

# California Condor – Back From the Brink?

By Paul Blomquist



**1971:** The California Endangered Species Act enacted and the California Condor is declared an endangered species. 1975 - only 40 California Condors remain in the world. (Left: June of 1971, the US Post Office issues the 8 cent 'Wildlife Conservation Series' stamp of the California Condor)

**1980's:** 1982 - only 22 California condors remain. 1983 - the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance hatches its first California Condor chick in captivity. 1987 - 10 wild California Condors remain. 1985 - last wild California Condor brought into captivity and into managed care.



**California condor** – *Gymnogyps californianus*  
North America's largest bird, the California condor may weigh 20 pounds and have a wingspan of 10 feet. A triangular patch of white on the underside of each wing is visible only in flight. The condor is a scavenger, feeding on the carcasses of dead animals such as deer, elk, cattle, and pronghorn which it can spot from high in the sky.

**1990's:** Between 1992 and 1997, the release of captive-bred condors in California and in Arizona begins. By the end of the 1990's, condors in the wild are successfully breeding with the help of managed care. (Above: October of 1996, the US Post Office issues the 'Endangered Species' set which included the California Condor. First Day of Issue ceremony took place at the San Diego Zoo. Postal card with cache and first-day cancellation, and 32 cent 1<sup>st</sup> class stamp.)

**2002:** California Condor releases begin in Baja California, Mexico.  
(Right: In 2009, Mexico issues \$10.50 California Condor stamp.)



**Today :** The Fish and Wildlife Service updated the total world population of the California Condor in 2023 at 561 condors. A wonderful success story so far. (Right: National Wildlife Federation California Condor label.)

