

# Four endangered condors released in Northern California

Condors have been absent from the region for over 100 years.

**FRAME 8** After more than a century, California condors are once again gliding over the forests of Northern California. **Does anyone know what kind of birds condors are?** (*Vultures.*) In July, members of the Yurok tribe—one of the largest Native American tribes in California—released four captive condors into Redwood National Park. The condor release was the culmination of years of work by the Yurok Condor Restoration Program, a conservation group that has been working to save these threatened birds for more than a decade. Condors, known as “prey-go-Aneesh” in the Yurok language, are part of many of the native tribe’s songs and narratives. **Who wants to read the quote from a member of the Yurok tribe? What do you think he means?**

Over the 20th century, the California condor population dropped significantly due to several human activities, including habitat destruction and the use of lead ammunition for hunting. **How do you think condors are affected by lead ammunition?** (*Condors eat animal carcasses that are contaminated with lead ammunition, which causes lead poisoning.*) By 1980, there were only 22

condors left in the wild. California condors were declared officially extinct in the wild in 1987, while the

last 27 condors were taken into captivity for conservation efforts. Breeding programs have since helped revive the California condor population in Mexico and the Southwestern United States, but the animal was still missing from northern California until last month.

The reintroduction of California condors into the wild is significant for the Yurok Tribe but also for the natural world more broadly. Condors are scavengers – they help the decomposition process of carrion. **What is carrion?** (*Carrion is the decaying flesh of dead animals*) This is important because the decomposition process feeds smaller scavenging animals and creates nutrient-rich soil. In Redwood National Park and other regions of Northern California, the California condors will once again be an important part of the food web. NEXT



## California and Andean condors are the largest flying land birds in the Americas

**FRAME 9** Condors are incredible animals. They are the largest flying land birds in North and South America. Condors belong to a family of vultures that contains only two species: the California condor and the Andean condor. Both species of condors have no feathers on their brightly colored heads. Scientists think this helps them stay healthy and clean while feeding on large animals such as deer, cattle, and sheep. **What might happen if they had feathers?** (*Food particles and germs might stick to their feathers and spread disease.*) When condors fly, they rarely flap their wings. One Andean condor flew 100 miles without flapping its wings once! Condors are also fast. The California condor can fly as fast as 55 miles per hour.

The two condor species are different in several ways. **What similarities and differences do you notice in the images here?** Although Andean condors are slightly shorter from beak to tail, they are larger, on average, in wingspan and weight. Andean condors can weigh up to 33 pounds and have a wingspan of over 10 feet. Unlike California condors, male Andean condors have brown or yellow eyes, while female Andean condors

have red eyes. Both condor species are monogamous. This means that they generally only mate with one other condor during their lifetimes. **Why are some animals monogamous?** (*Their young are often very immature and helpless, so both male and female parental care is required.*)

While the Andean condor population did not drop as low as the California condor population, their population is still decreasing. The International Union for Conservation of Nature, or IUCN, lists the Andean condor as near threatened. But there is hope for the condors. In recent years, lawmakers have passed legislation that could help increase condor numbers, including a California law that bans the use of lead ammunition. The Yurok tribe will also continue to work with the Redwood National Park to save condors. They plan to release 4 to 6 California condors each year. **What else do you think could be done to help protect condors?** END

