

Ventana Wildlife Society

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Dear Ventana Wildlife Society Supporters,

Since starting our monthly condor Zoom-Chats in the wake of the COVID pandemic, our number one question from viewers has been, "How's Iniko?"

We all want to know. Iniko became an internet star as we watched her on live-cam each day. The world feels a connection with her, having participated in the selection of her name. And, with a name meaning 'born during troubled times,' perhaps her survival make us think of our own challenges navigating through the pandemic.

We watched as Iniko faced the flames of the Dolan Wildfire in August 2020, then rejoiced when we heard the news of her survival. But when Iniko was subsequently injured and evacuated to Los Angeles Zoo, it seemed like another turn on the rollercoaster of life. For Ventana Wildlife Society, the loss of the Big Sur Condor Sanctuary's assets and more than 10% of the central California Condor population in one careless fire was compounded by an unexpected surge in condor fatalities due to lead poisoning. This surge was even more devastating to the condor population than the fires.

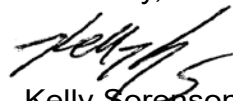
But like Iniko, we are recovering and making progress toward a stronger future. Through your generosity, we are on track for a 2022 completion of new facilities that will improve our research and recovery capabilities. We

are continuing releases of captive-bred condors to the wild in San Simeon and documenting nesting pairs. As a licensed ammunition vendor, we are managing the lead threat at its source by using condor GPS data to prioritize distribution of non-lead ammunition.

Our education programs are also taking flight. While a period of virtual learning helped us get through the initial throes of the pandemic, we are again building in-person programming to serve local underserved communities in exciting ways. We're thrilled to announce plans for a prime new campground in Big Sur that will provide overnight outdoor experiences for families who have difficulty accessing camps along the coast.

You might say that we are trending in the same positive direction as Iniko, despite these troubled times. As of December 2021, Iniko is freely soaring over the central coast. Watching her will be a reminder of how resilient condors are, and how much we can overcome together to achieve the goal of a self-sustaining population for future generations to enjoy.

Sincerely,



Kelly Sorenson
Executive Director



Bill Eckert
Board Chair



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Big Sur Condor Sanctuary sunsets always take our breath away!

COVER PHOTO



Wildlife Biologist, Evan McWreath, photographed condor 1104 just after it fledged from its nest. Successful nesting in the wild is a positive step toward our goal of a self-sustaining population scenes like this provide and a hopeful glimpse of a tagless future.

A Rebuild Update at the Big Sur Condor Sanctuary

THE COAST IS CLEAR



Depending on the artist, a blank canvas can be intimidating or exciting. It can be an unwelcome reminder of the hours of work to come, or the promising foundation of a great work of art.

For Ventana Wildlife Society, just uncovering a blank canvas from the rubble of the Dolan Wildfire was a major achievement on the path to rebuilding the Big Sur Condor Sanctuary. One of the first steps was to apply for a permit to remove the building debris from the site. As luck would have it, the wait for the permit stretched all the way through the summer of 2021. But once authorized, we led a work crew to the sanctuary and hauled off several tons of ruins. The ruggedness of the sanctuary, so valuable for condors, added a degree of difficulty to the operation. Much of the debris had to be hauled by hand to transport vehicles.

Of course, the cleanup required more than making debris disappear.

There were access roads to clear, soil samples to collect, and burned snags to remove. We also restored the water and septic systems and removed mud and debris from the drainage culvert. We purchased a tractor to help with some tasks, giving an eager Joe Burnett a new calling as heavy equipment operator in between condor duties. By October, our blank canvas was finally ready for the next stage of the rebuild.

We expect great things to arise from the canvas. Building plans include an expanded bunkhouse and research facility for field staff, with a commanding view of condor activity on the opposite slope. A new condor release facility will allow us to continue the full extent of our trapping, monitoring, and releases in Big Sur. Thanks to your generosity, we reached the initial rebuild goal, with over \$650,000 raised. We look forward to unveiling the new condor sanctuary for you in 2022.



DONATE WITH CONFIDENCE: WE SCORED ABOVE AVERAGE



GuideStar PLATINUM Seal
of Transparency

(less than 1% of non-profits receive this honor)

GuideStar is the largest source of non-profit information and has collected results information from more than 13,000 nonprofits.



Charity Navigator
PERFECT SCORE

100 out of 100!

Charity Navigator is the largest independent evaluator and rater of non-profits, analyzing 9,000 organizations. The exceptional charities that receive a perfect score of 100 execute their missions in a fiscally responsible way while adhering to good governance and other best practices that minimize the chance of unethical activities. Each has earned perfect scores for its financial health and its accountability and transparency. Those two scores then translate into a perfect 100 point overall score. Less than one percent of the thousands of charities rated by Charity Navigator have earned perfect scores.

BUILDING COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

Yulissa Ochoa is hitting the farmer’s market. The 22-year-old CSUMB graduate is not looking for fresh produce. She is looking for ways to help Ventana Wildlife Society connect with youth and families in underserved communities within Monterey county.

While the families shop for leafy greens, she unpacks a suitcase and arranges coloring books and crafts for the kids under the Ventana Wildlife Society tent. We have always benefited from collaborators leading youth groups to us, but since the pandemic paused in-person programming in 2020, we have taken a more active role in recruiting

participants. We use weekly farmer’s markets to spread the word among the shoppers while providing fun activities for their children.

Yulissa is the right person for the job. As an intern, she compiled data that helped develop a community-based approach to bridge the transition back to in-person programming. Her analytical side is clearly at work as she uses her time at the farmer’s markets to survey families. She also leads focus groups to allow our programs to be more responsive to the needs of the community.




Yulissa is looking for ways to help Ventana Wildlife Society connect with youth and families in an underserved community in Salinas.


Farmer’s markets aren’t the only avenue through this community. We are also working with local healthcare professionals to provide outdoor programs as a prescription toward better health and wellness. The medical profession has long endorsed the restorative power of nature, whether it is catching a sunset over the ocean, walking through a redwood cathedral, or watching a condor soar in a clear blue sky. Now, we are sharing the benefits of “Salud y Naturaleza” with others – exactly what the doctor ordered. You don’t have to wait in line at the pharmacy to fill this prescription.

Joining us full time in August 2021 as Youth and Family Program Coordinator, Yulissa has taken the reigns for both the farmer’s market and our nature prescription programming. As a bilingual instructor, she is helping us reach families in new ways. The farmer’s market may only be once a week, but our community-based programs can bear fruit every day.

A special thank you to our supporters: Route to Parks – a grant of Parks California, and the California Coastal Conservancy’s Explore the Coast grant, which make removing the barriers accessing State Parks, and the coast, possible.



The Ventana Wildlife Society table is the place to be for kids while their parents shop the farmer's market.



Leading discussions with focus groups allows Yulissa to develop programming that is more responsive to the needs of the community.

BUILDING A CURRICULUM

Cristian Hernandez-Diaz has been teaching kids for years, but now he is setting his sights on teachers. Using a NOAA B-WET grant he mentors teachers in how to integrate Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) into their curriculum.

Not only do teachers get trained to develop MWEE's - which are learner-centered experiences that actively engage students in building knowledge and meaning through hands-on investigation of local environmental issues - they experience firsthand the joy of outdoor learning alongside their students. They get to slip on rubber boots, grab a bucket, and follow Cristian out to the local pond for a fresh perspective on creatures large and small. Some are surprised to find that watershed study can be integrated into nearly every subject they teach. The training is offered on weekend mornings to better accommodate the hectic schedule of the teachers, while mentorship and student / teacher experiences occur all year long. The NOAA B-WET grant pays teachers for their participation.

The greatest payoff is for the students, who discover that outdoor learning doesn't

have to end when Cristian's session is over. Not that there is a substitute for Cristian live and in person. Not everyone can serve up these lessons with the same flair and enthusiasm. But he can give teachers the tools to stimulate place-based experiential learning, so that the lessons learned during our watershed programs can continue on indefinitely.



Cristian Hernandez-Diaz (above) is training teachers to integrate outdoor programs into their school curriculum.



Through a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) grant, we are giving teachers the tools to stimulate place-based experiential learning.





Ventana Wildlife Society

www.ventanaws.org

Discovery Center

Located just a short walk from our Discovery Center at Andrew Molera State Park, we are setting our sights on developing a campground primarily for youth and families from underserved communities, which will lead to life-changing experiences in the outdoors, overall family enrichment, and engender a love of native wildlife.

BUILDING A CAMP

There are changes afoot at Andrew Molera State Park, Big Sur as we plan for a renewed future there for youth and families to enjoy. Beginning in 1992, our outdoor youth education programs have delivered programming to thousands of individuals, many of whom attended free of charge and experienced overnight camping for the first time. Our programs started and continue to grow due to the tremendous need that exists to overcome transportation, language or other barriers to the outdoors.

Our services are provided to State Parks through a concession agreement at Andrew Molera State Park that is in the process of another renewal. It couldn't come at a better time, as many local families struggle to find ways to enjoy the outdoors and are lost in the COVID scramble. The idea of enjoying the splendors of camping along the Big Sur coast seems unattainable for some. This is especially true for low-income families in underserved communities.

As we look to the future, we feel an unwavering commitment to



We are helping low-income families enjoy the splendors of camping along the Big Sur river.

providing life-changing experiences in the outdoors, particularly for underserved communities. Ventana Wildlife Society is in a great position to expand by leveraging our nearly 30-year relationship with State Parks to develop new amenities and programs. Andrew Molera State Park is a wonderful place for families to enjoy naturalist-led activities or find easy access to the park's hiking trails.

Whether we are building a condor

sanctuary, a community, a curriculum, or a camping experience, you are helping us create new paths for youth and families to experience and protect nature.

We are excited to share that Tarpy's Roadhouse in Monterey, owned by Coastal Roots Hospitality, will host a fundraising gala on Saturday, April 9, 2022 to help us kick off a campaign in support of outdoor youth education. We hope to see you there

Condor Releases Pave the Road to Recovery

ARE WE THERE YET?

If you have traveled the California highways recently, you might have been sharing the road with California Condors. Of course, condors prefer to soar slower than the posted speed limit along our interstates, only occasionally reaching vehicle cruising speeds. But on a clear day in September 2021, nine young condors were packed in carriers and got a free ride in our SUVs. Little did passing motorists suspect that our steady caravan carried the future of condor recovery.

These birds were sent on a mission to help a reeling population and explore a new frontier. They came from a captive breeding facility at the World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho and eagerly bounded from their carriers into the San Simeon Sanctuary holding pen at the end of their long journey. Here, they acclimated to the coastal environment, complete with an ocean view, room-service carrion meals, and curious visitors dropping in from the wild condor population.

Five of the nine were selected to join the wild population here and were released in November 2021. These five will bolster a population besieged in the last two years by

the Dolan Wildfire and a surge in lead poisoning. All are females, helping to even up the male dominated population. The other four pre-release birds were on a layover, ticketed for Redwood National Park in northern California, where the Yurok Tribe and the National Park Service plan to release condors in spring 2022. Their road trip would continue. (CONT ON PAGE 14)





Stretching out after a long car ride.

Nine young condors were transferred to our facilities in San Simeon from a captive breeding facility at the World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho. Iniko joined them from the Los Angeles Zoo.



Iniko returns home to the Central California Coast.

But there was one more condor hitting the road in October. A celebrity among condor cam viewers, Iniko made the trip from Los Angeles Zoo, where she was rehabilitated from the injury she sustained in her Big Sur nest shortly after the Dolan Wildfire. Many people who suffered during the pandemic, whether physically, economically, or emotionally, relate to the plight of Iniko. In early December, she returned to her central coast home, where she spread her wings and soared for the very first time.

Indeed, San Simeon has become even more important for condors after the Big Sur Condor Sanctuary was destroyed in 2020. And while the travel itineraries were not the same for each bird this year, they shared an ultimate destination toward full recovery of a self-sustaining population. We're pointed in the right direction, but no, we're not quite there yet. So, if you find that you're passing a condor caravan on the highway, give them a wide berth. They might be carrying precious cargo.



Iniko's assigned ID number is 1031, which corresponded to an orange 31 wing tag. In honor of Iniko's return from the zoo, falling near Halloween, the crew fashioned a playful jack-o-lantern, making her the first condor to carry an illustration on the underside of her tag.

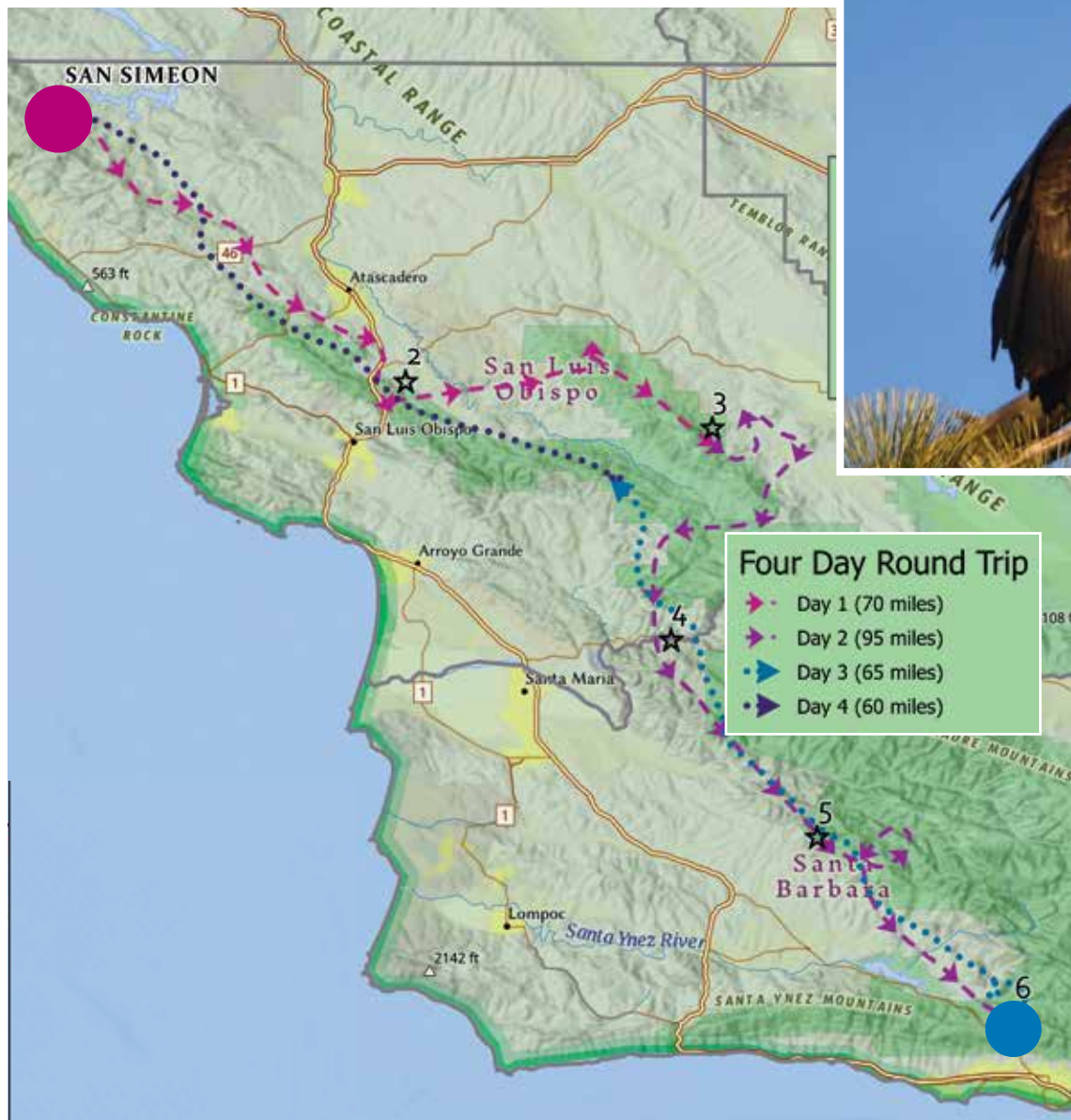
BIG SUR'S MOST LOVED CELEBRITY

Hatched April 25, 2020, Iniko was certainly "born in troubled times" as her name indicates. Iniko survived the Dolan Wildfire, only to lose a parent then be force-fledged from her nest by another condor. She recovered at the Los Angeles Zoo and was back on the condor cam in San Simeon for a month before being released back to the wild on December 4.

There is much excitement for Iniko fans around the world as they watched her adjust to life in the wild. Where will she settle?

Ventana Wildlife Society member, Linda Lutzai, created a stunning Iniko image that we used to create our first Christmas ornament (right).





A Weekend Getaway

SANTA BARBARA AND BACK

Do you ever just want to get away? If you are a condor, you don't need Southwest Airlines. Just spread your wings to the full 9.5 feet and lift off. While condors often stay close to their nest territory, roost, or favorite food source, they can easily travel 150 miles or more in a day.

Because many of the condors carry solar-powered transmitters which collect satellite GPS locations as often as every minute, we have discovered some amazing flights. Take Kodiak (974) for instance, who ventured to and from the Santa Barbara area over a four-day period (see map). Whether they are looking for food, scouting potential territories, or simply exploring new frontiers, these birds rack up plenty of frequent flier miles.

Targeting Non-Lead Outreach

AS THE LEAD THREAT CONTINUES FOR CALIFORNIA CONDORS

Targeting non-lead outreach is increasingly essential for condor recovery. As condor fatalities have surged in the last 2+ years in central California because of lead poisoning, we are prioritizing outreach in areas where condors are most at risk.

Our approach has always been to support hunters and ranchers through our free non-lead ammunition program. *Ranches provide habitat for birds that is protected from development, and this land provides food and water sources for condors. We see hunters and ranchers as a solution in condor recovery.* But, that solution requires non-lead ammunition. And, to chart that path, hunters and ranchers have had to navigate a series of regulations that have changed their way of life.

State regulations not only require the use of non-lead ammunition when shooting wildlife in California, but they restrict how hunters can purchase ammunition. As part of the Safety For All Act, designed



to slow the wave of gun violence in our country, every ammunition purchase in California must now be approved by the Department of Justice at the point of sale. Once a purchase is approved, the ammunition must be transferred face to face through a licensed vendor. This face to face requirement limits retail shipments, essentially putting an end to internet sales for most California residents. Without the internet as a resource, buyers must now visit their local stores and be satisfied with whatever stock is on the shelf.

Unfortunately, there wasn't much on the shelf this year. When the pandemic settled in, toilet paper was not the only thing that disappeared from stores. Widespread social unrest in 2020 influenced a wave of new firearm buyers, all demanding ammunition. The huge demand cleared the shelves by the end of that summer, and ammunition has been scarce ever since. We're seeing the return of ammunition for some calibers, but these returns have been dominated by lead brands. Some non-lead brands have been unavailable for more than a year.

Ventana Wildlife Society became a licensed ammunition vendor in 2019 to ensure that we could legally continue distributing ammunition to support hunters and ranchers. But with demand for ammunition so high, and availability so low, how do we

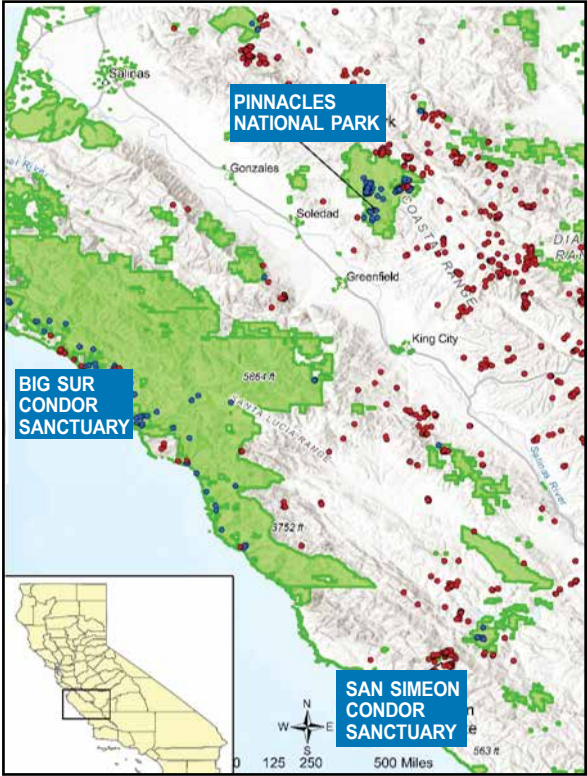


There wasn't much on the shelf this year. When the pandemic settled in, toilet paper was not the only thing that disappeared from stores.

prioritize the distribution of our limited supply to those hunters and ranchers that can have the greatest impact on condor recovery?

For that, we let the birds guide us. Those colorful identification wing tags you've seen also serve as GPS units for many of the birds, collecting location fixes as they move about the landscape. By monitoring maps of condor distribution based on GPS data, we can identify potential feeding areas of risk. We look for consistent locations of condors on the ground in open rangeland. For locations with frequent ground activity, or where lead-exposed birds have traveled, we attempt to make contact with land owners and provide free non-lead ammunition. As we continue to reach more properties in high-risk areas, we can help stem the tide in fatality trends.

This is what we mean when we talk about



By monitoring maps of condor distribution, we can prioritize where non-lead ammunition outreach should be focused. We look for condor GPS locations on the ground, indicating potential feeding behavior. (Green areas on the map are federal lands, the white is private.)

targeting non-lead outreach. Hitting the right targets in our outreach is critical now while we continue working toward our long-term goal of a self-sustaining population.



JOIN US

www.ventanaws.org/membership

TUNE IN MONTHLY TO OUR CONDOR ZOOM-CHATS

www.ventanaws.org/

WATCH CONDORS DAILY

www.ventanaws.org/condor_cam

FIND THE TRUE IDENTITY NOW

Find out who these two condors are and more

www.condorspotter.com

LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE CONDOR

www.ventanaws.org/my-condor-bios

FOLLOW THE CONDORS OF CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

www.facebook.com/VentanaWildlifeSociety

www.youtube.com/user/VWScondors

www.Instagram.com/ventanawildlifesociety

TEAM (CONDOR) SPIRIT

www.ventanaws.org/store

LISTEN IN Evan McWreath discusses with the crew, Condor 972's visit to the Big Sur Condor Sanctuary watering hole, during the (recorded) 2021 November Condor Zoom-Chat.

www.ventanaws.org/zoom-chats

Engaging Our Members



LIGHTS...CAMERA...ACTION! MONTHLY CONDOR ZOOM-CHATS

www.ventanaws.org/zoom-chats

Every last Thursday of the month, you have a front row seat to the show. Join Condor Joe (Burnett) and his field staff for a live Zoom-Chat on all things condors. See the latest photos, videos, and maps from the field. Find out what it's like to handle a condor, to place a carcass at night in the moonlit sanctuary, or to witness a chick's first flight. Their stories are YOUR stories.

We created the Zoom-Chats in 2020 to engage our members in the height of the pandemic. Now, they continue because we enjoy them so much!





MEMBERSHIP ADVANTAGE

www.ventanaws.org/membership

This year we added benefits to, and better refined, our Membership Program to enhance your experience and encourage a base of support. In addition to membership, we also have special needs or matching opportunities that arise to support condor recovery and meaningful outdoor education programming. Sign up as a member and receive 10% off merchandise all year long, special merchandise, monthly offers, invitations to digital content, and promotional items for members only! Make sure to **Join as a Member** when donating to Ventana Wildlife Society and have peace of mind knowing you're not only ensuring the survival and growth of the central California condor flock, but you're also helping educate our future stewards.

We are where we are because of supporters like you!

Not Just for Condors Anymore

There's a new buzz at ***the Big Sur Condor Sanctuary***. In November 2021, Ventana Wildlife Society was joined by biologists from Sequoia Ecological Consulting to plant monarch habitat kits donated by Xerces Society. *Migrating monarchs have declined significantly in recent years.* These plants will provide nectar-rich blooms for monarchs and other pollinators.



Big Sur Camera Visitors

When we first installed a live-streaming webcam at the Big Sur Condor Sanctuary in 2013, we thought it might be a handy tool for the field staff. They could more efficiently monitor the growing flock and even reduce their backcountry travel. Little did we know how much the cameras would allow viewers around the world to contribute to our condor recovery efforts. From providing daily roll calls to identifying signs of concern for individual condors, our viewers don't miss a thing. Here are some wildlife species, other than condors, that you might see at the sanctuary. Keep watching!



Golden Eagle



Striped Skunk



Acorn Woodpecker



Mountain Lion



Black Bear

Staff, Board, Volunteers

ADMINISTRATIVE **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Kelly Sorenson

OFFICE MANAGER

Cathy Hamilton

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Elizabeth Loh

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Joan Biddle

SPECIES RECOVERY

SENIOR WILDLIFE BIOLOGISTS

Joe Burnett

Mike Stake

WILDLIFE BIOLOGISTS

Kara Fadden

Darren Gross

Danaé Mouton

Evan McWreath

SEASONAL INTERNS

Carolyn Doyle

Moed Gervani

Jonathan McClellan

Grayson Poutas

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH **MANAGER**

Alena Porte

COORDINATORS

Cristian Hernandez-Diaz, Teen Program
and Teacher Training

Yulissa Ochoa, Youth and Family Program

PART-TIME EDUCATORS

Tanya Amaro

Ali Ponko

Crecencia Sanchez

Eessa Vanderspek

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GRANT WRITER

Laura Harris

SOFTWARE ENGINEER / VOLUNTEER

Tim Huntington

CONSULTING VETERINARIAN

Amy Wells, DVM

CSUMB SERVICE LEARNER

Shaelie Askew

Aliah Ibarra

BOARD EMERITUS

William R Hearst III



SHARED PASSION - UNITED VISION

In Fall 2021, enthusiastic staff and board members gathered for a retreat at the lovely Glen Deven Ranch in Big Sur. On the agenda was a strategy session to map out Ventana Wildlife Society's next five-year plan. Look for the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan to be finalized by summer 2022.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: (STANDING) Alena Porte, Cathy Hamilton, Bill Eckert, Cristian Hernandez-Diaz, Joe Burnett, Alec Arago, Richard Anderson, Mark Osterkamp, Amedee Brickey, Cesar Velázquez, Karen Kreiger, Dave Parker, Elizabeth Loh, (SEATED) Ana González, Jay Sinclair, Joan Biddle, Amanda Sharp Freedman, Kelly Sorenson, Yulissa Ochoa.

Financial Statement

APRIL 1, 2020 - MARCH 31, 2021

SOURCES OF FUNDS

Grants and Contributions	\$1,932,689
Government Grants	\$ 365,779
Change in Value of Split Interest Trust	\$ 328,438
Paycheck Protection Grant	\$ 138,639
In-Kind Contributions	\$ 101,071
Other Income	\$ 78,589
Fees for Services	\$ 6,248
Investment Income, Net	\$ 45

\$2,951,498

USES OF FUNDS

Program Services	\$1,194,759
Management and General	\$ 143,595
Fundraising	\$ 83,997

\$1,422,351

NET ASSETS

Net Assets, Start of Year	\$2,956,249
Change in Net Assets	\$1,529,147
Net Assets, End of Year	\$4,485,396

Note: The surplus is largely due to the generosity of donors in response to the Dolan Wildfire destroying the Big Sur Condor Sanctuary. Many thanks to our generous donors who are making rebuilding the Big Sur Condor sanctuary possible.

Ventana Wildlife Society is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)3 organization tax ID 94-2795935. Complete financials are available at ventanaws.org. Our office is located at 9699 Blue Larkspur Ln, Ste 105, Monterey CA 93940.



Ventana Wildlife Society
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Monterey CA 93940
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