the winter solstice sunrise is in upper left hand corner of the site (southeastern room complex of the Pueblo).*



birds. We do, however, have a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to distribute those feathers that come from imported birds seized and quarantined by law enforcement officials. Less than 1% of the feathers come from this source.

All feathers received at the Illinois State Museum are immediately placed in the freezer, as per Museum policy, to prevent possible damage to our collections from insects, bacteria, etc. After a suitable time, the feathers are removed, washed, dried, sorted, and packed for shipping or hand delivery to the Pueblos. Tail feathers and wing feathers are individually counted, but other feathers — the vast majority — are tallied by weighing 50-200 of each type. Weight-number equivalencies have been established for all the feathers distributed by the Project, and using weight, we ship or deliver packs of up to 1,000 feathers of each type. Depending upon their request and our supply at the time, Pueblo individuals receive anywhere from several hundred to several thousand feathers in each shipment or delivery.

To obtain feathers from the Project, Pueblo Indians are asked to fill out two forms, one for wild turkey feathers, the other for macaw and parrot feathers. The information is entered into a computer database, and we use this to try to deliver the requested feathers before

they are needed. Of course, supply and demand do not always coincide, and demand is almost always greater than supply. As is the case with all Pueblo religious matters, this file is completely confidential. Names of recipients are never divulged or discussed, even to other members of the same Pueblo, except with the express permission of each individual,

As an anthropologist, I am deeply interested in Pueblo religious and ceremonial life. I am particularly interested in how feathers are distributed within the Pueblos and used by individuals, both today and in comparison with the past (see above). Such specific information, however, is never requested and if volunteered, is never published. No sacred information is ever released for research or other purposes. This reinforces the fact that the feathers are an outright gift and not a means to acquiring sacred knowledge for dissemination to other anthropologists or to the public.

The original purpose of the Project was to provide the Pueblos with the macaw, parrot, and wild turkey feathers needed for the practice of their traditional religious observances and to help the Pueblos secure their First Amendment rights to freedom of religion. Two unplanned results have developed during the 17+ years of operation: first, the Project is helping to

reduce the smuggling of live birds and feathers from Latin America into the American Southwest, though it is difficult to assess with precision the degree to which this has helped; and second, it alleviates some of the stress on the native bird populations and their habitats in Latin America.

How has this happened? When this Project began, the Pueblos paid from 25¢ for a small macaw or parrot body feather up to \$100 for a long, perfect, Scarlet Macaw tail feather. Many, perhaps most of these feathers came from illegal imports, though the Pueblos did not know the sources. Advertisements offering to buy macaw feathers appeared in some bird magazines. The approximately 2,000,000 macaw and parrot feathers that the Project has distributed free-of-charge would have been worth perhaps \$18-20 million on the illegal market. By distributing large numbers of feathers without charge, the Project has managed to eliminate most of the commercial dealers. Some Pueblo individuals still purchase feathers, but most obtain them from the Project. The price of Scarlet Macaw tail feathers has dropped to \$25-35, and there are few buyers. Advertisements in bird magazines are now rare. The decreased commercial market means that relatively few birds and their habitats are exploited and destroyed to provide feathers for the Pueblos and



other American Indian groups. Nevertheless, the smuggling of "pet" birds across the U.S. and Mexican border remains a lucrative business in some places in the Southwest.

### The Pueblos Today

The Pueblos still revere birds and need their feathers for religious rites. Feathers are used in a wide range of ceremonial contexts, and special feather holders are used to store and protect them when not in use.

By federal law, many American Indians are permitted to possess eagle, hawk, macaw, parrot, and other feathers from threatened, endangered, and migratory species. Even so, they often find it difficult to obtain enough feathers for their religious needs.

Wild turkey feathers are also in short supply, and few Pueblo individuals now raise turkeys.

The shortage becomes clear when we consider the needs of one large Pueblo. A prayer stick often has at least three wild turkey feathers on it. If a man makes 80 prayer sticks per year, then he uses 240 wild turkey feathers annually. If there are 500 men in the Pueblo making prayer sticks, then 120,000 turkey feathers are required for this one religious activity. An adult

turkey has about 1,200 usable feathers, but only about half are suitable for prayer sticks. Thus, the feathers from about 200 turkeys are necessary to meet the needs for prayer sticks for just one Pueblo. Still more are needed for other ceremonial paraphernalia and costumes though, unlike prayer sticks, these last two might be used for years rather than once. When macaw, parrot, eagle, hawk, cardinal, bluejay, blue bird, magpie, flicker, duck, and other birds are taken into consideration, the number of feathers required by the more than two dozen Pueblo villages is enormous.

### Future Plans

Although the Project receives donations of macaw, parrot, and wild turkey feathers from dozens of contributors, the demand continues to exceed the supply. New donors are always needed, especially because some of the larger donors such as zoos have reduced or eliminated their macaw and parrot populations in favor of other animals.

Replacement donors are often difficult to find, and many donors give feathers once and then never again.

The Pueblos could once again become self-sufficient with respect to

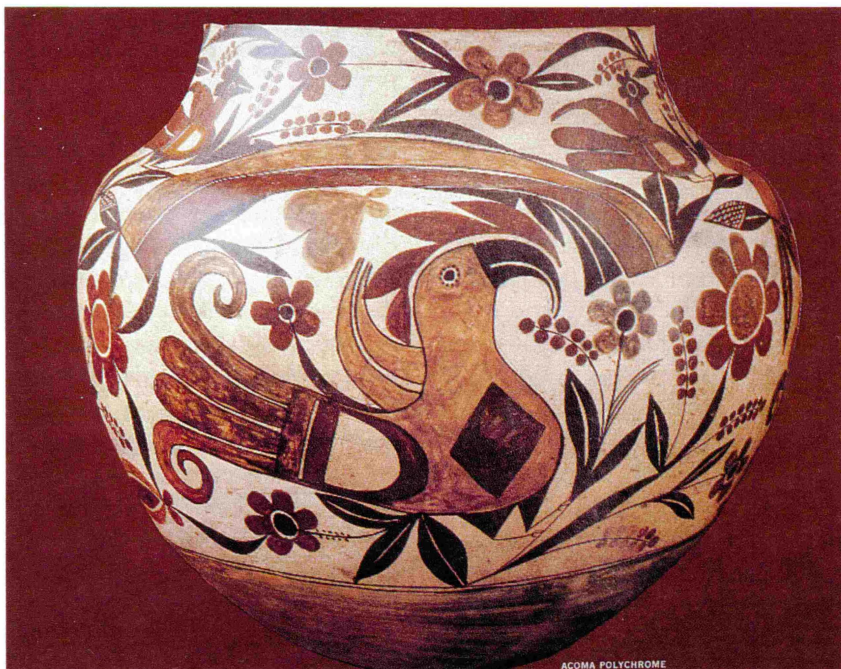
their needs for feathers; indeed they must become self-sufficient because The Feather Distribution Project cannot continue indefinitely. A five-year plan has been developed toward this end and is currently under consideration. It differs from one that I proposed two years ago, one with which some readers might be familiar. It must be noted that neither this plan nor any other can succeed without approval by the Pueblos and their cooperation in all phases of its establishment and operation. The five-year timetable should allow for the recruitment and training of the necessary professional personnel, as well as for the construction of the proposed facility. This timetable is flexible, however, so if additional time is needed to ensure the success of the proposed project, then more time can be allotted. The goal is to establish a first class facility operated in accordance with modern avicultural standards and practices.

The first part of the proposed plan earmarks a small portion of income from Pueblo gambling casinos to build a macaw and parrot sanctuary, including a full-scale avian clinic. As with similar sanctuaries that now exist elsewhere in the U.S., the Pueblo facility would house unwanted birds, overage breeding pairs, and, perhaps, abused birds that would be accepted and placed in a large, semi-free flight aviary located on Pueblo land in either New Mexico or northeastern Arizona. All birds would come from the U.S.; no birds would be imported so there would be no diminution of the endangered and threatened wild populations in Latin America.

The birds would be well cared for; indeed, before any birds would be accepted, a professional staff (avian veterinarian, trained assistants, et al.) would have to be recruited, and additional staff would have to be hired and trained. There would be an educational program for those Pueblo people who might already own macaws and parrots to improve the general care of these birds as well. Pueblo people with birds would have access to the avian health care facilities at the aviary.

The aviary would be a tourist attraction, and molted feathers would be collected and distributed for use in reli-

Photo by Gary Andrashko  
Illinois State Museum staff photographer



*Acoma Polychrome jar with painted macaw motif.*



gious ceremonies. Given the situation around the U.S., this facility could quickly house several hundred macaws and parrots, or about the number we find at ancient Southwest sites when the Pueblo population was substantially larger than it is today. All Feather Distribution Project records would also be turned over to the Pueblos so that they can continue to receive donations of feathers from outside sources and to solicit new ones. This aviary should also provide jobs for Pueblo people, a matter of critical importance to Pueblo economic well being.

It is worth noting here that one Pueblo is already involved in the sanctuary program: the Zuni Fish and Wildlife Department, in cooperation with the federal government, is building a raptor sanctuary and rehabilitation facility on the Zuni Reservation. This project requires strict adherence to federal law, rules, and regulations, and the Zuni will operate the facility in accordance with modern avicultural standards and practices

As noted earlier, Scarlet Macaws were successfully bred at the site of Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, Mexico for several hundred years and exported from there to sites in the ancient American Southwest. The late Charles DiPeso, who excavated Casas Grandes, unearthed an entire breeding facility with the remains of everything from macaw eggs through aged macaws, all of which were lost when the city was destroyed in the late 15th century.

The second part of the plan involves wild turkeys. This is of less interest to *Watchbird* readers and is not discussed further except to note: 1) that the National Wild Turkey Federation has restocked the wild turkey population at Zuni Pueblo and that the Zuni Fish and Wildlife Department is successfully managing the resultant wild population; and 2) as mentioned above, the Pueblos domesticated turkeys over 1,000 years ago and had large populations in their villages until World War II.

To be effective, however, the entire plan must be conducted as a pan-Pueblo undertaking. Some Pueblos would provide financial resources; others would provide land, food, and labor. Pueblo people would be offered



*San Juan Pueblo feather holder made of willow sticks bound with leather. Closed position.*



*San Juan Pueblo feather holder with macaw and wild turkey feathers. Open position.*

educational opportunities to become trained in modern aviculture, especially as avian veterinarians, as various technical specialists, as bird keepers, and in other necessary occupations.

Feathers would be distributed accordingly, and any income in excess of expenditures would be used as an endowment and to expand the facility, if necessary. If the Pueblos ultimately accept this plan and manage it successfully, they should become self-suf-

ficient with regard to their needs for macaw, parrot, and wild turkey feathers. If so, then this should further reduce the smuggling of macaws and parrots into the Southwest and lessen, again, the destructive pressures on bird populations in Latin America — at least those not due to the general destruction of the rainforests and other habitats. Thus, The Feather Distribution Project would ultimately succeed by becoming obsolete and unnecessary.