






# Condor Biology

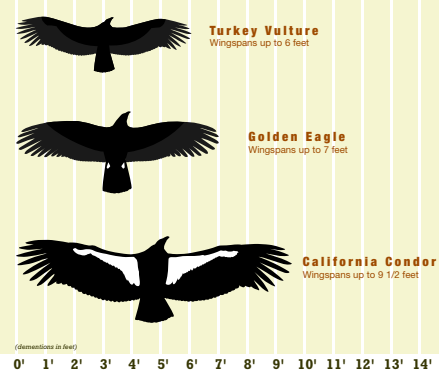
## Slow to Mature and Live Long Lives

California condors take six years to reach maturity, but may live to sixty years or more

					
<b>Chick</b>	<b>Fledgling</b>	<b>3 Years Old</b>	<b>4 Years Old</b>	<b>5 Years Old</b>	<b>Adult</b>
Chicks are covered in white down when they first hatch. Their pink heads lack any feathers. Within a few weeks, the gray down replaces the white.	Once a condor chick attempts to leave the nest (generally at six months) it becomes a fledgling. Although they are nearly the size of an adult bird, they remain dependent upon their parents for another six months or more.	At three years, condors begin to lose their juvenile coloration and gain more adult-like plumage. The skin on their head and neck becomes more yellow-pink and the gray down begins to disappear.	The gray down continues to disappear and the head becomes increasingly yellow-orange. The condor's eyes begin to show more of the reddish color of an adult.	At five years old, condors begin to look and act like full adults. There is generally very little down left on their heads, and the band of black feathers between their eyes begins to grow. The bill begins to turn from black to ivory and white patches have begun to show under the wings.	With bright reddish-orange heads, condors become sexually mature at six years old. Condors appear to stop breeding somewhere around forty but continue to remain in bonded pairs until death. Although no one really knows how old a California condor can live, biologists estimate sixty years or more.

## California Condor

North America's Largest Bird



The average California Condor boasts a wingspan of 9 1/2 feet and an average weight of 20 pounds.

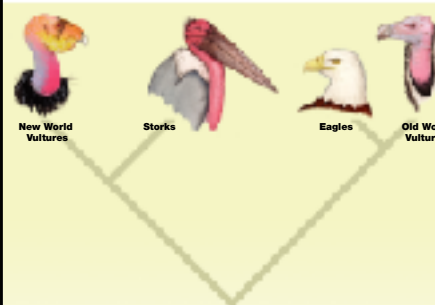
Worldwide, only a few birds are larger, including the Royal Albatross (wingspan: 11 feet), Wandering Albatross (wingspan: 11 feet), and Andean Condor (wingspan: 10 feet). Although Turkey Vultures are often mistaken for California Condors, in fact they are little more than half the condor's size, with an average wingspan of only six feet.

## All in the Family

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

The California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) belongs to a family of birds called New World vultures, or Cathartidae. Other New World vultures are the Andean Condor, King Vulture, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, and Greater Yellow-headed Vulture.

### Condor Relations:



### Converging Lifestyles

Although Old World and New World vultures are not closely related, they have numerous traits in common because they share a similar lifestyle—the life of a scavenger rather than a predator. When two fully unrelated species develop similar traits it is called convergent evolution.

### Some common traits

- Have feet adapted for walking, not seizing prey.
- Eat animals that are already dead (carrion), rather than capturing their prey.
- Have a reduced number of feathers on their heads.

## Up Close & Personal

Identifying a California Condor



California Condors are large, black birds usually seen soaring high in the sky or roosting in tall dead trees. They can also be spotted riding the thermals or searching for food with Turkey Vultures. They are generally social birds, often flying in pairs or foraging in groups. Adult California Condors have elegant ruffs of black feathers around their necks and featherless reddish-orange chests. Their heads also lack feathers except for a band of small black feathers between their eyes. When flying or sunning, California Condors are best identified by the large, white, triangular patches under their wings.