



PRESS RELEASE

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CALIFORNIA TRAILS CALIFORNIA CONDORS AND OTHER ENDANGERED SPECIES FROM STATE'S "BACKYARD" IN NEW SANTA BARBARA ZOO EXHIBIT COMPLEX

- Public Invited to Opening Day on Saturday, April 25
- Zoo is Third Zoo in the World to Exhibit Endangered California Condors
- Channel Island Fox, Desert Tortoise, Bald Eagle, and Other Local Endangered and Threatened Species Featured in New Exhibit Complex
- Barnyard Renovated to Showcase Animals from California Ranching History
- New Food Service "The Wave" and New Explore Store Also Now Open
- **PHOTO OPP:** Ribbon Cutting on Earth Day, April 22 at 10:30 a.m.

(Santa Barbara, CA, April 9, 2009) Rare California condors, the symbol of endangered species, are the centerpiece in a new \$7.5 million exhibit complex at the Santa Barbara Zoo that features creatures that are in danger of disappearing from the wild in the Golden State. *California Trails* officially opens with a ribbon-cutting on Earth Day 2009, Wednesday, April 22 at 10:30 a.m. The public is invited to a day-long, activity-filled celebration at the Zoo on Saturday, April 25, which is free with Zoo admission.

"There has been a dream to create a condor exhibit in Santa Barbara that would support recovery efforts," said Rich Block, Zoo CEO, "as well as help build a stronger public constituency for the conservation of this symbol of California's priceless wildlife resources. The dream has become a reality and we celebrate a conservation effort of heroic proportions that has returned condors to the skies over California."

Four dramatically large condors, featuring a nine-and-a-half foot wing span, will be on view in a new, spacious hilltop aviary overlooking part of their historic range, the Santa Ynez Mountains. New or renovated exhibits feature the small Channel Island fox, found only on the islands off the

California Coast; desert tortoises, once commonplace, but now facing habitat destruction; bald eagles, who are making a comeback after pesticides ravaged their numbers; and local raptor, amphibians and reptiles.

The Zoo took advantage of this exhibit construction to renovate the former barbecue area into a new food concession area called *The Wave*. The new *Explore Store* demonstrates how buying “green” directly helps protect the habitats of these creatures, both around the world and in California.

California Trails is the largest construction project in the Zoo’s nearly 50-year history.

ABOUT CONDOR COUNTRY



With this exhibit, the Santa Barbara Zoo becomes one of only three zoos in the world to display the endangered, California condor, joining Condor Ridge at the San Diego Wild Animal Park and the Chapultepec Zoo in Mexico City.

The condor exhibit, called *Condor Country*, has been designed in collaboration with the California Condor Recovery Program, which determines which birds are housed, released and/or bred. The individual birds at the Zoo may change, based on the needs of the program.

The Santa Barbara exhibit covers 6,000 square feet, but more importantly, encompasses 174,000 cubic feet of “glide space.” There are redwoods and oaks, wooden “snags” and a stream which fills two different pools. Studies show that condors bathe and spend hours smoothing and drying their feathers. California condors are known for their massive wing spans, which average nine-and-a-half feet.

The Zoo’s four birds are listed in the Condor Recovery Program by numbers 432 (male), 433 (female), 439 (male) and 440 (female). They were all hatched at the Peregrine Fund’s World Center for Birds of Prey (Boise, ID) within a two-week period from April 12 through 24, 2007. All but 433 were reared by their parents; 433 was raised by condor foster parents.

These juvenile condors won’t display the distinctive red coloration on their faces until they are mature, which is around ages six to eight. They will become familiar with people, both keepers and the public, so are unlikely to be released into the wild. They will most likely be moved to one of the condor breeding facilities before they become mature. There are no plans for breeding at the Zoo.

California condors have recovered from the brink of extinction. Numbering only 22 individuals in 1982, there are now 321 birds, with more than half of the population flying free. But there is still much work to be done to “save” the species.

OTHER CALIFORNIA TRAILS EXHIBITS

In honor of the arrival of the California condors, the Zoo has transformed surrounding areas to focus on other threatened or endangered California natives in new or upgraded exhibits:



Channel Island Fox: Renovation of the existing Channel Island fox exhibit, located next to the condors, enhances viewing opportunities of this critically endangered species, found only on the islands off the California Coast. The Santa Barbara Zoo is one of only a few facilities breeding these small, colorful animals and this renovation allows space for two separate breeding pairs. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Zoo’s conservation collaboration with the U.S. National Park Service regarding the Channel Island fox. The Zoo currently has five of these small creatures, which are just a little larger than a housecat.



Desert Tortoise: A new habitat has been created for the desert tortoise in what was once the Zoo Playground. These “quieter neighbors” were once commonplace in the California deserts, but are now listed as “vulnerable” by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, facing threats from car and off-road traffic and suburban sprawl, among other factors. The Zoo’s existing three male tortoises have been joined by three females from the Living Desert in Palm Desert, California. Large chuckwalla lizards will eventually share this exhibit space.



Rattlesnake Canyon: This new exhibit showcases reptiles and amphibians found in the Los Padres National Forest and will eventually feature the red-legged frog, a local species listed as “vulnerable” by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. The Zoo works in the field with the U. S. Forest Service to monitor this species, which has been decimated due to non-native predators, pollution and habitat loss. A Southern Pacific rattlesnake and gopher snake, California and Pacific chorus frogs, California newts, and an arboreal salamander currently inhabit the exhibit, with more species to be added soon.



Bald Eagles: The Zoo’s current pair of bald eagles are included in California Trails. The use of DDT as a pesticide in the 1960s caused bald eagle populations to crash and landed them on the federal Endangered Species list. The species is rebounding and their listing was changed from endangered to threatened in 1995. As a result of injuries in the wild, neither of the Zoo’s birds can be re-released into the wild; one is missing a wing, the other is missing an eye.



Barnyard: The Zoo's longtime Barnyard exhibit has been renovated and now features animals that played a part in California's ranching history: San Clemente Island goats, which were on the Island since the 1800s; Navajo-Churro sheep, the descendents of the first domestic sheep brought to the US by the Spanish more than 400 years ago; and Guinea hogs, which can grow as large as 200 pounds.



Raptor Roost: Adjacent to California Trails is an exhibit of California birds of prey. For various reasons, these longtime Zoo residents cannot be returned to the wild and are part of the Zoo's team of educational ambassadors. Current residents include two red-tailed hawks and a turkey vulture. These birds offer examples of raptors found in the Golden State and are a striking contrast, in size alone, to their condor neighbors.

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The Santa Barbara Zoo is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; general admission is \$11 for adults, \$9 for children 2-12 and seniors 60+, and children under 2 are free. Parking is \$4.

The Santa Barbara Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). AZA zoos are dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great visitor experience, and a better future for all living things. With its more than 200 accredited members, AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and is the public's link to helping animals in their native habitats.

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