



## NEWS RELEASE – Feb. 24, 2006

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### Public invited to watch release of endangered condors into the wild

PHOENIX — A very unusual event takes place just once every spring in northern Arizona: a release into the wild of endangered California condors that's open to the public. This year, anyone interested is invited to watch on Thursday, March 2 as seven condors are released at the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument. Fewer than 300 condors exist in the entire world.

"This is a chance to see an incredibly rare moment, when these birds take flight in the wild for the first time," says Chris Parish, condor field project supervisor with The Peregrine Fund, the group releasing the birds. "The moment marks progress toward bringing these condors back from the brink of extinction."

In 1982, only 22 California condors were left in the world. The birds were captured in an effort to breed and save the species. Captive-reared condors are now periodically released at sites in California, Mexico and at the Vermilion Cliffs in Arizona.

"People are welcome to come and enjoy the release at 11 a.m. on March 2," says Kathy Sullivan, a condor biologist with the Arizona Game and Fish Department. "The observation point is about a mile from the actual release site, so those interested may want to bring binoculars or a spotting scope."

To view the condor release, drive north on Highway 89 out of Flagstaff. Turn left (west) onto Highway 89A toward Jacob Lake and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. Drive about 40 miles past Marble Canyon until you turn right onto House Rock Valley Road (BLM Road 1065). Travel about three miles to a shaded viewing area on the right. On top of the cliffs to your east will be the location where the condors are released.

Condors have been federally listed as endangered since 1967. The condor is the largest flying land bird in North America. The birds can weigh up to 26 pounds and have a wingspan of up to 9 1/2 feet. Condors were first reintroduced in Arizona in 1996. Fifty-nine now fly free in the wilds of our state. Visitors at the Grand Canyon and Vermilion Cliffs may be able to observe the birds, especially during the spring and summer.

The condor reintroduction in Arizona is a joint project of many partners, including Arizona Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Peregrine Fund, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Kaibab National Forest and Utah Division of Wildlife Resources.

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**Note to media: Condor photos, condor video and biologist interviews are available by calling Arizona Game and Fish Department Public Information Officer Debbie Freeman at (602) 789-3215. Media representatives are also welcome to come out and cover the release.**

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