



PRESS RELEASE

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CALIFORNIA TRAILS CALIFORNIA CONDORS AND OTHER ENDANGERED SPECIES FROM STATE'S "BACKYARD" IN NEW SANTA BARBARA ZOO EXHIBIT COMPLEX

- \$7.5 Million Exhibit Complex Opens on Earth Day, Wednesday, April 22
- Zoo is Third Zoo in the World to Exhibit Endangered California Condors
- Channel Island Fox, Desert Tortoise, Bald Eagle, and Other Local Endangered and Threatened Species Featured in New Exhibit Complex
- Barnyard Renovated to Showcase Animals from California Ranching History
- New Food Service "The Wave" and New Explore Store Also Now Open

(Santa Barbara, CA, April 22, 2009) Rare California condors, the symbol of endangered species, are the centerpiece of *California Trails*, a new \$7.5 million exhibit complex at the Santa Barbara Zoo which features creatures that are in danger of disappearing from the wild in the Golden State.

"There has been a dream to create a condor exhibit in Santa Barbara that would support recovery efforts," said Rich Block, Zoo CEO, "as well as help build a stronger public constituency for the conservation of this symbol of California's priceless wildlife resources. The dream has become a reality and we celebrate a conservation effort of heroic proportions that has returned condors to the skies over California."

Four dramatically large condors, featuring a nine-and-a-half foot wing span, are on view in a new, spacious hilltop aviary overlooking part of their historic range, the Santa Ynez Mountains.

New or renovated exhibits feature the small Channel Island fox, found only on the islands off the California Coast; desert tortoises, once commonplace, but now facing habitat destruction; bald eagles, who are making a comeback after pesticides ravaged their numbers; and local raptor, amphibians and reptiles.

The Zoo took advantage of this exhibit construction to renovate the former barbecue area into a new food concession area called *The Wave*. The new *Explore Store* demonstrates how buying “green” directly helps protect the habitats of these creatures, both around the world and in California.

California Trails is the largest construction project in the Zoo’s nearly 50-year history.

ABOUT CONDOR COUNTRY



With this exhibit, the Santa Barbara Zoo becomes one of only three zoos in the world to display the endangered, California condor, joining Condor Ridge at the San Diego Wild Animal Park and the Chapultepec Zoo in Mexico City.

The condor exhibit, called *Condor Country*, was designed in collaboration with the California Condor Recovery Program, which determines which birds are housed, released and/or bred. The individual birds at the Zoo may change, based on the needs of the program.

The Santa Barbara exhibit covers 6,000 square feet, but more importantly, encompasses 174,000 cubic feet of “glide space.” There are redwoods and oaks, wooden “snags” and a stream which fills two different pools. Studies show that condors bathe and spend hours smoothing and drying their feathers. California condors are known for their massive wing spans, which average nine-and-a-half feet.

The Zoo’s four birds are listed in the Condor Recovery Program by numbers 432 (male), 433 (female), 439 (male) and 440 (female). They were all hatched at the Peregrine Fund’s World Center for Birds of Prey (Boise, ID) within a two-week period from April 12 through 24, 2007. All but 433 were reared by their parents; 433 was raised by condor foster parents.

These juvenile condors won’t display the distinctive red coloration on their heads until they are mature, which is between ages six and eight. They are familiar with people, both keepers and the public, so are unlikely to be released into the wild. They will most likely be moved to one of the condor breeding facilities before they become mature. There are no plans for breeding at the Zoo.

California condors have recovered from the brink of extinction. Numbering only 22 individuals in 1982, there are now 321 birds, with more than half of the population flying free. But there is still much work to be done to “save” the species.

OTHER CALIFORNIA TRAILS EXHIBITS

In honor of the arrival of the California condors, the Zoo has transformed surrounding areas to focus on other threatened or endangered California natives in new or upgraded exhibits:



Channel Island Fox: Renovation of the existing Channel Island fox exhibit, located next to the condors, enhances viewing opportunities of this critically endangered species, found only on the islands off the California Coast. The Santa Barbara Zoo is one of only a few facilities breeding these small, colorful animals and this renovation allows space for two separate breeding pairs. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Zoo's conservation collaboration with the U.S. National Park Service regarding the Channel Island fox. The Zoo currently has five of these small creatures, which are just a little larger than a housecat.



Desert Tortoise: A new habitat has been created for the desert tortoise in what was once the Zoo Playground. These “quieter neighbors” were once commonplace in the California deserts, but are now listed as “vulnerable” by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, facing threats from car and off-road traffic and suburban sprawl, among other factors. The Zoo's existing three male tortoises have been joined by three females from the Living Desert in Palm Desert, California. Large chuckwalla lizards will eventually share this exhibit space.



Rattlesnake Canyon: This new exhibit showcases reptiles and amphibians found in the Los Padres National Forest and will eventually feature the red-legged frog, a local species listed as “vulnerable” by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. The Zoo works in the field with the U. S. Forest Service to monitor this species, which has been decimated due to non-native predators, pollution and habitat loss. A Southern Pacific rattlesnake and gopher snake, California and Pacific chorus frogs, California newts, and an arboreal salamander currently inhabit the exhibit, with more species to be added soon.



Bald Eagles: The Zoo's current pair of bald eagles are included in California Trails. The use of DDT as a pesticide in the 1960s caused bald eagle populations to crash and landed them on the federal Endangered Species list. The species is rebounding and their listing was changed from endangered to threatened in 1995. As a result of injuries in the wild, neither of the Zoo's birds can be re-released into the wild; one is missing a wing, the other is missing an eye.



Barnyard: The Zoo's longtime Barnyard exhibit has been renovated and now features animals that played a part in California's ranching history: San Clemente Island goats, which were on the Island since the 1800s; Navajo-Churro sheep, the descendents of the first domestic sheep brought to the US by the Spanish more than 400 years ago; and Guinea hogs, which can grow as large as 200 pounds.



Raptor Roost: Adjacent to California Trails is an exhibit of California birds of prey. For various reasons, these longtime Zoo residents cannot be returned to the wild and are part of the Zoo's team of educational ambassadors. Current residents include two red-tailed hawks and a turkey vulture. These birds offer examples of raptors found in the Golden State and are a striking contrast, in size alone, to their condor neighbors.

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The Santa Barbara Zoo is grateful to the many donors who made gifts towards California Trails. Major donors include:

Condor Country Exhibit

Chad & Ginni Dreier (The Dreier Family)
The Annenberg Foundation
David & Lyn Anderson
Santa Barbara Foundation
Hutton Foundation
Mericos Foundation
Santa Ynez Band of Mission Indians

California Desert Tortoise Exhibit

Wallis Foundation

Zoo Campaign: Wild California

Wood-Claeysens Foundation
Shelby C. Bowen
M. Barry Semler

Channel Island Fox Exhibit:

Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Crawford

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The Santa Barbara Zoo is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; general admission is \$11 for adults, \$9 for children 2-12 and seniors 60+, and children under 2 are free. Parking is \$4.

The Santa Barbara Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). AZA zoos are dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great visitor experience, and a better future for all living things. With its more than 200 accredited members, AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and is the public's link to helping animals in their native habitats.

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BACKGROUND



April 22, 2009

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ABOUT THE SANTA BARBARA ZOO'S FOUR CALIFORNIA CONDORS

Four juvenile California condors arrived in Santa Barbara in March 2009 to take up residence in the new *Condor Country* exhibit. The Zoo's four birds are listed in the Condor Recovery Program Studbook by numbers 432, 433, 439 and 440. They were all hatched at the Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey (Boise, ID) within a two-week period from April 12 through 24, 2007.

All four birds are the direct descendents of the small group of last wild-born flying condors in California who were all ultimately captured in January 1986. These four birds are too closely related to breed to each other and will move to a Condor Recovery Program breeding facility when they reach maturity, between ages six and eight.

Number 432

Number 432 is a male condor who hatched on April 12, 2007, at the Center for Birds of Prey (Boise), where he was raised by his parents.

After his great-great-grandparent, a wild condor known as AC3 (#10 in Condor Recovery Studbook), died of lead poisoning, the decision was made to bring in all the remaining wild condors from the wild in January 1986.

Number 432's grandparents were all hatched in captivity and hand-raised, with the exception of #5 (known as AC6). Number 5 has been incredibly productive and sired (fathered) more than 20 eggs; he still lives at the breeding facility at the Los Angeles Zoo.

Number 432's parents were both hatched at the breeding facility at the Los Angeles Zoo, where they were hand-raised. They have lived at the Center for Birds of Prey (Boise) since 1997 and have produced an amazing ten eggs. Some chicks have been hand-raised, others raised by condor foster parents, and they have raised two, including #432.

Number 433

Number 433 is a female condor who hatched on April 12, 2007, at the Center for Birds of Prey (Boise), where she was raised by condor foster parents.

After her great-great-grandparent, known as AC3 (#10 in Condor Recovery Studbook) died of lead poisoning, the decision was made to bring in all the remaining wild condors from the wild in January 1986.

Number 433's grandparents were all hatched in captivity and hand-raised, except for #2, who is a wild male condor who was never captured. Many of his eggs with his wild mate #11 (known as Tama) were taken by researchers to be hatched and raised by hand.

Number 433's dam (mother) was hatched at the Los Angeles Zoo; her sire (father) was hatched at the breeding facility at the San Diego Wild Animal Park. In September 1993, they were in the first group of condors to be transferred to the breeding facility at the Center for Birds of Prey (Boise), where they have produced an amazing 12 eggs. Some chicks have been hand-raised, others raised by the parents, and a few have been raised by condor foster parents, including #433.

Number 439

Number 439 is a male condor who hatched on April 22, 2007, at the Center for Birds of Prey (Boise), where he was raised by his parents.

After his great-great-grandparent, known as AC3 (#10 in Condor Recovery Studbook) died of lead poisoning, the decision was made to bring in all the remaining wild condors from the wild in January 1986.

Two of #439's grandparents were hatched in captivity and hand-raised; one was a wild bird who had been captured for the Recovery Program; and another was captured as a chick in a wild nest to become the first member of the captive breeding program.

Number 439's parents were both hatched at the breeding facility at the San Diego Wild Animal Park and hand-raised. They have both lived at the breeding facility at the Center for Birds of Prey (Boise) since 1997, where they have produced seven eggs. Some chicks have been hand-raised, others raised by condor foster parents and they have raised two, including #439.

Number 440

Number 440 is a female condor who hatched on April 24, 2007, at the Center for Birds of Prey (Boise), where she was raised by her parents.

Her great-great-great-grandparents, #2 and #11 (known as Tama) produced the last egg hatched in the wild – her great-great-grandparent, #21 (known as AC8).

All her other great-grandparents and two grandparents were also hatched in the wild, but either died in the wild or were brought into captivity as part of the Recovery Program.

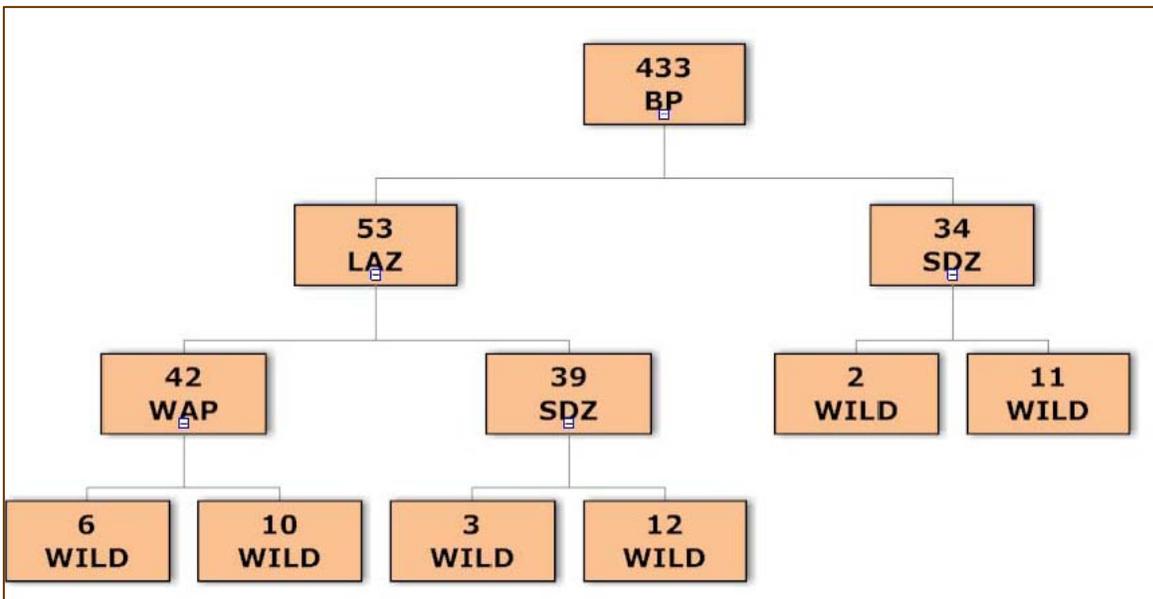
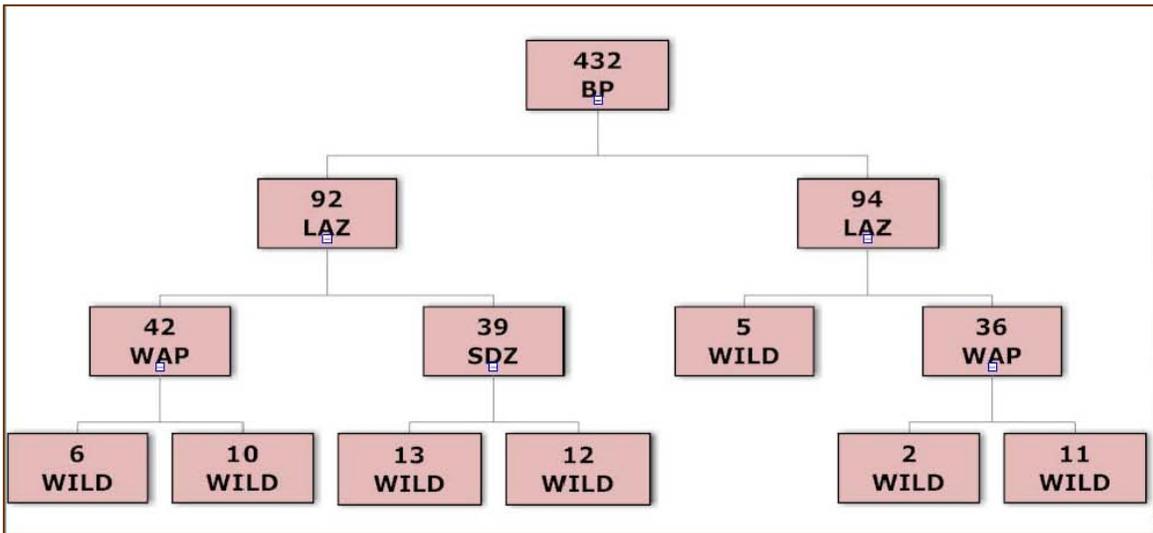
Her parents were both hatched at the breeding facility at the San Diego Wild Animal Park and hand-raised. They have both lived at the breeding facility at the Center for Birds of Prey (Boise) since September 1997, where they have produced five eggs. Two chicks were raised by condor foster parents and three were raised by them, including #440.

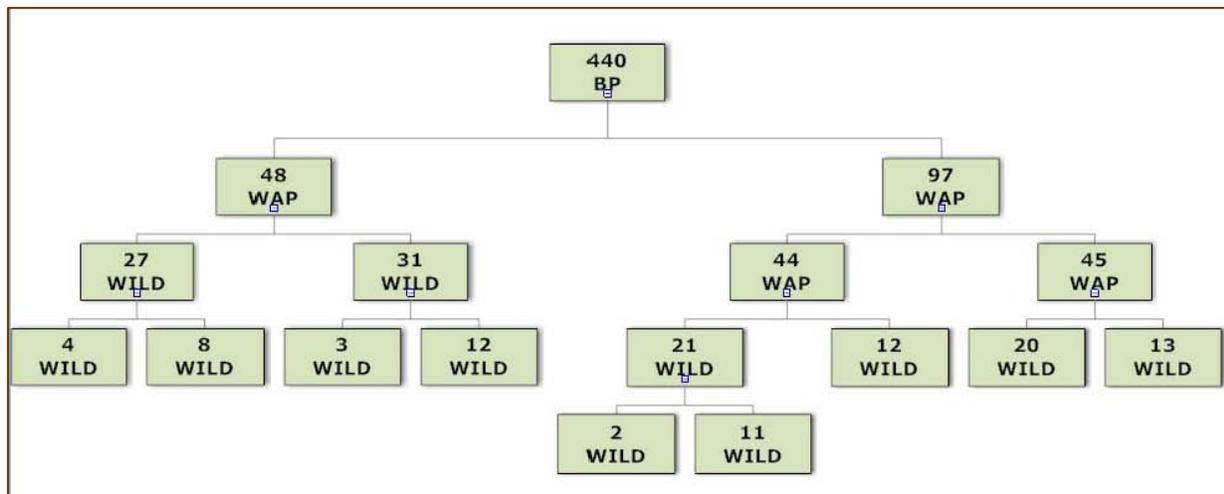
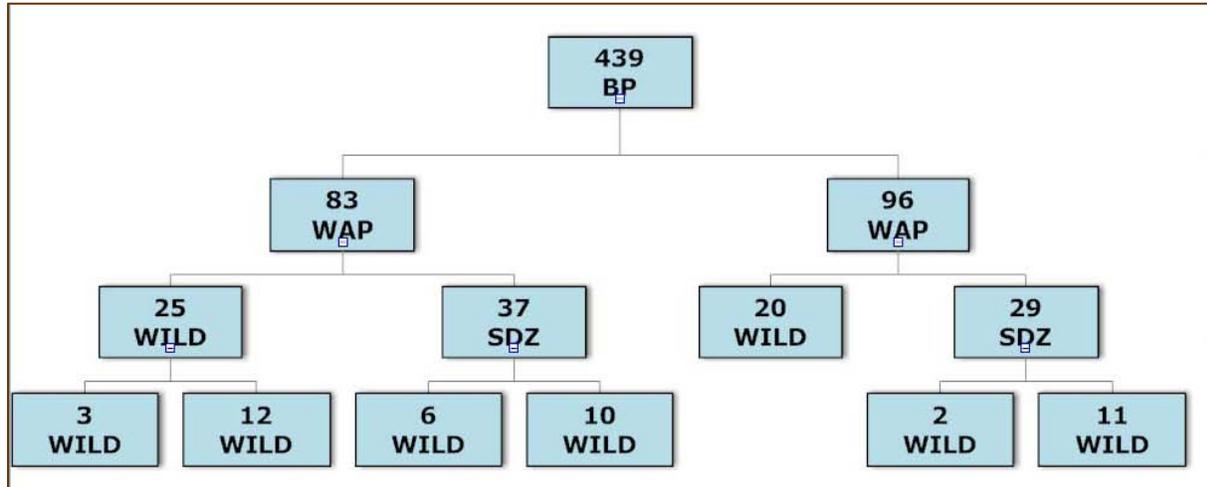
Family Trees of the Santa Barbara Zoo's California Condors

Key for Family Trees

WILD Hatched in the Wild
 LAZ Hatched at LA Zoo
 SDZ Hatched at San Diego Zoo
 WAP Hatched at San Diego Wild Animal Park
 BP Hatched at World Center for Birds of Prey
 AC 1980s Research Designations

4 = AC7
 5 = AC6
 6 = AC2
 10 = AC3
 12 = AC8
 20 = AC4
 21 = AC9





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On Earth Day, April 22, 2009, the Santa Barbara Zoo opened 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.

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BACKGROUND



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NEST MONITORING PROGRAM **SANTA BARBARA ZOO & U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE** **KEEP CLOSE WATCH ON CONDOR NESTS**

Seven wild California condor chicks successfully fledged (left their nests) in California during a very successful breeding season in 2008. Four of these nests were in the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex, where Zoo staff and volunteers keep a dawn-to-dusk, seven-day-a-week watch on wild condor nests as part of a nest monitoring program with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Estelle Sandhaus, Assistant Director of Conservation and Research, leads the Zoo's conservation research activities. She helped develop the scientific protocol for the program, facilitates the data entry and analysis, and collaborates in writing grant proposals and reports.

But this isn't a desk job.

Estelle spends a good deal of her time in the isolated backcountry where the condors nest in caves high in sandstone cliffs. If she is not observing or collecting data, she is training program staff and volunteers how to.

She shows how to recognize condor courtship displays and pairing behavior, and how to use powerful spotting scopes to identify individual birds, often flying miles away, by their wing-tag numbers.

Estelle also prepares the workers for the rigors of hiking, often for several hours through rugged terrain, to the hidden observation locations, how to avoid poison oak, and what to do should they encounter wild animals. Rattlesnakes, bobcats, bears and mountain lions all live in this remote area.

"The volunteers are basically sitting, for hours on end, hidden in a blind made of existing foliage and camouflage netting," says Estelle. "They are watching for condor behaviors and activity at the nest. It can be insanely hot during the summer and chilly in the winter, especially when you are sitting still."

The volunteers are rewarded with breathtaking views of condors flying in the wild, raising their chicks, and, if the timing is right, a chick's first flight.

Condors do not build the stereotypical bird's nest of sticks and feathers. Instead, they choose a protected location, often in an isolated cave. The female lays one egg directly onto the cave floor. In some lucky cases, volunteer researchers have a clear view directly into the cave.

"Behaviors we are most interested in are egg incubation, nesting and nest maintenance, brooding of the chick, and the social interactions between the parents and the chick, such as feeding and preening," says Estelle. "But we also see 'play,' when the chick engages in energetic bouts of hopping, running around in circles, picking up sticks, putting them down and pouncing on them."

If they can't see into the nest, researchers record the amount of time each condor spends there, when the pairs switch off, and, once the chick is grown, when it ventures out of the nest.

Though isolated, volunteers aren't totally alone. They are in radio contact with other researchers and Refuge staff also working in the field, either monitoring other nests or locating the birds visually or by radio telemetry. (Most adult condors are tagged with radio transmitters.)

"Often the call will come over the radio, 'hey, Estelle, number 21 is headed over your way,'" she says. "We work together."

Observations begin in late Fall when researchers begin to see two condors spending time together. The condor pair often visits several possible nesting sites before the female decides on the final spot. One single egg per female is laid generally between February and April. The egg incubates for 56 to 58 days and hatches in Spring. Then it is another five and-a-half to six months before the young chick fledges.

"This year, 2009, has been running a bit late," reports Estelle. "We didn't see displays until January. But we've had an egg hatch just this week (April 16)."

The eggs and then chicks are checked regularly by biologists or veterinarians and there have been interventions to aid an ailing chick. Co-investigator Joseph Brandt (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) has extensive backcountry survival and mountain rescue experience and serves as the climbing specialist as well as lead biologist on most nest entries.

"It's a good thing too, as it our monitoring, nest entries, and interventions have increased the number of successful wild fledglings," notes Estelle. "We are giving these chicks the best start on life possible. This is especially important in a species with a long life span and a long period of parental dependence like the condor – early learning experiences will affect the bird's behavior throughout its entire lifetime.

Several years ago, a chick had to be airlifted out for emergency treatment. A program intern stayed in a bivouac outside the nest to keep the adults from coming into the cave. "If they had discovered the chick was missing, they might have abandoned the nest," she reports. "Within 24 hours, the chick was back and reunited with the parents. It eventually fledged successfully."

This season, as of April, there are four active nests in the study area, with more in Big Sur and Arizona.

"Last year, in our study area, we had five active nests. Four of those chicks fledged successfully, but one had to be airlifted to the Los Angeles Zoo because it had microtrash and lead in its system. But it has recovered and will be released soon."

Data collected is used to learn about condor behavior, which is the subject of the PhD dissertation that Estelle is currently preparing.

"We want to find out the differences between adult condors who were captive-raised vs. those raised by condor parents," she notes. "What are the different parenting styles? Are there different success rates for birds that were wild-fledged vs. those captive-raised and released?"

Estelle, Joseph, and the other program researchers are also interested in determining why parent condors bring trash into the nests and how to prevent it.

"We've done amazing work against the odds and rescued these birds from extinction," says Estelle. "But there is still work to get the lead out of the environment. The ban on lead shot is still very new. It is too early to evaluate its full impact."

Learning what will help these huge birds, once numbering only 24 individuals, now over 320, continue to survive and breed in the wild – that may be worth getting a case of poison oak for the nest monitors.

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