

Making a Difference for Wildlife

Hundreds of local conservation projects are undertaken annually by SCI Chapters. They are reinforced by many notable conservation initiatives funded by the SCI Foundation.



Andean Condor Breeding and Reintroduction Neuquén and Rio Negro Provinces, Argentina

THE ANDEAN CONDOR is the largest flying bird in the world and is the majestic symbol of South America's Andes Mountains. However, because of slow reproductive rates, poaching, lead poisoning and human encroachment, condors are threatened in the region. Originally found all over Patagonia and along the Atlantic coast, the condor is now distributed in the north from Venezuela to Tierra del Fuego and Argentina's State Islands and in the south along the Andes.

The Program for Conservation of the Andean Condor (PCACD) was created in 1991 by the Buenos Aires Zoo, the Temaiken Foundation and the Bioandean Argentine Foundation to breed condors in captivity and release them into their natural habitats. The initiative receives assistance from local and international institutions.

In the wild, condors lay one egg every two-three years. In captivity, using modern techniques, condor egg-laying increases to several times a year. The eggs are removed from mothers and incubated in the Buenos Aires Zoo's incubation center.

When chicks are born, they are placed in a special isolation nursery and fed using latex adult condor replicas that act as substitute parents. They then pass into an external enclosure where they socialize and are in company of adult condors that act as their teachers until their youngster feather period has ended. Prior to liberation, the chicks have identification marks and transmitters applied in their wings for tracking.

Algar Safaris, a first-class outfitting company and one of the most active members of SCI's *Argentina Chapter*, assists by providing lodging, communication, logistic facilities, and hunter-harvested venison from clients to feed the condors during the program's liberation and reintroduction steps.

The first condors from this pioneering work were reintroduced in 1997, when condors were transferred to the "Valle Encantado" area in Argentina's Neuquén Province. The next condor reintroduction took place December 22, 2003, in Pailemán, Rio Negro Province, Patagonia, returning the condor to its ancient, southern Atlantic habitat. Future efforts will focus on public education, including sustainable-use conservation, elimination of practices detrimental to condors and condors' positive contributions to local habitats.

