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See California Condors

First ever "Day of the Condor" set for June 21

Virgin -- You can see one of the world's largest and rarest birds on June 21.

That's the day the Division of Wildlife Resources will hold its first ever California condor viewing event. Dubbed "The Day of the Condor," the free event runs from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Lava Point near Kolob Reservoir in southwestern Utah.

Biologists from the DWR, the National Park Service and the Peregrine Fund will be available to answer your questions, distribute information and help you find the condors.

To reach the viewing site, take SR-9 to Virgin. Then take the Kolob Reservoir turnoff and travel north through Zion National Park. The viewing site is about 20 miles from Virgin, where Kolob Creek flows under the road into Lava Point. Look for government vehicles and viewing scopes on the right hand side of the road.

Lava Point – a condor viewing hotspot

"For the past two years, we've seen significant numbers of condors in the area around Lava Point," says Keith Day, regional sensitive species biologist for the DWR. "We commonly see 24 birds, but we have counted as many as 42 birds at one time.

"That's very exciting when you consider there are only about 300 of these birds in the world. And of those 300 birds, fewer than 150 are free flying. That means you have the potential of seeing one-sixth of the world's wild population of California condors right here at Lava Point."

A large and unique bird

The California condor is the largest flying bird in the Northern Hemisphere. Its body is about 4 to 5 feet long from head to tail. That makes the bird impressive to see, even when it isn't flying. With a wingspan of about 9½ feet, and weighing in between 16 and 23 pounds, they're especially impressive in flight.

Adults are a dull black with white coloring under their wings. Their bald heads are covered with yellow, orange and red skin.

Young condors have a black head and don't have the white underwings the adults have. But they're about the same size as the adults. They're just as impressive to see in the air and on the ground as the adults are.

Taking care of their young

Condors can live up to 60 years. They usually reach maturity when they're 6 to 7 years old. When they reach that age, they choose a mate that they'll remain with for the rest of their life.

Condors lay a single egg on the floor of a small cave or crevice on the side of a cliff. Both parents help incubate the egg. It takes about 56 days for the egg to hatch.

After the egg hatches, the young condor will remain in its cave for about two to three months. Then it will venture out, but it won't fledge (take its first flight) until it's five or six months old.

The young condor's parents will take care of it for a full year, and sometimes even longer. Because of their devotion to their young, the condor pair may nest every two years instead of every year.

For more information about the viewing event, call the DWR's Southern Region office at (435) 865-6100.