



NEWS MEDIA ADVISORY

Release Date: Dec. 15, 2003

Contacts:

Jeff Cilek, The Peregrine Fund, 208/362-3811, cell 208/890-6685

Bill Heinrich, The Peregrine Fund 208/362-3811, cell 208-890-0163

Jeff Humphrey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 602/242-0210

David Boyd, Bureau of Land Management, 435/688-3303

Dawn O'Sickey, Grand Canyon National Park, 928/638-7779

Andi Rogers, California Condor Coordinator, Arizona Game and Fish Department, 928/774-5045

Note to editors: Condor images are available at

http://arizonaes.fws.gov/image_library.htm

http://www.gf.state.az.us/nrm/photo_downloads.html

http://www.peregrinefund.org/press_condor.html

Photos of previous condor transports are available by contacting Jeff Humphrey at jeff_humphrey@fws.gov.

Photos of this transport will be available on December 22, 2003 from Jeff Cilek (jcilek@peregrinefund.org) or Linda Behrman (lbehrman@peregrinefund.org).

MORE CONDORS ON THEIR WAY TO VERMILION CLIFFS

Arizona's population of California Condors will increase on December 19 when ten condors will be transported to the release site in the Bureau of Land Management's Vermilion Cliffs National Monument. All of the young condors hatched last year at The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey. On December 1, there were 217 California Condors in the world, 84 of those were in the wild in Arizona, California, and Mexico.

The ten young condors will be transported by Norm Freeman of Chino Valley, Arizona, in a specially designed motor coach. The condors will travel from the World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho to a transfer area below the release site at the base of the cliff in the Bureau of Land Management's Vermilion Cliffs National Monument. The condors will be divided into separate four-wheel drive vehicles for the steep drive to the release aviary on the top of the 1,000 foot cliff.

After an acclimation period of at least six to eight weeks, the young condors will be released in small groups. The public will be invited to view those releases. As information becomes available about the releases, it will be placed on The Peregrine Fund's web site (www.peregrinefund.org/whats.html).

"This is an exciting time for the project," stated Dr. William A. Burnham, President of The Peregrine Fund. "Last month's successful fledging of the first condor chick in the wild in decades is a major step in establishing a viable population in the wild," finished Burnham.

"With the fledging of a wild condor chick, 2003 was truly a historic year in the California Condor recovery effort in northern Arizona. We are optimistic that the arrival of these new condors marks the beginning of another great year in the recovery of these remarkable birds," said Roger Taylor, Field Manager for the BLM Arizona Strip.

"This has been such a great year for condors and it's always exciting to get new birds into the program. We are looking forward to these young condors' successful integration into the wild flock in Arizona," stated Andi Rogers California Condor Coordinator for the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

The historic Arizona reintroduction is a joint project among the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, The Peregrine Fund, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Southern Utah's Coalition of Resources and Economics, and others. 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, Bureau of Land Management, Grand Canyon National Park, Kearney Alliance, Grand Canyon Trust, Patagonia, Turner Foundation, Globe Foundation, Earth Friends, Arizona Public Service, Wallace Research Foundation, Mattie Wattis Harris Foundation, Arizona Community Foundation, Oracle Corporation, 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. However, in Grand Canyon National Park condors are provided full protection as a federally protected endangered species. 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.

* * * *