

**Audience:** This artifact was written to be viewed by the general public in a zoo setting. This means it was written with the intent that both children and adults will be able to read and interpret the information provided. In other words, this artifact was written for a lay audience with no previous knowledge or expertise on the subject.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this artifact is to educate and inform the public on the basic ecology and habitat of California condors and the conservation efforts that have been made to restore their populations in the wild. It is intended to be read while observing the species in a zoo setting.

**Bibliography:**

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). 2025. California Condor. California Department of Fish and Wildlife; [accessed 2025 Jan 31].  
<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Birds/California-Condor>

# THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR:

*GYMNOGYPS CALIFORNIANUS*

**Basic habitat & ecology:** The California condor is a large bird, weighing more than 20 pounds with a wingspan of 9+ feet from tip to tip. This wingspan means that they are masters of soaring and gliding through the air for long periods of time, reaching more than 55 mph while scavenging for carrion, or dead animals, their only source of food. They prefer to nest in mountain cliff caves or large cavities of tree trunks and can be found in the southwest United States, although their habitat range used to be much larger.

**Conservation efforts:** Once occupying a range from Canada to Mexico and as far east as Florida and New York, by the 1970s the California condor's population had diminished to only a few dozen residing in Southern California. Major conservation efforts were put into place that eventually led to all the remaining wild condors being captured and placed in zoos. Using captive breeding programs, the population of California condors went from only 27 birds remaining in 1987 to 161 birds in 1999. Captive bred condors have since been released in California, Arizona, and Baja, Mexico and the total population was recorded as 446 birds in 2016.



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