



# News Release

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## **LOCAL ASSISTANCE SOUGHT IN REVIEW OF CALIFORNIA CONDOR EXPERIMENT**

Phoenix, Ariz. – Land managers and condor biologists will hold open houses in Arizona and Utah next month to seek public input on an ongoing program to reintroduce California condors to the canyon lands and high plateaus of northern Arizona and southern Utah.

The first open house will be on Thursday, November 1, 2001, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Shilo Inn, 296 West 100 North in Kanab, Utah. The second open house will be on Monday, November 5, from 7 to 9.m. at the Arizona Game and Fish Department Office, 3500 South Lake Mary Road in Flagstaff, Arizona. The open houses will include presentations and group discussions on various aspects of the condor recovery in northern Arizona. Comments must be submitted by November 23, 2001, to: California Condor Recovery Program Coordinator; Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office; 2494 Portola Road, Suite B; Ventura, CA 93003; or by e-mail to [fw1azcondor@r1.fws.gov](mailto:fw1azcondor@r1.fws.gov).

“The success of the condor recovery project in northern Arizona in large part is due to the support of the local community,” said Bruce Palmer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service California condor recovery coordinator. “The open house provides us with an opportunity to update the public on the project and to listen to any concerns or ideas that may improve the program.”

The hearings are part of a Federal rule establishing the experimental release program. The rule requires a review of the program after five years to gauge public acceptance of the program and its overall success.

The release of California condors in northern Arizona is a joint public/private partnership between The Peregrine Fund, the Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Arizona Game and Fish, Coalition of Resources and Economies, and other partners. The Peregrine Fund, a non-profit organization, is funding and conducting the releases.

Since the project started in December 1996, 47 condors have been released to the wild in northern Arizona. A total of 18 birds have died and four have been returned to captivity. Reintroduction efforts have been complicated by predation, lead poisoning, interactions between birds and humans, and a shooting. Today, there are 25 free-flying condors.

Last March, a reintroduced bird produced the first condor egg laid in the wild since 1986. The egg was laid in a shallow cave in Grand Canyon National Park, a short flight for the condor from the condor release site. The condors have been known to fly widely, but generally within the Grand Canyon corridor. In the summer of 1998, one bird flew to Flaming Gorge, Wyoming, 310 miles from the release site; three other condors flew to Grand Junction, Colorado, 250 miles to the north.

Condors are scavenging birds that soared over many parts of the United States since prehistoric times. Their numbers plummeted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in 1967 the condor was listed as an endangered species under a law predating the existing Endangered Species Act. The causes of their decline are not completely known. In 1982, the condor population reached its lowest level of 22, prompting Service biologists to begin collecting condor chicks and eggs for a captive breeding program. By late 1984, only 15 condors remained in the wild and six of them died within a short period. In 1987, the last of the California condors were removed from the wild and brought into the captive breeding program.

The goal of the California Condor Recovery Plan is to establish two geographically separate, self-sustaining populations -- a primary population in California and the other outside of California, each with 150 birds and at least 15 breeding pairs. For information about the California condor and the Arizona releases, go to: [www.peregrinefund.org](http://www.peregrinefund.org) or [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 94-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses more than 535 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.

