

From: Ventana Wildlife Society kellysorenson@ventanaws.org
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To: Mary MARYANNSTEGGLES@ICLOUD.COM

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The FULL Crop

Ventana Wildlife Society
e-newsletter

Working with Hunters & Ranchers Honoring Amigo (204)



California Condor, Amigo (204), allopreening with mate, Kodama (646), in 2023, photo by: Meredith Evans

If you watched our wildlife documentary, [Condor Canyon](#), you got to know

Amigo (204) and Kodama (646) as they became the first California Condors to mate in the wild in over 100 years.

[Amigo \(204\)](#) and his long-time mate, [Kodama \(646\)](#). Often the first condors seen by blossoming birders in Big Sur, CA, Amigo and Kodama were fixtures in their territory at Sea Lion Cove. **They raised three biological chicks together playing a key role in the recovery of the species.**

On December 13, 2024, Amigo was found deceased on the cliffs of his coastal territory. It is known that condors can live more than 5 decades, however, at the time of his death, Amigo was just 25 years old. Necropsy results confirmed his **cause of death was lead poisoning**. The lead bullet recovered from his digestive tract was consistent with a .22 caliber. While this caliber is legal in California, lead-based ammunition has been banned for hunting wildlife since 2019 due to its devastating effects on condors and other wildlife. Lead poisoning accounts for half of all known causes of death in condors and unfortunately for Amigo, **his life was cut short**.

However, this isn't about blame, but rather, about solutions. Hunters and ranchers across California are following the law and doing their part to protect wildlife. Many responsible land stewards want to make the switch but still face limited availability of reliable non-lead options for smaller calibers like .22, which is America's most popular rifle. **Expanding access and awareness is key to protecting condors and supporting people whose livelihoods depend on working and living off the land.**

Let's honor Amigo's legacy by advancing practical tools and partnerships that benefit both people and wildlife. If you or anyone you know hunts or has a ranch in central California, **please pass along information about our Free Non-lead Ammunition Program. Click or tap the button below to get started:**

[**Free Non-lead Ammunition Program**](#)

The Unsung Heroes of Condor Recovery





Top left: CA Condor pair Redwood Queen (190) & Zenith (650), top right: condor biologists, Danaé Mouton & Kara Fadden w/ research student, Kaitlyn Tunick, handling condor, bottom left: Oakland Zoo RVT, Quincy Gray, sporting condor tattoo on HPAI vaccination day, bottom right: condor biologist, Darren Gross, transporting condor,
photos by: Meredith Evans

The biologists, doctors and registered technicians of veterinary medicine involved in condor recovery dedicate their lives to working behind the scenes bringing the California Condor back from the brink of extinction. They are happy to remain anonymously in the background. However, recent developments bring their work to the forefront.

In December 2025, federal funding for Ventana Wildlife Society's California Condor Recovery Program ends, resulting in a **50% cut** to the program. Because of these cuts, the ability of our condor crew and partners to continue the following is at risk:

- **Non-Lead Outreach** – Working with hunters and ranchers to make the switch to non-lead ammunition and providing free non-lead ammunition to them
- **Nest Monitoring** – Field teams closely monitor active condor nests,

improving the chances of successful hatching and fledging

- **Captive Releases** – Releasing captive-bred condors to grow the wild population and ensure genetic diversity
- **Medical Treatment** – Providing care for sick or injured condors, including lead poisoning treatment
- **CACO Central & GPS Tracking** – We manage a centralized data system called CACO Central and track condors with GPS to detect illness early and strategize outreach to key foraging zones

To support the continuation of our roll in the California Condor Recovery Program, please consider a gift to our Save the Condors Fund. You can also help by sharing this information with friends and fellow wildlife advocates.

[Watch this video](#) to catch a glimpse of what these dedicated people do in the name of condor recovery and the birds they're saving.

[**Donate to Save the Condors Fund**](#)

Cool Condor Moments: Wild-fledged Condor



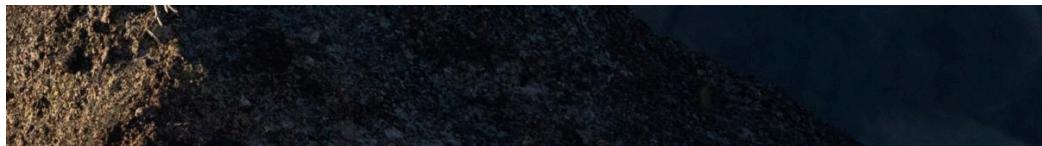


Photo by: Meredith Evans/VWS

In this photo, an untagged California Condor soars above two adults perched on a rocky ledge in the High Peaks of Pinnacles National Park. Spotting an untagged condor is always inspiring — it means the bird hatched in the wild. For everyone working in condor recovery, this is the ultimate goal: a self-sustaining population, free of tags, tracking devices, and the need for human intervention.

Click the button below to learn about central California's resident condors:

[My Condor Bios](#)

Watch Joe Burnett's Exclusive Interview on Explore.org's *Wildlife Intervention*



Explore.org's Mike Fitz speaks with our Senior Wildlife Biologist and Condor Recovery Program Manager, Joe Burnett, about the role that people have in the continued recovery of endangered condors, especially those condors who are injured or distressed.

[Watch](#)



Get the latest updates on the condors of central California from the experts — Ventana Wildlife Society's Condor Crew!

Join us for our next [Condor Chat](#) on **July 31st at 4PM (PDT)** for behind-the-scenes insights and the latest condor news.

Click the button below to register — you'll get a reminder on the day of the chat!

[Register Here](#)





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When you shop this collection, **10% of your purchase goes to environmental nonprofits**, with **one-third of that supporting Ventana Wildlife Society's work** to protect California Condors and other native wildlife.

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Ventana Wildlife Society
9699 Blue Larkspur Ln, Ste 105
Monterey, CA 93940
831-455-9514
www.ventanaws.org
[Contact Us](#)

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