

Ian I. McMillan
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Shandon, California

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Copy

The Honorable A. A. Erhart
State Senator
Capitol Building
Sacramento, California

Dear Al:

There is considerable concern among many of us who are interested in the wildlife of this region, over the recent issuing, by the Fish and Game Commission, of a permit to capture and keep in captivity, two California Condors. A zoo keeper in San Diego received this permit.

As you are probably aware, the California Condor has been on the verge of extinction for more than half a century and the few individuals that survive are found only in the area that borders the southern San Joaquin Valley and includes the counties of Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Monterey.

Originally quite common and much more widely distributed, the Condor population was severely decimated during the late 1800's mainly through the depredation of novelty hunters. A Condor egg was worth a hundred dollars or more and the carcass of a dead bird much more.

From a recent study of this species, which in my opinion was very thorough and accurate, it appears that no more than about 65 birds are now in existence. These birds nest and roost in the most remote and mountainous parts of their range, but in foraging for food, which is exclusively carrion, the range far out into the open rangelands and are often exposed to the hazards of being shot or trapped.

With the total extermination of this species in sight, laws were passed in recent years, giving the birds complete protection. An inviolate nesting sanctuary has been established where they are protected even from being disturbed by photographers.

In addition to this protection by law, a general program of education and moral suasion has been carried on by the many who are interested in saving this species. This program has been very effective in establishing a protective attitude toward these birds among the ranchers, sportsmen and others who often encounter Condors and are in a position to either kill them as a novelty or protect them as a matter of ethics and responsibility.

I firmly believe that this protective attitude is the most important factor in the preservation of this species. It has gradually become recognized and agreed upon in the rangelands where these birds come to feed, and where they could be easily trapped or shot, that they are not to be molested under any conditions. In consideration of this ethical

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restraint you can probably appreciate our amazement and concern when we learn that the Commission has casually issued a permit to capture two of these birds.

This action repudiates what we have understood was the official policy toward the protection of Condors. It establishes a precedent, which, if followed impartially, would soon result in the last Condor being cooped up as a novelty and a curiosity. If a zoo keeper in San Diego is entitled to take two Condors, who can convince the cowpuncher who has never seen a game warden but who often comes on a group of Condors as they fed on the carcass of a dead calf, that he is not entitled to take one also? I am unable to see how this trapping of Condors could possibly help the species and I definitely feel that its harmful effects will be many.

I am writing to you about this matter Al, principally because it is of particular concern in this area where we have the Condors and which is represented by you in the State Legislature. There is no one on the Fish and Game Commission from this entire region and in Director Seth Gordon of the Department of Fish and Game and Mr. Robert L. Jones who is now game manager for this territory, we have in charge of our wildlife two men who have recently moved here from the East Coast and who apparently have not the slightest understanding of this Condor situation.

I feel safe in stating that the opinions I have expressed in this letter are held by many others throughout this region and any action that you may take to have our opinion considered by the authorities who have issued this permit to trap Condors, will, I assure you, be deeply appreciated .

I wish you the best of luck and success throughout this New Year.

Sincerely,