

Macaw Feathers Help Preserve Wild Populations

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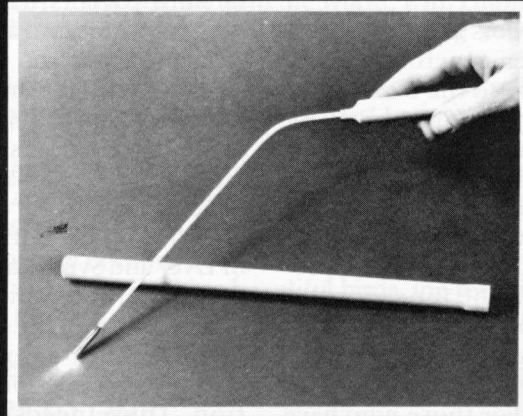
Parrot feathers have been used for centuries for ornamentation by natives throughout South and Central America. In Panama, scarlet macaws (*Ara macao*) — a species now classified as endangered and placed on Appendix I of CITES — are traditionally captured to obtain feathers used in local folk dances in the central part of the country. However, the increasing popularity of the dance in which the feathers are used has greatly increased the demand.

Capture of macaws, including the Buffon's (*Ara ambigua*), also the less rare blue and yellow (*A. ararauna*) and green-winged (*A. chloroptera*), has increased. Most of these must be killed for their feathers as few are held in captivity in the region.

The Panamanian section of ICBP (International Council for Bird Preservation) has, therefore, instigated a project to collect feathers in collaboration with aviculturists and zoos outside Panama. Over 200 macaw tail and wing feathers have been collected in two years — but many, many more are needed. This number has allowed more than 50 adult dancers and children's groups to perform their dances without further depleting the wild population. The feathers are hired for a modest sum and the revenue has helped to offset the cost of the project.

If you can help by donating macaw tail and wing feathers in good condition to this worthwhile project, please send them to Francisco Delgado, CIPA-ICBP, Seccion National Panama, Apartado 278, Chitre-Herrera, Panama. ●

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