



EMBARGOED UNTIL 10 A.M. ON WEDNESDAY,
AUGUST 26, 2015

PRESS CONTACTS:

Julia McHugh, Santa Barbara Zoo, 805-569-3303
Ashley Spratt, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 805-644-1766 ext. 369
Charles Eldermire, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 607-254-1131
Kelly Sorenson, Ventana Wildlife Society, 831-455-9514

For photos and video clips, visit:

https://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws_pacificsw/albums/72157656122953288

**FIRST EVER LIVE-STREAMING CAMERAS CONNECT PEOPLE
TO RARE CALIFORNIA CONDORS NESTING IN THE WILD**

*Conservation Partners Launch Live-streaming Cameras on Two Endangered
California Condor Nests: in a Southern California Cliffside and in a
Central California Coastal Redwood Tree*

VENTURA – Starting today (8/26/15), people around the world have the unprecedented opportunity to observe nesting California condors and their young chicks in real time via live-streaming webcams near the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s [Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge](#) (NWR) in southern California and at the [Ventana Wildlife Society’s \(VWS\) Condor Sanctuary](#) in Big Sur along the central California coast.

Biologists installed webcams in two California condor nests located in the rugged terrain of Ventura and Monterey counties to enable the public to watch California condor chicks and their parents. The idea for live-streaming webcams was conceived in 2010 by [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) (Service) employees after a remote California condor nest failed due to an injured chick.

“What started out as a way for biologists to monitor the health of endangered California condor chicks and the breeding success of the species has become an important tool for outreach about this incredibly rare bird,” said Joseph Brandt, a Service biologist.

Initially observed courting in fall of 2014, Ventura County condor pair #111 and #509 hatched their first chick together in April. Condor #111 is a 21-year old female that has been a breeder since 2001, with four surviving offspring in the southern California flock. Male #509 is 6 years old and fledged from a wild nest near Hopper Mountain NWR. The chick of the Big Sur pair, #167 and #190, hatched in May. Together since 2006, this pair was the first ever recorded to nest in a coastal redwood tree. This year, the [California Condor Recovery Program](#) celebrated a milestone in endangered species recovery with a record 19 wild condor nests in California. The two live-streaming nests from Ventura and Monterey counties are two of 11 nests that are still currently active.

“Seeing these huge birds raise their young in the wild is unforgettable,” said Charles Eldermire, Bird Cams Project Leader with [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#), which hosts [the livestream webcam](#) of the nest in Ventura County, as well as webcams on many other unique and rare bird species

from across the country. “Their success in raising their chicks is critical in the effort to bring the species back from the brink of extinction.”

Installing the condor nest webcams was no small task; biologists and staff from the Service, Santa Barbara Zoo and VWS hiked heavy camera equipment on foot along deep canyons and steep ridgelines for installation into the nest cavities.

“Many people are aware of our conservation work at Santa Barbara Zoo, but our team also works in the field alongside Service biologists to help train volunteer nest observers and monitor wild California condor nests, making sure eggs and chicks are healthy during the nesting season,” said Estelle Sandhaus, PhD, Director of Conservation Programs for the [Santa Barbara Zoo](#).

In addition to providing viewers with entertainment as the growing condor chicks stretch their wings and feet in unique yoga-like poses, explore the far reaches of their cavities, and interact with their attentive parents, these cameras also help biologists monitor the chicks and parents without trekking to the very remote nesting locations.

VWS in collaboration with Oakland Zoo and FedEx launched the first livestreaming cameras of condors at [release sites](#) in Big Sur in 2013.

“Now, anyone with an internet connection can not only watch condors at two release sites, but now observe their behavior in wild nests, which is truly extraordinary,” said VWS executive director Kelly Sorenson.

In 1982, only 22 California condors survived world-wide. By spring of 1987, all remaining wild condors had been placed in captivity thus beginning an intensive recovery effort among government agencies, zoos and other conservation groups to save the California condor from extinction. In 1992, the Service began reintroducing captive-bred condors into the wild and with the help of public and private partners the total population has grown to approximately 430 birds, with more than half of the population flying free.

[Click here](#) to view the nest webcam near Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge in Ventura County.

[Click here](#) to view the nest webcam at Big Sur in Monterey County.

The Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge nest webcam was made possible through the financial and technical support of the following project partners: [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#), [Santa Barbara Zoo](#), [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) and [Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology](#). [Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund](#), and [Friends of California Condors Wild and Free](#).

The Big Sur nest webcam was made possible through the financial and technical support of the following project partners: [Ventana Wildlife Society](#), [Oakland Zoo](#) and [FedEx](#).

###

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific

excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. Visit us at www.fws.gov.

*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. The Santa Barbara Zoo is the region's top paid visitor attraction, attracting nearly 500,000 guests yearly, and has more than 13,000 members. Visit www.sbzoo.org.*

*The **Cornell Lab of Ornithology** is a membership institution dedicated to interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Visit the Cornell Lab's website at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu>.*

*The **Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology** (WFVZ) is a non-profit natural history collection specializing in eggs and nests of birds, and a research and education institution dedicated to bird conservation. The Foundation's collections of materials are among the largest in the world, and its mission is to contribute to the conservation of the world's wild bird species through making our collections and data accessible to researchers, educators, students, and the public. The WFVZ also contributes to bird conservation through bird education programs for scientific professionals and the public, and field- and collections-based research projects and publications. Visit us at www.wfvz.org.*

*Founded in 1977, **Ventana Wildlife Society** led the way to successful reintroduction of the Bald Eagle and the California condor, two of the most iconic birds in the world, to native habitats in central California. Through the course of their work, they developed an organizational culture that strongly values science, education and collaboration and regularly found ways for both wildlife and people to benefit from one another. VWS recovers individual species and tracks the populations of many others so that conservation can be timely as well as effective. Focusing on youth education, we better ensure that future generations have the willingness and capacity to help wildlife. Our vision is to have a society who cares for and supports wildlife across the planet, particularly in California. www.ventanaws.org.*