



BACKGROUND

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TIMELINE FOR THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR

The story of the California condor spans from the time of saber toothed tigers to the present day. No one knows what the population numbers were in the Pleistocene era, but they soared the skies throughout coastal North America. By 1982, there were only 22 left in the world. Condor Recovery efforts have brought the numbers up to more than 320, with more chicks – wild and captive -- born each year.

- Prehistory: The California condors range along the both coasts from British Columbia to Baja California and from New York to Florida; the California condor serves as a deity figure in Native American cultures.
- 1602 First recorded condor sighting by a European, Father Antonio de la Ascension, in Monterey Bay.
- 1805 Lewis and Clark report sighting a condor, calling it “Vulture of the Columbia,” in present-day Washington State; they later shoot one to examine.
- 1939 National Audubon Society researcher Carl B. Koford begins field studies. Koford estimates 60 to 100 condors remain in the wild.
- 1967 California condor is included in the first federal list of U.S. Endangered Species.
- 1975 California Condor Recovery Team is established and the recovery plan is adopted.
- 1979 25 to 35 condors in the wild and one in captivity; Cooperative California Condor Conservation Program is formed; field surveys begin.
- 1980 – 1987 Field investigations and management programs include radio telemetry and captive incubation of wild-collected eggs.
- 1982 Only 22 birds remain in the wild.
- 1983 First successful hatching from an egg captured from wild, at San Diego Zoo.
- 1987 Last wild condor taken into captivity at Hopper Mountain in Ventura County. World’s total of 27 condors now kept in breeding facilities at Los Angeles Zoo and San Diego Wild Animal Park.
- 1988 First successful breeding of captive California condor, at the San Diego Zoo.
- 1992 Two captive-bred condors reintroduced into the wild, accompanied by two Andean condors, five years after the last wild bird captured.
- 1993 Third condor breeding center established at World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho.

- 1993 Releases begin in Santa Barbara County.
- 1994 Captive condors have laid a total of more than 100 eggs.
- 1996 Condor population reaches 103, including 13 in the wild; releases begin in San Luis Obispo County and near the Grand Canyon.
- 1997 Releases begin in Monterey County.
- 1998 Santa Barbara Zoo approaches Recovery Team offering to become a partner.
- 1999 Condor population reaches 147, including 50 in the wild. Santa Barbara Zoo's Board of Directors approves condor exhibit concept.
- 2000 AC8 is the first of the wild-born birds re-released into the wild.
- 2001 Oregon Zoo joins Recovery Program as the fourth captive breeding partner.
- 2002 First chick born in the wild successfully fledges in Ventura county; six puppet-reared condors are released in Baja California; Santa Barbara Zoo invited to officially join Recovery Team.
- 2003 Two condors released at Pinnacles National Monument.
- 2004 AC9, last condor taken from the wild (re-released in 2002), sires a chick in the wild.
- 2007 First wild egg hatches in Mexico since the 1930s; two condors go on view at Mexico Zoo, which becomes Recovery Team partner; Santa Barbara Zoo receives Ventana Wildlife Society's Lapanski Award recognizing cooperation on condor projects.
- 2008 321 condors. Number of free flying condors exceeds number in captivity for first time in over 20 years; use of lead bullets outlawed in California's "condor country;" Santa Barbara Zoo leads a nest guarding program which brings the percentage of birds fledged (taking their first flight) from 12% to 87% over two seasons at Hopper Mountain.
- 2009 Santa Barbara Zoo opens *California Trails* featuring four California condors along with other native endangered species; it concludes the largest building expansion in the Zoo's history.

Information courtesy of California Fish & Game, San Diego Zoo, and the Oregon Zoo.

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On Earth Day, April 22, 2009, the Santa Barbara Zoo opens California Trails, a new exhibit complex showcasing threatened or endangered California natives including critically endangered California condors plus Channel Island foxes, bald eagles, desert tortoises, and local raptors, reptiles and amphibians. With this exhibit, the Santa Barbara Zoo becomes one of only three zoos in the world to display California condors, a species which has rebounded from the brink of extinction. But there is still much work to be done to "save" all these species. For more information, visit www.sbzoo.org.