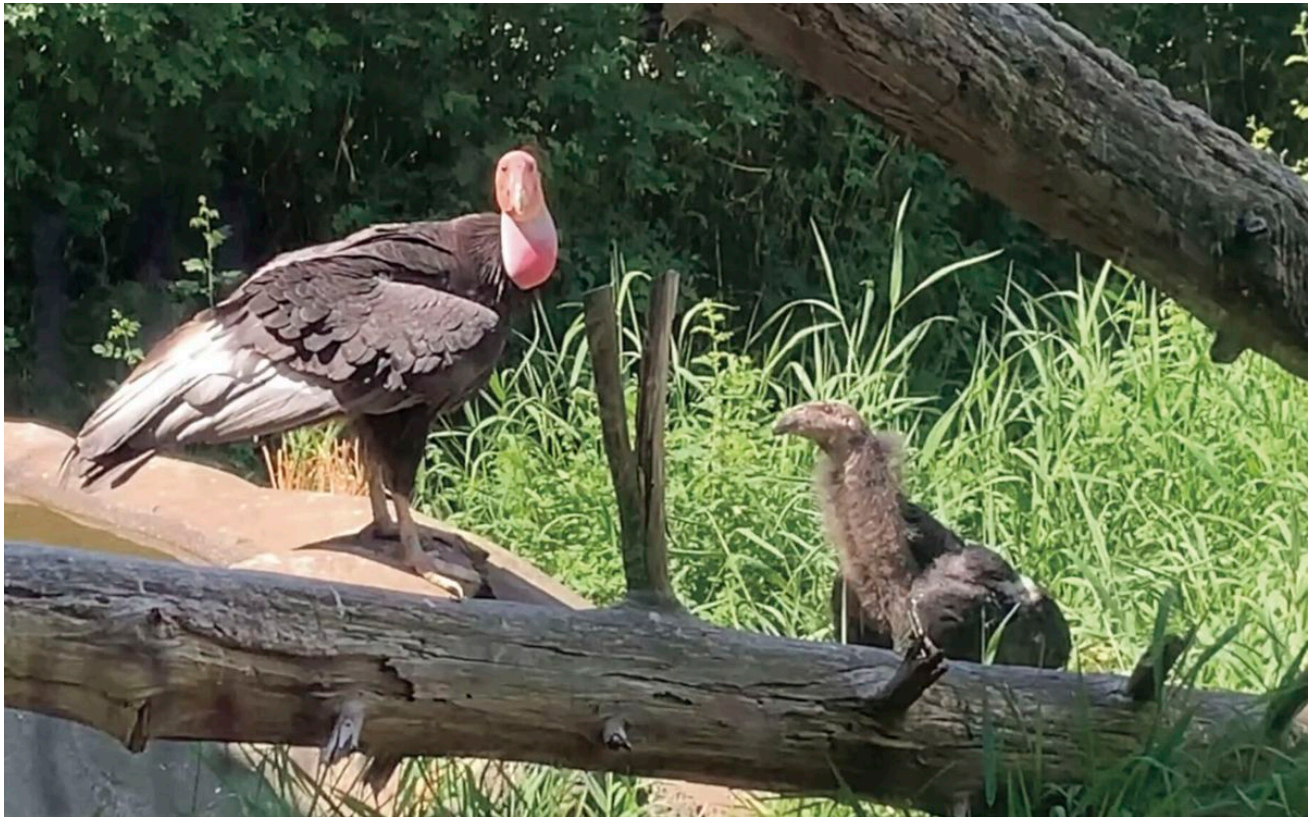


Zoo condor chicks learn to fly

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A dozen flappy condor chicks are getting their wings this month at the Oregon Zoo's Jonsson Center for Wildlife Conservation. As their fluffy down turns to strong, sturdy wing feathers — a process known as fledging — the young birds have started to take short flights outside.

“Some of the chicks are still big fluffy balls of fury,” said Kelli Walker, the zoo's lead condor keeper. “But they'll be full-fledged condors before long. Once they're flying on their own, they'll practice in larger enclosures until they're finally ready to soar into the wild.”

The chicks, which hatched earlier this year, stay with their parents for at least eight months before spending about a year in their large, outdoor pre-release pens. Eventually, they will travel to a wild release site to join free-flying condors in California and Arizona.

The first chick fledged earlier this month, and the remaining 11 are following closely behind and can be seen hopping and flapping around the pen, Walker said. The 12-chick cohort is the biggest batch yet in the zoo's

19-year effort to save the birds from extinction. And with scarcely more than 500 birds left in the world, each new condor is vitally important to the species' survival.

Visible security cameras from Teledyne FLIR are providing improved views into the nesting areas and 24/7 observation of the condors, helping zoo staff better monitor the health of chicks and parents.

The California condor was one of the original animals included on the 1973 Endangered Species Act and is classified as critically endangered. In 1982, only 22 individuals remained in the wild and by 1987, the last condors were brought into human care in an attempt to save the species from extinction. Thanks to recovery programs like the Oregon Zoo's, the world's California condor population now totals around 500 birds, most of which are flying free.

The Oregon Zoo's condor recovery efforts take place at the Jonsson Center for Wildlife Conservation, located in rural Clackamas County on Metro-owned open land. The remoteness of the facility minimizes the exposure of young condors to people, increasing the chances for captive-hatched birds to survive and breed in the wild.

Upgrades and new equipment at the center have been made possible through continued support from the Avangrid Foundation and donations to the Oregon Zoo Foundation, which supports the zoo's efforts in advancing animal welfare, conservation and education. To learn more or to make a gift, call 503-220-2493 or email foundation@oregonzoo.org.

More than 108 chicks have hatched at the Jonsson Center since 2003, and more than 73 Oregon Zoo-reared birds have gone out to field pens for release. Several eggs laid by Oregon Zoo condors have been placed in wild nests to hatch.

California condor breeding programs are also operated at San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park, the Los Angeles Zoo and the Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey in Idaho. For more information, visit oregonzoo.org/condors.