



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Michele Miller Houck 704-252-0967

December 14, 2021

THE RAPTOR CENTER'S NEWEST RESIDENT UNVEILED AT PRESS EVENT TODAY - It was a HUGE surprise!

HUNTERSVILLE: The Raptor Center in Latta Nature Preserve unveiled its newest and largest resident today at a media event on the Raptor Trail. The Andean Condor, Matilda or "Tillie" as she is called, recently joined the more than 35 species on the Raptor Trail.

Leaders at the Raptor Center thought that this huge bird deserved a huge introduction to the Charlotte Region as there are no other individuals of this species nearby. The Andean Condor is the largest flighted bird species in the world, and Matilda's big personality matches her wide wingspan.

"We couldn't just quietly put this bird on display and wait for people to notice her," said Executive Director Jim Warren. "We knew when she arrived that she was large and in charge and needed a big introduction to the Charlotte community."

Matilda arrived at the Raptor Center just in time for Thanksgiving and has settled in well in her enclosure on the Raptor Trail. Visitors are already taking notice and often exclaim in delight when they turn the corner and encounter her. Matilda can be seen daily on the Raptor Trail (Wed-Sun). Visitors can purchase tickets online at raptorcenter.simplerix.com or in the Visitor Center for one of two daily sessions – AM (10 am – 12:30 pm) or PM (1:30 pm – 4 pm).

Andean Condors are native to the western mountain region of South America. Maximum wingspan for males is approximately 10.5 feet and the largest birds can weigh as much as 33 pounds. This species belongs to a group of New World vultures that are currently included in the birds of prey grouping called "raptors." The word **condor** is derived from the Quechua word **kuntur**. These large birds can live up to 70 years in the wild.

Andean Condors are considered "vulnerable" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the global authority on the status of the natural world. A **vulnerable species** is threatened with extinction if the circumstances threatening its survival and reproduction do not improve.

The Raptor Center has supported conservation efforts worldwide for the past five years contributing to both VulPro (Africa) and The Peregrine Fund's Vulture Conservation. Currently, we support The Peregrine Fund's conservation and research efforts for the Andean Condor in Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia and Argentina. Local biologists and students research and monitor wild populations and help with captive breeding, environmental education, and community participation programs.

Culturally significant in the Andean region, the condor plays an important role in indigenous folklore and mythology. The Andean condor is a national symbol of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and the Venezuelan Andean states. In Andean mythology, the Andean condor was associated with



the sun deity, and was believed to be the ruler of the upper world. The bird is considered a symbol of power and health in many Andean cultures.

Over recent years, the Raptor Center has added a number of birds that are not native to the United States. These birds were all raised in human care with special attention to their health and wellbeing. These birds act as ambassadors for their species and allow visitors who have cultural ties to other countries to learn about the birds of their native countries as well as the conservation challenges that they face. The Raptor Center currently hosts birds from six continents on the Raptor Trail – North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia.

Esta ave esta considerada como un símbolo de poder y de salud en muchas culturas andinas. En los últimos años, el Raptor Center ha agregado una serie de aves que no son originarias de los Estados Unidos. Todas ellas fueron criadas bajo cuidado humano poniendo especial atención a su salud y bienestar. Estas aves actúan como embajadoras de sus especies y permiten que los visitantes que cuentan con algún vínculo cultural con otros países, conozcan a las aves de sus países de origen, y también los desafíos de preservación que enfrentan. El Raptor Center alberga actualmente aves de seis continentes en el Raptor Trail: América del Norte y del Sur, Europa, Asia, África y Australia.

About the Raptor Center

The Raptor Center is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit environmental education and rescue facility located in Huntersville, NC. The Raptor Center sits on 57 acres of woodland forest in Latta Nature Preserve -- part of the watershed for Charlotte, NC. The public Raptor Trail is home to more than 85 birds of prey in 37 unique species - eagles, hawks, owls, falcons and vultures. The Raptor Rescue facility sees an average of 900 birds a year and releases back into the wild approximately 60% of the birds that live through the first 24 hours.

Animal Welfare at the Raptor Center

The Raptor Center is a "birds first" facility, which means that even though our raptor experience is designed to inspire humans, we put our birds' interests first by providing best-in-class care for our avian ambassadors. Our expert Bird Care team manages their nutrition, training, enclosures, enrichment and overall quality of life with the utmost care.

Mission Statement

The Raptor Center ignites imaginations and encourages engagement with the natural world through the exploration and rehabilitation of birds of prey.

In the end we will only conserve what we love, we will only love what we understand, and we will only understand what we are taught" -Baba Dioum

Social Media Links

Facebook: www.facebook.com/carolinaraptorcenter

Twitter: @carolinaraptor

Youtube Channel: <https://youtube.com/c/carolinaraptorcenter>

Instagram: @carolinaraptor



FACT SHEET

The Raptor Center

- The Raptor Center (RC) was founded in 1976 at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte when a Broad-winged Hawk was treated for injuries at the Biology Building by Dr. Richard Brown, an ornithologist and the founding director of The Raptor Center.
- To date, the Raptor Center has treated more than 24,000 raptors since that time, primarily birds native to the Carolinas – Barred Owls, Red-shouldered Hawks, Great Horned Owls and Red-tailed Hawks.
- The Raptor Trail, established in 1984 when operations moved to Latta Nature Preserve, is home to 40 species of birds of prey, including hawks, owls, vultures, eagles, falcons and corvids.
- In 2011, the RC began accepting exotic species birds into its resident bird population with the first birds being Eurasian Eagle Owls, a King Vulture, an Augur Buzzard and a Spectacled Owl.
- In recent years, the Red-legged Seriema, the Abyssinian Ground Hornbills, the Laughing Kookaburra and the Gray Crowned Cranes have been fan favorites on the Raptor Trail.
- After the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Raptor Center was able to open its outdoor facility in July 2020, providing a safe and exciting outlet for Charlotte residents and their visitors.
- In recent years, the RC has served more than 60,000 visitors and almost 30,000 students onsite and in their classrooms. Our digital outlets including our website, Google, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc., reach more than 500,000 people a year, providing STEM education and conservation inspiration to audiences around the globe.
- In 2022, the RC will open its Raptor Trail location at Quest, a Mecklenburg County Park and Rec facility that will serve as the visitor and educational center for the RC in future years.
- We look forward to when the Bird Show can be held in the 200-seat Duke Energy Amphitheater at Quest. This exciting program features native and exotic raptor species from around the world. Construction of this new facility will likely begin in 2022.
- The Raptor Center is a global leader in avian medicine, ambassador bird training and husbandry and in designing visitor experiences for wonder and empathy.

JIM WARREN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jim Warren has been with the Raptor Center for 16 years, 11 as the Executive Director. He is a proud graduate of Appalachian State University. Being a part of the “Raptor Flock” is the perfect place for him.

KATE SHANER, EDUCATION MANAGER

Kate Shaner is a northern transplant, hailing from Ohio she studied zoology at The Ohio State University and worked in the education department at The Cincinnati Zoo for 7 years. 2022 will mark her 8th year at Carolina Raptor Center where she started as a wildlife educator and is now the Education Manager. She is a true bird nerd at heart!

COLLEEN HARTMAN, TRAINING MANAGER

Colleen Hartman is the Curator of Birds at the Raptor Center. She has been working with a variety of species including raptors and non-raptor birds of prey for more than 8 years. Colleen is responsible for the care and management of the entire collection of resident birds at the Raptor Center as well as implementing the most up-to-date training practices.



FACT SHEET

Matilda, Andean Condor

- Matilda, the Andean Condor, arrived at the Raptor Center on Wednesday, November 25, 2021, from one of our AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums) accredited partner facilities.
- She is 28 years old, and if you consider that Andean condors under human care can live to be 75 years old, she has a long life ahead of her!
- Matilda is fully flighted and can often be seen showing off her gorgeous 9 ft wingspan! Male Andean Condors can have a wingspan of up to 10.5 ft, but females are generally smaller, unlike most other raptor species where the males are smaller.
- Matilda weighs in at 20 pounds, significantly more than any other bird on the Raptor Trail. She is 4 ft tall, and at this height is the tallest resident of the Raptor Trail.
- Matilda gets a varied diet at the Raptor Center- some days she dines on rodents like rats or mice, and other days it's chicken, fish, squirrel or rabbit. So far, her favorite food seems to be rabbit! And Matilda has quite an appetite... she eats about 1.25 lbs of food every day!
- Her health and wellness will be monitored and treated like any other vulture at the RC. She will have a yearly health check that includes a fully body exam, radiographs, blood work, and medication (vaccines, parasite prevention, and other preventive procedures).
- Her enclosure was fitted with a room on the back that she can go into when her space is being cleaned to allow for protective contact from aviary caretakers. The room has a heat lamp to provide supplemental heat and provides extra protection from the elements.
- Matilda will be offered all kinds of enrichment opportunities: items that encourage ripping and shredding (paper items like phone books), puzzle feeders filled with treats, foraging boxes, novel food enrichment (Quail wings, chicken eggs), and seasonal items like old Christmas trees for perching or hollowed out pumpkins for cavity feeding. Enrichment is given with the goal of providing interactive opportunities that enhance an animal's welfare and are designed to create choices and elicit natural behaviors.

From day one, Matilda has been confident and curious. She often greets staff at the door when they arrive with her lunch, and she wastes no time digging in. She can often be seen sitting on her tall perch, wings fully outstretched, taking advantage of the morning sunlight. Once she settled in, the staff began to observe her making some interesting, guttural vocalizations. Because we are still getting to know her, we aren't sure what these vocalizations mean yet!

Species Facts

- Andean Condors are the largest Bird of Prey in the WORLD! They can weigh up to 33 lbs and have a 10.5 ft wingspan.
- Because Andean Condors are vultures, their primary diet in the wild is carrion, or animals that are already dead. Because of their size, they tend to feed on larger remains like deer, sheep, alpaca or cows...however they will eat smaller animals if necessary. And like all their vulture brethren, Andean condors have featherless heads for keeping clean after a messy meal.
- Andean condors are the only New World Vultures that show sexual dimorphism. There is a visible difference in size and physical characteristics between the male and the female. Males tend to be larger, have yellow eyes, and sport a fleshy protuberance atop their heads, called a



caruncle. Females are typically smaller, have red eyes, and lack a caruncle. The caruncle is thought to help the males attract a mate. Both sexes have all black body feathers and sport a white neck ruff.

Cultural Significance

- The Andean condor is a national symbol of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuelan Andes states.
- It is the national bird of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador.
- It plays an important role in the folklore and mythology of the South American Andean regions
- The Andean Condor has been represented in Andean art from c. 2500 BCE onward, and is a part of indigenous Andean religions
- In Andean mythology, the Andean condor was associated with the sun deity and was believed to be the ruler of the upper world
- The Andean condor is considered a symbol of power and health by many Andean cultures, and it was believed that the bones and organs of the Andean condor possessed medicinal powers, sometimes leading to the hunting and killing of condors to obtain its bones and organs.
- In some versions of Peruvian bullfighting, a condor is tied to the back of a bull, where it pecks at the animal as bullfighters fight it. The condor generally survives and is set free. This specific act of cruelty is mentioned on The Peregrine Fund's website and is a practice that they are actively trying to end.



ANDEAN CONDOR PRESS MATERIALS

DRAFT

12/5/2021 (Rev. 12/6/2021)

PRESS ADVISORY

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December 7, 2021

THE RAPTOR CENTER ANNOUNCES ARRIVAL OF ANDEAN CONDOR TO THE RAPTOR TRAIL WITH A PRESS EVENT IN LATTA NATURE PRESERVE

HUNTERSVILLE: The Raptor Center in Latta Nature Preserve will present its newest resident, the largest flighted bird in the world at a media event on Tuesday, December 14 at 10 am. Matilda, a female Andean Condor, will spread her wings (9 ft) for the event and announce her presence in the Charlotte community.

Photo opportunities

- Matilda (will remain inside her enclosure)
- Trainers will feed her from outside the enclosure after the remarks
- The Raptor Center trails and other resident birds

Interview opportunities

- Executive Director Jim Warren
- Kate Shaner, Education Manager (background on Andean Condors, why we care about their conservation, details on individual bird.)

Members of the press are asked to register their attendance at the event via the below link so that we won't start without you. Registered parties will receive a press kit including video, photography and fact sheets on the Andean Condor, the Raptor Center and Matilda.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/andean-condor-press-conference-tickets-221541395277>

Location:

The Raptor Center at Latta Nature Preserve

6000 Sample Road

Huntersville, NC 28078



REMINDER PRESS ADVISORY

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December 13, 2021

TOMORROW THE RAPTOR CENTER ANNOUNCES ARRIVAL OF ANDEAN CONDOR TO THE RAPTOR TRAIL HUNTERSVILLE: The Raptor Center in Latta Nature Preserve will present its newest resident, the largest flighted bird in the world at a media event on Tuesday, December 14 at 10 am. Matilda, a female Andean Condor, will spread her wings (9 ft) for the event and announce her presence in the Charlotte community.

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