

Grand Canyon National Park's Ranger Audio Tour Stop # 18 **Condors**

Welcome to Grand Canyon National Park! I am Ranger Pat.

As you marvel at the Grand Canyon, have you managed to pull your gaze upward? Have you noticed the big sky? This endless sky is part of the rich Grand Canyon ecosystem. One species in particular claims the sky as its own: the California condor. While you are here, you have a wonderful and rare opportunity to see a California condor.

As the condor glides effortlessly across the canyon, it is returning to its native habitat. Northern Arizona was selected as a reintroduction site for endangered California condors in 1996. The condor reintroduction program is a cooperative effort of private, federal, and state agencies. The Peregrine Fund, a nonprofit organization, coordinates the condor program in northern Arizona and southern Utah.

This tremendous effort is beginning to show results. As with any reintroduction program there are setbacks and accomplishments, but for now the future for the California condor looks bright.

As of 2008 the condor population here has eight wild condors. The four oldest of these birds are just a few years away from potentially becoming parents themselves. It would be a joyous and magnificent occasion if the condors can reach that next major milestone of wild condors raising their own chicks. High expectations abound that this next season even more condor chicks will be raised in a Grand Canyon cave.

One partner of the condor reintroduction program still needs to be mentioned – you. Remember the national parks belong to you. You can take an active role. If you encounter a condor, please follow proper behavior. First always enjoy the birds from a distance. Do not approach or attempt to feed a condor. Second make sure you place all of your bits of litter in the proper container and do not throw coins over the edge of the Grand Canyon. This can have negative effects not only on the condors but other wildlife as well.

For more information and the latest updates about California condors, visit Canyon View Visitor Center and ask a park ranger.

When you get to your next Grand Canyon view, keep one eye on the brilliant blue sky. You have a wonderful chance to see a California condor. If you are rewarded with a sighting, stand and absorb your experience. Then let your joy ride on the wings of a condor.