


# THE FLIGHT OF Predators


## Ecuador's quest for the Andean condor

by Dr Julia Baum



Andean condor (*Vultur gryphus*).  
Photo © Thomas Fuhrmann

 IUCN Conservation Status:  
Vulnerable

 The Andean condor (*Vultur gryphus*) is a giant South American Cathartid vulture and is the only member of the genus *Vultur*. Found in the Andes mountains and adjacent Pacific coasts of western South America, the Andean condor is the largest flying bird in the world by combined measurement of weight and wingspan. It has a maximum wingspan of 3.3 m (10 ft 10 in) and weight of 13 kg (33 lb). It is generally considered to be the largest bird of prey in the world.



**E**ccuador's Andean condor, an iconic figure of the high Andes, showcases an impressive wingspan that holds symbolic and ecological significance for the nation. Regrettably, this majestic bird grapples with threats ranging from habitat loss to direct human persecution, making its status precarious in various countries, including Ecuador.


Central to the battle for the condor's survival is the **Andean Condor Conservation Project**.

This initiative, which has taken flight in several countries, prioritizes a holistic approach:

*Research:* This encompasses collecting data on condor populations, their habitats, and

movements. Advanced techniques like tagging and tracking shed light on their intricate behaviour and range.

*Education:* Recognizing the cultural and ecological significance of the condor, the project emphasizes community awareness.

 **The objective? To promote peaceful coexistence and diminish human-wildlife conflicts.**

*Conservation:* Direct measures like habitat restoration, safeguarding against threats such as lead poisoning, and establishing protected zones are actively pursued.

*Rehabilitation:* In instances where condors suffer injuries or poisoning, dedicated efforts ensure their recovery and eventual return to the wild.

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Key players amplifying these efforts include the **Fundación Cóndor Andino Ecuador (FCAE)**, with its notable focus on research and rehabilitation. Similarly, **Fundación de Conservación Jocotoco** manages reserves that act as sanctuaries for the condor and other avian species, while **The Peregrine Fund** extends its global expertise in bird of prey conservation, whilst the **Galo Plaza Lasso Foundation’s Huasi Condor Project** exemplifies “Conservation through Tourism”, fostering community involvement for a symbiotic relationship between a thriving ecosystem and the well-being of local residents.

The linchpin in these endeavors is the support from Ecuador’s Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition. Through their guidelines and active engagement, they harmonize conservation

practices with the nation’s objectives. Complementing this is Fundación EcoCiencia, an NGO that contributes invaluable research, deepening the narrative on the condor’s needs.

Integral to this conservation tapestry are the local communities and indigenous groups. For them, the condor transcends its avian identity, resonating as a chapter of their cultural heritage. Their involvement is pivotal to ensure a synergy between nature conservation and tradition respect.

 **The journey for the Andean condor’s preservation in Ecuador remains arduous. However, with this collaborative spirit, there’s hope for a sky graced with their mighty presence.**

For more information on impactful condor conservation projects, visit:



<https://fundacioncondor.org/>



<https://www.jocotoco.org.ec/wb#/EN/home>



<https://www.peregrinefund.org/projects/andean-condor>



“ There is no more magnificent view than witnessing these majestic creatures soar below you from the top of the mountain peaks. ”



Andean condor.



Hacienda Zuleta is a colonial-era working farm that has belonged to the family of Mr Galo Plaza Lasso, a former president of Ecuador, for more than 100 years. It was chosen as one of the world's "Top Ten Finds" by *Outside* magazine and named one of the best "Ecuadorian Hotels" by *National Geographic Traveler*.



**CASE STUDY:**  
**Conservation through Tourism**

Through its esteemed Galo Plaza Lasso Foundation, Hacienda Zuleta is internationally regarded as one of the leaders in condor conservation and has spent the past 20 years attempting to produce condor chicks in captivity and release them into the wild. This is no easy feat, as condors are known to mate for life, do not reach reproductive status until seven or eight years old, and only produce one egg every one to three years.

Hacienda Zuleta is also one of only a few places in South America where guests are virtually guaranteed an interaction with the endangered Andean condor. As anyone who has visited this unique corner of the planet can say, there is no more magnificent view than witnessing these majestic creatures soar below you from the top of the mountain peaks.



Rooted in the local economy through tourism, the foundation's mission is to support, develop, and implement programs and activities, which improve the quality of life for the local communities through education, conservation and socioeconomic development.



**LEARN MORE!**  
<https://zuleta.com/foundation/>



**WATCH THIS!**  
Scan the QR code or visit <https://youtu.be/ZCsdaCstMAk?si=sOma4ELqsG3qp36T> to watch the video: 'Hacienda Zuleta Webinar' – the Condor Centre clip can be viewed at 28'40". Video published by Clark Kotula Representation.



<https://kerdowney.com/blog/hacienda-zuleta-andean-condor-huasi-project/>



Hacienda Zuleta is home to quality horses and great riding. Tracks radiate from the hacienda in numerous directions.

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Read the full article on Hacienda Zuleta, page 118. ■