

MONTEREY COUNTY

sit on it. After enough shocks, the birds learn: *Power poles=No way.*

“We’re like a preschool for condors,” Sorenson laughs. And even after the young birds are released, the job is still not finished. “They don’t have their parents, they don’t know where to find food, or where to fly. There’s a long way to go before they’re truly going to be independent and know what the heck to do.”

There are 375 bird species in 4,000-acre Andrew Molera State Park, and the guides at Ventana Wildlife give some of the best bird walks in the region. Though their specialty is condor tours, they can also point out dozens of other species.

Asilomar State Beach

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GETTING TO KNOW THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR

Kelly Sorenson, Executive Director, Ventana Wildlife Society

With only a handful of its kind left in the world, the California condor isn’t exactly the best-known bird on the block. Before going to the main holdout in Big Sur, learn a bit about these fascinating birds of prey.

- By 1982, the world population of California condors was only twenty-two.
- As of 2008, there are more than 300 California condors.
- About half of them are in the wild, half in captivity.
- Condors were first released back into Big Sur in 1987.
- Four zoos today have condors in captivity for breeding purposes: LA Zoo, San Diego Wild Animal Park, World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho, and the Oregon Zoo in Portland.
- These zoos transfer the offspring to Ventana Wildlife for eventual release into the wild.
- Condors have a 10-foot wingspan and can weigh up to twenty-six pounds.
- Condors can live over fifty years in the wild.
- Typically a condor pair-bond is for life, though there have been documented “breakups.”
- They lay only one egg at a time and raise one chick at a time.
- Condors are strictly carnivorous and eat only the remains of dead animals—they never kill.
- The California condor is the bird featured on the commemorative state quarter.