



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Contact

Susan Whaley, The Peregrine Fund, (208) 362-8274

Jeff Humphrey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (602) 242-0210, ext. 222

Lynda Lambert, Arizona Game and Fish Department, (623) 236-7203

Rachel Tueller, Bureau of Land Management, (435) 688-3303

Maureen Oltrogge, Grand Canyon National Park, (928) 638-7779

Mark Hadley, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, (801) 538-4737

Patrick Lair, Kaibab National Forest, (928) 643-8172

First eggs signal start of 2014 breeding season for California Condors

BOISE, Idaho – The first eggs in both the wild flock of California Condors in Arizona and Utah and the captive flock in Idaho were observed last week, marking the start of what biologists hope is another successful breeding season.

Last year, four young condors hatched in the wild, the most ever in one season. Eddie Feltes, field manager for The Peregrine Fund's condor project, said there are as many active pairs in the wild flock this year as last year – but with an exciting new twist.

“Two individuals among the observed active pairs are wild-hatched condors, and with any luck, the Arizona-Utah population might well have its first second-generation wild bird,” Feltes said. “A wild-hatched condor producing wild-hatched young – we have our fingers crossed!”

Such breeding success is a testament to the resiliency of condors, which continue to face lead poisoning and other threats to their survival, he added.

The first egg in the wild Arizona-Utah flock was reported February 11. The adults will incubate it for about two months in their nest at a remote location in Vermilion Cliffs National Monument. Biologists will continue to monitor all the wild pairs from afar to confirm when eggs hatch and chicks take their first flight, or fledge, and to check on how the young birds progress as they are raised by their parents for about a year.

Breeding is also under way in the captive flock at The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho. The first egg, which appeared February 16, was small and yolkless but eight eggs have been laid since then. Marti Jenkins, who oversees the condor propagation program, expects the captive flock to produce up to 20 young birds this season.

The World Center for Birds of Prey is home to the world's largest captive flock of condors. When an egg is two weeks old, biologists determine whether a chick is growing inside. If it is fertile, the egg is artificially incubated until it is ready to hatch. It is then returned to adult condors for hatching and the chick is raised by them for about a year. Juveniles join the wild flocks at various release sites, including The Peregrine Fund's release site at Vermilion Cliffs National Monument.

The recovery effort is a cooperative program by federal, state, and private partners, including The Peregrine Fund, Arizona Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Strip Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management, Grand Canyon and Zion national parks, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and Kaibab and Dixie national forests.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Prior to reintroduction, the last wild condor in Arizona was sighted just south of the Grand Canyon in 1924.
- Condors reach maturity at about six years of age. They usually produce one egg every other year.
- The condor is the largest land bird in North America. The birds can weigh up to 26 pounds and have a wingspan up to 9½ feet.
- Condors were added to the federal Endangered Species List in 1967.
- Lead poisoning is the leading cause of death for California Condors in Arizona and Utah.

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