Project Update: December 2010

During 2010 we were able to perform four surveys, in summer (March), autumn (May), winter (July – August) and spring (September – October). There were 314 individual surveys (16 days) for Condorito National Park, 371 surveys (16 days) for Quijadas National Park and 377 surveys (17 days) for Talampaya National Park. For each seasonal survey in each of the three protected areas, we obtained the following variables: maximum number of adults (A_{max}), maximum number of juveniles (J_{max}), maximum total number of condors ($Tot_{max} = A_{max} + J_{max}$), relationship between adults and juveniles (A_{max}/J_{max}), mean number of condors, as well as the relationship between daily activity patterns and weather conditions. These results were compared with previous studies conducted during 2006, 2008 and 2009.

These preliminary results were presented in oral presentations at: Condorito National Park (for park rangers and tourist guides), two rural schools near the Condorito National Park (for students), Municipalidad of Villa Carlos Paz (for residents, teachers, tourist guides and students), IV Binational Ecological Meeting - XXIV Ecology Argentinean Meeting (for scientists from Argentina and Chile) and an interview for "Canal 12" (Córdoba province's TV Chanel). During these events we shared general information about the Andean condor (biology, adaptations and behaviour), updated information on condor abundance in the study area and census methodology implemented during the investigation.

We also established the basic guidelines for a condor census technique, and trained Condorito and Quijadas National Parks' park rangers. This will allow them to make future comparisons with previous data and keep a record of the condor populations in each area over time.

In addition, we conducted surveys at other sites with evidence of condor's presence in the National Parks under study and nearby areas. In each site, we recorded coordinates with GPS, took photographs, recorded slopes' orientation, and estimated the capacity to host roosting condors taking into account the number and capacity of the rocks marked with droppings. We also conducted periodic surveys at the only known wild Andean condor nest in Córdoba province.

We are currently compiling and analyzing the data recorded in order to obtain a better idea regarding the conservation status of the Andean condor in the study area. We are also working on a condor distribution map for the center of Argentina. In the near future, we will be sending the compiled information to specialized scientific magazines for publication as well as continuing our outreach activities with the information obtained.



