

GRAND CANYON EXPLORER

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Saving the Condors

Article submitted by Betty Leavengood

"The condor is one of the most endangered birds in the world and one of the largest," said Robert Mesta, of United States Fish and Wildlife Service, to 19 Grand Canyon Pioneers who made the trek to Marble Canyon on September 15. Mesta, who has been involved with the condor program for 10 years, pointed out that the condor has a wingspan from 9 to 10 feet. "If you hung a condor wing to wing from the rim of a basketball hoop, it would almost touch the floor," he said. Condors have been released at Vermilion Cliffs, near Marble Canyon, and are often seen at the Grand Canyon.

Mesta explained that condors do not hunt. "They are carrion feeders and do not kill their prey," he said, adding that condors do not have talons. "They do have very strong beaks that can penetrate the tough hide of larger animals." Condors also have bald heads so their feathers will not get in their food.

People have questioned whether there will be enough available carrion to sustain the condor population at Vermilion Cliffs. "The condors are very efficient," Mesta explained. "They soar hundreds of miles a day without burning many calories. They soar higher than other birds and when they see other birds feeding below they head down." Wildlife biologists track the flight of the released condors. "One was tracked going 300 miles into Utah and back in one day," Mesta said. He added that food, such as calf carcasses, is provided for the newly released condors at Vermilion Cliffs, but the older condors are feeding on their own. "Condors don't have to feed everyday," he explained. "They can eat as much as three pounds of food a day and store it in their crop to sustain them."

Mesta said that the condor dates back to the Pleistocene era, 11,000 to 15,000 years ago. "This is when great woolly mammoths roamed North America," he said, "and condors were found all over the continent." When the mammoths became extinct the condor population was also reduced. Other factors contributed to the decline of the condor. "Wanton shooting was the major reason for the condor nearly going extinct," Mesta said, "plus egg collecting was big at the turn of the century. Condor eggs brought as much as \$500".

"By 1980 only 22 condors remained along the coast of California," Mesta said. "By 1985 there were only 15 remaining and by 1986 there were only nine left, including only one breeding pair. The decision was made to capture the remaining condors and bring them into the Los Angeles Zoo." Mesta said the capture of wild condors was a controversial decision. "There were demonstrations at the zoo to free the condors." On April 17, 1987 the last wild condor was captured.

"The main fear was that the captured condors would not breed in captivity," Mesta said,

"but one year after the condors were brought in the first chick was born." Mesta showed slides of a newborn condor. "That's a face only a mother could love," he laughed. In the wild female condors only produce one egg every other year. "In captivity we have been able to speed up breeding by taking the egg away from the nest. The breeding process begins all over and we are able to get six eggs a year," he explained.

Releasing condors back into the wild began in 1992. "First the birds are put in a pen on the site," Mesta explained, "and when they become accustomed to their surroundings, the pen is opened and the birds are free." Such a holding pen can be seen from the observation area near the Vermilion Cliffs. The first condors were released in southern California. The Vermilion Cliffs area was selected because it is ideal habitat for condors. "Condors need isolated back country with rock outcrops, ledges, and caves," Mesta said. "When they breed they look for a shallow caves with a level floor. They don't spend much time building their nests. All they do is scrape out a depression in the floor of the cave."

The primary threats to released condors are power lines and lead in the environment. "We now have a behavior modification program," Mesta said, "where we have a power line and a tree. The power line shocks and the tree doesn't, so the condors learn to avoid the power line." Lead is more difficult to manage. "Condors are extremely susceptible to lead," he said, "and even a tiny fragment of a bullet will damage the condors." Recently the condors at Vermilion Cliffs found a carcass loaded with shotgun pellets of three different sizes. "One condor had ingested 16 lead pellets," he said. "We brought in all the condors and treated them and are now in the process of re-releasing them."

"Our long-range goal is to get condors off the endangered list and onto the threatened list," Mesta says. "To do that we need 150 condors in two separate locations and 150 in captivity." Currently the total condor population in the United States is 170 -- 120 in captivity including 20 new chicks and 50 in the wild. That's a large number compared with nine in 1986.

After the meeting the Pioneers regrouped at the North Rim Lodge dining room for dinner. Joining the group were Robert and Robin Nelson and Peggy Nelson Thune. All grew up at the Grand Canyon. We enjoyed hearing their stories of living at the Canyon. All three said they were happy to see that the Grand Canyon Pioneers organization is continuing to meet.

GCPS Meetings for 2000

October 21:

Annual Board Meeting at:

Time: 12:00 Noon

Place: Perkins Family Restaurant

1900 S. Milton Road, Flagstaff.

Board will have space reserved for them in separate area for lunch and board meeting. Other members will find tables separate from the Board.

A talk by Tom Martin about "Day Hikes From The River" and a report from the Board at:

Time: 1:30 PM
Place: La Quinta Inn
2015 S. Beulah Boulevard

November Rescues and other mishaps in the Canyon by Ken Phillips, head of Search
18: and Rescue at the South Rim, and Bil Vandergraff, backcountry ranger at
the South Rim.

Time: 12:00 Noon for lunch < > 1:00 PM for presentation

Place: Poco Diablo Resort
1736 Highway 179, Sedona

Don't miss this exciting talk.

December: No meeting

Rowe Well Info Submitted by Vicki Crowther

[Vicki Crowther is the great-great granddaughter of Sanford Rowe. She says there isn't much to be found, so far, about his ancestors, but she is doing a little genealogy, which brought her to the point of becoming a member of the GCPS. She found the following information at the NAU Library some years ago. She notes that "Sanford Rowe appears to have had a good relationship with the native people of the area although there is one area of this report which seems a sign of the times re Big Jim." She has submitted this report as it was typed, spelling errors and all.]

From (Grand Canyon) Park Naturalist Glen Sturdevant's monthly report of January 31, 1928:

"During the month I had an interview with Mr. Sanford Rowe, who owns the Rowe Well private property within the park (Grand Canyon Natl Park). Mr. Rowe gave me information covering about three typewritten sheets relating to the discovery of the well and blazing a road to the Grand Canyon from Williams, Arizona."

Sanford Rowe was living in Williams operating a livery stable. He was interested in locating a trail from Williams to the canyon and wanted to find a way into the Canyon. He stopped at Bill Hull's place for the night. Capt. John Hance was working for Hull breaking horses. Hance told Rowe of the Bright Angel trail then in use by the Indians. This was a natural passageway into the canyon. Harry Hankley and Englishman was accompanying Rowe to the Canyon as he was interested in seeing it. Hance told Rowe that he might get water at cow tank which is the wash near the present location of Rowe Well. The following night Rowe and Hankley camped at Hance ranch. While camping there Big Jim came in on them. He had been camping at Lockett Lake. Rowe although he had directions about reaching the present head of B. A. Trail asked Big Jim if he would guide him. Big Jim then entered the employ of Rowe. Big Jim could then speak about as much English as at the present time. Big Jim by the way had a brother Tom known as one-eyed Tom who took up with Bass and who was a very smart Indian. They killed an antelope on the way so there was no danger of hunger. When Rowe told Big Jim that Hance had told him where to get

water, Big Jim replied Hance him lie. This was Big Jim's way of expressing that Capt. Hance was mistaken. Big Jim guided Rowe and Hankley to the wash down below the present Rowe well. Digging in the sand they found sufficient water to camp for the night. After supper Rowe thought he would question Big Jim about the presence of water in that vicinity knowing full well that an Indian is rather reticent about such subjects. So after supper he approached Big Jim and said Big Jim you savez spring little ways from here. Big Jim replied yes I savez do you? Rowe yes I know where spring is when I come another way but I don't know where it is this way. Although Rowe was really through with Big Jim after bringing him to the present location of Rowe Well and had showed him the head of B. A. Trail, Rowe did not wish to dismiss him if it were possible to locate water. So Rowe told Big Jim in the morning they would go together to the spring and Big Jim consented. Rowe told Hankley during the night that perhaps they might find the spring in the morning. The following morning they saddled their horses and Big Jim led the way up the present Rowe Well Canyon. Rowe who had herded and tracked mustangs on the plains followed and Hankley brought up the rear. Going up the canyon Rowe noticed the largest tracks of a deer that he had ever seen. Near the present location of Rowe Well he observed that the dirt stood up between the hoofs a little more and the ground appeared slightly damp. Big Jim guided Rowe the way along the old Moqui trail where the Rowe well Ranger station is located and down horse thief canyon into Hermit Basin where a few springs came out like dripping springs. That noon they returned and Rowe paid Big Jim off. Ed. Rudolph an old timer had already told Rowe about water in Hermit Basin. In the afternoon he told Hankley that there was a sign of water less than one half mile from camp and if he was interested they would go up and prospect for it. Hankley was interested and liked anything like prospecting. So they went up to the present Rowe well location and started digging int he dead down timber and the ground was very moist. After getting down to solid rock 18" below the surface there was a little water. Another party had come in in the mean time and started talking that someone would come in and locate it if it were not already located. The following day Rowe wrote on a piece of paper Property of Sanford Rowe by right of discovery and the date. He build up a little monument and placed the paper in it. After this he cut some brush and built a small brush fence around it and went back to Williams intending to return shortly. In those days Rowe states that property was respected by right of discovery. Upon reaching Williams where he had some capable men whom he expected to leave in charge of his property he got some tires and made ready to return to the canyon. Instead he was taken sick with typhoid and was confined to bed for six weeks and nearly passed out. When he was able to sit up and ride he hired to well-men to come along with him and work towards developing water. They came along and found the well. Rowe returned to Williams and said he would return in about a week. When he returned he was half afraid of what the men would say for he never figured that the water was anything but a seep. When the men came out of the cabin they said well we have got more water than we did. Rowe was elated over this and the next thing was how to obtain title to it. He consulted an attorney and the attorney did not know as Rowe had already used his homestead right. If he could locate mineral then he could use the work on the well as assessment work. The Forest Service came in and lived in Rowe's cabin and used the water. Finally he heard that plans were on foot to show that he had no mineral and that they intended to oust him. Rowe knew he had to get busy. He prospected but could find no mineral. Finally he decided relocate an abandoned clain near Bass' homestead, set up a mill site and use the water from the well for power. This worked and he shipped sufficient mineral to justify his claim to Rowe Well. Rowe was a pioneer on plains and hunted buffalo. Marked road to Williams by Rain Tank, Howard Lake and Red Lake.

October Birthdays

Chris Greening
Mildred Ludwick
Richard Mangum
Gale Burak
Forest May
Frances Lewis
Buck Olberding
Linda Wade
Nancy Gibson
Gus Scott
Robert Bechtel

Annual Board Meeting

The Board will be meeting on Saturday, October 21, to discuss the items on the proposed agenda at:

Time: 12:00 Noon

Place: Perkins Family Restaurant
1900 S. Milton Road
Flagstaff

A talk on "Day Hikes From The River" by Tom Martin and a report from the Board will be at:

Time: 1:30 PM

Place: La Quinta Inn
2015 S. Beulah Boulevard
Flagstaff

PROPOSED AGENDA

1. Minutes of the October 1999 Board of Directors Meeting - Lee Albertson.
2. Treasurer Report - Fred Schick.
3. Results of the Election for the three (3) Board of Directors, 3-Year Term - Lee Albertson.
4. Election of Officers: Election of a President; Vice President and Outing Chairman; Secretary; and Treasurer for 2000 - Tom Carmony.
5. Process for Nomination of Individuals for the Pioneer Award. - Lee Albertson.
6. Scholarship Award: Status report and allocation of funds - Al Richmond.
7. Process for selecting individuals for the Grand Canyon Hall of Fame for Community Service. Grand Canyon Pioneers Society and the National Park Service - Al Richmond.
8. Joint effort with the Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association to "clean up" the Pioneers Cemetery at the South Rim Village.
9. Cabin Restoration Project: Status and allocation of funds for 2000 - John Azar.
10. Twenty-Four Mile Rapid: Georgie Rapid.

11. Outings for 2001: List of proposed outings. - Betty Leavengood.
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New Member

Charles Schulz of Carefree, AZ

Outings Contacts Information

Outings Coordinator:

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The Bulletin welcomes comments, stories, or Reflections and Remembrances.

Please send them to

Diane Cassidy
8540 North Central Avenue #27

Phoenix, AZ 85020

or e-mail them to Diane@grandcanyonbooks.com

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