



Chris West
Senior Wildlife Biologist
 cwest@yuroktribe.nsn.us
 707-482-1822 x 1026

Michael Palermo
Wildlife Biologist I
 mpalermo@yuroktribe.nsn.us
 707-482-1822 x 1028
 Cell 707-954-3571

Tiana Williams,
Wildlife Biologist I
 tiana@yuroktribe.nsn.us
 707-482-1822 x 1027

Kent Barnes
Wildlife Biologist I
 kbarnes@yuroktribe.nsn.us
 707-482-1822 x 1025

**Yurok Tribe
 Klamath Office**
 190 Klamath Blvd
 PO Box 1027
 Klamath, CA 95548

Welcome to the Yurok Condor Program

Returning the California condor to the Pacific Northwest is part of the Yurok Tribe's obligation to heal the world. Yurok people consider the condor a sacred animal. Condors have been spiritually tied to Yurok ceremonies since the beginning of the world. Its feathers are used and its songs are sung in the World Renewal ceremony where Yuroks pray and fast to balance the world.

The condor is also critical for a flourishing ecosystem. In the absence of large mammalian carnivores like grizzly bears and wolves, Condors would do the share of work in removing large, decaying animals from the ecosystem. They can tear tough hides to open large carcasses and make them accessible to other scavengers like turkey vultures, ravens, raccoons, skunks, and foxes.

Yurok Country is an ideal location to reintroduce condors, with relatively pristine habitat and miles of undeveloped forests, prairies, and beaches. Most of the extractive industries, such as timber, have run their course or have adopted more environmentally sound methods that would not adversely affect condors. The rugged, empty coastline and the barren mountaintop meadows on the north coast could provide vast soaring and foraging opportunities for the massive bird. Additionally, the rebound of California sea lions and gray whales would also produce ample food for the condor. Evidence indicates that condors nested here on high-country cliff faces and in ancient redwoods, both of which are still here waiting for the condor to take residence.

Currently, the experienced Wildlife Program biologists are working to confirm that Yurok Ancestral Territory is indeed safe for reintroductions to begin. The program is sampling pinnipeds, seals and sea lions, for organochlorine pesticides, such as DDT and DDE, which negatively effect condor reproduction, by the same thinning of eggshells as once threatened bald eagles. Program staff is also trapping turkey vultures to test their blood for lead exposure from ingested ammunition.

These projects are currently the centerpiece of the Yurok Tribe's California



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Condor Reintroduction Feasibility Initiative. Other aspects of research include potential condor habitat mapping, hunter education, and release facility site assessment. Once these projects are completed and the Tribe can fully assess the information gathered, decisions can be made regarding the direction future efforts will take to best support the reintroduction of condors to their former northern range. The Condor Program is one of many of the Yurok Tribe's endeavors to restore the environment in Yurok ancestral territory into a self-sustaining place where animals and humans can thrive.



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