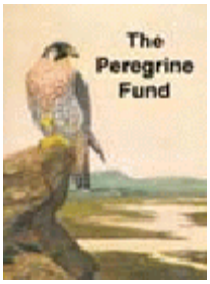

Contacts:
Jeff Cilek, The Peregrine Fund, 208/362-3811 office, 208/890-6685 cell
Bill Austin, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 928/ 226-0614
David Boyd, Bureau of Land Management, 435/688-3303
Maureen Oltrogge, Grand Canyon National Park, 928/638-7779
Andi Rogers, Condor Biologist, Arizona Game and Fish Department, 928/774-5045

CONDORS IN ARIZONA MAY HAVE NESTLING

Biologists have confirmed that at least three pairs of California Condors nesting in Arizona have each produced an egg. Two nests were unsuccessful but biologists continue to monitor the third to determine whether one pair may have produced a young condor. If so, this would be the first condor to hatch and survive in Arizona in decades.

After occupying the "Battleship" nest for several weeks, Condors 119 and 122 abandoned the site. Eggshell fragments from the "Battleship" nest were retrieved by climbers from Grand Canyon National Park last week. Although it could not be confirmed, biologists speculate that the egg failed during the hatching phase. The pair's efforts in 2002 ended similarly. Another pair, Condors 114 and 133, nested in the Bureau of Land Management's Vermilion Cliffs National Monument, and laid an egg that failed to hatch. Climbers from the Arizona Game and Fish and National Park Service collected eggshell fragments. It is not uncommon for California Condors to fail in their early nesting attempts.

Behavior from Condors 123 and 127 in the "Salt Creek Nest" in the Grand Canyon seem to indicate the presence of a nestling. Due to the location of the nest, it is impossible to visually confirm the existence of a nestling. For the past three weeks the pair have been very attentive to the nest, switching nest duty on a daily basis. In 2002, after incubating an egg for three months (incubation period for condors is usually 56-58 days) they switched nest duty only every few days. Their current behavior is very different. If they have a nestling, it could be as old as three weeks.

"If this is a nestling, it would be the first one in Arizona in decades," stated Chris Parish, Arizona Supervisor for The Peregrine Fund. "From the start we knew this would be a tough, long-term effort so it's very exciting to know we may have cleared another hurdle in the recovery of North America's largest bird," finished Parish.

Last spring, condors in California hatched three eggs in the wild, however none survived. In California this year, one egg was laid and hatched three weeks ago.

Regular updates from the field on all of the California Condor activities in the Southwest are provided on the "Notes from the Field" section of The Peregrine Fund's web site (www.peregrinefund.org).

"Waiting for a condor chick to be old enough to amble out into view is such an anxiety ridden and exciting time," said Andi Rogers, Condor Biologist for Arizona Game and Fish. "We all have our fingers crossed that this year we will see the first truly wild condor since the last historical Arizona report in 1924."

"Having three confirmed condor nests and a possible chick in Arizona is wonderful news," said Roger Taylor, Field Manager for the Arizona Strip BLM Field Office. "It will take time to recover a species like the condor, and these nesting attempts show we are making progress," finished Taylor.

"National Park Service and Peregrine Fund staff are monitoring the nest cave and birds daily from sunrise to sunset, assisted by a dedicated core of hearty volunteers," stated Elaine Leslie, Wildlife Biologist. "Our hope is that by mid-to late summer, we will be able to view a condor chick tucked high and safely into the redwall of Grand Canyon National Park, just waiting for that first flight of a wild-reared chick into the Arizona skies," finished Leslie.

"These condor pairs are teaching us a great deal at this important step to establishing a self-sustaining wild population," said Dale Hall, Fish and Wildlife Service Southwest Regional Director. "A reproductive condor population in the Southwest is essential to the recovery of this once-gravely endangered species."

The historic Arizona reintroduction is a joint project between The Peregrine Fund (conducting the release), the Arizona Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (responsible for the overall recovery of the species), Bureau of Land Management (managing the habitat), National Park Service (managing the habitat), Southern Utah's Coalition of Resources and Economics, and numerous other partners. Funding for the project is being provided by The Peregrine Fund, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Peter Pfendler, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund Awards, Steve Martin/Natural Encounters, Grand Canyon National Park Foundation, Kearney Alliance, Patagonia, Turner Foundation, Globe Foundation, Earth Friends, Arizona Public Service, Wallace Research Foundation, Grand Canyon Conservation Fund, and others.

The California Condors are being released as a "non-essential/experimental population" under section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act. Section 10(j) provides that the species can be released in an area without impacting current or future land use planning. This authority has been spelled out further in an innovative agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and local governments. This "Implementation Agreement" spells out a positive working relationship between the Federal government and the various local governments.

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The Peregrine Fund

Focusing on birds to conserve nature

WORLD CENTER FOR BIRDS OF PREY

CALIFORNIA CONDOR (*Gymnogyps californianus*) FACT SHEET

SIZE: Weight: 16 to 23 pounds
Wingspan: Up to 9.5 feet (3 meters)
Body Length: 46 to 55 inches

VOICE: None, but may grunt or wheeze

NEST SITE: Usually a cave in a cliff or a crevice among boulders on a steep slope.

REPRODUCTION: Condors reach sexual maturity and attain adult plumage and coloration by five to six years of age and breeding is likely between six and eight years of age. A mature condor will lay one egg (average incubation period for a condor egg is 56 days) every other year during a successful nesting cycle. The species provides extensive parental care to very few young.

FEEDING: Condors are strict scavengers. Historically, carcasses of bison, elk or deer in inland areas. Seals and beached whales along coasts. With fluctuating populations of wild game, the condor has adapted to utilizing carcasses of domestic animals too. Unlike Turkey Vultures, condors do not have an exceptional sense of smell. They find their food visually, often by investigating the activity of ravens, coyotes, eagles, and other scavengers. Without the guidance of their parents, young inexperienced juvenile condors may also investigate the activity of humans. As young condors learn and mature this human directed curiosity diminishes.

RANGE: Occurred historically from British Columbia south to northern Baja California and in other parts of southwestern United States. Has ability to travel 150 miles a day in search of food.

POPULATION: In 1982, there were only 22 California Condors in the world. On May 1, 2003 there were 210 condors (131 in captivity and 3 in Baja, 40 in the wild in California and 36 in wild in Arizona).

YOUNG: Nestlings fledge (leave nest) full grown at six months of age, however, historically juvenile condors may be dependant on their parents for more than a year. Reintroduced condors are released on their own and must learn to forage and survive with the now existing free-flying population.

SEXES: There is no sexual dimorphism (observable difference in size or appearance) between males and females.

IDENTIFICATION: Numbered wing tags, white or mottled triangle under wing, no feathers on head, and head color black in juveniles or orange/pink in adults, not dark red as in Turkey Vultures.

CAUSE OF DECLINE: Unsustainable mortality rate in the wild and a naturally low reproductive rate. Predation, shootings, poisoning, lead poisoning, and collisions with power lines are some of the major threats.

CONDOR ENCOUNTER: Please enjoy the birds from a distance. Do not approach or attempt to feed a condor. **Never feed, shoot, or throw objects at a condor.** The California Condor, hawks, eagles, vultures, and owls are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty and the Endangered Species Act. Under these acts it is illegal to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, or attempt any of these activities to a bird of prey.

CONTACT INFO: If a condor approaches you, or you observe anyone harassing or harming a condor, immediately notify:

The Peregrine Fund - (928) 355-2270 (azcondors@aol.com)
Arizona Game & Fish - (928) 774-5045
Bureau of Land Management - (435) 688-3200
National Park Service - (928) 638-7756

If you should observe a condor please report your sighting to Peregrine Fund biologists at (928) 355-2270 or e-mail us at azcondors@aol.com. Helpful information would include date, time, location, number of birds observed, and wing tag numbers if possible.

5668 West Flying Hawk Lane * Boise, Idaho 83709 * United States of America
Business Office (208) 362-3716 * FAX (208) 362-2376 * Interpretive Center (208) 362-8687
tpf@peregrinefund.org * http://www.peregrinefund.org