



California Condors

Saved by Captive Breeding



by Meish Goldish

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New York, New York

Credits

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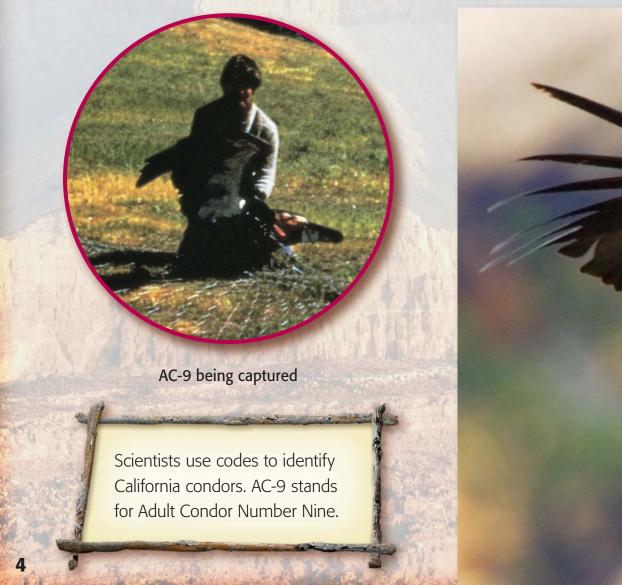
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The Last Wild Condor

On April 19, 1987, a California condor named AC-9 soared high in the sky. The bird spotted a dead calf on the ground below. He flew down to eat some of the meat. Suddenly, biologists hiding nearby fired a net from a big gun, trapping the large bird. The last wild California condor in the world had just been captured.





They knew that California condors had been dying out for years. Soon the birds might be **extinct**. Their only chance to save the condors was to capture them and **breed** them in zoos. Then they could try to **release** the **chicks** back into the wild. With AC-9, scientists had finally captured all the wild condors—but there were only 27 in all. Would they be enough to save the **species**?



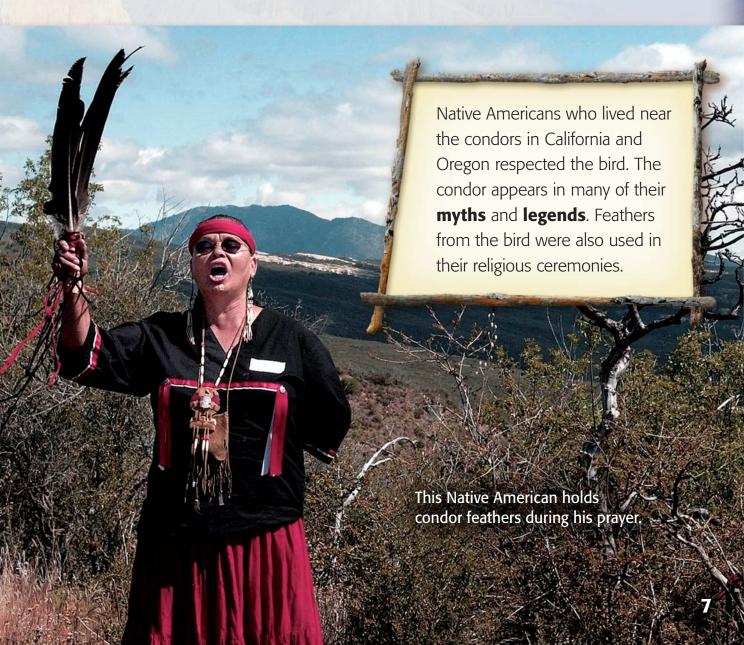
A Free Life

California condors once enjoyed a life of freedom in North America. Forty thousand years ago, the birds soared over large parts of the west and southwest, including California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. They fed on prehistoric animals such as giant sloths, ancient bison, and camels.



This painting shows a prehistoric condor trying to eat a dead camel.

About 10,000 years ago, however, the **climate** of the southwest became more desert-like. Most of the animals that the condor ate died out. To find food, condors in the southwest were forced to move farther west, near the Pacific Ocean. The climate there was milder. There were also many animals that the condor could eat. The large black birds were able to feed on whales, sea lions, pronghorn antelope, deer, and elk.



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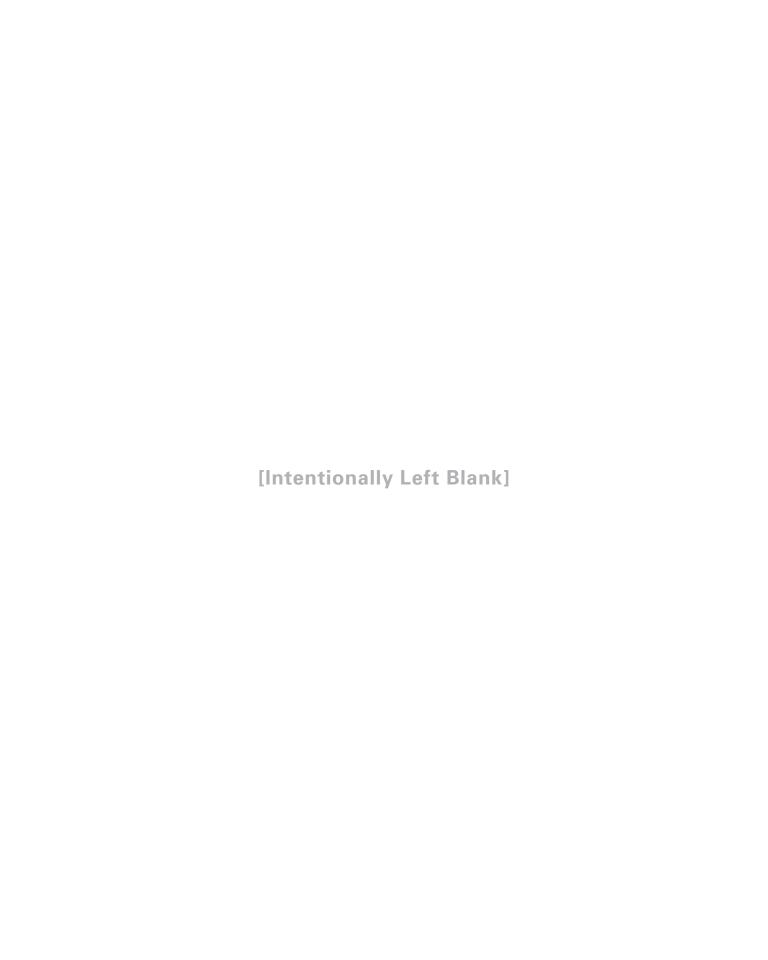
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About the Author

Meish Goldish has written more than 100 books for children. His books *Florida Manatees: Warm Water Miracles* and *Gray Wolves: Return to Yellowstone* were recommended by the National Science Teachers Association in 2008.







California Condors

Saved by Captive Breeding

On April 19, 1987, a California condor soared high in the sky. As he flew down to eat some meat on the ground, biologists hiding nearby fired a net from a big gun—trapping the last wild California condor in the world. For thousands of years, these giant birds had soared across North America. Yet by 1987, there were only 27 still alive. Could scientists find a way to help bring the California condor back from the brink of extinction?

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