

Kids' KOrner

Demand for pet parrots threatens species

In biblical times, Hebrew sailors would bring macaws, the brightly-colored parrots of the tropics, to the Court of Solomon.

Were Solomon as wise as he is purported to be, he might have discouraged the practice, because today the very survival of these birds is threatened by their increasing popularity as pets in America, according to the current issue of National Wildlife magazine.

They bring high prices — some sell for \$30,000 apiece — but the birds themselves may be paying the highest price of all. Faced with continued raids on their populations by fortune-hunters and increasing losses of habitat to development, many species are in trouble, according to the bi-monthly publication of the National Wildlife Federation.

Distinguished from other parrots by their bare facial skin, large beaks and long tail feathers, macaws are now found throughout parts of the tropics from Mexico to Argentina. One species of macaw, the hyacinth, measures 40 inches from head to tail. In the nineteenth century, reports National Wildlife, flocks of more than 300 macaws, which tend to roost in groups, were commonplace. Today a flock of more than three dozen macaws is a rare sight.

It's no coincidence that the decline in macaw populations parallels an upturn in their popularity as pets. Forty million Americans keep birds in their offices or homes; parrot sales alone account for \$300 million in sales a year. Consequently, the volume of parrots imported into the United States has doubled in

the last decade, according to TRAFFIC, a World Wildlife Fund-sponsored group that recently completed an extensive study on macaw trade. And as imports have increased, so has smuggling.

More than 90 percent of all birds seized by U.S. customs officials are parrots. Smugglers, who can avoid the red tape of legal importation, are tantalized by the high price-tags macaws carry. In pet stores, their brightly colored plumes bring prices that range from \$500 to \$30,000. "Pound for pound," said one customs agent, "a parrot is worth more to a smuggler than marijuana."

Current means of trapping macaws in the wild inflict their own damages on these birds, according to the magazine. When nesting trees are cut down to retrieve baby parrots, valuable and increasingly scarce nesting sites for other birds are destroyed. Young birds are often killed when their nests crash to the ground.

For the birds who survive this kind of treatment, more abuse awaits them on their travels to the United States. To quiet these natural talkers, smugglers feed them tranquilizers, chloroform or corn meal mixed with tequila — so that border officials won't be alerted by the bird's squealing and squawking.

The irony of all this "macaw madness," as National Wildlife calls it, is that macaws don't make great pets. They have been known to use their powerful beaks, which help them to feed on nuts in the wild, to tear apart cages and even furniture in private homes. Many

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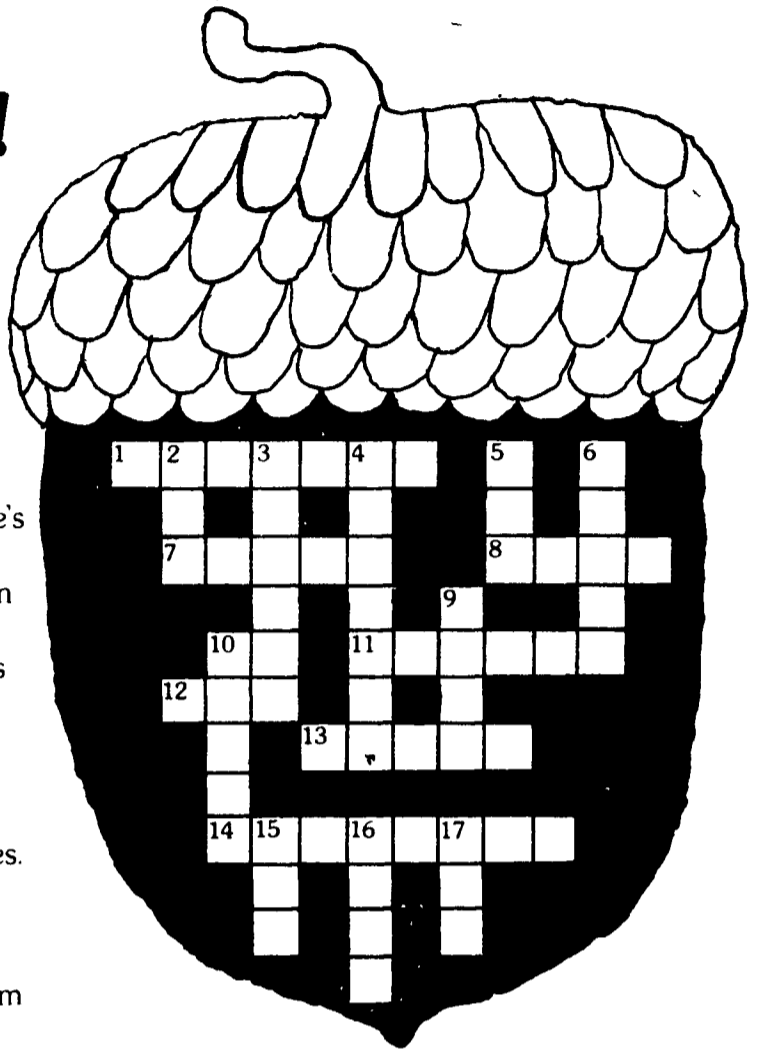
Try this acorn puzzle!

ACROSS

- 1 Kind of willow tree
- 7 We get syrup from it.
- 8 Evergreen tree.
- 10 First two letters of a tree's covering.
11. Some trees lose these in the fall.
12. An evergreen that bears cones.
- 13 Its leaves quiver in the slightest breeze.
14. Indians used its long thorns as sewing needles.

DOWN

2. Large tree in danger of dying out in the U.S. from disease.
3. Tall, slender tree sometimes planted in rows.
4. A pine tree's leaves.
5. Liquid inside a tree.
6. Fruit of fir and pine trees.
9. In the fall when all the leaves drop off a tree, it's _____.
10. A tree with whitish bark.
15. Wood used for making baseball bats.
16. Wood of the Douglas fir is used for making railroad _____.
17. Tree that has acorns.



Answers (ACROSS) 1 weeping 7 maple 8 pine 10 ba (bark) 11 leaves 12 fir 13 aspen 14 hawthorn (DOWN) 2 elm 3 poplar 4 needles 5 sap 6 cones 9 bare 10 birch 15 ash 16 ties 17 oak

COLOR THIS!

- | | |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1. BLACK | 6. ORANGE |
| 2. RED | 7. GREEN |
| 3. YELLOW | 8. LT. GRAY |
| 4. BLUE | 9. LT. BLUE |
| 5. BROWN | 10. LT. GREEN |

EASTER BEGAN AS THE MOST JOYOUS OF CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS TO CELEBRATE THE REBIRTH OF CHRIST. EASTER COMES THE SAME TIME AS SPRING, WHEN NEW LIFE BEGINS WITH GROWTH AND REBIRTH IN NATURE. RABBITS HAVE BEEN A SYMBOL OF BIRTH AND NEW LIFE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.

