Bird remains in the Mimbres region

Bird remains are seldom abundant in archaeological assemblages in the Mimbres region of southwestern New Mexico. Despite their relatively low frequency, bird remains are often of interesting or unusual archaeological contexts, and provide information on cultural practices and local and regional environmental conditions.

This study examines data from over 70 archaeological assemblages from the Mimbres region, including the Reserve (upper San Francisco), upper Gila, Mimbres Valley, and eastern Mimbres drainage areas. Bird use varies over time at a regional scale, with changes in the relative abundance of important taxa. Specific taxa are also linked to particular types of cultural deposits.

### Important bird taxa

Some taxa stood out as more common than other birds; these important taxa were represented by more than 10 elements in any drainage area and time period (interments and partial interments were counted as one occurrence). Additional taxa with smaller numbers of identified specimens (NISP) but particularly interesting contexts were also noted.

### Important taxa by time and area

#### Eagles, hawks, and falcons

- **Acipernidae and Falconidae** present in every time period
  - Species of note include red-tailed hawks (Buteo jamaicensis), ferruginous hawks (B. regalis), golden eagle (Aquila chrysaetos), American kestrel (Falco sparverius), and peregrine falcons (F. peregrinus)
  - Most abundant AD 500–1130 in Reserve area (especially Luna Village), upper Gila (especially Wind-Mountain), and Mimbres Valley (especially Montezuma)
  - Hawk burials in Reserve area (Hough, Wood Canyon), upper Gila (Wind/Mountain), and Mimbres Valley (NAN Ranch, Montoya)
  - Golden eagle burials in upper Gila (Wind Mountain) and Mimbres Valley (Swarts and NAN Ranch)
  - Kestrel and falcon burials in Reserve area (Luna Village) and Mimbres Valley (NAN Ranch)

#### Turkeys

- Meleagris gallopavo found in all areas and time periods
  - AD 200–500: 20 specimens from the SU site (at least 5 individuals)
  - Somewhat common AD 550–1000 in the same two areas
  - Most abundant AD 1000–1130 in the Mimbres Valley (especially Montezuma) and Reserve area (especially Luna Village and Beauregard)

#### Parrots and macaws

- Psittacidae species of note include scarlet macaw (Ara macao), military macaw (Ara militaris), and thick-billed parrot (Psittacara psittacosa)
  - Important from the south and very rare in every time period
  - Most abundant AD 1000–1130 in the Mimbres Valley
  - Most interred bird taxa occur in a variety of contexts
  - Owls (barn owl, nighthawk, burrowing owl) and Corvidae (jay and raven) strongly associated with kivas
  - Birds interred with human remains most often macaws and parrots, occasionally hawks or turkeys

#### Aboriginal avifauna

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#### contexts of bird interments

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