



# Andean Condor

*(Vultur gryphus)*

One of the largest flying birds in the world, the Andean Condor relies on wind rising up the sides of mountains to take off. It can then glide for hundreds of miles while riding on air currents, or thermals. The white ruff that encircles its lower neck denotes this bird. Its body is generally glossy black with white bands on the dorsal portions of its wings. Another distinctive characteristic is the large, comb-like carbuncle that rests on top of the head and beak of a male.

## Habitat & Diet

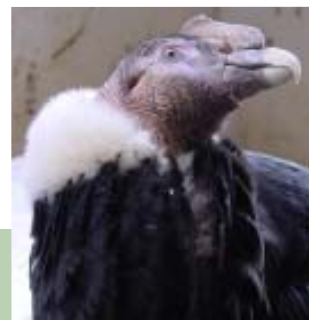
The Andean Condor can be found either inland or along the coast. Inland they live off large mammal corpses and sometimes off newborn animals. Along the coast they live off of dead fish, whales, and seals. These birds can be seen in large groups of up to 60 individuals when foraging. They locate their food by sight and have a hierarchy at a carcass based on age and sex.

## Fascinating Facts

When nesting, these creatures will lay one egg on an exposed ledge. During courtship the males reddish neck will become bright yellow and both parents will participate in incubation for 54-58 days. The young will then be cared for well into their second year. Therefore, a Condor is born only every other year. Also, sexual maturity is not attained until eight years of age. Another interesting fact is that like all New World vultures, these birds are silent. Although you may hear a wheeze or grunt, they have no real voice. The Andean Condor is the official bird of many South American countries. Vultures and Condors are descended from ancestors who were also predators at one time, and at some stage in their evolution, they gave up the ability to kill. To adapt to become scavengers, they had to become highly efficient soaring fliers. Only in this way can they travel the enormous distance necessary to find food while using very little energy.

## Status

Andean Condors are significant to the religion of the people of the Andes. They value their feathers for decoration and regard the killing of this great species as proof of manhood. This animal is also persecuted and poisoned because of alleged attacks on livestock. Combine these with poaching, habitat destruction, and low birth rate, and the result is another endangered species.



**Height:** 45-54 inches

**Weight:** 18-33 lbs.

**Wingspan:** 10-14 ft.

**Habitat:** The cliffs of mountains

**Range:** Andes mountain range of S. America

**Life Expectancy:** wild: 30-40 years,  
captive: up to 70 years



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