

# IUCN Vulture Specialist Group North & Central America Update



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## California Condor

*Gymnogyps californianus*  
Cathartidae (New World vultures)

Number of mature individuals  
93

Population trend  
Increasing

IUCN Red List category  
Critically Endangered

Image © kojihirano/Shutterstock



## King Vulture

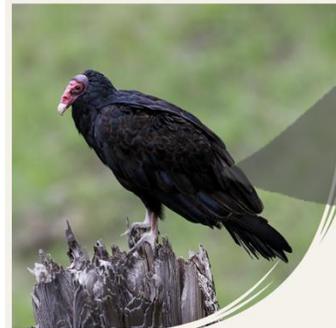
*Sarcoramphus papa*  
Cathartidae (New World vultures)

Number of mature individuals  
Unknown

Population trend  
Decreasing

IUCN Red List category  
Least Concern

Image © Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding Tours



## Turkey Vulture

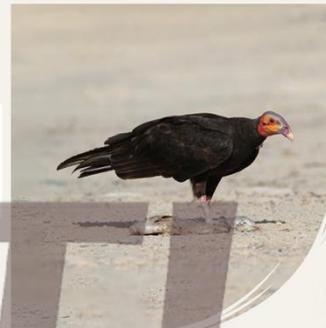
*Cathartes aura*  
Cathartidae (New World vultures)

Number of mature individuals  
-

Population trend  
Stable

IUCN Red List category  
Least Concern

Image © Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding Tours



## Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture

*Cathartes burrovianus*  
Cathartidae (New World vultures)

Number of mature individuals  
500,000 - 4,999,999

Population trend  
Stable

IUCN Red List category  
Least Concern

Image © Christoph Moning



## American Black Vulture

*Coragyps atratus*  
Cathartidae (New World vultures)

Number of mature individuals  
50,000,000 - 99,999,999

Population trend  
Unknown

IUCN Red List category  
Least Concern

Image © Christoph Moning

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A stylized logo of a California Condor in flight, rendered in a light gray color. The bird is shown from a side profile, with its wings spread wide, flying towards the right. The background of the logo is white on the left and transitions to a blurred natural background on the right.

California Condor  
*Gymnogyps californianus*

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# Population Numbers (January 2026)

Northern California: 24  
Yurok Tribe/NPS

Southern California: 103  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

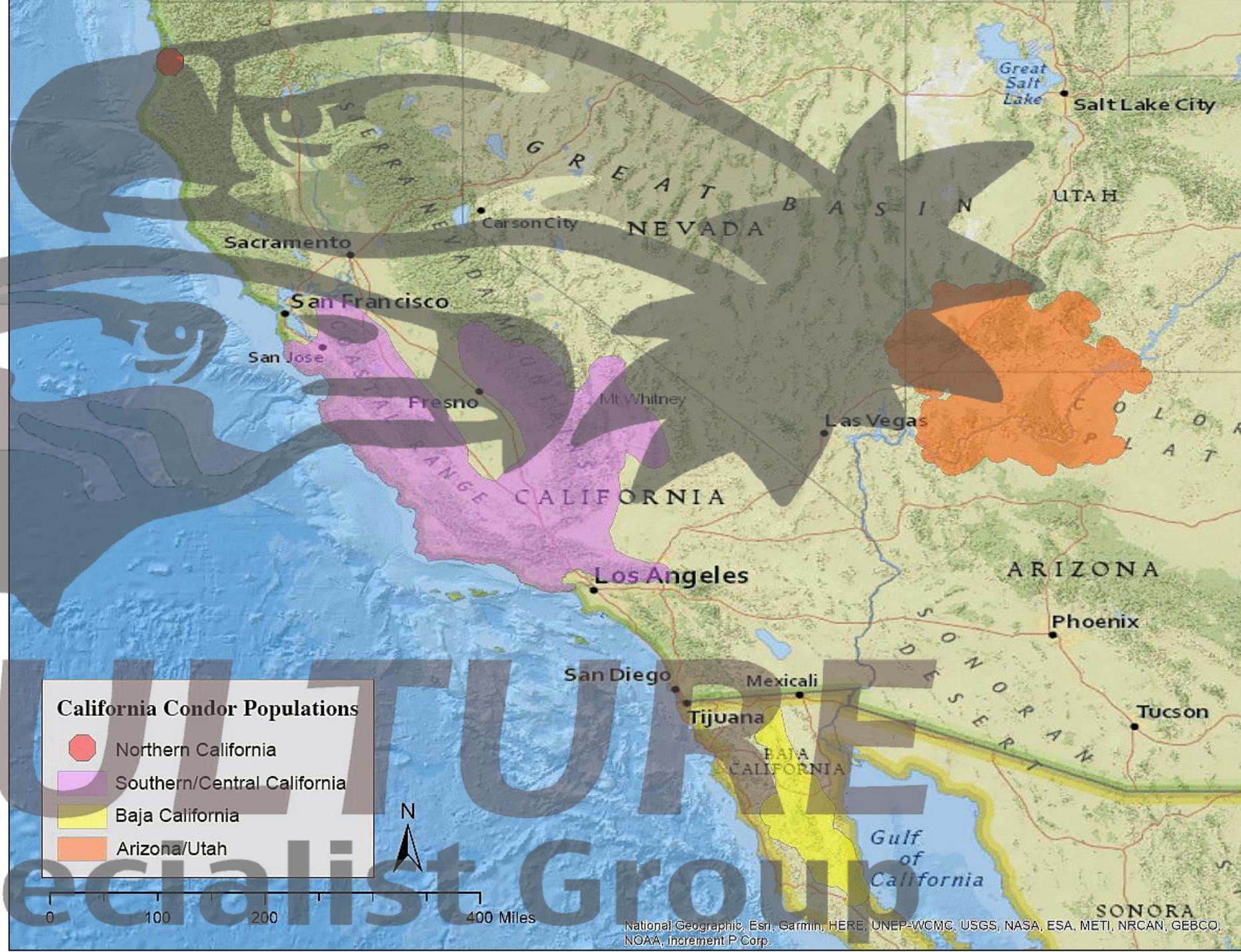
Central California: 116  
Ventana Wildlife Society/NPS

Arizona/Utah: 98  
The Peregrine Fund

Baja California: 53  
Ministry of Natural Resources / National  
Commission for Natural Protected Areas

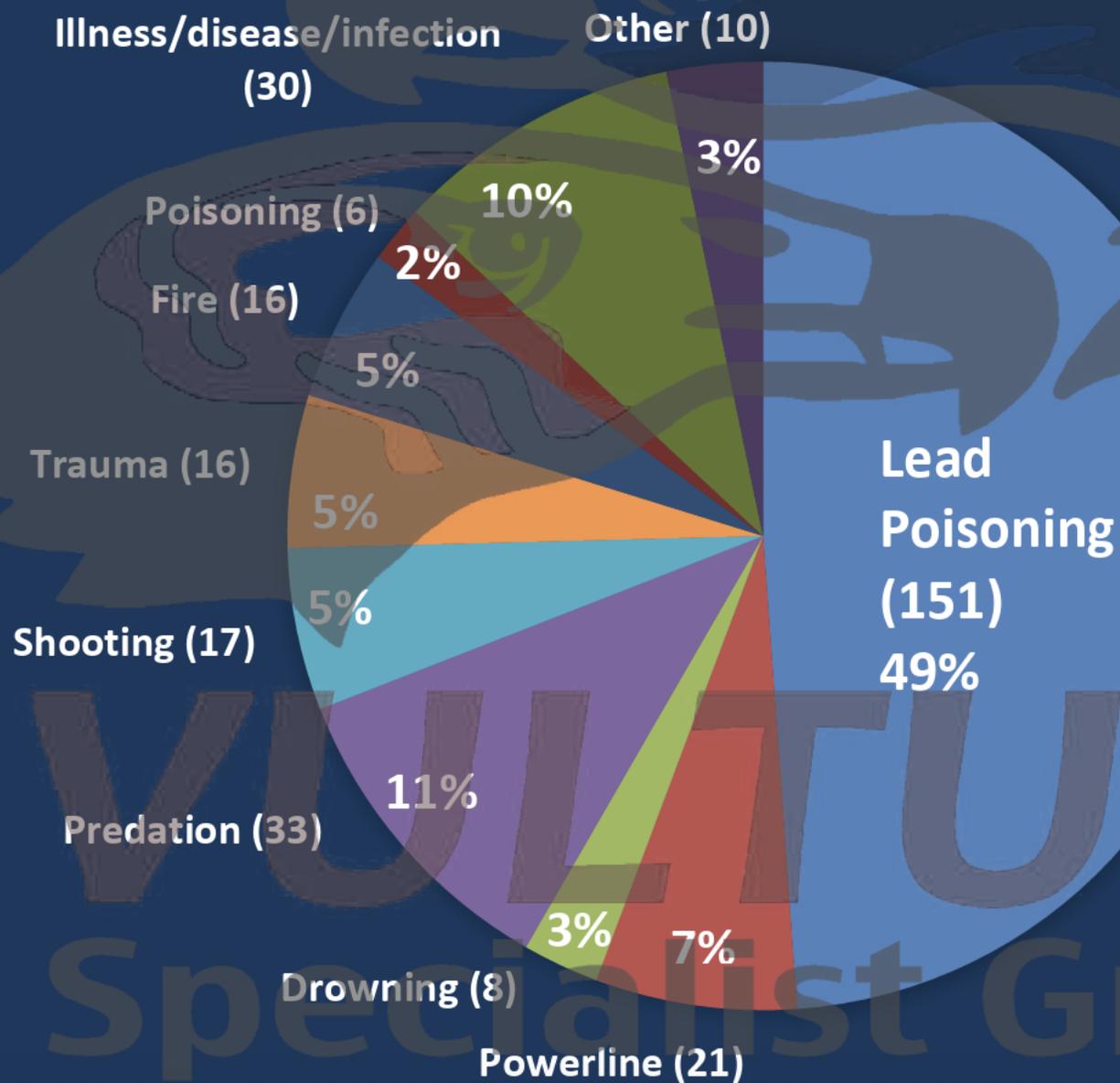
Total Wild Population: 394

Captive Population: ~199



# KNOWN CAUSES OF MORTALITY IN THE FREE-FLYING CONDOR POPULATION

1992-2024



# Response of California condor populations to reintroductions, reinforcements, and reductions in spent lead ammunition pollution

Bruce G. Marcot<sup>a</sup>  , Nathan H. Schumaker<sup>b</sup>, Jesse D'Elia<sup>c</sup>

- Scenarios of releases and lead reduction projected over 25 years
- Halting releases and status quo lead pollution => rapid decline
- Increased releases and elimination of lead pollution => population growth
- Substantial increase with incremental lead reduction
- Potential range expansion

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- Established in 2018
- Continent-wide lead-free scope
- 68 partners and growing

Many complimentary lead reduction efforts...



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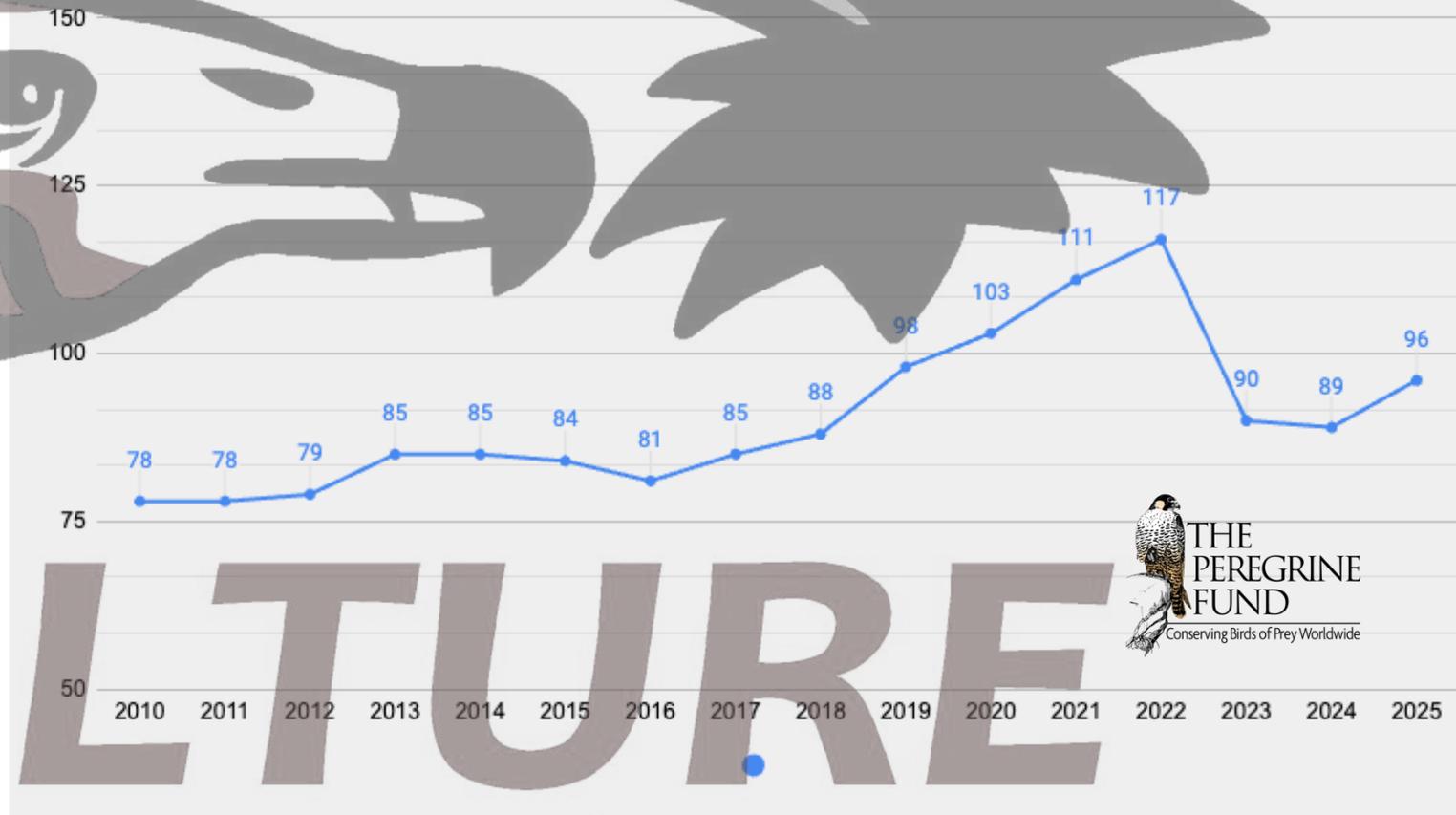
... & others!

- Voluntary actions
- Hunter engagement
- Outreach / awareness raising events
- Lead-free incentive programs

# Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Condors (HPAI)

- March - April 2023:
  - 21 documented deaths from HPAI in UT/AZ
  - 18% of this wild population
- Rapid vaccine testing and implementation
- Ongoing HPAI surveillance
  - No detections in condors in 2.5 years
- Serology study
  - 2023/24 - 50% of sampled wild condors had antibodies
  - 2024/25 – 30% of sampled wild condors had antibodies
  - Limited effectiveness of vaccine
- Monitoring HPAI in dairy cattle
- 2025 - increased releases to compensate

AZ/UT California Condor Population 2010-2024



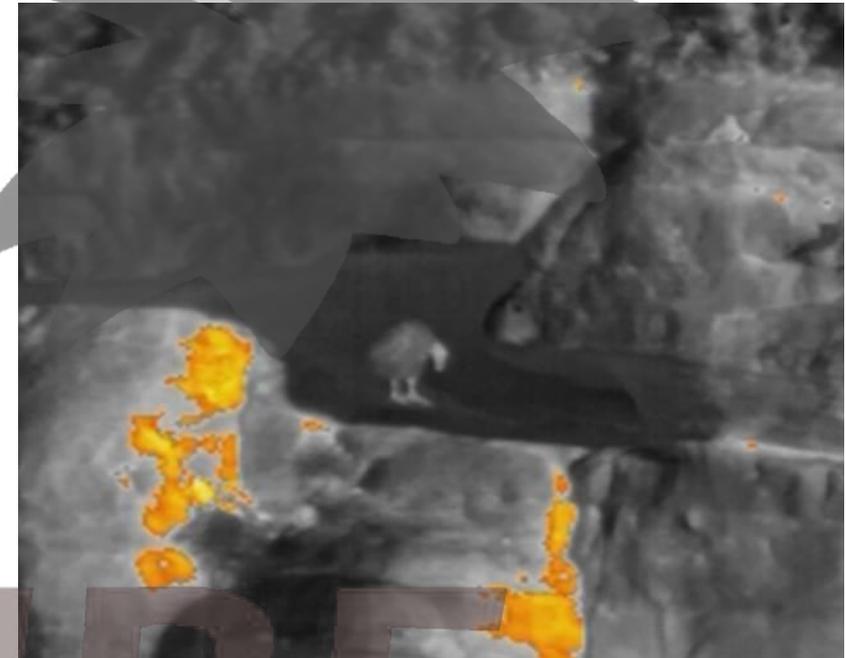
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## Modeling Individual-level and Population-level Nest Success of California Condors from Movement Data

Andrea Blackburn,<sup>1†</sup> Joseph M. Eisaguirre<sup>2\*†</sup>, Joseph C. Brandt,<sup>3</sup> Arianna Punzalan,<sup>3</sup> Laura McMahan,<sup>3</sup> Molly Astell,<sup>1,3,4</sup> Nadya E. Seal Faith,<sup>1</sup> David Meyer,<sup>1</sup> and Estelle A. Sandhaus<sup>1</sup>

- Estimated nest fate from telemetry data and limited field obs
- Accurately classified nest fate in 63/65 cases
- Estimate annual population-level nesting success
- Efficient monitoring





Black Vulture  
*Coragyps atratus*

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## Outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic H5N1 Influenza A Virus infection in Black Vultures (*Coragyps atratus*), USA, 2022

Mark W. Cunningham,<sup>1,16</sup> Justin Brown,<sup>2</sup> Rebecca Hardman,<sup>3</sup> Suzan Loerzel,<sup>4</sup>  
Bryan M. Kluever,<sup>5</sup> Trevor T. Zachariah,<sup>6</sup> Kyle A. Donnelly,<sup>6,15</sup> Rebecca L. Poulson,<sup>7</sup>  
Nicole M. Nemeth,<sup>7,8</sup> Kyle Van Why,<sup>9</sup> Robert Sargent,<sup>10</sup> Cindy P. Driscoll,<sup>11</sup>  
Amy K. Tegeler,<sup>12</sup> Lijuan Zhou,<sup>13</sup> Veronica Guzman-Vargas,<sup>1</sup> Julianna Lenocho,<sup>14</sup>  
Mark G. Ruder,<sup>7</sup> Y. Reddy Bommineni,<sup>13</sup> and David E. Stallknecht<sup>7</sup>

- February 2022 – BV mortality from H5N1 in Florida
- At least 2,600 deaths confirmed & 5,700 suspected (minimum estimate)
- Unknown effect on overall population size
- Antibodies detected in 67% of Florida BV tested ~ 1 year later
- BV could serve as indicator and potential reservoir for HPAI

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# **Safety and Immunogenicity of Poultry Vaccine for Protecting Critically Endangered Avian Species against Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Virus, United States**

Todd E. Katzner, Ashleigh V. Blackford, Mary Donahue, Samantha E.J. Gibbs, Julianna Lenocho, Michael Martin, Tonie E. Rocke, J. Jeffrey Root, Darrel Styles, Sunny Cooper, Kristin Dean, Zachary Dvornicky-Raymond, Dominique Keller, Carlos Sanchez, Brett Dunlap, Thomas Grier, Michael P. Jones, Gregory Nitzel, Erin Patrick, Maureen Purcell, Aaron J. Specht, David L. Suarez

- Tested influenza vaccine developed for poultry in Black Vulture and then California Condor
- No adverse effects of vaccination
- Detected positive antibody response in all vaccinated Black Vultures
- Detected positive antibody response in 16/20 vaccinated California Condors
- Determined that vaccine was a realistic strategy to deploy in California Condors
- Vaccination program for California Condors began

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# Feasibility and accuracy of *In Vivo* and *Ex Vivo* XRF bone lead assessment wild birds: An example with black vultures, *Coragyps atratus*

Thomas Grier<sup>a</sup>, Stephanie Silva Costa<sup>a</sup>, Bethany Faber<sup>a</sup>, Sunny Cooper<sup>b</sup>,  
Kristin Dean<sup>b</sup>, Michael Martin<sup>c</sup>, Brian P. Jackson<sup>d</sup>, Todd E. Katzner<sup>e</sup>, Aaron J. Specht

<sup>a</sup>  

- Evaluated the accuracy of portable pXRF systems to evaluate *bone* lead concentrations of live BV
- pXRF underestimate lead concentrations
- Nonetheless, a promising tool for evaluating lead exposure in wild animals in field settings

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

 **Open Access**



## **Spatial responses of black vultures to resource pulses during white-tailed deer hunting seasons**

[Alexandra M. Dudley](#) , [Marian A. Wahl](#), [Lee A. Humberg](#), [Bryan M. Kluever](#),  
[Grant N. Burcham](#), [Patrick A. Zollner](#)

First published: 03 April 2025

<https://doi.org/10.1002/wsb.1584>

 **VIEW METRICS**

- Quantified home ranges during hunting and non-hunting periods in Indiana & Kentucky, USA
- Home range size decreased by ~50% during hunting seasons

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Turkey Vulture  
*Cathartes aura*

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# Journal of Raptor Research



Advancing the science, conservation,  
and understanding of birds of prey

*Journal of Raptor Research* 59(2):jrr2449

doi: 10.3356/jrr2449

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## Investigating Plastic Pollution Ingestion in Migratory Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*) in Ontario, Canada

Kerry Schutten<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Akshaya Chandrashekar,<sup>1</sup> Brian Stevens,<sup>2</sup> E. Jane Parmley,<sup>1</sup>  
Jennifer F. Provencher,<sup>3</sup> and Claire M. Jardine<sup>1,2</sup>

- Investigated plastic pollution in Turkey Vultures in Ontario, Canada
- Collected pellets at 4 communal roosts across 3 years
- Plastics found in 16% of pellets

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# Journal of Raptor Research



Advancing the science, conservation,  
and understanding of birds of prey

*Journal of Raptor Research* 59(4):jrr2392

doi: 10.3356/jrr2392

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## Movements of Turkey Vultures Provide Evidence of Nonmigratory Behavior and Natal Philopatry in a Population Breeding in Southwestern California, USA

Peter H. Bloom<sup>1</sup>, Nicollet Overby<sup>1</sup>, Miguel D. Saggese<sup>2</sup>, Alexandra Eagleton<sup>3,4</sup>,  
Alexandria B. Koedel<sup>3,5</sup>, Harold Batzloff<sup>1</sup>, and Andrea Bonisoli-Alquati<sup>3\*</sup>

- Patagially tagged 23 TV fledged from 6 nests in CA
- Resighted >100x over 7 years
- Evidence they are year-round residents
- Some evidence of natal philopatry (i.e. living / nesting near where born)
- Exposure to contaminants
- Health and pathogens
- Breeding ecology

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King Vulture  
*Sarcoramphus papa*

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# Journal of Raptor Research



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*Journal of Raptor Research* 59(3):jrr2387

doi: 10.3356/jrr2387

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## Assessing the Conservation Status of a Wide-ranging Species with a Reduced Area of Highly Suitable Habitat: The Case of the King Vulture (*Sarcoramphus papa*) in the Neotropics

Alan Monroy-Ojeda <sup>1,2,3\*</sup> Angelina Ruiz-Sánchez <sup>4</sup> Félix Hernán Vargas,<sup>2</sup>  
and Jorge Antonio Gómez-Díaz <sup>5</sup>

- Modeled the current global distribution
- Found the range size to be 34% smaller than the IUCN estimate
- Indigenous territories key habitat
- Recommended reclassifying as NT

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RESEARCH

Open Access



# Fast food: GPS tracking reveals behavior-specific habitat selection and cattle farm subsidies of three sympatric neotropical vulture species

Christopher Beirne<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Enzo Basso<sup>1,2,4,5</sup>, Eduardo Fabrizio Tubelli<sup>1,2</sup>, Sarah Wicks<sup>1,2</sup>, Eleanor Flatt<sup>1,2</sup>, Diego Rolim Chulla<sup>1,2,6</sup>, Rosio Vega Quispe<sup>1,2,7</sup>, Caleb Jonatan Quispe Quispe<sup>1,2</sup>, Flor Maria Perez Mullisaca<sup>1,2,7</sup>, Sara Campos Landázuri<sup>1,2</sup>, Priscila Peralta-Aguilar<sup>1,2,8</sup> and Andrew Whitworth<sup>1,2,9\*</sup>

- 42 GPS-tracked individuals of 3 species (32 KV, 5 TV, 5 BV)
- King Vulture favor mature forest when flying and roosting but not feeding
- But, forage close to forest => overall reliance on contiguous mature forest

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RESEARCH ARTICLE **OPEN ACCESS**

## Vulture Exclusion Halves Large Carcass Decomposition Rates and Doubles Fly Abundance

Julia Grootaers<sup>1</sup>  | Greta Hernández Campos<sup>2</sup>  | Violeta Marie Montenegro<sup>2,3</sup>  | Rosio Vega Quispe<sup>2</sup>  | Sarah Wicks<sup>2</sup>  | Sara Campos Landázuri<sup>2</sup>  | Eduardo Fabrizio Tubelli<sup>2</sup>  | Francisco Vega-Reyes<sup>2</sup>  | Enzo Basso<sup>2,4</sup>  | Andrew Whitworth<sup>2</sup>  | Andrew Young<sup>1</sup>  | Christopher Beirne<sup>1,2</sup> 

- Experimentally excluded vultures (KV, TV, BV) from domestic pig carcasses in Costa Rica
- Vulture exclusion halved carcass decomposition rates
- Vulture exclusion doubled fly abundance
- Vultures instrumental for quick carrion consumption

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- Planning a King Vulture workshop in May / June 2026 in Costa Rica
- Contact Dr. Chris Beirne [chrisbeirne@osaconservation.org](mailto:chrisbeirne@osaconservation.org)

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Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture  
*Cathartes burrovianus*

...nothing from 2025???

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Thanks!



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# Home range and presence of the California Condor *Gymnogyps californianus* in a protected area in Baja California: seasonal, biological, and food supplementation influences

Alejandra G. Ramos<sup>1</sup> , David Schneider<sup>1,4</sup>, María Catalina Porras-Peña<sup>2</sup>, Juan Julián Vargas-Velazco<sup>3</sup>, Tamara Abigail Loredó-Arce<sup>1</sup> and Karla Lelys Miramontes-Ríos<sup>1</sup>

- Condors spent > half time within PN Sierra de San Pedro Martir
- Increased presence in winter
- Supplemental feeding increased condor presence
- Smaller ranges in winter
- Male > female ranges in spring only
- No age effect

## California Condor *Gymnogyps californianus*



Tracking solutions to a persistent threat: spatial movement patterns reflect lead exposure in critically endangered California condors

Varalika Jain <sup>1,2</sup> · Christopher J.W. McClure <sup>3</sup> · Chris N. Parish<sup>3</sup> · Timothy J. Hauck<sup>3</sup> · Petra Sumasgutner <sup>1,2</sup>

- Can telemetry inform lead exposure risk assessments?
- Lead-exposed condors ranged wider and visited known “high-risk” areas
- No detection of change in movement behavior after exposure

# California Condor

## *Gymnogyps californianus*



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# King Vulture

## *Sarcoramphus papa*



Short Communication

### Are morphometric traits cryptic indicators of sexual size dimorphism in 'monomorphic' species? Evidence from the King Vulture (*Sarcoramphus papa*)

Enzo Basso , Jonathan Vergara-Amado, Sarah Wicks, Eleanor Flatt, Diego Rolim Chulla, Flor Maria Perez Mullisaca, Caleb Jonatan Quispe Quispe, Raí Delgado ... [See all authors](#) 

First published: 19 December 2025 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/ibi.70022> | [VIEW METRICS](#)

- Used molecular sexing and morphometric analysis
- Found males were moderately larger, esp. head & bill, and to a smaller extent wings
- Extreme morphometric values can be used to sex

# Effects of interspecific competition on Turkey Vulture foraging site selection

Turkey Vulture  
*Cathartes aura*

Rennie McIntosh, MSc thesis,  
Cal State – Northridge

- Studied Turkey Vulture foraging in California & Texas
- Black Vulture presence had a significant positive effect on TV abundance at carcasses
- Corvid presence had a significant negative effect
- Gulls & hawk presence at carcasses had no effect

