



ANDEAN CONDOR

Falconiformes
Family: Cathartidae
Genus: *Vultur*
Species: *gryphus*



Female

Male

Range: Andes mountains and adjacent Pacific coasts of western South America

Habitat: open grasslands and alpine areas up to 16,000 ft in elevation. It prefers relatively open, non-forested areas - high mountains, lowland deserts, open grasslands, along coastlines and in alpine regions

Niche: Carnivorous scavenger, diurnal, arboreal

Wild diet: Carrion, prefers large carcasses such as deer, guanacos, sheep

Zoo diet:

Life Span: Wild- up to 70 years Captivity – longest 79 years

Sexual dimorphism: M larger than F (atypical of birds of prey), M has a wattle and caruncle (only New World Vulture to show sexual dimorphism)

Location in SF Zoo: Puente al sur

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

Andean condors are large birds in the Family Cathartidae, with New World Vultures; they have the longest wingspan of any raptor and are among the largest birds that are able to fly; they have the largest wing surface area of any bird. They are black with a ruff of white feathers surrounding the base of the neck, and large white patches on the wings. Their head and neck are a dull red color and nearly featherless; the color may change in response to the bird's emotional state. In the male, there is a wattle on the neck and a large, dark red fleshy comb (caruncle) on the crown of the head. The eyes of the male are yellow, while those of the female are red. The eyelids lack eyelashes.

Their beaks are large and hooked, and they have large feet with sharp claws, allowing them to easily tear apart their meals. The middle toe is greatly elongated, and the hind one is only slightly developed, while the talons of all the toes are comparatively straight and blunt; their feet are best adapted for walking and not grasping. They play an important function as a natural clean-up crew.

Weight: M 24 - 33 lbs F 18 - 24 lbs
Body Length: 3 - 4 ft
Wingspan: up to 10.5 ft

STATUS & CONSERVATION

The Andean condor is listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List. It was placed on the Endangered Species List in 1973 and is in danger of becoming extinct due primarily to over hunting. The Andean Condor is suffering widespread declines, especially in the northern part of its range. Many farmers shoot these birds because they mistakenly believe the condors kill their livestock. Pesticide poisoning through the food chain has also hurt populations. Thanks to the repopulation efforts of captive breeding programs in several countries, the Andean condor is finally beginning to make a comeback. An adult pair usually produces only one chick every other year; this slow reproductive rate makes recovery of the species challenging.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

Andean condors use the thermals that rise and spiral off of cliff faces to soar for hours with very little effort, scanning for carrion; they soars with their wings held horizontally and primary feathers bent upwards at the tips, an adaptation for soaring. Soaring makes it possible for them to fly for long periods of time without expending much energy. They prefer to roost on high places from which it can launch without major wing-flapping effort.

They will defecate straight down their legs; the acidic poop helps to kill any bacteria on their feet. Since they live in a cold Andean habitat, a cooling effect does not make sense.

There is a well-developed social structure within large groups of condors, with competition to determine a 'pecking order' by body language, competitive play behavior, and vocalizations. Generally, mature males tend to be at the top of the pecking order. At night, Andean Condors all get together to sleep. They can be found in relatively large numbers, roosting on inaccessible cliffs and rocky outcrops. These areas are up high to help keep them safe from ground predators.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

The Andean condor prefers to roost and breed at elevations of 9,800 to 16,400 ft., generally on inaccessible rock ledges. Unlike many birds, the Andean condor does not build nests, but rather lays its eggs among boulders or in caves or holes. During courtship season, the male works hard to impress the female; he walks around with wings spread, making all kinds of unusual and interesting noises; the skin of the male's neck flushes, changing from dull red to bright yellow, and inflates. Pairs mate for life.

Condors can't carry food in their feet like most birds of prey; adults regurgitate food from their crop for the chicks. Chicks remain in the nest 6-10 months until it is ready to fledge. It will stay with its parents for several more months learning how to find food and survive on its own.

Incubation: ~ 2 mos	Sexual Maturity: 5 – 6 years
# of Eggs: 1 – 2 every other year	Fledging: 6 – 10 mos

MISCELLANEOUS

Andean condor is a national symbol of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru and plays an important role in the folklore and mythology of the Andean regions.

The Andean condor is slightly shorter from beak to tail than the California condor, but it has a longer wingspan and is also typically heavier.

Sources:

Handbook of Birds of the World Vol 2 © 1992 Lynx Edicions
<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birds/andean-condor/>
http://www.peregrinefund.org/explore-raptors-species/Andean_Condor
<http://www.arkive.org/andean-condor/vultur-gryphus/>
<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/kids/species-profiles/andean-condor>
http://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Vultur_gryphus/

Created 2/2016