



## **BIRD SECTION**

### **CALIFORNIA CONDOR**

#### **ABOUT**

The California Condor (*Gymnogyps Californianus*) is North America's largest and rarest flying bird from the vulture family. Their wings, from tip to tip, can span more than nine feet and they soar high on wind currents. Adult condors have a bare orange, yellow-orange, or pink head and neck, which turns a deep red-pink during courtship or when expressing excitement or alarm. The body is an even black, but the feathers on the back are edged with brown. The underside of each wing (particularly in males) has a white triangle-shaped patch or bands of white. Their bill is ivory, legs and feet are gray, and they sport a frill of black feathers surrounding the base of the neck. Like other vultures this bird is a scavenger, but instead of relying on its sense of smell, uses its sharp sight to find food and is an important member of nature's cleaning crew. California Condors can live up to 60 years, and they mate for life. Normally, they breed every two years, producing a single egg. The male and female take turns sitting on the egg until it hatches and then feeding the chick for up to a year, until it can feed itself.

#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The California Condor is critically endangered and one of the rarest birds in the world. Although nobody knows exactly how many there were historically, in 1982 there were less than 25 in the wild. Condors were sacred to the Native Americans who lived in the open expanses of western America. After decades of decline this bird almost reached extinction in the late 1970s. Many birds died from poison ingestion or being shot as well as illegal egg collection. Like so many species, they are suffering from a loss of habitat and collisions with power lines. Due to the intense efforts of many conservation organizations there are now 349 living - 186 of them in the wild. Designated refuges and captive breeding programs are helping keep this species from becoming extinct. They can be seen around the Grand Canyon National Park, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and Pinnacles National Monument as well as in southern California and Baja California.

For more detailed information visit: [www.sandiegozoo.org](http://www.sandiegozoo.org) or [www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org).

#### **TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE**

What family of birds does the California Condor belong to?

- a. Vulture
- b. Eagle
- c. Domestic Fowl
- d. Raptor

Answer is A.

