

# VENTANA WILDLIFE SOCIETY

## *Strategic Plan*

2020 - 2025

Adopted 6/01/20 by the Board of Directors





# VENTANA WILDLIFE SOCIETY

## *Our Story*

*Ventana Wildlife Society is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization*

## OUR STORY

Founded in 1977, Ventana Wildlife Society led the way to successful reintroduction of the Bald Eagle and the California Condor, two of the most iconic birds in the world, to native habitats in central California. Through the course of our work, we developed an organizational culture that strongly values science, education and collaboration, finding ways for both wildlife and people to benefit from one another. This “Ventana Way” is evident throughout our conservation projects including the work we do to provide meaningful outdoor education for youth who couldn’t otherwise afford to attend. The Ventana Way is about sticking to the facts and finding solutions for society as a whole. Our approach positions us well to address tomorrow’s ecosystem management challenges and inspire the next generation of wildlife stewards.

## OUR VISION

California Condors will be self-sustaining, no longer needing the day-to-day assistance from people to survive. This success will serve as a model and catalyst for new wildlife recovery projects developing worldwide. We also understand the value of contributing peer-reviewed publications to the scientific literature and extending our leadership in endangered and special-status species research, recovery, management and consultation. Access to meaningful outdoor education opportunities for youth will remain critically important in our approach to conservation, and these opportunities will expand through collaboration. Ventana Wildlife Society will be helping to drive a better community as a whole where wildlife coexists with people and both thrive.



# OUR MISSION

*Conserving native wildlife and their habitats through science, education and collaboration.*



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**BIG SUR CONDOR SANCTUARY**



**LAKE NACIMIENTO EAGLE SANCTUARY**



**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE**



# *Our Goals*

*This document outlines Ventana Wildlife Society's strategic goals. The plan's six major goals establish our focus for the next five years.*

## **1 CONDORS**

To recover self-sustaining, free-flying populations of California Condors and to serve as a nationally-recognized model of success.

## **2 EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**

Instill a conservation ethic and inspire youth to take action by fully integrating innovative scientific and ecological education.

## **3 RESEARCH AND CONSULTING**

Extend our leadership in endangered and special-status species research, recovery, management, and consultation.

## **4 COLLABORATIONS**

Collaborate with other stakeholders on high impact wildlife recovery and conservation, education, and outreach.

## **5 ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY**

Build the organizational capacity and sustainability while fostering a culture to further our mission and accomplish the goals, strategies and objectives of this plan.

## **6 FINANCIAL**

Ensure the long-term fiscal strength and stability of Ventana Wildlife Society.

The drafting of this strategic plan coincided with the outbreak of the **COVID-19** pandemic, a time when businesses and organizations worldwide were forced to temporarily pause operations and develop new ways to provide their services. Our strategic plan incorporates new strategies and objectives to help us manage during this crisis and beyond. These include developing more online resources to connect with students, collaborators, donors, members, and the general public, as well as implementing measures to protect the health and safety of staff and others in the places we work. We adjusted the timeline for many of our objectives to account for the process of reopening our office and programs under state and county guidance for phasing out shelter in place restrictions. The timelines also reflect a greater level of uncertainty in funding. The COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges for everyone, but we look forward to using this strategic plan with your support to help Ventana Wildlife Society become stronger and better connected in an era of greater social distancing awareness.

## Our Process

This five-year Strategic Plan was developed after extensive input from the Board of Directors, the staff and key community stakeholders. The plan was created in an effort to serve our community while balancing environmental, human, and financial realities.

We will use this overarching plan in our annual planning and budgeting process. Annual plans will focus on the vital few objectives critical to moving the organization toward the long-range goals shown in this plan. Management staff will review the organization's progress quarterly and make adjustments as appropriate. The highest priorities will be tracked and progress will be reported to the board at least every six months. In recognition of the need for flexibility and responding to changing conditions, the five-year plan will be reviewed annually and, if necessary, updated by management and the board.

*For consistency, the terms used in the Strategic Plan are explained below and will be used in the annual plans.*

**GOAL:** An outcome statement that guides a program or management function.

**STRATEGY:** A coordinated, broad approach or direction adopted by an organization in response to the environment so that the organization can achieve its goal.

**OBJECTIVE:** A measurable, time-phased result that supports the achievement of a goal. Objectives in this plan are to be S.M.A.R.T.

**S = SPECIFIC**

**M = MEASURABLE**

**A = ATTAINABLE**

**R = REALISTIC**

**T = TIME RELATED**





# Goal #1

To recover self-sustaining, free-flying populations of California Condors and to serve as a nationally-recognized model of success

GOAL #1 STRATEGIES	OBJECTIVES	Due
<b>Augment the wild condor population.</b>	• Release California Condors in Big Sur or San Simeon, California to increase the wild population by 50%, reaching a total of 150 birds in central California by 2025.	FALL 2025
	• Monitor all accessible condor nests and productivity in the central coast region.	ANNUALLY
<b>Expand distribution of condors through development of new release sites in California.</b>	• Assist development of a new release site in northern California in cooperation with Yurok Tribe, National Park Service (NPS), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and others.	FALL 2021
	• Investigate potential release sites in California as needed.	ONGOING
	• Determine feasibility of release effort at Ano Nuevo State Park, where an elephant seal colony might provide scavenging benefits.	SPRING 2022
<b>Track all free-flying condors with radio telemetry, and when possible satellite transmitters, to monitor health and habitat use of individual condors, which informs other strategies herein.</b>	• Prioritize deployment of satellite transmitters on newly released condors and on breeding birds as available.	ONGOING
	• Capture as needed to maintain radio telemetry tags.	ONGOING

***Manage lead exposure threats to aid in survivorship for the wild population.***

- Transport all condors showing symptoms of lead poisoning to a facility for treatment, and release them in their original habitat when appropriate.
- Provide 2,500 boxes of free nonlead ammunition to hunters and ranchers in condor range with emphasis on rimfire.
- Conduct survey of hunters and ranchers to determine attitudes toward nonlead ammunition, challenges with availability, and degree of acceptance.

AS NEEDED

ANNUALLY

FALL 2021

***Manage causes of death to aid in survivorship for the wild population.***

- Determine causes of death for condors whenever possible and work with key stakeholders to prevent future fatalities.

ONGOING

***Document reproductive success in the wild population.***

- Determine reproductive rate for population viability analyses.
- Determine causes of nest failure when possible.
- Use remote cameras in nests to enhance monitoring when feasible.

ANNUALLY

ONGOING

ANNUALLY

***Continue positive condor recovery collaboration with federal and state agencies.***

- Complete Phase 3 of the California Condor (CACO) Central database creation, which is a shared online tool provided for the international condor program to integrate all data collection and management in one central database.
- Attend all condor recovery meetings and work with partners to evaluate program-wide strategies and progress toward recovery, while maintaining all permits.

WINTER 2020

ANNUALLY



# Goal #2

Instill a conservation ethic and inspire youth to take action by fully integrating innovative scientific and ecological education

GOAL #2 STRATEGIES	OBJECTIVES	Due
<p><i>Develop more versatile programming to adjust to the COVID-19 pandemic and other barriers that might prevent students from attending our programs in person.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop online curriculum to provide an opportunity for virtual learning and programming when in-person programming is not possible.</li> </ul>	SUMMER 2020
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and maintain a reopening plan to resume in-person outdoor youth education, in line with COVID-19 health and safety guidelines.</li> </ul>	ONGOING
<p><i>Maintain and enhance interpretive center(s) for community outreach.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and install new exhibit on the wildlife of Big Sur at Andrew Molera State Park and at other locations as other opportunities arise.</li> </ul>	SPRING 2021
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain activities and opportunities for the Discovery Center at Andrew Molera State Park to serve a minimum of 1,300 visitors annually during summer months.</li> </ul>	REOPEN 2021
<p><i>Provide meaningful outdoor education experiences for youth.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage 1,200 youth (ages 4-17) through innovative seasonal or year-round classes focusing on nature awareness and stewardship in a live or virtual format, with approximately 50% of enrollment consisting of students from underserved communities.</li> </ul>	ANNUALLY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain bilingual educator to ensure curriculum and content accessibility to Spanish speaking constituents.</li> </ul>	ONGOING
<p><i>Expand outdoor education opportunities for youth in Monterey County.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a new collaboration with Monterey Peninsula Unified School District to create opportunities for youth not previously served.</li> </ul>	SPRING 2021
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine feasibility of a residential youth camp to serve school districts in California.</li> </ul>	FALL 2021
<p><i>Develop nature prescription programming in collaboration with doctors and the charitable, agricultural, and business communities.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide outdoor experiences for east Salinas youth and families in partnership with Alisal Health Clinics.</li> </ul>	SPRING 2021
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine feasibility of replication and expansion to other areas.</li> </ul>	SPRING 2022

GOAL #2 STRATEGIES OBJECTIVES *continued*

Due

*Give presentations and attend tabling events to share the results of our work and expertise with the public.*

- Resume tabling events when shelter in place restrictions associated with COVID-19 allow, at a rate of 10 per year.
- Give 25 public presentations in either live or virtual format.

ANNUALLY

ANNUALLY



# Goal #3

Extend our leadership in endangered and special-status species research, recovery, management, and consultation

GOAL #3 STRATEGIES	OBJECTIVES	Due
<p><i>Utilize a scientific advisory committee to discuss future research needs and opportunities.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form board-led scientific advisory committee and recruit independent professionals to join.</li> </ul>	FALL 2020
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform committee review of scientific research strengths and opportunities.</li> </ul>	ANNUALLY
<p><i>Expand research and monitoring opportunities for regionally significant wildlife and collaborate with other researchers.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine feasibility of at least one new research project involving regionally significant wildlife species.</li> </ul>	ANNUALLY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contract with agencies, companies, non-profit organizations and others to research and monitor species of conservation concern.</li> </ul>	ONGOING
<p><i>Develop a species-wide demographic model to inform recovery planning for California Condors.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine annual lead exposure, reproduction and survivorship rates.</li> </ul>	ANNUALLY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with collaborators to incorporate our data into the demographic model.</li> </ul>	ANNUALLY
<p><i>Develop the capabilities, size, and leadership of the staff.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support and training for key staff to receive permits on listed species in central California as well as leadership courses.</li> </ul>	ONGOING
<p><i>Present our research findings in peer-reviewed publications and/or professional conferences and lectures.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare at least one manuscript for peer-reviewed publication.</li> </ul>	ANNUALLY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare and submit a manuscript on eggshell thickness in California Condors in California.</li> </ul>	SUMMER 2020
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend technical meetings or conferences live or virtually twice per year and present our project results at least once.</li> </ul>	ANNUALLY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain publication library on website to demonstrate past success and release new publications while coordinating with journals and media.</li> </ul>	ONGOING

# Goal #4

Collaborate with other stakeholders on high impact wildlife recovery and conservation, education, and outreach



GOAL #4 STRATEGIES	OBJECTIVES	Due
<p><b>Promote our mission through collaborations with government agencies and non-government organizations.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forge stronger relationships by meeting annually, at all levels, with California Department of Fish and Wildlife, USFWS, NPS, and regional agencies such as Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District to keep abreast of emerging issues or species of concern.</li> <li>• Identify land trusts, zoos, Native American Tribes and other conservation organizations that have the potential for effective collaborations. Meet with key partners annually.</li> <li>• Regarding youth education, maintain current partnerships with Monterey peninsula groups and forge new relationships with other youth-serving organizations to provide opportunities for southern and northern Monterey County as well as adjacent counties.</li> </ul>	<p>ANNUALLY</p> <p>ANNUALLY</p> <p>ONGOING</p>
<p><b>Maintain regular communication with collaborators and identify common goals including ways to bring an asset or expertise to shared problems.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and execute new agreements as necessary to support this plan.</li> <li>• Maintain a master list of collaborators and review agreement renewal dates.</li> </ul>	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>ANNUALLY</p>
<p><b>Expand role regionally to enhance visitor experience and overnight camping.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek renewal of concession agreement at Andrew Molera State Park.</li> <li>• Determine the financial feasibility of a youth and family camp and/or residential camp regionally.</li> <li>• Add campground elements for a youth and family camp (i.e., gazebo, picnic tables, etc.).</li> </ul>	<p>SUMMER 2020</p> <p>SPRING 2022</p> <p>SPRING 2022</p>

# Goal #5

Build the organizational capacity and sustainability while fostering a culture to further our mission and accomplish the goals, strategies and objectives of this plan

GOAL #5 STRATEGIES	OBJECTIVES	Due
<b><i>Maintain a healthy, productive, collegial, and collaborative work environment and culture.</i></b>	• Ensure the proper diversity and expertise of the board of directors through recruitment in the communities most underrepresented.	ONGOING
	• Enhance ongoing board/staff coordination for annual fundraising event, membership events, and major donor cultivation.	ONGOING
	• Maintain an Infectious Disease Policy to ensure that staff follow the current best practices to avoid contracting and spreading illness in the workplace.	ONGOING
	• Develop more online educational content, presentations, and remote access applications.	ONGOING
<b><i>Improve board satisfaction and effectiveness through meaningful engagement.</i></b>	• Maintain active participation of all board standing committees.	ONGOING
	• Maintain a list of board prospects for consideration and prioritize attributes needed.	ONGOING
	• Expand to at least 14 board members through ongoing recruitment and succession planning.	FALL 2021
	• Conduct satisfaction and effectiveness survey.	ANNUALLY
<b><i>Improve staff satisfaction and effectiveness through training, surveys, competitive salaries, and regular reviews.</i></b>	• Identify and provide staff training opportunities through professional seminars and classes.	ANNUALLY
	• Conduct employee satisfaction survey.	BI-ANNUALLY
	• Provide competitive salaries at midpoint or higher levels, based on surveys of similar non-profits.	ONGOING
	• Ensure staff reviews are completed in a timely manner.	BI-ANNUALLY
<b><i>Enhance our commitment to addressing equity and cultural relevancy throughout the organization to better reflect the communities we serve.</i></b>	• Provide Spanish-language versions of organizational outreach materials, including course curriculum, brochures, and webpages.	ONGOING
	• For each new job announcement, identify one new posting location to promote a greater equity of cultures represented among applicants.	ONGOING
	• Provide recurring staff development opportunities in equity and inclusion for both seasonal and full time staff.	ANNUALLY



# Goal #6

Ensure the long-term fiscal strength and stability of Ventana Wildlife Society

GOAL #6 STRATEGIES	OBJECTIVES	Due
<i>Improve our financial health.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain at least three months of liquidity year-round.</li> <li>• Maintain a maximum debt-to-asset ratio of 25%.</li> </ul>	<p>WINTER 2021</p> <p>ONGOING</p>
<i>Enhance our development and communications capabilities.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and cultivate major gift prospects and update annual fund plan.</li> <li>• Increase number of contributing households by 10% annually.</li> <li>• Hire a full-time development director contingent upon maintaining the months of liquidity objective and a minimum of \$50,000 dedicated salary.</li> </ul>	<p>ANNUALLY</p> <p>ANNUALLY</p> <p>SPRING 2022</p>
<i>Maintain and find new fee-for-service or governmental contract funding opportunities, such as endangered species recovery, condor tours, and youth camps.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase governmental contracts and earned income to represent one-third of organization revenue.</li> <li>• Obtain a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA).</li> </ul>	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>WINTER 2020</p>
<i>Enhance donor engagement and meaningful access to programs, staff and board.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain robust schedule of donor offerings and outstanding “customer service”.</li> <li>• Offer a condor tour to Big Sur Condor Sanctuary for all donors contributing at a leadership level.</li> <li>• Seek input on membership with the use of surveys.</li> </ul>	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>ONGOING</p> <p>BI-ANNUALLY</p>
<i>Enhance exposure to organization through online media such as Explore.org, live chats, Google Adwords, and social media.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Google Adwords with timely and interesting information.</li> <li>• Conduct live chats via Explore.org at the Big Sur Condor Sanctuary.</li> </ul>	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>QUARTERLY</p>



# OUR EXPECTED OUTCOMES

If the goals and objectives herein are achieved, we can expect outcomes described below

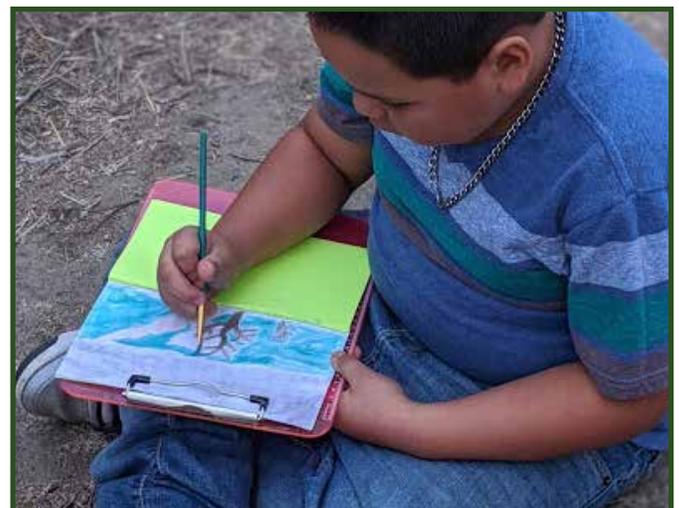
## GOAL #1 - *Condors*

By 2025, the California Condor population in central California will be showing signs of progress toward becoming self-sustaining. These signs will include continued growth in numbers (>150 birds) and distribution, an increased capacity for productivity, and a decreased rate of fatalities. Population growth will be aided by maximizing releases of captive-bred birds in San Simeon and the development of new release sites. We will continue to monitor reproductive success, and engage the general public through the use of live webcams at active nests when feasible. We will help hunters and ranchers reduce lead exposure for condors by distributing free nonlead ammunition in areas where birds are most at risk. By requiring face to face ammunition transfers and increased documentation, the Safety For All Act will present new opportunities for us, as a licensed ammunition vendor, to meet directly with hunters and ranchers and facilitate access to nonlead ammunition. Our condor recovery efforts will extend beyond the central California population, from assisting with release strategies in northern California to providing nonlead ammunition to hunters and ranchers throughout the condor range in California. We will maintain our commitment and position as a key collaborator in the full recovery of the species.



## GOAL #2 - *Education and Outreach*

We will offer meaningful outdoor education experiences through online and in-person classes as social distancing guidelines allow for at least 1,200 youth annually. By offering grant-funded scholarships, we will ensure that students from underserved communities have every opportunity to participate. Half of enrollment will consist of students from underserved communities. With a bilingual educator on staff, we will take steps toward greater cultural relevancy in our materials and instruction. By owning and operating a fleet of 15-passenger vans, we will overcome transportation barriers that prevent youth from having access to education programs outside of their traditional classroom experiences. While focusing on nature awareness and stewardship in youth, we will also increase outreach and outdoor education programming for adults. These advances will include installing a new display at our Discovery Center, establishing youth and family camps, and developing park prescription programming in collaboration with local medical and business communities.



# OUR EXPECTED OUTCOMES *Continued*

## GOAL #3 - *Research and Consultation*

We will conduct research studies on current focal species, such as California Condor, with topics including lead exposure, reproduction, and survivorship. Results of our studies will be presented at scientific conferences or in peer-reviewed journals and publications. We will increase our staff expertise and involvement with a broader range of wildlife species through participation in courses, training workshops, and permit applications for new species (e.g., California red-legged frog). A scientific advisory committee will be organized to help ensure that we maintain high scientific standards while recognizing new opportunities for research. While providing consultation, we will distinguish ourselves from typical consultation firms by ensuring that all projects are consistent with our conservation mission.



## GOAL #4 - *Collaborations*

We will promote our mission through collaborations with government agencies and non-government organizations, and identify meaningful ways to bring an asset or expertise to a common goal or issue for the mutual benefit of all. By leading the development and expansion of the online CACO Central database, we will provide our condor recovery partners with an efficient means of remotely entering and accessing data. This database will integrate the work of each condor project collaborator and streamline research designs, data collection, analyses, and reporting. Through collaborations, we expect to take on an expanded role at Andrew Molera State Park to enhance visitor experience and overnight camping opportunities. We will forge stronger relationships with local, state, and federal agencies and organizations by meeting annually to keep abreast of emerging issues or species of concern. We will also expand collaboration with other youth-serving non-government organizations to reach new students from underserved communities.





## GOAL #5 - *Organizational Capacity*

We will seek ways to improve the satisfaction and effectiveness of staff and board members to maintain a healthy and productive work environment. We will support staff training opportunities, encourage feedback in the form of employee satisfaction surveys, and provide competitive salaries. We will maintain board participation in standing committees, recruit additional board members, ensure accountability through annual board evaluations, and encourage board and staff coordination. In light of COVID-19, we will focus on developing more online educational content, presentations, and remote access applications, such as Condor Cam, to become even more resilient.

## GOAL #6 - *Financial*

We will improve our financial health by maintaining an annual fundraising plan, increasing government contracts and earned income, offering an expanded schedule of unique donor benefits and events, and enhancing social and online media interaction with the general public. Our financial health will be measured by retention of at least three months of cash reserves, a debt to asset ratio of less than 25%, and a 10% annual increase in the number of contributing households. Achievement of these financial benchmarks will accelerate the schedule for hiring a development director, which would further strengthen our ability to conserve native wildlife and their habitats for years to come.



# VENTANA WILDLIFE SOCIETY

Conserving native wildlife and their habitats through  
science, education and collaboration.



## Ventana Wildlife Society

9699 Blue Larkspur Ln, Ste 105

Monterey, CA 93940

(831) 455-9514

[www.ventanaws.org](http://www.ventanaws.org)

[www.condorspotter.com](http://www.condorspotter.com)

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