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# The Herald

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**Wildlife experts, wind power advocates**  
seek areas where big birds won't be threatened

## Condors, turbines seeking to coexist

By **JANE PALMER**  
*Herald Staff Writer*

Contrary to previous reports, wind turbines and condors don't have to be a lethal combination in Monterey County, said Kelly Sorenson of the Ventana Wildlife Society.

While wildlife enthusiasts and wind energy advocates typically clash on the issue, Sorenson said, he has teamed up with Stanford University's Solar and Wind Energy Project to reduce limitations to harvesting wind energy in the county.

"We are a wildlife conservation organization, yet we are proactively looking for suitable places to cultivate



ORVILLE MYERS/Herald file

**Researchers studied the typical flight path of free-flying condors in the county for five years.**

wind energy," he said.

The problem for bird lovers and wind energy developers is that turbine blades kill

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## Condors

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birds and bats. Whenever there is a proposal to build a wind turbine, concerns about the impact on the environment can stall development.

But Sorenson had a hunch there might be regions in Monterey County where wind turbine development would not pose a threat to California condors.

"We know that condors are large soaring birds that fly high over valleys such as the Salinas Valley," said Sorenson. "And they may not be impacted by development in these regions."

In conjunction with researchers at Stanford, Sorenson and his co-workers conducted a study of the typical flight path of free-flying condors. The researchers attached GPS devices to 16 condors and measured their altitude at regular intervals throughout the day for a five-year period that ended September 2008.

"Our GPS database is the most robust of its kind, and we are putting it to good use," Sorenson said.

The information allowed researchers to pinpoint areas in Monterey County where wind resources were good and the impact to condors would be low.

"Areas along the Salinas Valley floor toward the center of the valley and away from the foothills would potentially be suitable for wind development," Sorenson said. "In these regions, condors would fly high overhead and wouldn't normally fly near the valley floor."

Sorenson hopes results of the study will inform decision-makers and enable renewable energy to move forward. He wants to ensure that developments "won't erase everything that we have done to restore condors to the wild."

Sorenson wants the study to be a model for how energy companies and environmentalists can collaborate.

"There are two ways to go about this issue," Sorenson said. "You can avoid and fight, or you can engage and collaborate, and I have chosen the latter."

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