

## VULTURE SNIPPETS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

### **Palm-nut Vulture observation in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**

At 13h30 on 20 January 2008, whilst driving along a farm dirt road in the Greenpoint area (about 5 km north of Scottburgh, KwaZulu-Natal) towards the R102 (about 1 km from the seashore), our group spotted two sub-adult Palmnut Vultures *Gypohierax angolensis* circling possibly 100 m above us. We were returning from a birding outing on the Finningley estate and whilst driving, noticed a 'raptor' circling above us. On stopping to take a look, we were surprised to see that another four birds had joined the first one. We quickly identified an adult and juvenile Black-chested Snake-eagle *Circaetus pectoralis*, together with two

sub-adult Palm-nut Vultures. Unfortunately we were unable to identify the fifth bird. However, minutes later we came across a Brown Snake-eagle *Circaetus cinereus*. The vultures showed brown bodies and wing coverts, white patches at the base of the primaries (underwing) and dark tails, tipped white. All of these birds are scarce in our area. There is a previous record of an adult and sub-adult Palm-nut Vulture visiting the Greenpoint Crocodile Farm (about 1 km from the current sighting) about 15 years ago (Hamish Campell pers. comm.). Interestingly there are a number of Raffia palms growing in the amaHlongwa River floodplain (which borders the crocodile farm) that are probably 10 to 20 years old and certainly introduced.

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### **Genetic characterization of HPAI (H5N1) viruses from poultry and wild vultures, Burkina Faso**

The first molecular characterisation of H5N1 isolated from Hooded Vultures *Necrosyrtes monachus* in Burkina Faso indicates that these wild scavengers are

potential vectors for H5N1 and need to be monitored, particularly given their close proximity to human settlements. The H5N1 isolates show a common ancestor with the strains isolated from poultry in Burkina Faso, northern Nigeria, Sudan, and Côte d'Ivoire.

From: *Emerging Infectious Diseases* (2007) 13 (4).



### **Flock of 100 vultures eats live cows in Spain in rising phenomenon**

Madrid, Spain — A flock of some 100 Eurasian Griffons *Gyps fulvus* killed a cow and her newborn calf, the latest in a series of attacks in which carrion-eaters get so hungry they set upon on live animals, a Spanish farmer's union reported. The attack occurred last weekend in the Mena Valley, an area in northern Burgos province that is home to many cattle ranches, the Spanish Interior Ministry office in Burgos said. It said a rancher alerted police after seeing the birds swarm on a cow that had just given birth and kill both animals. "There was nothing he could do to stop them," the office said in a statement. The phenomenon is on the rise in that valley and elsewhere in Burgos, said Jose Manuel de

las Heras, president of the local chapter of a union called the Farmers and Ranchers Coordinator. In the past two months there have been three or four attacks in the valley and several others elsewhere. Traditionally, farmers and rural officials designate areas to dump the carcasses of farm animals like mules so vultures could feed on them. But there are fewer and fewer of these places, in part because of mad cow disease: it is now illegal to dump cow or any other ruminant remains at such feeding troughs, de las Heras said. The result is that vultures are so hungry they have even shed their wariness of humans to swoop down near farms and feast on live animals like cattle and pigs, de las Heras said. "We have seen them land 100 m from people. They are not afraid of anything," he said in a telephone interview.

From: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,269858,00.html>

3 May 2007



### **Predator vultures eat Spanish farm animals alive**

Madrid – For as long as anyone can remember, Spanish Eurasian Griffons *Gyps fulvus* have swooped down on carcasses of dead cattle or other animals lying on fields or forests. Yet now, in a dramatic change of behaviour, the bald-headed and broad-winged scavengers are making savage attacks on live cows, sheep and even horses, literally eating them alive. The phenomenon has surprised officials some of whom refuse to believe it, saying

the birds only attack sick or moribund animals. Farmers, however, maintain that the vultures also set upon healthy animals, mostly mares or cows which have just given birth and their newborn. "The birds have killed 17 of my 40 recently born colts," said Antonio de la Fuente, a rancher near Burgos in northern Spain. Some cases of vultures attacking live animals have been reported in the 1980s and 1990s, but they were rare. Now, however, "cows become nervous and even flee when they see a flock of vultures soaring overhead," Catalan

farmer Josep Blasi said. There have been dozens of reports of Eurasian Griffons preying on live animals in northern and eastern Spain. In early May, for instance, about 100 vultures killed a cow and its newborn calf near Burgos. Farmers are not asking the authorities to eliminate the birds, which help to keep the environment clean of carcasses, but for a control and, above all, for damages for losses which are not foreseen by any law. Experts link the vultures' behaviour with the epidemic of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE),

known as mad cow disease, in 2001 and 2002, which prompted the authorities to prohibit leaving carcasses of dead animals in the wild. The amount of food for the vultures decreased just as they were on the increase. The number of Eurasian Griffons has grown from about 3000 to 22 000 pairs in Spain over two decades thanks to measures aimed at preserving this protected species. The government has now modified the mad cow rules, adopting a decree allowing farmers to leave carcasses outside. Whether the vultures will go back to their former menu, remains to be seen

Source: unknown

29 May 2007



### **Hungry vultures driven away**

Madrid – Hundreds of Spanish Eurasian Griffons *Gyps fulvus* are flying to Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany in search of food, the daily El Pais reported on Friday. The bald-headed scavengers with a wingspan of up to 2.8 m have been left without food after the European Union (EU) prohibited leaving animal carcasses in the open in 2003 to prevent the spread of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), known as mad cow disease. Eurasian Griffons could normally fly up to 50 km in search of nourishment, but for them to travel more than 1000 km northwards was totally unusual, said Juan Carlos Atienza of the environmental organisation

SEO-Birdlife. Hungry vultures have even attacked cows and other live animals in Spain, prompting the government to relax regulations prohibiting farmers from leaving dead animals outside. The EU has accorded exceptions to Spain and other southern countries, but bird specialists say it is impossible to now supply enough nourishment for the vultures and other scavengers in Spain. The EU should relax its regulations union-wide, said Atienza. A failure to do that could threaten 80% of Europe's scavenger birds with starvation in "the worst natural disaster over the past 50 years," he warned. Spain is home to the vast majority of Europe's Eurasian Griffons, a protected species.

From: [http://www.news24.com/News24/Technology/News/0,,2-13-1443\\_2134820,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/Technology/News/0,,2-13-1443_2134820,00.html)  
22 June 2007

### **Rare Andean Condor hatches at Denver Zoo, USA**

Denver – A rare Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus* has hatched at the Denver Zoo, becoming only the second such bird to hatch at a zoo anywhere in the world in the past year, zoo officials said Thursday. The Denver condor, a male, hatched on 13 May 2007, joining a condor born in Sydney, Denver Zoo spokeswoman Amy Sarno

said. The chick, which does not yet have a name, and his parents, Evita and Andy, are the zoo's only condors, she said. When the Denver chick matures, it will either be taken to another zoo for breeding – most likely in Europe or South America – or it may be considered for a programme in Colombia that releases the birds into the wild, Sarno said.

From: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,-6710857,00.html>  
14 June 2007



### **A pair of Bearded Vultures from Austria sent to the wildlife rescue centre of Green Balkan**

A pair of long-expected Bearded Vultures *Gypaeatus barbatus* finally arrived in the Wildlife Rescue Centre of Green Balkans on 15 July 2007. The two birds were hatched and raised in a Breeding Centre for Bearded Vultures in Austria /EGS - Eulen und Greifvogel Schutz – Austria/ <http://www.egsoesterreich.org/index1.html>. The Centre is a part of the international programme for Bearded Vulture restoration in the Alps. The Bearded Vulture is the symbol of Bulgarian nature conservation, but unfortunately the species has disappeared as a nesting species since the 1960s. At present there are only records of single wandering individuals on the Balkans. The team of Green Balkans has been discussing the breeding, restoration

and conservation of the four vulture species in Europe with various experts from numerous international organizations during the past ten years. In 2006 a commission comprising the leading experts on Bearded Vultures decided to grant a pair of these birds, hatched in Austria to the Wildlife Rescue Centre of Green Balkans, as a part of the Balkan Vulture Action Plan. Last week a team from Green Balkans visited our colleagues in Austria for experience exchange and took part in the last release of young birds bred in captivity into the Alps for the current year. This year two young birds were set free in the Hohe Tauern National Park. The new inhabitants of our Centre are two-years-old birds. They are still mainly resting under the shades of their new home, due to the warm weather. Their aviary was designed especially for

breeding of vultures, with the dimensions of 10 x 11 x 4.5 m, while the design and plans were entirely copied from our colleagues in the Austrian Centre. We would like to especially thank Dr Hans Frey and his team for the granted trust. We would also like to thank our colleagues from the Black Vulture Conservation Foundation – Spain, the

Frankfurth Zoological Society – Germany, LPO – France, Alex Llopis – Spain and all volunteers and employees of Green Balkans, who all made this happen. We are hoping for success in the raising of the pair and we also hope they would successfully adapt to their new environment.

Ivailo Klisurov



### **Marked vultures released in Thailand**

A satellite-tracked Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* and four Himalayan Griffons *Gyps himalayensis* were released in northern Thailand on 10 May 2007. The vultures were found exhausted due to starvation in January and have been rehabilitated to gain strength. All vultures have a yellow-coloured wing tags. The Cinereous Vulture is tagged with V1 on its right wing as well as a satellite telemetry unit (see photograph at the link).

The Himalayan Griffons are tagged with V4, V5, V6 and V7 mark on their left wings. The release operation is part of the Fly the Vulture Home Project, which is the cooperation of Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BCST), Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Kasetsart University's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Mongolia's Wildlife Science and Conservation Center and Thai Raptor Group.

From: <http://thairaptorgroup.com/TRG/modules.php?name=Forums&file=viewtopic&t=783>



### **Egyptian Vulture sighting in Caprivi, Namibia**

An adult Egyptian Vulture was observed circling over Bum Hill, close to the

Kwando River, Caprivi Strip, Namibia (17°46'870''S, 23°20'434''E) on 4 January 2008.

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**Vulture Rescue website**

Various updates have recently been posted on the [www.VultureRescue.org](http://www.VultureRescue.org) website, including the latest publications, news from the breeding centres (including a flood at Pinjore), a new page on the vulture

advocacy programme, vulture surveys, links to download some important press coverage over recent months (e.g. *India Today* article), research updates (including satellite tracking), etc.

**New California Condor website**

Here is the URL of a new California Condor *Gymnogyps californianus* website: <http://cacondorconservation.org>

**Vultures, planes crash in Peru**

Lima – Hundreds of vultures have swarmed the airport of the biggest city in Peru’s Amazon jungle, putting planes at risk and threatening to cut off the city of more than 400 000 people from the rest of the country. The head of Peru’s airport authority, Aurelio Crovetto, said the birds had already forced the airport in Iquitos, a popular tourist destination only reached by air from the capital Lima, to shut down eight hours a day. “One of these birds only has to bump into a plane and the effect could be devastating,” he said. “If one gets into an engine, it will destroy it, the motor will stop and the plane will come down.” Set on the banks of a tributary of the Amazon River, Iquitos is one of the world’s largest

cities inaccessible by road. The vultures became a problem when migration swelled Iquitos’ population and extra garbage pushed the edge of a rubbish dump, which attracted the birds, closer to the airport. The vultures have collided with planes at least 19 times since 2002, according to the airport authority. Photographs show engine parts and wing flaps mangled by avian encounters. The airport authority blames local officials, whom they say have ignored nearly a decade of complaints about the dump. But the city’s mayor said airport operators should be better equipped to scare away the vultures. Peru’s commerce and tourism minister has referred to the situation as “surreal”.

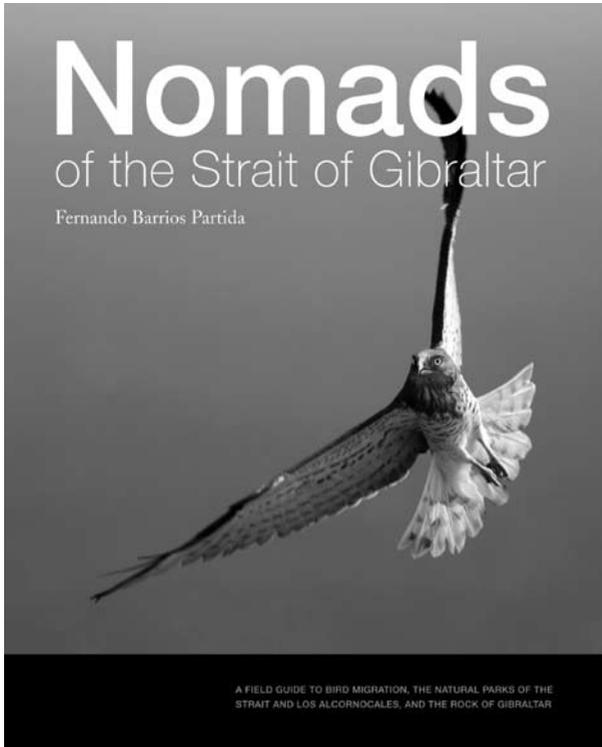
From: [http://www.news24.com/News24/Technology/News/0,,2-13-1443\\_1985209,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/Technology/News/0,,2-13-1443_1985209,00.html)  
19 August 2006



**New publication**

A new book on birds of the Strait of Gibraltar entitled “Nomads of the Strait of Gibraltar” has been published. Its author is the renowned Andalusian photographer Fernando Barrios Partida, who has been living in the area since 1943. He has an

describes his first impressions of the Strait of Gibraltar during his first visit in 1995. He has visited annually since then. The book has eight chapters. Chapters 1 to 3 are a description of the Strait of Gibraltar and its surroundings, thus providing information about the strategic location of the area for migratory birds. Chapter 4 provides information about bird migration (theories, flight routes, monitoring techniques, etc.). Chapters 5 and 6 detail the migration of White Storks and raptors, respectively. Up to 28 species are included in the analysis with a special dedication to vultures: the Eurasian Griffon *Gyps fulvus*, Rüppell’s Griffon *Gyps rueppellii* and Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*. Chapter 7 refers to threats that birds must avoid while migrating. Finally, Chapter 8 is a traveller’s guide for visitors. The entire book has been widely illustrated, mainly by the author but



intimate knowledge of the migratory birds of the area. The book has been published in Spanish and English. The foreword is by Keith Bildstein (Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Pennsylvania) in which he

also by other collaborators.

The book costs €60 plus shipment and can be ordered from Apartado de Correos 1178, 11280 Algeciras, Spain.  
(e-mail address: [lonbra@ono.com](mailto:lonbra@ono.com)).



### **The Raptor Research Foundation's Leslie Brown Memorial Grant**

In memory of one of the most inspired and productive raptor conservation biologists of recent decades, the Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. announces the availability of this grant, for up to \$1400, to provide financial assistance to promote the research and/or the dissemination of information on African birds of prey. Applications that don't focus on African raptors will be considered non-responsive and will not be further reviewed for funding. Applicants must send five copies of a resume, specific

study objectives, an account of how funds will be spent, and an indication of how the proposed work would relate to other work by the applicant (if applicable) and to other sources of funding. Please note that the application deadline has changed. A complete application (see above) must be received by 15 February. Proposals, donations, and inquiries about tax-exempt contributions to the fund should be sent to Dr Jeff Lincer, Director of Research, Wildlife Research Institute, Inc., 9251 Golondrina Drive, California 91941, USA; e-mail address: [jlincer@tns.net](mailto:jlincer@tns.net).



### **Tagged vultures in Fouta Djallon, Guinea**

In February 2007 in Guinea, 18 vultures (African White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*, Rüppell's Griffon *Gyps rueppellii*, White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis*, Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*) were fitted with patagial tags in the newly created Fouta Djallon vulture sanctuary (a collaboration of Africa Nature International, FFI, IUCN-Netherlands, EWT-BoPWG, Clemson University, Guinée Écologie, the National Water & Forest Direction and the Veterinary Department of Guinea). The ringing/markingsampling

process was undertaken, as part of the West African vulture conservation programme, to monitor the local/regional vultures' movements and for a toxicology assessment of the Fouta Djallon vulture population. Further vultures will soon be marked with the establishment of the three vulture restaurants in the northern half of the Fouta Djallon Highlands. The blue (right wing) and yellow (left) wingtags bear an alphanumeric code visible on both the dorsal and ventral sides of the wings. Sightings of these birds can be submitted to Guy Rondeau.

Guy Rondeau; e-mail address: [g.rondeau@afnature.org](mailto:g.rondeau@afnature.org)



**Blouberg vulture**

On 8 May 2007, a vulture cell phone tracking device was fitted onto an adult, female Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres* at the Blouberg Nature Reserve (Limpopo Province, South Africa) after she underwent rehabilitation for eight days. The bird was grounded due to inclement weather conditions. On 9 May, the vulture was released and took off into Botswana where it spent a week foraging and then returned to Blouberg. For the next three months the adult Cape Vulture spent her time between Blouberg and Botswana. During the last week of July, she flew into the Rustenberg area in the North West Province, South Africa, and soon

afterwards joined the Cape Vultures at the Skeerpoort colony in the Magaliesberg. She remained at the Skeerpoort colony for three days and then travelled westwards along the Magaliesberg Mountains, approx 20 km to the Nooitgedacht breeding colony. She has subsequently remained with the Cape Vultures in the Magaliesberg and has begun foraging in their known foraging area. It is unsure whether this bird originally came from the Blouberg colony or from one of the Magaliesberg colonies. This study was done in collaboration with the Rhino & Lion Wildlife Conservation NPO (Vulture Programme) and the De Wildt Cheetah & Wildlife Trust.

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**The unloved vulture**

‘The horrible “Aasvogels” – Carrion birds, or vultures – wait near by with mirthless, down-drawn curves to the corners of their cruel beaks, with heads sunken between their bowed shoulders, and the eternal ashes

upon their ugly bald pates, as a fitting token of their wretchedness. Thus do they hold the burlesque funeral obsequies of their victims, and make mock sorrow at their hard fate, and the dearth and famine that yet yield them many banquets.’

Alfred De Jager Jackson (2006 [2nd edn], *Manna in the Desert*, Brevitas: Howick, RSA) describing the Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres* in the Great Karoo, South Africa, in the 1870s.



### **Birds and People: a major website and book project**

The British author Mark Cocker and photographer David Tipling are launching a major new project entitled “Birds and People”. This is also a ground-breaking joint venture between BirdLife International and Random House. Birds and People is being launched as a website forum where anyone interested in birds and their cultural significance can discuss and place on record their experiences and observations. Vultures are enormously important in this larger story. Human interactions with, the feeding of and often deep human

tolerance of vultures are all subjects we wish to learn about. At the same time vultures are sometimes persecuted and even eaten. Anyone who has information on the subjects is encouraged to contribute. Many of the contributions will be used in the text of an eventual book and all contributors will be acknowledged. If you wish to get involved then visit our website [www.birdsandpeople.org](http://www.birdsandpeople.org) for more detailed information. Or email us at [markcocker@randomhouse.co.uk](mailto:markcocker@randomhouse.co.uk) or write to: Birds and People, Jonathan Cape, Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, SW1V 2SA, United Kingdom.

Mark Cocker; e-mail address: [mark.cocker@virgin.net](mailto:mark.cocker@virgin.net)



### **Three condors dead in a week: biologists uncertain of cause**

Biologists have found three dead California Condors *Gymnogyps californianus* in Big Sur and near Pinnacles National Monument in the past week, and what killed them remains a mystery. All three birds were part of the California Condor Recovery Plan created after the population plummeted in the mid-1980s and the endangered bird nearly went extinct. The loss of

several condors in one week is a shock for those who spend their days tracking the inquisitive birds. As of 1 May, there were 40 free-flying condors in Central California between the Pinnacles and Big Sur. Now there are 37. “It’s like losing your children,” said Carl Brenner, park ranger at Pinnacles National Monument. “The biologists are spending almost every day with these birds. It’s like part of your family.”

Dania Akkad

Full story at: [http://www.montereyherald.com/ci\\_5941512](http://www.montereyherald.com/ci_5941512)

20 May 2007



### **Condor dies at L.A. Zoo following treatment for lead poisoning**

A California Condor died this week at the Los Angeles Zoo following treatment for lead poisoning, a conservation group reported today. The bird was trapped at the Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuge on 29 July 2007 and transported to the zoo two days later. Tests showed the bird had ten times the safe amount of lead in its bloodstream, according to Audubon California, an environmental and conservation organization. "The passing of Condor #245 is tragic," said Glenn Olson, executive director of Audubon California. "Lead poisoning is a tremendous threat to these remarkable birds," he said. "With only 300 condors in the world, to lose even one bird is a setback for this important conservation program and a severe threat to the entire species." Dr Janna Wynne, a veterinarian with the Los Angeles Zoo, confirmed the condor's death. Researchers with Audubon California believe the

Garrison Frost, Audubon California



### **"Junk" threatens re-establishment of California Condor**

Of 13 breeding attempts by Critically Endangered California Condors *Gymnogyps californianus* in the wild in southern California between 2001 and 2005, only one resulted in successful fledging. A paper published in *Bird Conservation International* finds that "ingested anthropogenic material" – swallowed junk – was directly responsible for the deaths of two condor nestlings, and is strongly

implicated in the deaths of several more. Four dead nestlings and two removed from the wild held substantial quantities of junk such as glass fragments, metal bottle-tops, washers, cartridge cases, electrical wiring and plastic pipes. By contrast, of nine chicks produced between 1980 and 1984, all but one fledged successfully. "Current levels of junk ingestion clearly surpass that found in the historical breeding population," the authors assert. "The deleterious effects of junk ingestion on condor nest success

now seriously threaten the long-term re-establishment of a viable, self-sustaining breeding population in southern California.” The US Forest Service has tried to clean up sites used by condors, but because of the “growing and deeper human footprint on the environment of southern California”, the task is huge. The authors propose that as a matter of urgency, additional condor restaurants should be set up at multiple feeding sites away from problem areas.

“However, an increase in the foraging ranges of condors is likely to result in increased exposure to lead. Removing the threat of lead poisoning from the condor range would allow greater flexibility for the management of condor populations.” *Bird Conservation International* is the official journal of BirdLife International. It provides stimulating, up-to-date coverage of bird conservation topics important in today’s world.

Mee, A., Rideout, B.A., Hamber, J.A., Todd, J. N., Austin, G., Clark, M. & Wallace M.P. 2007. Junk ingestion and nestling mortality in a reintroduced population of California Condors *Gymnogyps californianus*. *Bird Conservation International* 17: 1-13.



**Conference Announcement and call for papers: Ingestion of spent lead ammunition: implications for wildlife and humans.**

12-15 May 2008, at Boise State University, Boise, Idaho. Convened by The Peregrine Fund. The goal of the conference is to promote a better understanding of ingested

spent lead ammunition as a source of lead exposure and to reduce its effect on wildlife and humans. For details, visit: [http://www.peregrinefund.org/Lead\\_conference/](http://www.peregrinefund.org/Lead_conference/) or for a flyer to post on bulletin boards, visit: [http://www.peregrinefund.org/Lead\\_conference/Flyer%20March08.pdf](http://www.peregrinefund.org/Lead_conference/Flyer%20March08.pdf).

The Peregrine Fund; e-mail address: [tpf@peregrinefund.org](mailto:tpf@peregrinefund.org)



**Audubon California applauds signing of legislation to protect California Condor**  
Sacramento, CA – Audubon California today applauded Gov. Schwarzenegger’s decision to sign AB 821, which will help the continued recovery of the California Condor *Gymnogyps californianus* by banning the use of lead ammunition from areas inhabited by the endangered species. “This

is a great day for the California Condor and the State of California,” said Glenn Olson, executive director of Audubon California. “I would like to commend Governor Schwarzenegger for signing the Ridley-Tree Condor Conservation Act and again putting our state at the forefront on wildlife protection.” Condors frequently feed on animal carcasses left behind by hunters,

and ingest dangerously high levels of lead from ammunition. Audubon California, which has long advocated on behalf of the endangered species, has been pushing for additional protections for the condor both among hunters and actively at the legislative and policy levels. The new law, authored by Assemblyman Pedro Nava, will require the use of non-lead centerfire ammunition within the Department of Fish and Game's deer hunting zones within current and potential condor range

in California. Lead-free ammunition is increasingly available and will have no effect on hunters' enjoyment of their sport. To the extent funding is available, big game hunters in these hunting zones will get coupons for non-lead ammunition at no or reduced charge. "This legislation is clear proof that creative solutions are available to our most vexing environmental issues, and that Californians need not choose between wildlife protection and recreational uses, such as hunting," added Olson.



### **Assemblymember Nava's Condor Protection Bill passes key Senate Committee**

Sacramento, CA – Assemblymember Pedro Nava's legislation to protect the last remaining California Condors passed out of the Senate Appropriations Committee last week 9 to 7. "Yesterday the fight to save the condor took a huge step forward by passing out of the Senate Appropriations Committee, but we can't let up. Another vote is coming for this bill in the Senate to protect the condor and we need your support," stated Nava. "The California Condor is a national treasure and I am pleased with the support my bill received to protect this incredible bird," said Nava. AB 821, the Ridley-Tree Condor Preservation Act, will remove the number one threat to the survival of the endangered California Condor, lead ammunition, by having hunters switch to a widely available, non-lead ammunition alternative when they hunt big game and coyotes in condor areas. Once, they covered the continent, and the California Condor flew over woolly

mammoths and saber-toothed tigers, until their number one predator, man, brought them to the brink of extinction. In 1987 the last remaining 22 wild California Condors on earth were captured and placed in protective custody. Over the years, the population has incrementally increased, bird by bird, until 1992 when condors were reintroduced to the wild, and their biggest threat – lead ammunition. Scavengers, the birds eat carcasses left by hunters where accidentally ingested fragments of lead ammunition are mistaken for bones with nutritious calcium. If not captured, tested, and treated for lead poisoning the California Condor would have less than the 140 flying wild today. "In 2005, after \$10,000 worth of invasive treatment, a lead-poisoned female condor survived to hatch the first wild condor chick in California in over 100 years," said Nava. "Today, with the passage of AB 821, California is one step closer to protecting the newest member of the condor family from its biggest threat, lead ammunition."