



BACKGROUND



April 22, 2009

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HOW PEOPLE CAN HELP CALIFORNIA CONDORS

There are plenty of ways that the public can help California condors – everything from picking up “microtrash,” to volunteering to watch condor nests in the wild, to making a monetary donation. Here are just a few ideas.

Don’t Litter

Microtrash is small bits of trash, be it bottle caps, pull tabs, broken glass, and bits of plastic. Condors find microtrash on the mountain tops within their habitat, which are where humans like to visit.

Condors often collect microtrash and take it back to their nests – where it is regurgitated with food for their nestling. Once ingested by a chick, the trash can obstruct their digestive tract.

Biologists are not sure why condors are drawn to microtrash, but they are taking steps to distract these majestic birds from the habit.

You can help by packing out your trash when you visit condor country. Zoo staff often volunteers to help clean up condor habitat. Want to help? Contact the Zoo at (805) 962-5339.

Respect Wildlife

Give wild condors – and all wildlife – lots of room. If you see a wild creature, don’t approach it. Interactions between humans and wild animals often don’t end well for either the person or the animal. Observe from a distance and respect the fact that you are in their territory, their wild home.

Volunteer to be a “Nest Monitor”

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.

Volunteers who are interested in becoming a California Condor Nest Monitor must complete training in monitoring and data collection protocols, plus spend long hours in the field, including in inclement conditions. Depending on nest site location, volunteers may need to hike or camp in the backcountry.

But they 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.

The program needs volunteers who can commit to regular observation days (minimum of 2 per month) over the full breeding season of six to eight months.

Does this appeal to your sense of adventure? Contact Estelle Sandhaus (805) 962-5339, ext. 138 or esandhaus@sbzoo.org.

Make a Donation to the Santa Barbara Zoo's California Condor Recovery & Conservation Fund

Collaborative efforts over the past two decades have brought the California Condor back from the brink of extinction. With more than 320 condors in existence, now, more than ever, the condor population needs your help to survive.

When you make a gift to Santa Barbara Zoo and designate your donation to "condor recovery and conservation fund," your donation goes towards efforts to stabilize the population so that these magnificent birds will be here for generations to come. For more information, please call (805) 962-5339. Send donations to:

Santa Barbara Zoo
Attn: Conservation Donation
500 Niños Drive
Santa Barbara, CA 93103

More Ideas to Help Conservation Efforts

Visit the Zoo's webpage for more information on doing your part to help the environment at: www.sbzoo.org/do_your_part.asp.

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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.

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.

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