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Recent vulture observations in Namibia.

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Oregon Zoo's condor breeding a hit

The good news: Five of the Oregon Zoo's six breeding pairs of endangered California Condors *Gymnogyps californianus* have produced eggs this season and there could be more to come, making it the breeding programme's most successful year yet. The bad news: Two of those eggs are infertile. On Tuesday, keepers inspected the newest egg, laid on 11 March at the zoo's Jonsson Center for Wildlife Conservation in Clackamas County. They "candled" the egg, holding it up to an intense light. When they did, said assistant curator Shawn St. Michael, they saw an embryo about the size of a pencil eraser surrounded by blood vessels inside the fist-sized, gray-green egg. North America's largest land birds, California Condors grow to

be about three feet tall, weigh up to 30 pounds, and have wings that span nine to ten feet. Two decades ago, 17 of the big, bald-headed birds remained in the wild; they were captured in an effort to save the species from extinction by breeding them in captivity. The Oregon Zoo joined the effort when it opened its breeding programme three and a half years ago. It has hatched seven chicks, six of which survived. At last count on 31 January, 279 California Condors survived at breeding sites or in the wild. This season, all three of the zoo's fertile eggs will remain in incubators for about two months. When the chicks begin to hatch, keepers will return them to the nests for their parents to raise. "Until now," St. Michael said, "we've been laying the groundwork. The coming seasons should be even better."

Katy Muldoon, e-mail address: katymuldoon@news.oregonian.com.



Recent vulture observations in Namibia

17 May 2007 – Thirteen Lappet-faced Vultures *Torgos tracheliotos* at a Springbok *Antidorcas marsupialis* carcass next to the park fence near the Gemsbokwater turn-off (22°56.587' S 15°37.168' E), one tagged individual, tag no F027.

18 May 2007 – Fifty-nine Lappet-faced Vultures and one Cape Vulture *Gyps*

coprotheres were seen on a Gemsbok *Oryx gazella* carcass next to the Ganab – Hotsas road (23°03.612' S 15°27.936' E). Two Lappet-faced Vultures were tagged, but we could not approach close enough to read the alphanumericals on the tags.

18 May 2007 – Three Lappet-faced Vultures and four Warthogs *Phacochoerus aethiopicus* on an Common Ostrich *Struthio camelus* carcass just off the main

Windhoek – Swakopmund road near the eastern park boundary (22°54.495' S 15°35.058' E). The vultures were not tagged.

21 May 2007 – Eleven Lappet-faced

Vultures at a Gemsbok carcass near the Ganab weather station (23° 07.309' S 15° 32.301' E); two birds were tagged but I could not get close enough to read the tags.

Holger Kolberg; e-mail address: holgerk@mweb.com.na.



Cyprus zoo boosts local vulture stocks

Efforts are underway on the island to boost the local vulture stocks, as their numbers are dangerously dwindling. Limassol Mayor Andreas Christou handed over a vulture egg to Forestry Department officials, saying that the municipality “attaches great significance to this effort”. This was the fourth time the town’s council has provided the Forestry Department with vulture eggs from Limassol Zoo to breed the species, which is under the threat of extinction. He said these birds are in danger from poisoned food and material which people leave to control vermin. “Such practices result in the extermination of a very useful and important bird for our

island, the vulture, and for this reason we appeal to all Cypriots, farmers, shepherds and everybody else not to use poison”, the Mayor added. Forestry Department official Haris Nicolaou said that the egg will be taken to Paphos for the incubation period. After three months, the new born vulture will be returned to its parents to become accustomed to its environment and then it will be released into the wild when it is one year old. “The vulture is a species on the verge of extinction and if no drastic action is taken by the state or by environmental organizations, we will only be able to see vultures in photographs”, he added. Limassol Zoo vet Lambros Lambrou said that in 20 days another egg is expected by the mother vulture which will be incubated this time by the parents.

From: Financial Mirror, 21 February 2007.

http://www.financialmirror.com/more_news.php?id=6165&nt=Politics

