

# USACE Natural Resource Management

## Non-migratory Birds



### California Condor

### FAST FACTS

**REASONS FOR CURRENT STATUS:** By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, condor populations across the world had drastically declined. The California Condor was no exception and by 1987 was listed as endangered by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

According to Cornell's Birds of the World, this species' low reproductive rate compounded with mortality due to lead poisoning and shooting is what led to the condor's dramatic decline. USFWS notes that lead toxicosis was the responsible for approximately 50% of all condor deaths from 1992-2017.

**MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION:** USFWS developed a recovery plan in 1975 which was revised several times; the last revision occurred in 1996. USFWS found in 2018 that for the Arizona/Utah and Baja, Mexico subpopulations, mortality levels still exceed natural recruitment. As such, these populations still depend on intensive management and the release of captive bred birds. On the contrary, the California subpopulation has a mortality to natural recruitment ratio which is low enough to allow the population to remain stable even without captive bred birds being introduced. However, this subpopulation still requires intensive management activities, such as extensive monitoring and treatment for lead exposure.

**HABITAT NEEDS:** Birds of the World notes that this species is not a habitat specialist as evidenced by its historical distribution and the current California subpopulation's broad habitat and climate tolerances.

- Scavenges for food in a range of habitats including Pacific beaches, mountain forests, and meadows.
- Nests in remote locations that are difficult to access. Nesting occurs in caves of cliff faces up to 6,000 feet in elevation.
- Most important habitat attribute may be the availability of adequate food supply.
- Another important habitat feature is reliable air movements that allow for extended soaring flight. (*Birds of the World*)

**Size:** This is the largest wild bird in North America and grows to be between 46 and 53 inches in length. (*All About Birds, Cornell*)

**Color:** Adults are mostly black with white patches beneath the wings. They have a naked head and an orange neck. Immature birds have dark heads, necks that are more gray, and mottled gray patches beneath their wings. (*All About Birds, Cornell*)

*Photo Credit:*  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

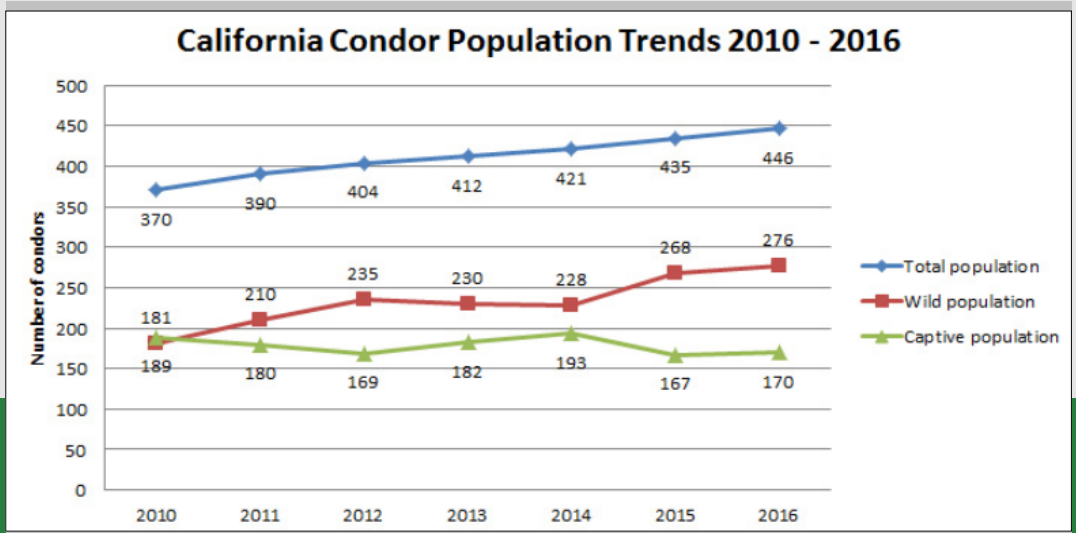
*Natural Resource Management (NRM)*

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**USACE ROLE:** Since 2010, the USACE has expended over \$30,000 on efforts related to the California Condor. This money was expended from multiple business lines including Regulatory, Planning and Program Management, Operations, and Environmental Stewardship. Of that sum, over \$10,000 has been spent on inventorying, surveying, and monitoring this species. These actions are crucial to maintaining a stable population of California Condors.

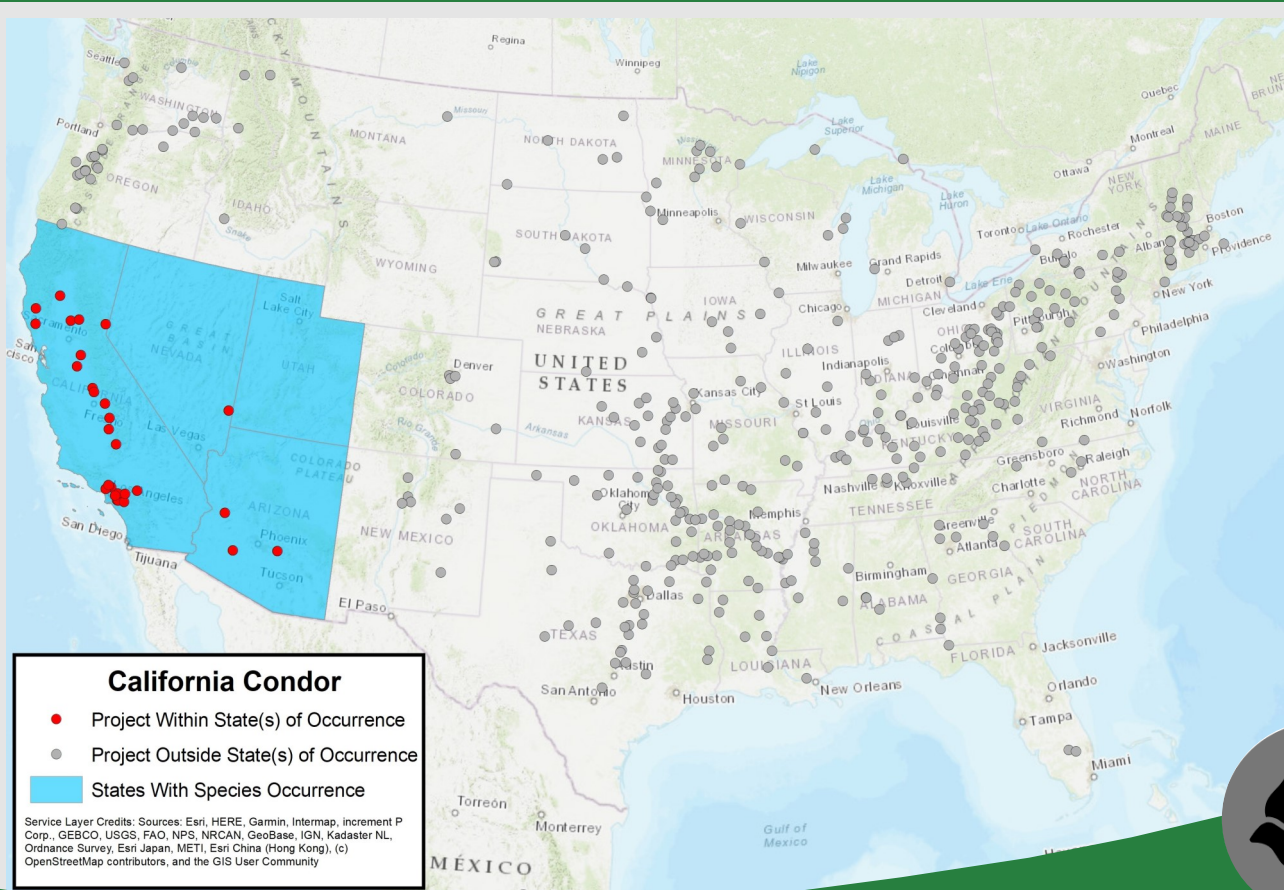
*Chart, right:* Provided by USFWS; Condor populations through the years.



**THE FUTURE:**

In 2008, USFWS announced that the California Condor Recovery Program had reached a major milestone: there were more California Condors flying free in the wild than in captivity for the first time since the program was initiated! By 2018, there were more than 488 condors flying free in the wild and an additional 176 birds in captivity.

The California Condor is still in need of consistent, careful management. As such, USACE works diligently to analyze project plans to ensure they will not have negative impacts on the species or its habitat. All current and future work is closely coordinated with resources agencies.



Source: Map provided by Ashleigh Boss, ORISE Fellowship, Institute for Water Resources

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