



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Inez Connor 202/343-5634

FIRST FREE-FLYING CONDOR CAPTURED; TESTS UNDERWAY TO DETERMINE ITS SEX

The first free-flying California condor was captured late yesterday northeast of Ventura. The endangered bird is being held near the site temporarily while its sex is being determined. It is believed to be 3 to 4 years old and is in excellent condition, following its capture Tuesday about 3:30 p.m. Pacific time. It is under the constant observation and care of a veterinarian.

Dr. Noel Snyder, condor research biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fired the cannon-net over the condor while it was feeding on a calf carcass. It resisted strenuously, biting the hands of its captors, but displayed no signs of stress during initial examination and taking of the blood sample. The blood is now being analyzed at the San Diego Zoo, where it will take about 36 hours to determine the bird's sex. The condor will be held near the trapping site until that time.

If it is a female, it will be taken into captivity as a prospective mate for Topa Topa, a male condor already held at the Los Angeles Zoo, according to Dr. John Rogers, Jr., acting director of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. However, if it is a male, it will be fitted with two solar-powered transmitters and then will be released. Trapping efforts will then resume to capture a female.

The California Fish and Game Commission authorized the trapping of immature condors on August 6, 1982. Only two birds can be taken into captivity under the permit this year, one as a mate for Topa. One condor was removed from its nest August 13 because of parental neglect and is now thriving at the San Diego Wild Animal Park.

The capture of the wild condor was announced jointly by the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Audubon Society, and the California Department of Fish and Game. Officials for all three agencies said they are delighted by the first successful trapping effort and praised the field biologists for the smooth operation. Dr. Snyder was assisted in the trapping effort by John Ogden, Jesse Grantham, Bruce Barbour, and Peter Bloom of the National Audubon Society, Steve Kimpel of the California Department of Fish and Game, and Dr. Philip Ensley, veterinarian with the San Diego Zoo.

The California condor research project is a cooperative effort among the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Audubon Society, California Department of Fish and Game, Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management. The purpose of the program, begun in late 1979, is to identify factors causing the continued decline of the wild California condor population and at the same time, to breed the birds in captivity for eventual release in the wild.

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