



30 SECONDS WITH

David Moen

[condor expert]

The Oregon Zoo runs one of only four breeding programs for the California condor in the country. What's the program's primary objective?

We'd like to reintroduce the California condor to the Pacific Northwest. But to do that, we need to find suitable nesting sites for them in the wild. At our condor release sites in Arizona, paleo-archaeologists have found condor skulls and shell fragments that prove breeding sites were there in the past. We're still searching for similar evidence here, because if [the condors] were successful at one site before, they are likely to be successful there again.

What's the most promising find so far? We've found a number of turkey vulture nests in the [Columbia River] Gorge. In California, condors and turkey vultures often overlap, sometimes even sharing nesting sites. If we find more vulture

nests, we'll have a case that's even better.

Finding these nests can't be easy. Most are in cliff caves. We bushwhack in, set up rappel lines, and lower ourselves in. But for one location in the Gorge, St. Peter's Dome, we'll need a helicopter to drop us off.

In the early 1980s, there were only twenty-two California condors left alive. (There are now 172 living wild in California and Arizona.) Why do they need to return to this area?

Really, it's an Oregon ethos. Their scavenger function is vital to the ecosystem. [The condor] is part of our natural history as well. Besides holding a high place in the cultures of local Native Americans [who call them thunderbirds], condors were first identified to Western science by Lewis and Clark. They called it the "beautiful buzzard of the Columbia."

—PETER BELAND

Shortcut to Heaven

The path to the Pearly Gates just got a little smoother.
BY SAM HOLDER

LAST JUNE, to honor the two thousandth anniversary of the Apostle Paul's birth, Pope Benedict XVI granted all Catholic dioceses around the world the authority to grant plenary indulgences—code for forgiveness of previous sins (until you slip up again). But there's a catch: like a late-night infomercial, this is a limited-time offer. You've got just till the end of the month to claim a ticket for the express train to Heaven.

The premise—participate in certain religious functions or pious exercises in the next thirty days and your sins will be washed away—might sound flimsy. But here in Oregon, where a 2007 Pew Research Center survey found that over half of residents never or rarely attend church and that less than 15 percent are Catholic, some see the "get outta purgatory free" card as a



good way to kick-start idling faith. "Catholics in their fifties and sixties might use this as an opportunity [to return to the fold]," says Deacon Tom Gornick, the director of evangelization at Portland's Archdiocese.

Not everyone is excited, though. The Archdiocese of New York, which oversees a community of 2.5 million Catholics, offers these indulgences in only one of its four hundred parishes. "In some ways, indulgences make [spiritual benefits] quantitative," says Father Jim Kolb, pastor at St. Elizabeth's of Hungary and chaplain at Oregon Health & Science University.

Meanwhile, Portland's archbishop, John G. Vlazny, continues to advertise those benefits on the Archdiocese website—archdpdx.org—where a list of ways to attain the plenary indulgence is the main story on the news page. "It's just one of the tools one

can use to reestablish relationships with God," says Deacon Gornick, who points to a 4,853-person bump in membership in the Portland Archdiocese since last year. Certainly not a halo-bending number, but in this town, known for its homebrewed versions of the devil's nectar and a glut of packed strip clubs, it's a start.

Word on the Street | A PORTLAND GLOSSARY

TriMetiquette *n.* (ca. 2008) Unofficial rules for riding Portland's public transportation; esp: shower, please; smoke your clove outside the bus shelter, even if it's raining; and when there are empty pairs of seats, don't sit down next to someone—even if they're cute. Especially if they're cute. See also: trimetiquette.com, where you can read (and share) stories about socially unpleasant commuters.