

**Ventana Wildlife Society**  
**Press Release**  
May 16, 2007

**The first wild-hatched California condor in Big Sur's Ventana Wilderness in  
100 years receives life-saving West Nile Virus Vaccine:  
Enter a contest to name the baby condor**

On May 11, 2007, Biologists were dropped off by helicopter at the remote nesting location of a condor pair in Big Sur, CA. Biologists, Joe Burnett and Joseph Brandt, then rappelled 100 feet down a cliff face to the nest cave to get the first look at the month old condor chick (photos and video available upon request). This is the first chick wild-hatched in the Big Sur, Ventana Wilderness, in over 100 years. This was their first look at the chick since hatching from the egg on April 8, 2007 (Easter Sunday). Once inside the cave, biologists conducted a brief health check on the chick and administered a West Nile Virus Vaccine. At least one condor that was not vaccinated in time died from West Nile Virus, so this was a very important life-saving step in preserving the health of the wild chick.

A small blood sample was taken from the chick and will be tested for lead toxicity. The condor parents could inadvertently poison the young chick with lead during a routine feeding. Lead poisoning is the leading cause of mortality in wild condors. Condors ingest lead by feeding on deer, pig and other carcasses containing spent lead ammunition. A small fragment of a lead bullet can kill a condor. Assembly member Pedro Nava D-Santa Barbara, introduced AB 821 which seeks to require hunters to use widely available nonlead ammunition in the condor range in California. The bill just recently passed the Assembly and will now be heard in the Senate. The chick, which is now 38 days old, will leave the cave and take its first flight at approximately 5-6 months in age. The chick will stay with its parents until a year and half in age.

Senior Wildlife Biologist, Joe Burnett, commented on the chick:  
"This was my first good look at the chick (we can't actually see into the cave from the ground) and I was very impressed by the chick's size (about the size of a chicken) and overall great health...Mom and dad are definitely keeping this chick well fed."

"To me, my newborn son represents hope for my future and I imagine this chick also represents hope for this pair of condors and indeed anyone in the world who cares about wildlife conservation."

"This chick is not out of the clear and still has some big hurdles to overcome."

Assembly member Pedro Nava is sponsoring a new website, [www.savethecondor.com](http://www.savethecondor.com) to educate the public on the problem with lead and condors and creates opportunities to support the bill and help support the condor chicks in the wild. On this website there is also a "name the baby condor contest" where the public can enter a name of their choice to name this chick. The winner will get to see condors in the wild. For video and photos of the chicks and to receive email updates on the chick's progress you can go to [www.ventanaws.org](http://www.ventanaws.org)

“It is truly an honor that Assembly member Pedro Nava is so supportive of condors in the wild and I can’t thank him enough for everything that he is doing,” said Kelly Sorenson.

In 1987 the last free-flying California condor was captured from the wild and an intensive recovery effort was initiated to save this species from extinction. Ventana Wildlife Society's Species Recovery Program started releasing condors in Big Sur in 1997 and in conjunction with the National Park Service at Pinnacles National Monument in 2003. Today there are 285 condors living, with 148 in captivity and 137 in the wild. Ventana Wildlife Society, the only non-profit releasing condors in California, works in collaboration with US Fish and Wildlife Service, California State Fish and Game, National Parks Service, Santa Barbara Zoo and the USDA Forest Service as well as the captive breeding institutions of San Diego Wild Animal Park, Los Angeles Zoo, Oregon Zoo, and the Peregrine Fund.

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