

Zoo's California condor facility currently in phase II construction

The Oregon Zoo's 16 California condors at the Jonsson Center for Wildlife Conservation will soon have more room for nesting and breeding, as well as a new training space where they'll learn the ins and outs of condor customs and culture prior to being released into the wild. Construction on phase two is under way with construction on the third (final) phase scheduled to begin on August 1. The expansion should be completed by October 24.

The expansion includes a mesh-covered breeding facility plus the addition of a mesh-covered pre-release "boot camp" area with a small holding building. A \$235,000 contribution to the Oregon Zoo Foundation from Erik Jonsson, representing the Jonsson family, enabled the zoo to continue with these final phases of construction.

The breeding facility addition is approximately 19,500 square feet and provides for eight additional breeding pairs in two buildings.

The "boot camp" pre-release pens, when finished, will provide young condors the final round of training needed before they are sent to the wild for release.

"Although there are no immediate plans to release condors in Oregon, I believe the expansion at the Jonsson Center for Wildlife Conservation brings us closer to one day seeing California condors in Oregon skies," says Oregon Zoo Director Tony Vecchio.

The last condors were seen in Oregon in 1904, near the town of Drain, in southwest Oregon. Condors held out a little longer in California, but in 1987, there were only 27 left in the wild. In an attempt to save the species, biologists decided to place all the remaining condors into a captive breeding program. When Congress passed the Endangered Species Act in 1973, the California condor was one of the original animals included on the list.

Condors have a long history in Oregon. Archeologists have

unearthed 9,000-year-old condor bones from Native American middens. The condor was a common design motif of the Wasco people, who lived along the Columbia River from The Dalles to Cascade Locks—the condor was considered a helper to the native peoples and a key character in many myths.

The Oregon Zoo is the fourth organization in the nation invited to join the California Condor Recovery Program. The recovery goal for the condor program is to establish a captive population of 150 birds and two separate wild populations of condors (150 each), one in California and the other in Arizona. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Condor Recovery Program coordinate and implement the recovery efforts and provide oversight of all program partners.


Condors are the largest land birds in North America, with wingspans of up to ten feet, and weigh between 18 and 24 pounds. They are highly intelli-



gent and inquisitive, often engaging in play. During the Pleistocene Era, which ended about 10,000 years ago, the condors' range extended across much of North America. By 1940, the range was reduced to the coastal mountains of southern California.

The zoo opens at 9:00 a.m. daily and is located just off

Highway 26. The zoo is also accessible by MAX light rail line. General admission is \$9.50 (12-64), seniors \$8 (65+), children \$6.50 (3-11), and infants two and under are free. A parking fee of \$1 per car is also required. Additional information is available at <www.oregonzoo.org> or by calling 503-226-1561.



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