A large, dark, rounded rock dominates the foreground, covered in ancient petroglyphs. The rock is dark and has a rough, cracked texture. Several petroglyphs are visible, including a large, stylized bird-like figure with long, thin legs and a long, thin neck, and a smaller, more abstract figure. The background shows a desert landscape with dry, yellowish-brown grass and some sparse, green-leaved shrubs. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

# On Wings and Prayers: An Introduction to Rock Art Birds in the Jornada Mogollon/Mimbres Region

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Margaret Berrier (Marglyph)  
Jornada Research Institute



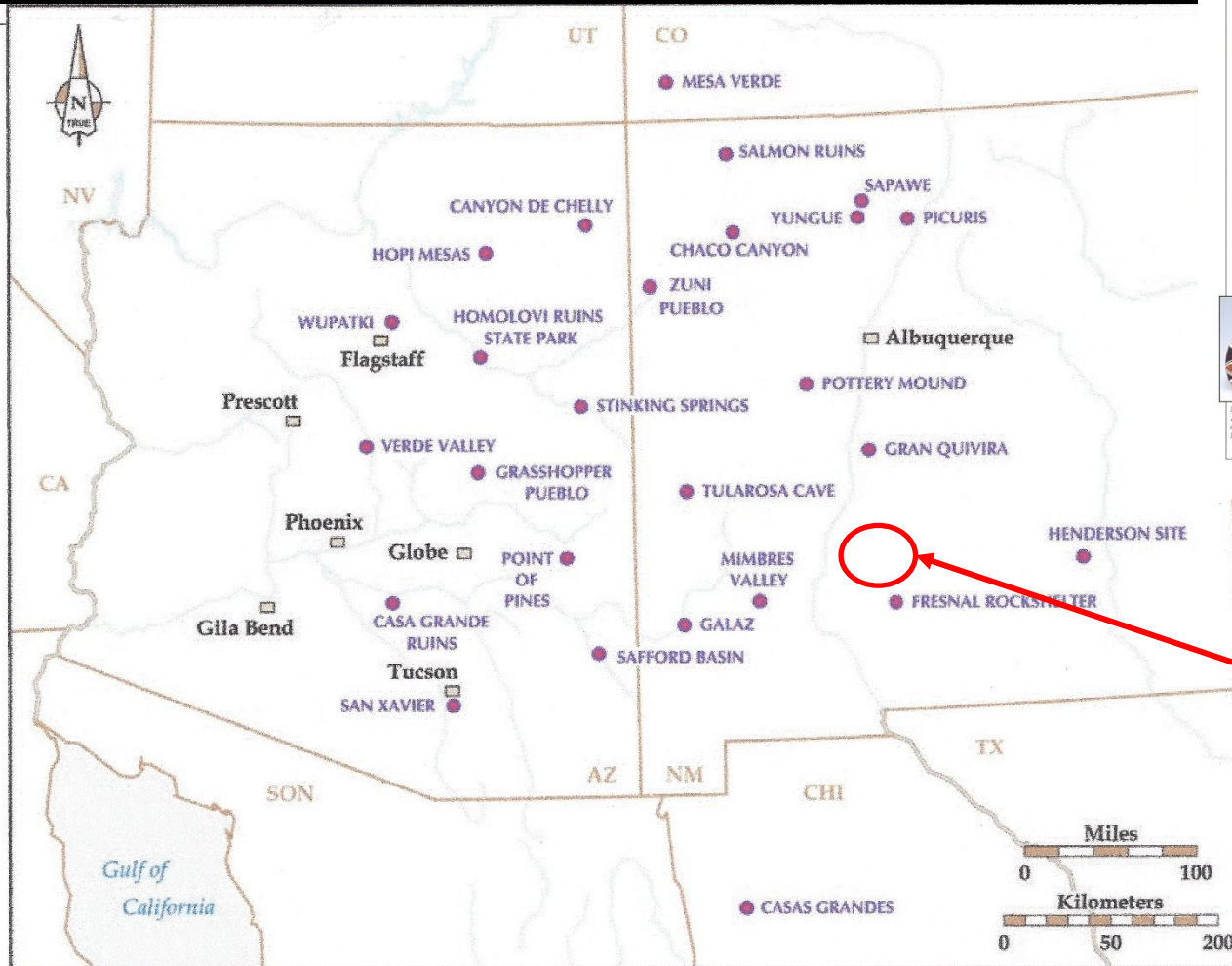
Thanks to  
URARA!



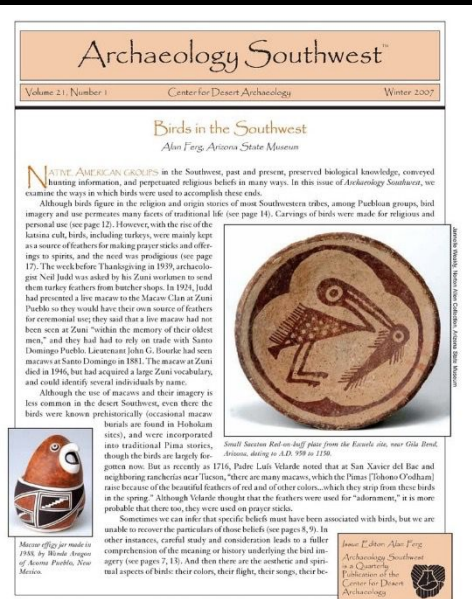
For supporting documentation, research,  
conservation and education  
And for allowing me to speak on the  
Jornada Mogollon. Understanding other  
areas helps us all see a bigger picture.



# Archaeology Southwest 2007 Volume 21:1

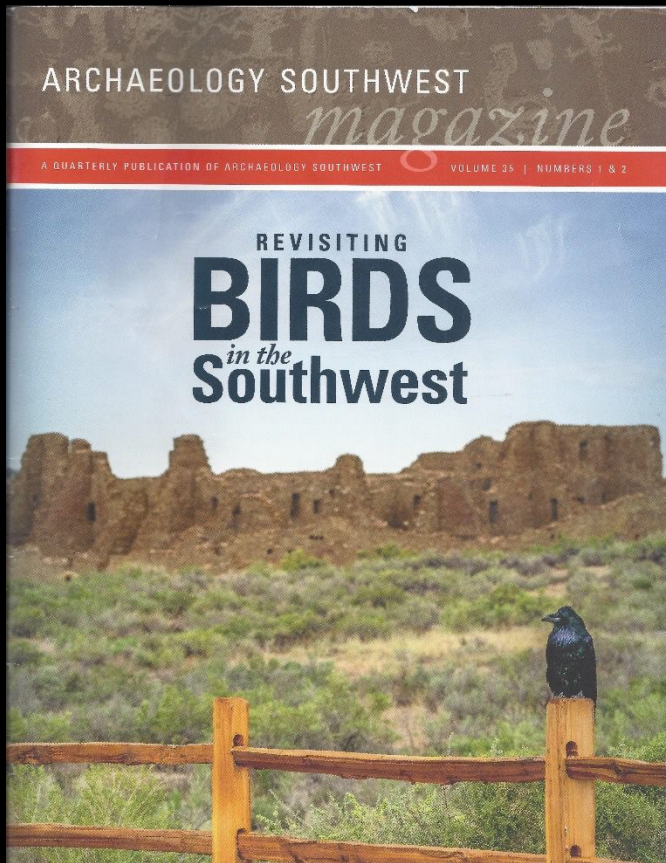


The American Southwest and Mexican Northwest, with major sites mentioned in this issue of Archaeology Southwest highlighted.



Earliest domesticated turkeys – A.D. probably from the West Texas and before that Oklahomaduck

# 2022 Volume 35: No# 1 & 2



TOPICS  
SEVEN on MACAWS  
Two on Chaco  
Four are General  
Six on turkeys  
One on raptors



Major places mentioned in this issue. MAP: CATHERINE GILMAN



# Chaco Canyon, NM

Less than 150 birds while  
footprints are the most  
common elements. 290  
sites documented  
(personal conversation –  
9-18-2025 Jane Kolber)



## Mesa Prieta, NM

Mesa Prieta – unknown – inquiry made but  
no response from their data sharing team



# Mesa Prieta



## **Bird Category**

Crane/Shorebird	24
Duck	10
Joined Birds	1
Knifewing	22
Possible Bird	121
Possible Knife Wing	1
Raptor/Parrot	33
Swallow	53
Thunder Bird	4
Thunder Bird/Knife Wing	52
Turkey	19
Unidentified Bird	271
Total	<b>611</b>





# Birds at Petroglyph National Monument and Creston, NM

Bird Category	PNM#	PNM%	Creston#	Creston%
Crane/Shorebird	6		25	0.5
Ducks	22	0.1	20	0.4
Joined Birds	17		11	0.2
Raptor/Parrot	23	0.1	25	0.4
Swallow	11		25	0.4
Thunder Bird	62	0.2	74	1.5
Turkey	18		12	0.2
Unidentified Bird	453	1.8	308	6.3
	612		500	

% of total # of images at each site



# Jornada Mogollon!

Many of the rock art images in the Jornada are comparable to examples in Mimbres iconography. These images show that like other cultures in the southwest the Jornada Mogollon were fascinated by and valued birds. The Jornada region plays an important part in the pre-contact era of the Southwest, and the abundant avian iconography of the region deserves to be recognized.





Many Indigenous communities have ancestral and cultural ties to the lands of the Jornada Mogollon Region.

These communities include:

The modern Puebloan communities of Zuni, Acoma, Laguna, Hopi, Isleta, Ysleta del Sur, and Tesuque.

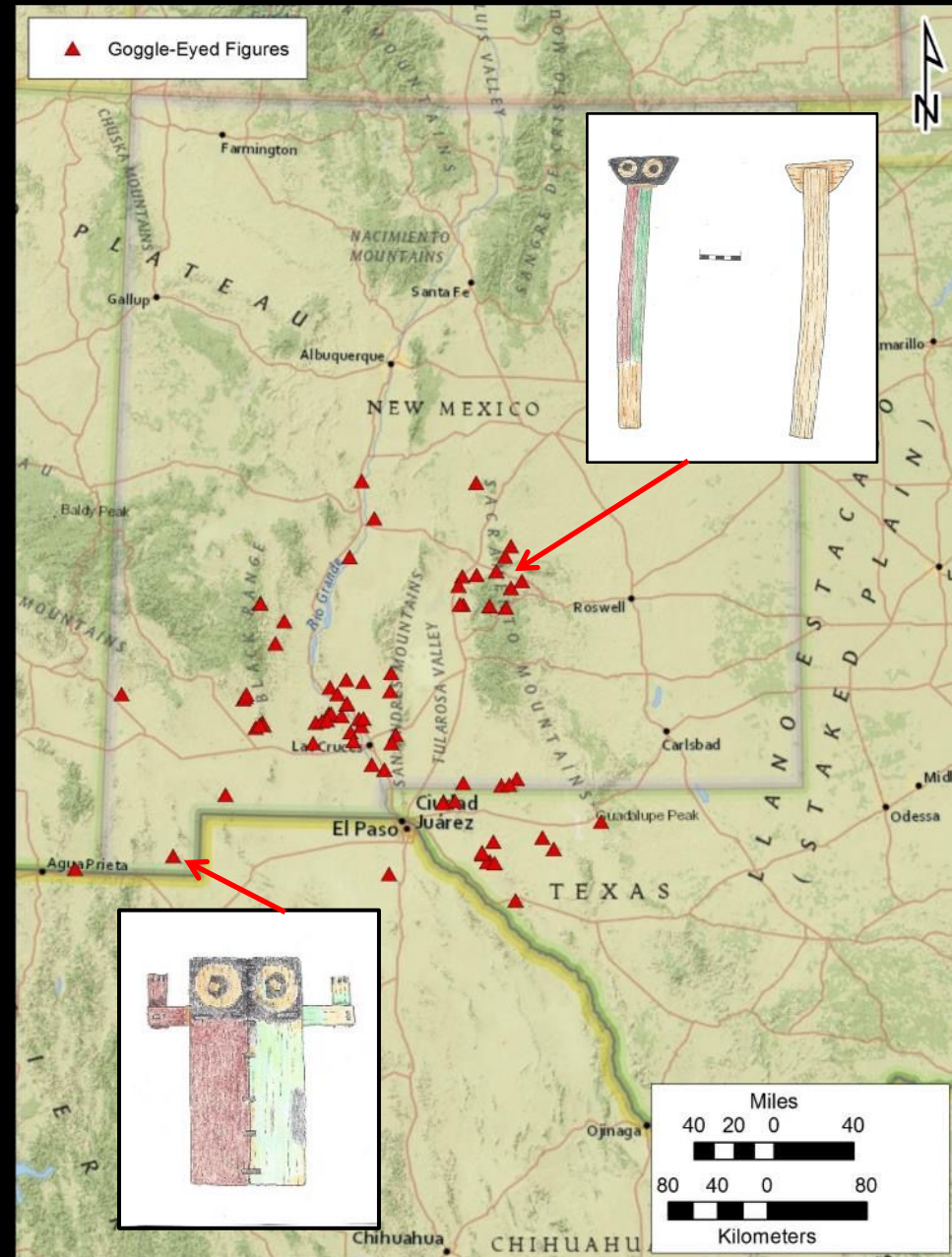
White Mountain Apache, Fort Sill Apache, Mescalero Apache, Lipan Apache, Navajo, Kiowa, and Comanche.

Pueblo of Tortugas and Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe



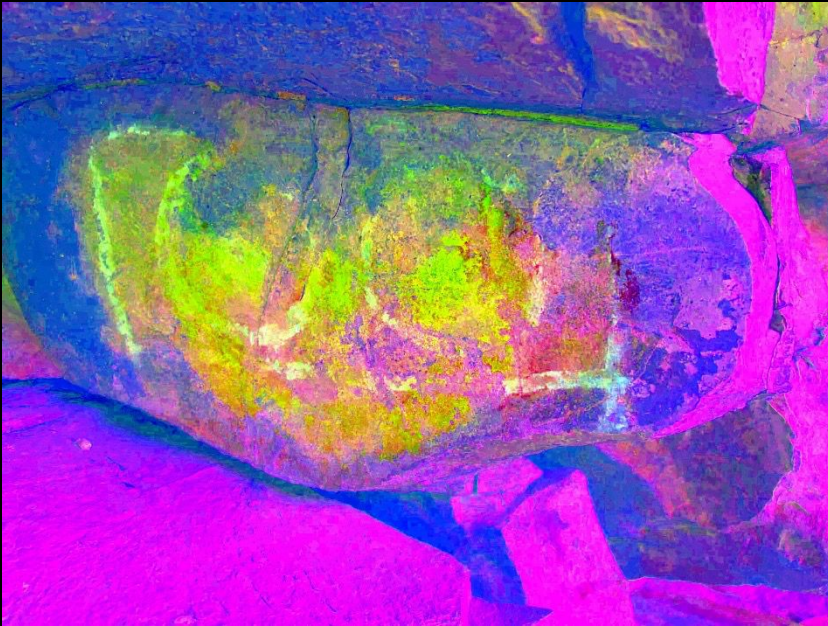
# When - Jornada

- Recent Calibrated radiocarbon age estimates consistently range for Goggle-eyed artifacts is between A.D. 600 and A.D. 900
- The updated range for the Jornada Mogollon Culture is from A.D. 500 to 1450 (Miller et al. 2023)



Map by Mark Willis 2013

# Even newer unpublished additional dates (Vesar and Sacred Sites)

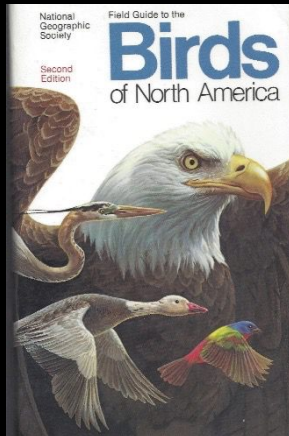


Green Paint A.D. 600-1200  
Yellow Paint A.D. 675-940  
Calibrated Age Range



# Documentation and Observations?

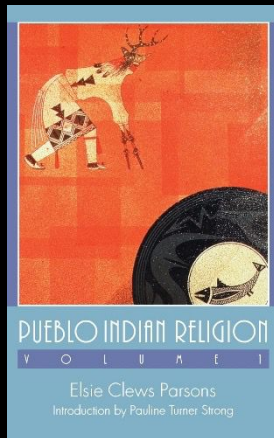
- Identify attributes
- Search photos – mine and other researchers.
- Literature search
- Cross Media Comparisons
- Sketches and Dstretch



Three Rivers, New Mexico

# A common interpretation ...

“Birds are messengers to  
the supernatural.”  
(Parsons 1966:282)

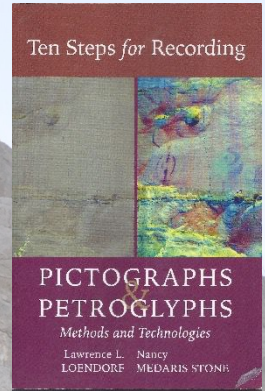


“Flight commonly symbolizes aspects of the spirit  
world and rituals pertaining to it.” (Wallace 2007:8)





During the recording of rock art at Picture Cave in Texas, SSR crew members noticed that every 10 minutes or so, a small bird flew into the deeper recesses of the cave. Identified as a rock wren, it is a member of the Troglodytidae family, whose dietary habits include searching for insects in caves (Miller et al, 2012). In doing so, it was believed, the Rock WRENS served ancient Puebloans as messengers to the clouds or to the mountains enclosed in clouds where katsina, the ancestral spirits of the people, lived. The small birds were therefore the connection between the underworld and the sky world.



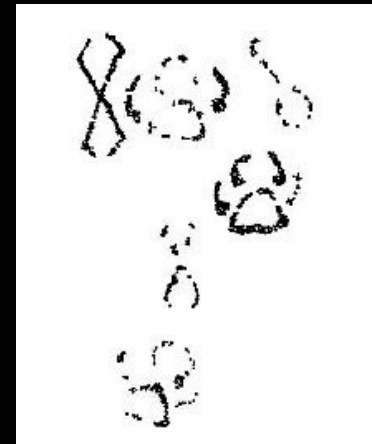
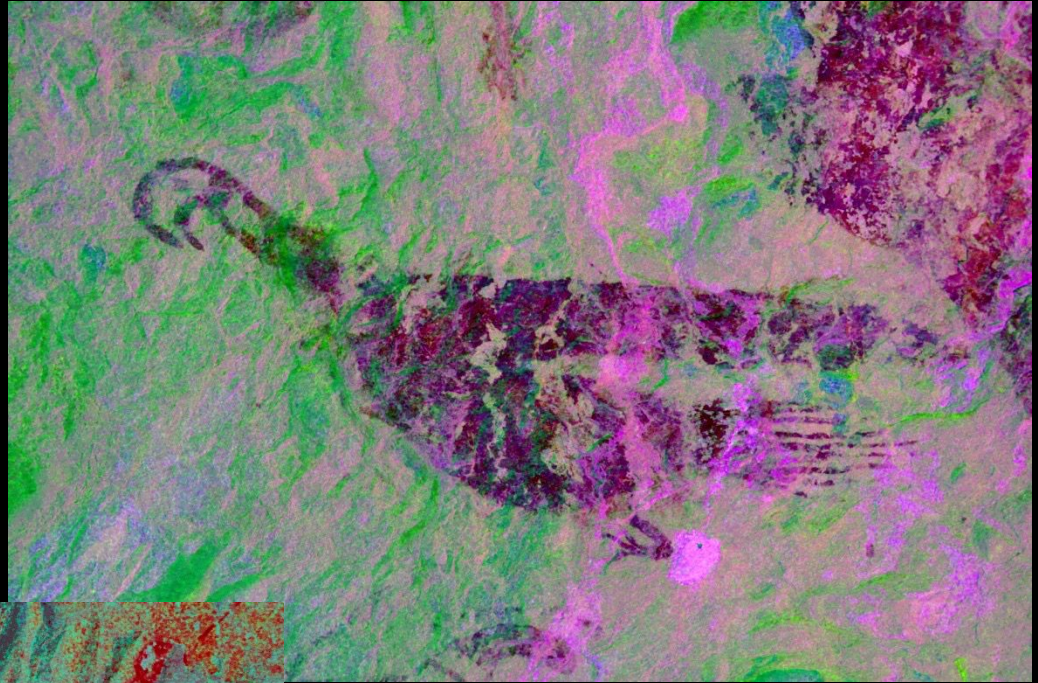
2025: 62

Picture Cave,  
Texas



# Picture Cave, West Texas

Roadrunner?  
Turkey?  
Macaw?

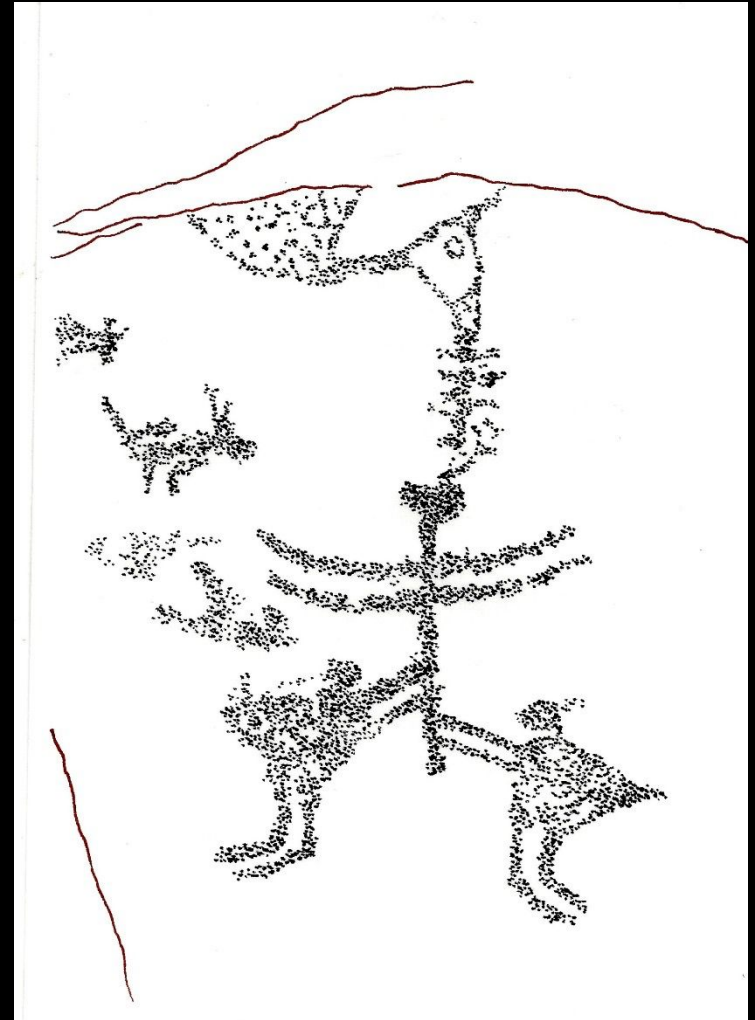






Sierra Blanca  
Region –  
Northeastern  
Jornada Mogollon

Some birds are  
part of complex  
panels which  
appear to be  
narratives.





And some are unusual depictions



Three Rivers, New Mexico





# Documentation of Three Rivers, New Mexico

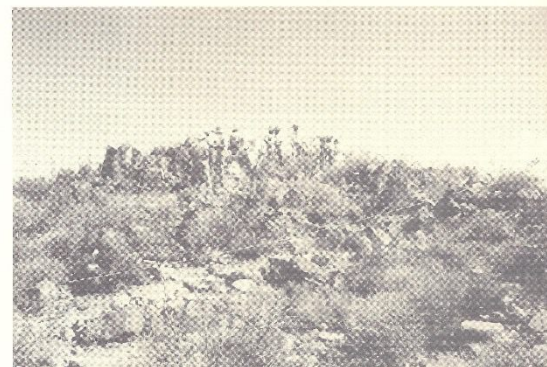
9000+ hours of  
volunteering just in  
the field! 1986-1992

Recent scanning project in  
2023-2024

~80 site visits

## Three Rivers Petroglyph Site:

Results of the ASNM Rock Art  
Recording Field School



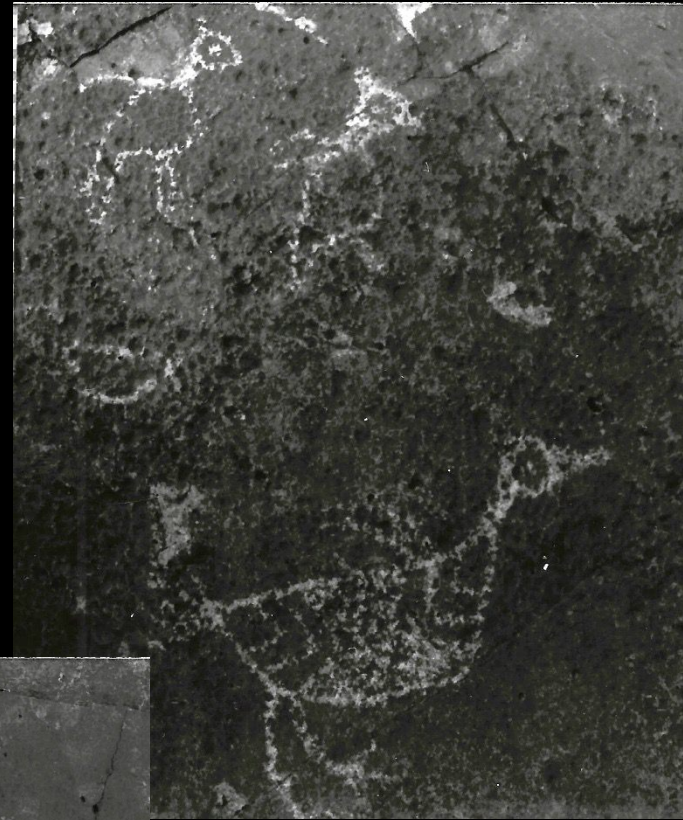
Meliha S. Duran and Helen K. Crotty

*The Artifact*  
Vol. 37, No. 2, 1999  
El Paso Archaeological Society, Inc.  
El Paso, Texas

Special Publication No. 2  
Archaeological Society  
of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Human Systems Research  
Report 9301  
Human Systems Research, Inc.  
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Duran and Crotty 1994



# 498 Birds at Three Rivers

(documentation at that  
time didn't include  
"type" of bird)

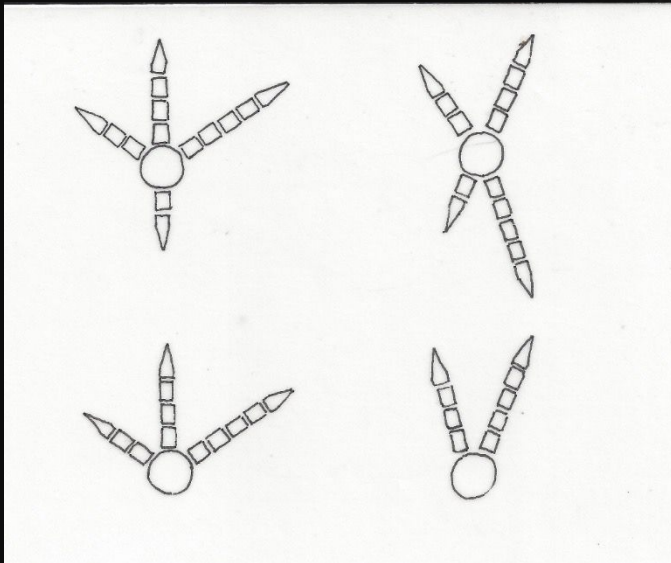


Some scanned photos  
from ASNM Recording  
School



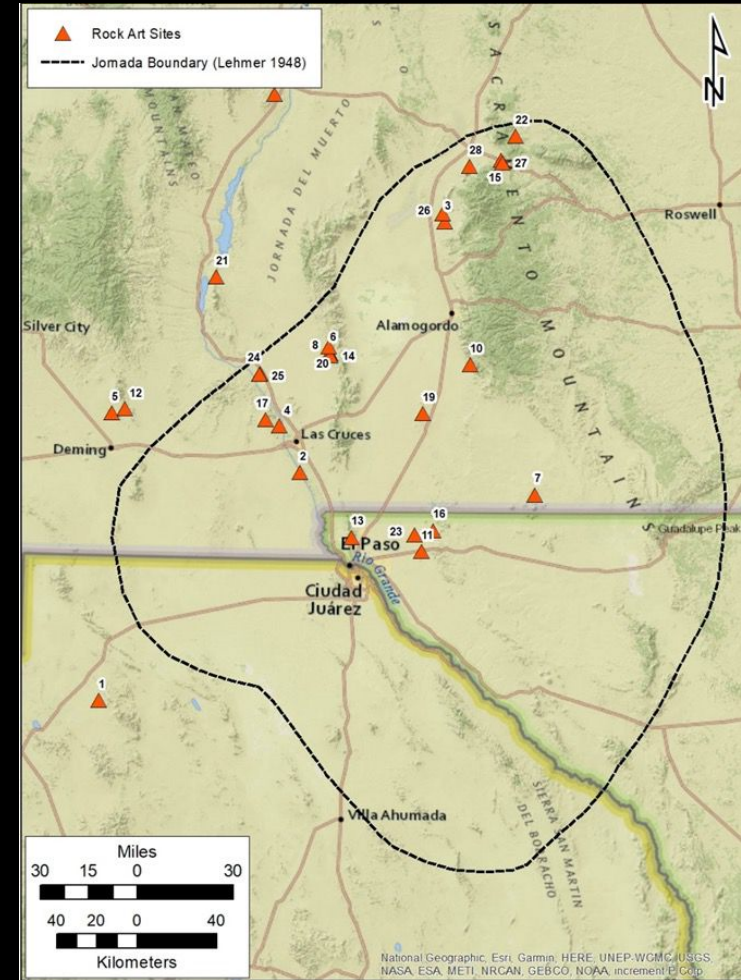
Three Rivers has  
~619 bird tracks

---





# Many are Roadrunner Tracks



Map created by Mark Willis, created 2024



# Roadrunners



Hueco Tanks, Site 23, Texas



Sometimes  
birds are  
seductive –  
especially the  
brightly  
colored ones



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dactyly>



Macaws found on  
Mimbres and  
Casas Grande  
pottery and  
remains found at  
habitation sites



Ramos Polychrome Macaw  
Casas Grandes Culture (AD 1100-1300)  
Edward Ledwedge, 1959

#MimPIDD ID: 8538

Owner: Thomas Gilcrease Foundation



#MimPIDD ID: 1608  
Site Name: McSherry

Macaws or parrots?  
No macaw remains found in  
the Jornada and only a few  
possible petroglyphs of  
macaws





# Sexy birds – macaw facts

Less macaws found in archaeological context in Mesoamerican than the Southwest

Mesoamerican macaws are not found in burial contexts



Photo by Douglas Petranoff

# West Texas

## Room for Jornada Mogollon research



### Identifying Attributes

Hooked beak

LONG tail

Zygodactyly Configuration of feed

Possible white spot around eyes

Differences in macaw depositional evidence suggest “only rudimentary ideas were imported from Mesoamerican w/the birds, rather than specific ritual practices leaving room for local interpretation.”

The theory that macaws were breed in the other areas of the Southwest has many contradictions.

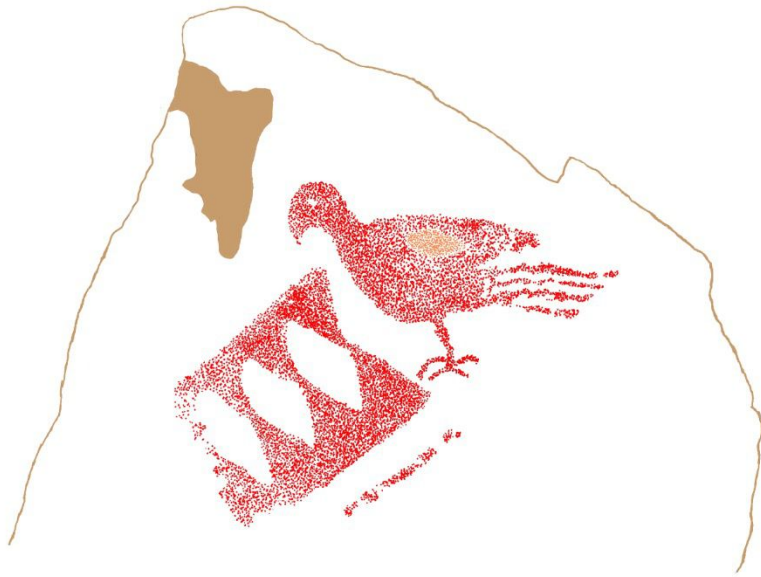


# Hueco Tanks, Texas



## White Sands Missile Macaw or just red paint

In determining whether the parrot is a macaw or some other parrot, it may be significant that the tail feathers do not trail extensively far behind the bird ...  
Katy Bishop (personal communication 2024)



0 10cm 20cm 30cm

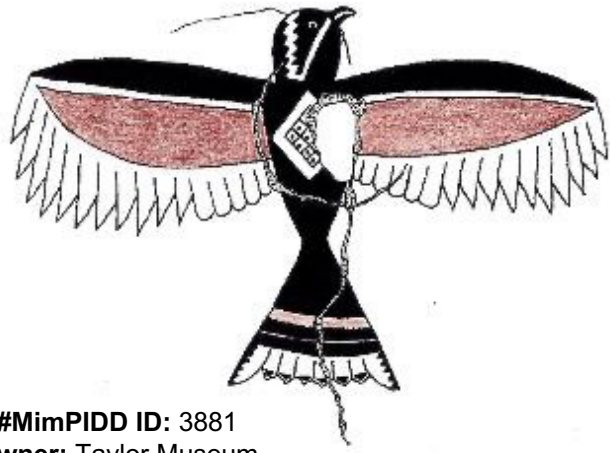
LA182420  
Bird Site  
Panel 31A  
4-21-22  
D. Kaiser

Red  
Orange  
Natural

From Wikipedia:  
The **thick-billed parrot** (*Rhynchopsitta  
pachyrhyncha*)







#MimPIDD ID: 3881  
Owner: Taylor Museum

## Raptors and Swallows

Avian Forms:  
Stylized and  
Realistic



Black Range, NM  
Dstretch - Ire



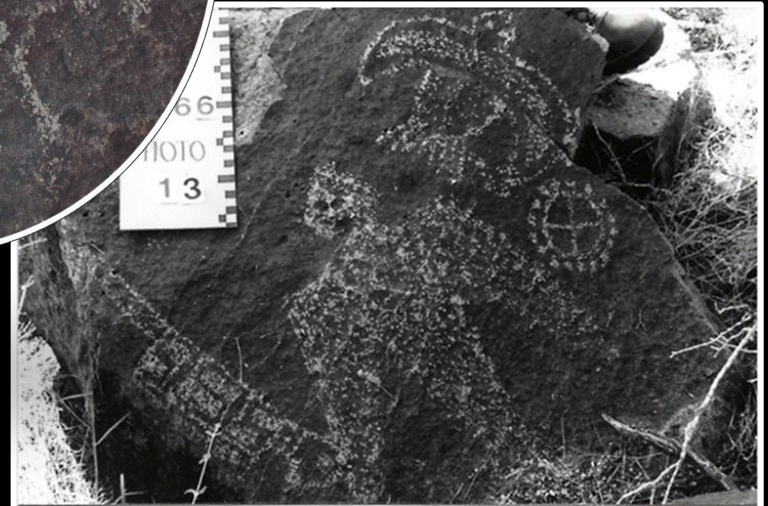
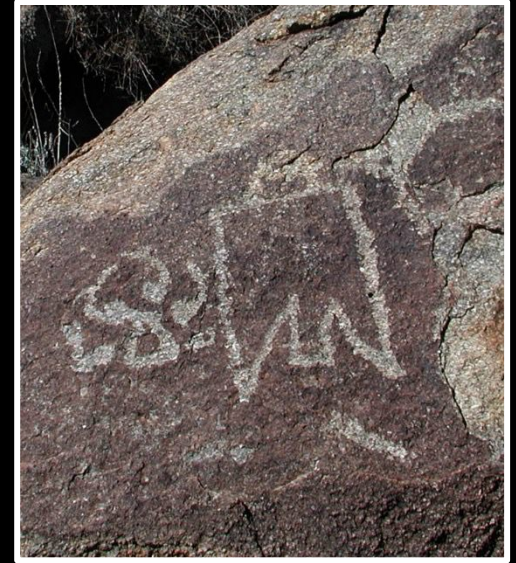
Three Rivers, NM



# Spread winged birds – hawks, eagles, or mythical thunderbirds

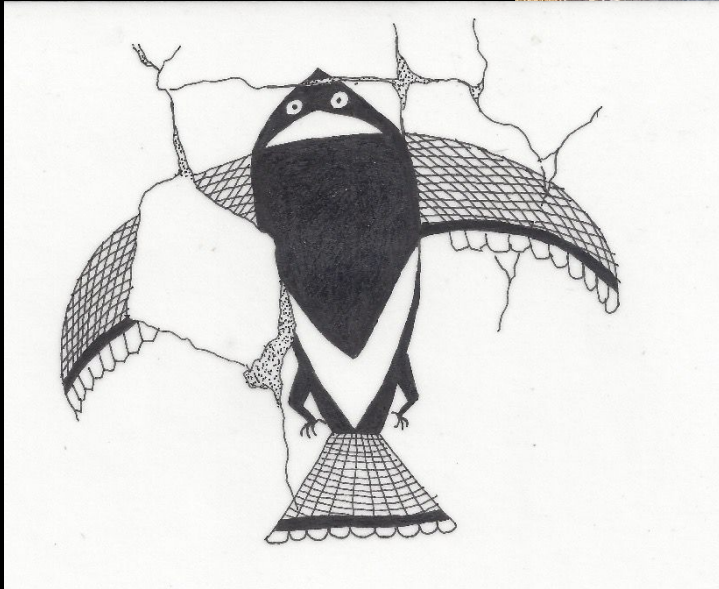


Raptors as seen  
from below?





# Petroglyph from Ladder Ranch, New Mexico



MimPIDD ID: #10197

# Artistic “convention” ~ Feet showing on birds



#MimPIDD ID: 2576  
Site Name: Swarts



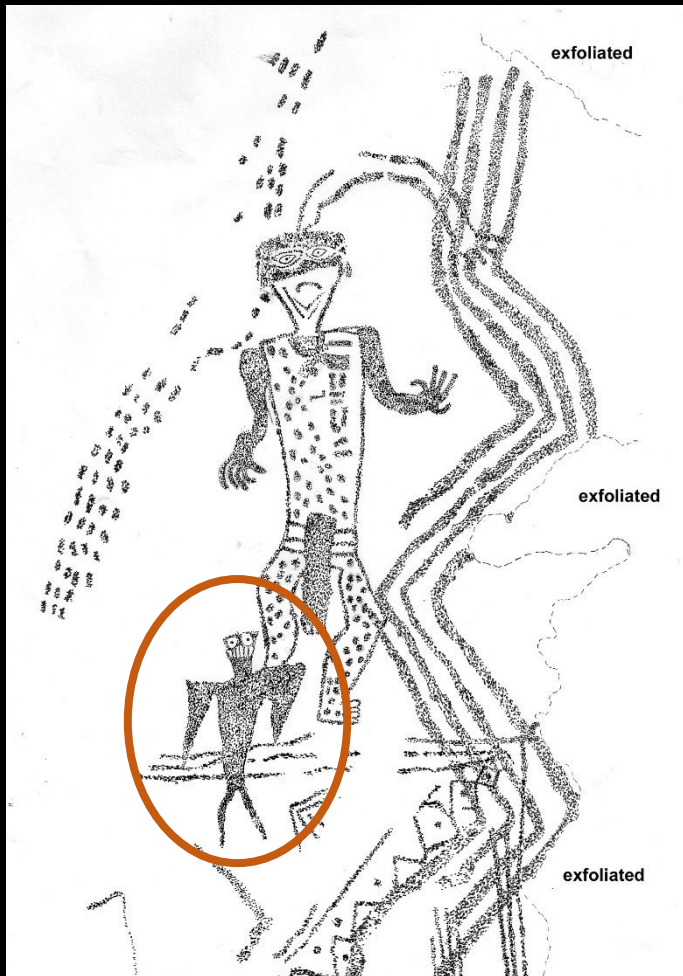
Deming Luna Museum



Three Rivers, New Mexico



# Wedge-winged Goggle Eyed figures





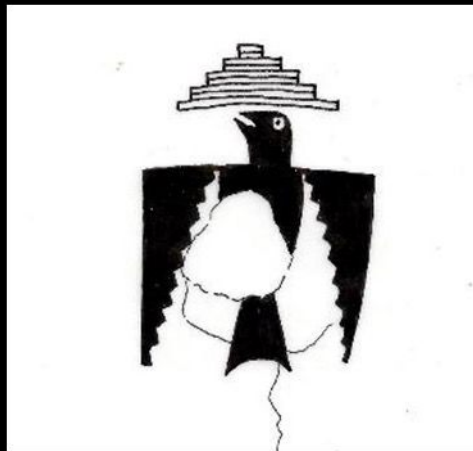
Many sites with birds are  
probably also shrines ...

Some birds are combination  
zoomorphs





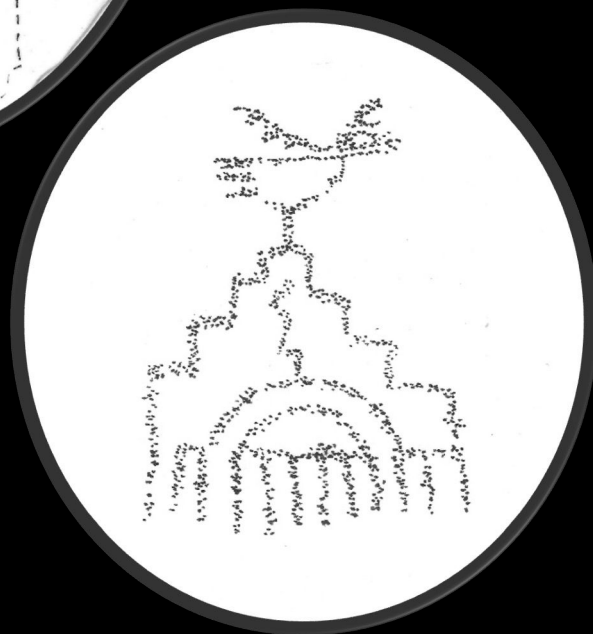
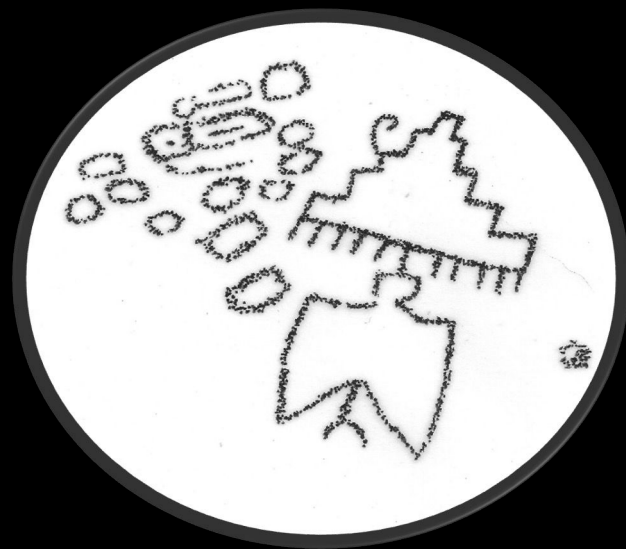
# Birds associated with Cloud terraces across the Mimbres and Jornada Mogollon



#MimPIDD ID: 2359  
Site Name: Swarts



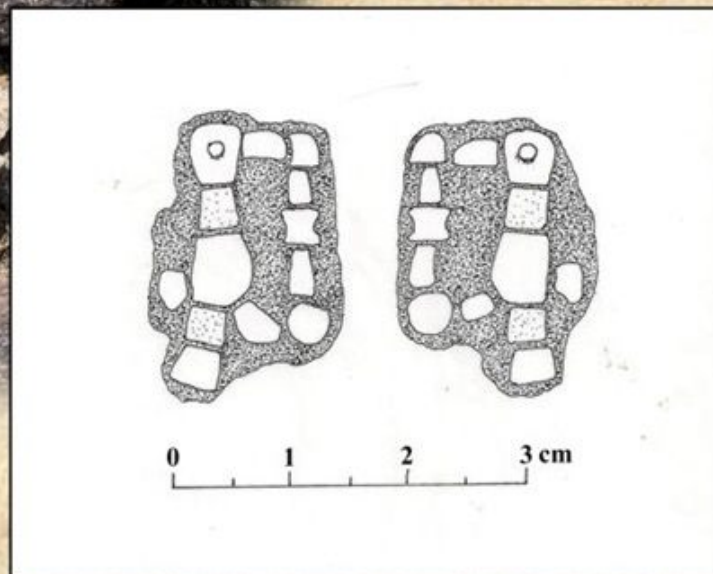
Birds from  
the Sierra  
Blanca  
Region of  
the  
Jornada  
Mogollon







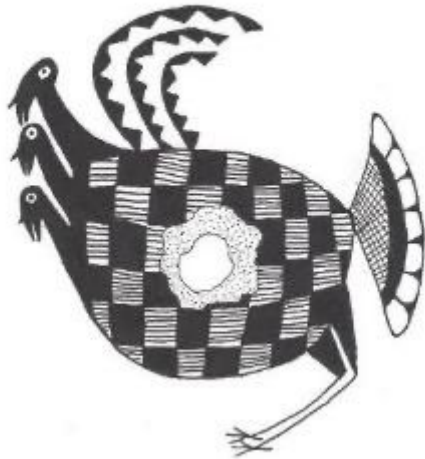
Mosaic birds from NAN Ranch



Three Rivers, New Mexico

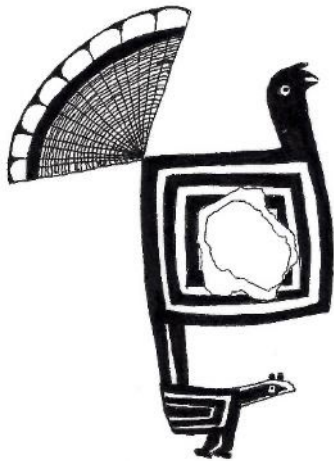
# Turkeys

29 in Mimbres database



#MimPIDD ID: 140

Housed at: Arizona State Museum

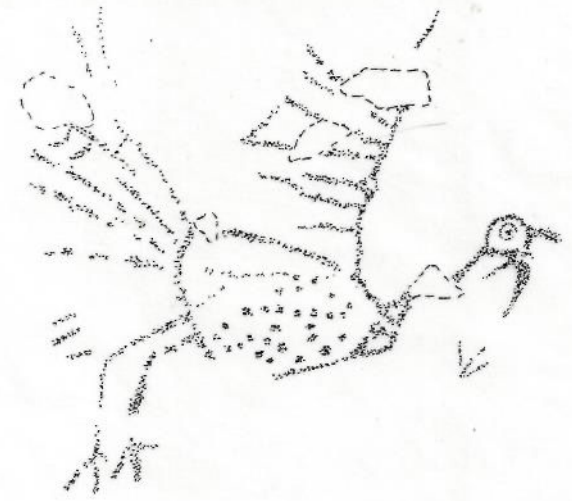


#MimPIDD ID: 471

Housed at: Western New Mexico  
University Museum



Three Rivers



Turkey feathers are a  
visual prayer for rain.  
Wright, Barton



Dolan uses  
these  
Identifying  
features –  
snood, beard or  
wattle

but admits...

It is difficult to  
understand what  
the potter was  
thinking, and the  
imagery can be  
ambiguous..



Dolan: 2021:40

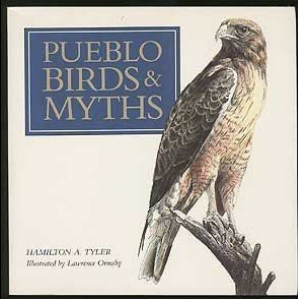
# Cranes and Herons – Guardians, water, seeds

~



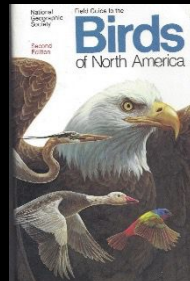
There was a Hopí Crane  
Clan into the 1940's





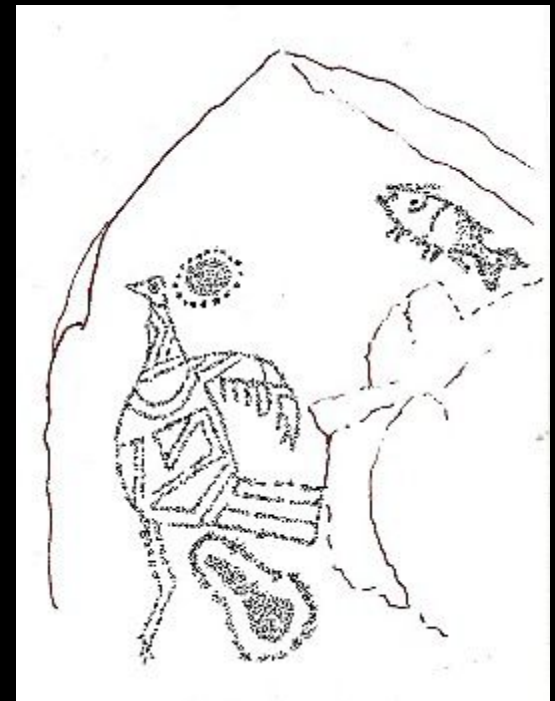
Tyler 1991:138

- Crane is also associated as an Underworld figure in both Mesoamerican and historic cosmology
- Associated with both water and the realm of the dead.
- Important in Pueblo solstice rituals. Echo the movement of the sun by flying north and then south again.
- Organized flying formation and their social habits have caused them to be considered guardian figures among the Pueblo

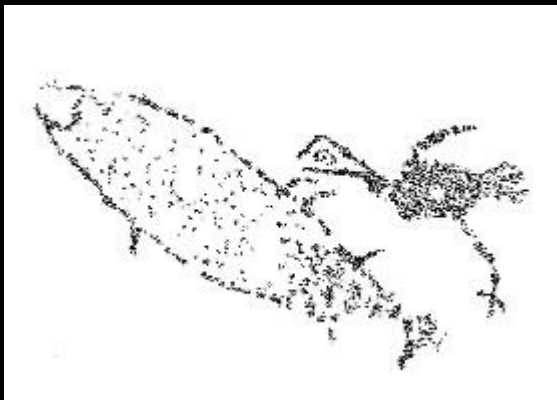




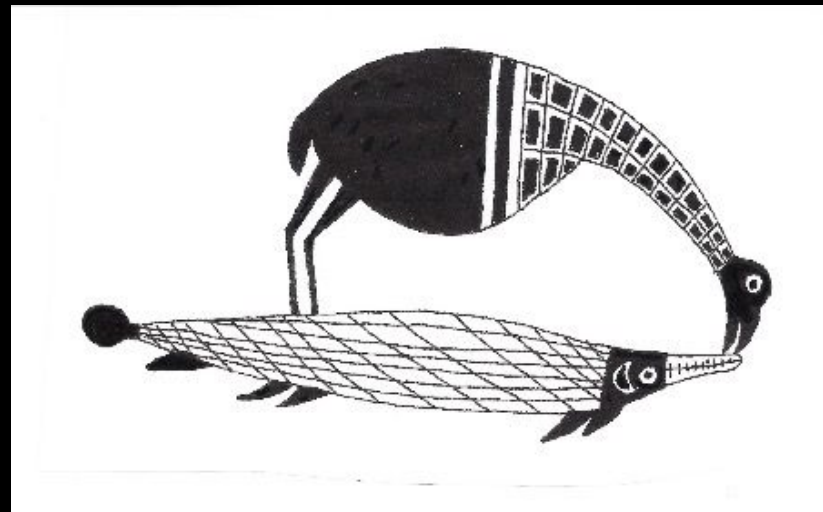
# Numerous examples of Mimbres “shore” Birds and Fish



Three  
Rivers, NM



Three Rivers, NM

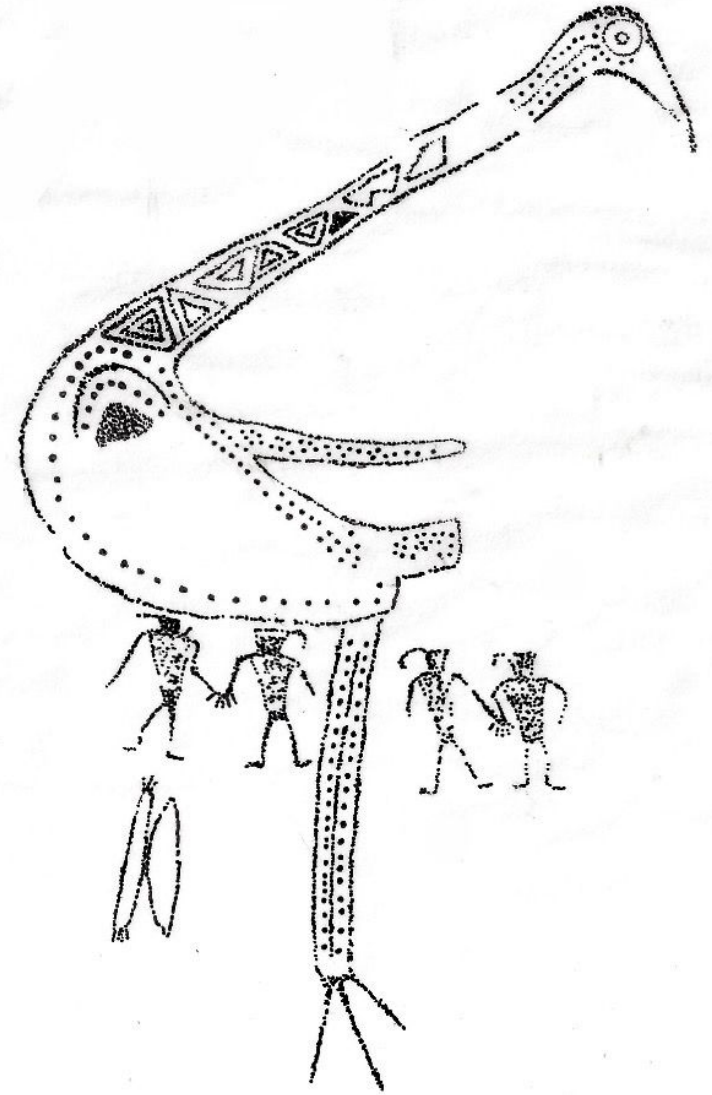
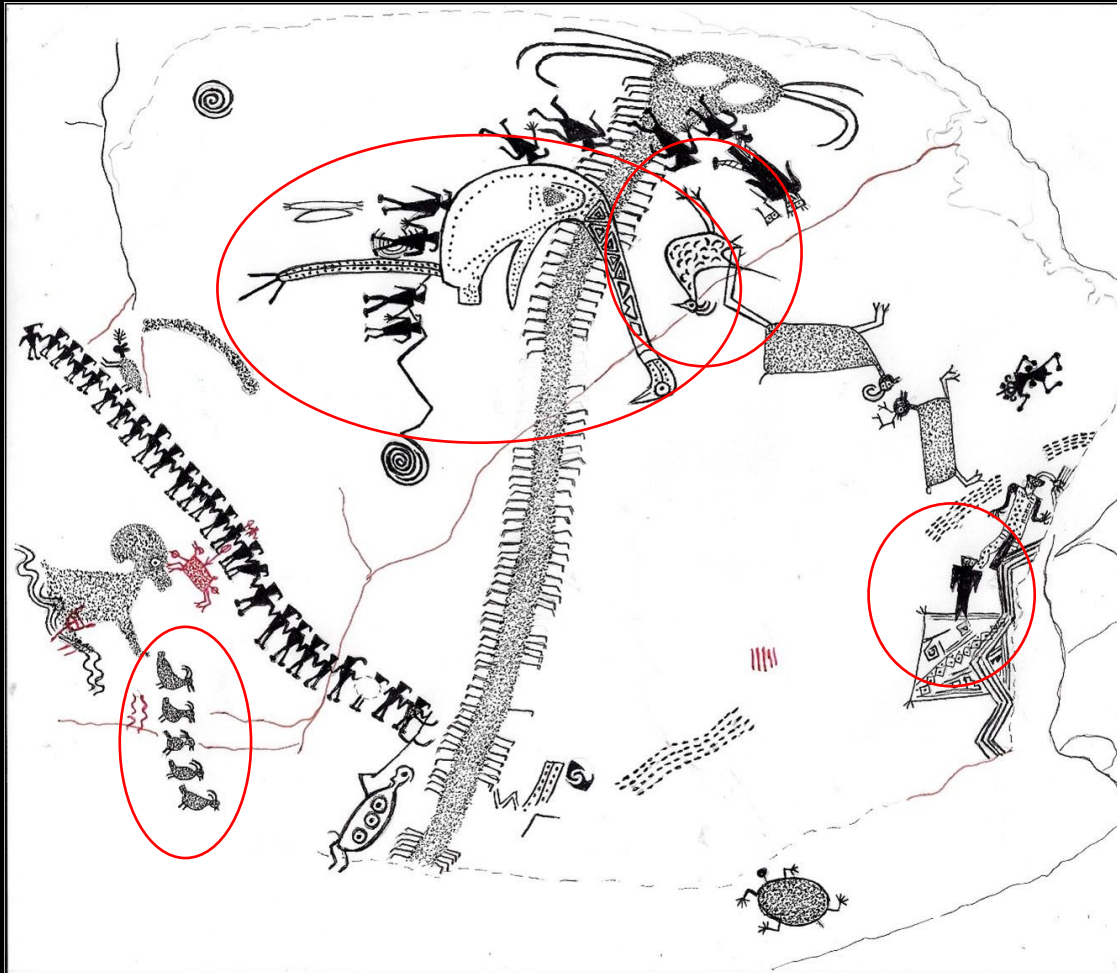


Adapted from a portion of a Mimbres ceramic design with a  
long-nosed fish



# Centipede Cave, Texas

## 8 different birds



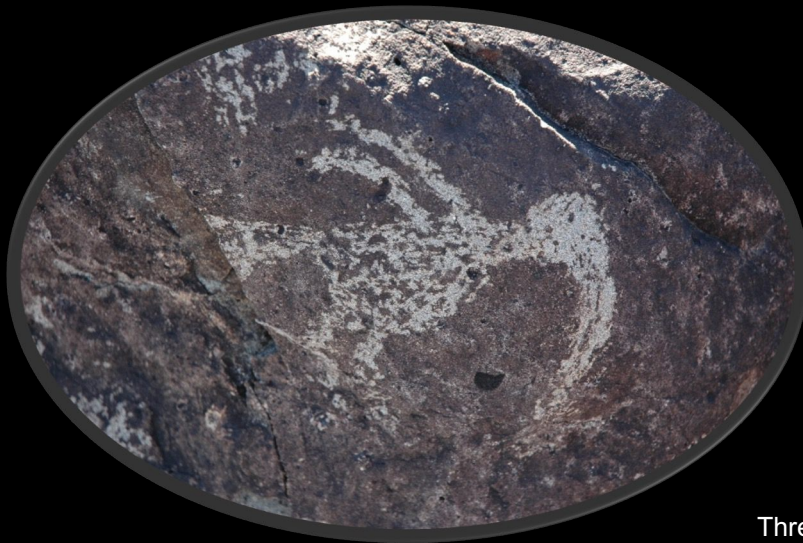
Kachinas are given form  
as

1. Hummingbirds
2. Wrens
3. Quail
4. Turkeys
5. Roadrunners
6. Owls

Hays-Gilpin 2007:15



#MimPIDD ID: 2091  
Site Name: Swarts



Three Rivers, New Mexico



# A discussion of birds should include the uses of Feathers

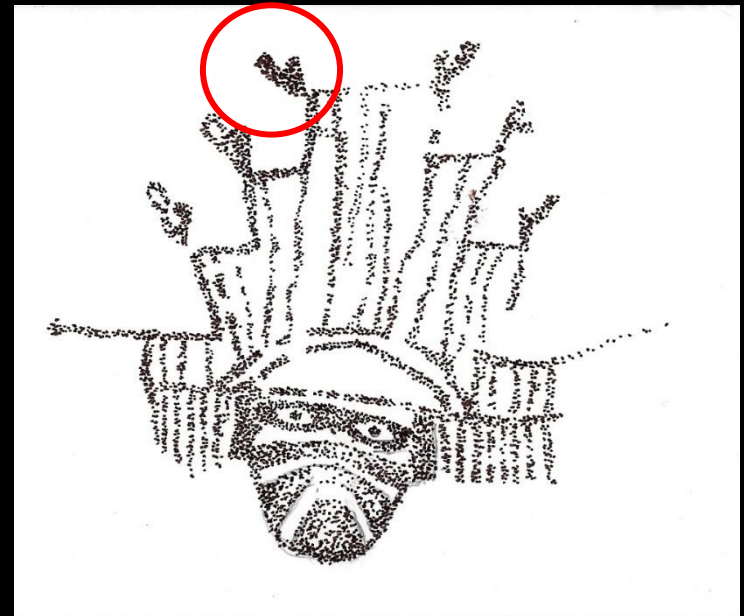
1. Fetishes
2. Masks
3. Hair ornaments
4. Prayer Sticks

Zuni may have created 16-80 per family member per year (that's a lot!!)

Zuni used 63 kinds of feathers  
Prayer or summons



West Texas, Photo by Robert Mark



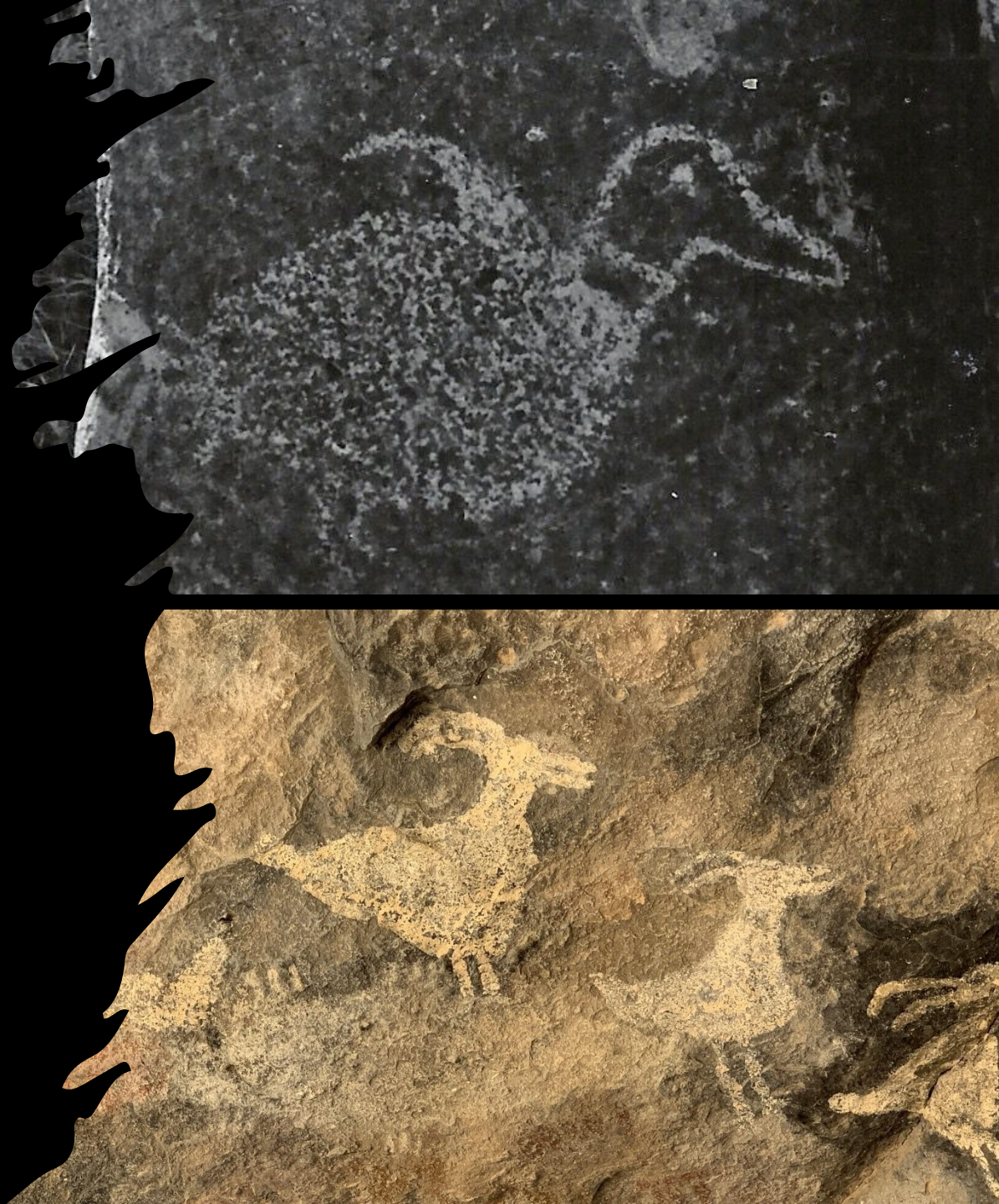
Ladd/Taylor  
2007:17



While there  
are ducks in  
the Jornada  
rock art  
there are no  
duck heads!

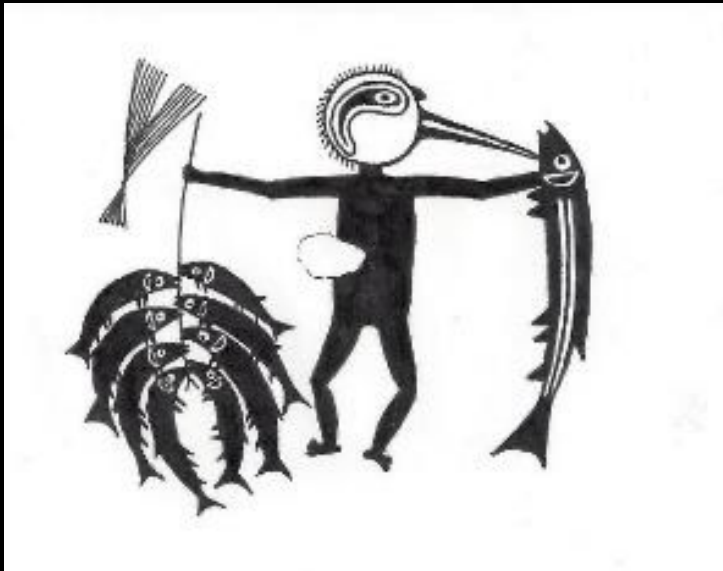


Canyon de Chelly, AZ





# Bird heads ... not that frequent in Jornada Mogollon Rock Art



11178

Housed at: Western New Mexico University Museum



Three Rivers, New Mexico



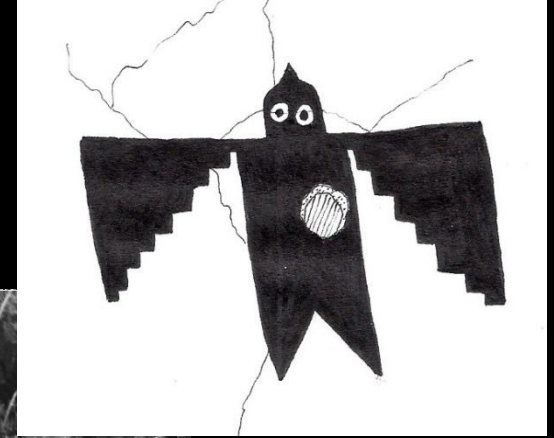
North of Las Cruces, New Mexico

Some researchers suggest most Jornada images are related to rain and that the Mimbres are related to the Underworld

~590 Birds in the  
Mimbres Database



#MimPIDD ID: 10697





# Hopí

Feathers of all kinds of birds carry Hopi prayers to the sun and sky. Prayer sticks and feathers can be offered for family members, rain, harvest, peach trees, horses, pilgrimages and other journeys and for the health and well being of everything in the world.

Hays-Gilpin 2007:21:1, p 14-15



## Schafer, Harry J.

- “The context of production for the painted pottery and the roles served by the pottery were woven into the matrix of cooperate group behavior and irrigation agriculture.
- “Although the painted pottery has been mostly recovered from mortuary contexts, it was by no means produced as a mortuary ware. The primary function of the black-on-white pottery was in publicly display graphic geometric and naturalist images via feast and ceremonies.”





The Jornada Mogollon Region should also be included in discussions of the Southwest and the connections with the Mimbres studied.

Birds have different significance in different areas and/or cultures.

MimPIDD ID: 1658.  
Fewkes/Osborn – National  
Museum of American Indian



Research also begins and ends with  
the landscape and integrates the  
research.





"We do not ask for what useful purpose the birds do sing, for song is their pleasure since they were created for singing. Similarly, we ought not to ask why the human mind troubles to fathom the secrets of the heavens. The diversity of the phenomena of nature is so great, and the treasures hidden in the heavens so rich precisely in order that the human mind shall never be lacking in fresh nourishment."

— Johannes Kepler