



Conservation Grants Fund

Andean Condors Rely on Puma Predation of Camelids

By Paula L. Perrig and Dr. Jonathan N. Pauli

Vultures, obligatory scavengers that have evolved to feed on unpredictable and ephemeral ungulate carcasses, are one of the most threatened groups globally. The cause for their decline is multifaceted, but most pronounced has been the loss of safe food items.

For example, Andean condors (*Vultur gryphus*), the largest avian scavenger, have declined rangewide as a result of intentionally poisoned carcasses, lead-contaminated game, the functional extirpation of native ungulates and the apex predators that provide carrion year-round.

With support from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Conservation Grants Fund (CGF), and in collaboration with the Argentine Research Council and National Park Service, we studied the importance of puma (*Puma concolor*) predation on native camelids (*Vicugna vicugna* and *Lama guanicoe*) in food provisioning for Andean condors in a pristine landscape of northwestern Argentina. Our field investigations revealed that puma predation was the overwhelming

source of mortality for camelids, and our analysis of condor pellets and the isotopic signature of molted feathers showed that the majority of Andean condor diet is from puma-killed camelid carcasses.

Our results, then, demonstrate a strong trophic dependency of Andean condors on pumas and their interaction with camelids and highlight the importance of protected areas in maintaining functionally-intact ecosystems for conserving this iconic species. We are now expanding our research to quantify the space-use and behavior among predator, prey and scavenger using GPS to track condors, pumas and camelids simultaneously. Ultimately, this work will help to inform management actions aimed at the long-term conservation of not just condors but the species that they depend on for survival.

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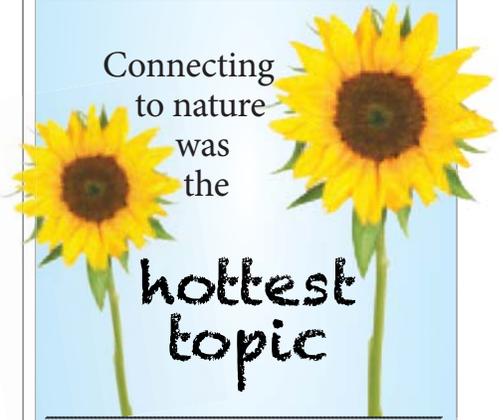
By the Numbers

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and Education Between 2013 and 2014:

Habitat destruction was the most frequently discussed conservation issue



Connecting to nature was the



hottest topic

Most programs were suitable for all audiences, with elementary school students being the most common.

