



NEWS RELEASE

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SANTA BARBARA ZOO RECEIVES DISNEY CONSERVATION GRANT

\$25,000 Grant for California Condor Nest Guarding Program for Third Year

(Santa Barbara, CA, November 5, 2015) – The Santa Barbara Zoo has been awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Disney Conservation Fund (DCF) in recognition of the Zoo’s work with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) to monitor and study California condors nesting in the wild. The program, which began in 2008, puts volunteers and staff in the field to watch the nests and to monitor chick and parent behaviors. This is the third year that the Zoo has received a DCF grant for this program.

“We are interested in egg incubation, nesting and nest maintenance, brooding of the chick, and



the social interactions between the parents and the chick, such as feeding and preening,” says Dr. Estelle Sandhaus, the Zoo’s Director of Conservation and Research.

Sandhaus was awarded her PhD in Psychology: Cognition and Brain Science from Georgia Institute of Technology based on her analyses of the data from these observations.

Endangered California condors, once numbering only 22, are making a comeback from near extinction. More than 430 birds are alive today – with more than half living and breeding in the wild – but the species still faces challenges in its habitat.

“Our monitoring, nest entries, and interventions have increased the number of successful wild fledglings of the Southern California flock,” notes Sandhaus. “We are giving these chicks the best start on life possible. This is especially important in a species with a long life span and a long period of parental dependence like the condor – early learning experiences affect the bird’s behavior throughout its entire lifetime.”

In 1987, the Santa Barbara Zoo's then-veterinarian Dr. Amy Shima was part of the team that captured the last wild condor, AC9, from the wild in 1987. This initial event led to the Santa Barbara Zoo becoming an official member of the Recovery Program in 2002. Since then, the Zoo has been an active collaborator with the California Condor Recovery Program, providing veterinary, logistical, research, and other support for condor reintroduction efforts.

On Earth Day 2009, the Zoo opened **California Trails**, a \$7.5 million complex featuring animals that are in danger of disappearing from the wild in the Golden State. With that exhibit, the Zoo became one of a handful of institutions that exhibit California condors. Also on view are Channel Island foxes, found only on the islands off the California Coast; desert tortoises, once commonplace, but now facing habitat destruction; bald eagles, who are making a comeback after pesticides ravaged their numbers; and local raptors, amphibians, and reptiles. The Zoo currently has five female condors on view in a large aviary featuring sweeping views of the Santa Ynez Mountains, which are within the condors' historic range.

The **Disney Conservation Fund** focuses on protecting wildlife and connecting kids and families with nature. Since its founding in 1995, DCF has provided more than \$30 million to support conservation programs in 115 countries. Projects were selected to receive awards based upon their efforts to study wildlife, protect habitats and develop community conservation and education programs in critical ecosystems.

For information on Disney's commitment to conserve nature and a complete list of 2015 grant recipients, visit www.disney.com/conservation.

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*Known as "one of the world's most beautiful zoos," the **Santa Barbara Zoo** is located on 30 acres of botanic gardens and is home to nearly 500 individual animals in open, naturalistic habitats. It is accredited by the [Association of Zoos & Aquariums](http://www.aaz.org) (AZA), representing the highest level of animal care, and participates in AZA cooperative programs for endangered species including Asian elephant, California condor, Channel Island fox, and Western lowland gorilla, among others.*

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