

Editor Sir:

As a ranch owner of a region in San Luis Obispo County where the California Condor is often observed and is highly regarded as a rare and significant form of wildlife, may I call the attention of your readers to a subject of much importance in the welfare of this species.

I am sure most of these people are interested in the recent controversy over the management of these birds which arose when a zoo was granted permission to capture and cage a pair for the purpose of propagating condors as domestic curiosities.

The California Department and Commission of Fish and Game have aided and supported the zoo in this effort. On the other hand a tremendous amount of opposition has developed with various educators, scientists, conservationists and sportsmen joining in protest. Ranchers living in the condor range have objected strenuously.

After nearly five months of heated controversy, a final show-down on the matter took place. At a meeting of the Fish and Game Commission in San Francisco on May 21, the opposing forces presented their respective arguments and requests as to whether or not the permit to take condors should be cancelled. Requests for cancellation were presented by Mr. MacCaughey and Mr. Sprunt of the Audubon Society. Mr. Philpott of Fresno, President of the Sportsmen's Council of Central California explained why his organization was opposed to trapping condors. Dr. Carl Koford, Zoologist from the University of California and the foremost authority on the condor gave scientific reasons why they should not be taken. Mr. McMillan of Shandon presented the opposition of conservationists in that area.

As the representative of a group of ranchers in San Luis Obispo County I presented their objections briefly as follows: The most significant and important attributes of the California Condor are its characteristic wildness and rareness. In its natural state it is an integral and component part of the few areas of wilderness that are being preserved in Central California. For the reason that so much has been done by so many people to preserve them, condors have become a symbol of conservation. These attributes are of particular value only as long as the condor remains a wild free bird, and would suffer great impairment were this species to become a commonplace, domestic curiosity. Furthermore, the condor has come to be regarded by the people who live within its range as a rare and significant creature not to be harmed or molested for any reason. This consideration allows the birds to move about in safety throughout a region where a generation ago they were killed at every opportunity. There is an abundance of evidence that under this protective code the birds are increasing and extending their range, and the present program for their survival is successful. This arbitrary action by the authorities which allows outsiders to come into the condor country and violate the ethics and codes that protect these birds, is rank misuse of authority, which could well touch off an epidemic of similar activities and nullify thirty years of progress in their conservation.

Defending the trapping project were two representatives of the San Diego Zoo and Mr. Ben Glading of the Department of Fish and Game.

Despite our sincere and logical appeals and the magnitude of that which we represented I am very sad to report that our requests *were* ignored by the commission and the zoo people are free again to continue their exploitation of the California Condor. Their permission continues indefinitely or until the condors are trapped.

From my observation of this case I would say in all sincerity that the basic problem is not what to do about condors, but instead is what to do about our wildlife administration?

Dear Bill: I thought you might be able to use this in the letter you intended to write to the San Luis Press.

I can support every word of it and will be glad to do so.

I have been quite active in this controversy and the opposition is trying to make it appear that only a few are opposed. A public statement from you would be most effective.

I will try to get the Cattlemen's Assn. to do something and if you would send a copy of your letter to Philpotts - 1278 Arthur, Fresno. He could publish it in his magazine which is widely read in this area.

Let's go after those crooks!

I /s/ M. J. Millan.