

COYA, TARISHKA AND HUAGCHA

Coya and Tarishka are Huagcha's parents. Huagcha's mother, Coya, was born around 1997 in the wild. She is the last individual to have been rescued by Friedman and Heide Koester, in 1999. It was confiscated from peasants in the area of Cayambe, with whom it has remained for an unknown time. He arrived to Zuleta with a low weight and a swollen leg from the tie they used to maintain it. X-rays revealed the presence of 6 pellets on her body, so she was also a victim of illegal hunting.

Tarishka has a similar story. He was also born in the wild, probably around 1995. It was rescued by Friedman and Heide Koester the following year, confiscated from people in the Pifo area. He was part of the first group of four condors that were moved in 1996 from the Koesters' home to the Condor Huasi project, then newly designed in Zuleta.

The Coya -Tarishka couple was formed in 2010, when they were 13 and 15 years old. Although they lived together from the beginning without a problem, they showed mutual interest and courtship only several years later to finally have a first egg in 2019. That first attempt was infertile, but the following year Coya and Tarishka had a successful reproductive event, giving birth to their first chick, a female; Toa, in November 2020. With that event, they became the second successful current couple in the country, after Ayu - Inti, also managed by Condor Huasi. Finally, they had, in September 2022, a new egg from which, after a hectic incubation process and temporary separation, Huagcha was born two months later. Tarishka took care of the chick, and she grew strong and healthy.

Coya and Tarishka are now reunited and hopefully in their future extended confinement they can give Toa and Huagcha, several siblings and hope for their species.

Huagcha

She is the second chick born from Coya-Tarishka in the Condor Huasi Project. Born in 2022, she is the sister of another female, Toa, born in 2020 and now under the care of the Quito Zoo in Guayllabamba.

Huagcha was born within the framework of the national conservation plan for the Andean condor, a species in strong danger of extinction in Ecuador. This plan includes, with other activities, a captive breeding program with the aim of maintaining a backup population, a gene pool, and the hope, in the long term, of being able to release individuals born under human care to increase the wild population.

In 2022, after several months of courtship, Coya and Tarishka's breeding season began in July. The result of several copulations between July and August, Coya was a single egg – as is always the case with condors – on the night of September 3-4. After 63 days of shared incubation, Huagcha was born on the afternoon of November 7.



However, for the first time in the couple's history, the incubation process that year was marked by tensions and fights between the parents. Coya and Tarishka had several altercations shortly after taking care of the incubation, from which Coya was injured twice. For the safety of her and the newborn chick, and with the advice of the FGPL veterinarian and specialists from the U.S. and Argentina, it was decided to separate the couple and leave Huagcha in the sole care of her father, explaining her name "Huagcha", "orphan" in Kichwa, while Coya recovers peacefully in another confinement.

Despite the initial uncertainties, Tarishka proved to be an excellent father and successfully raised Huagcha. At 1 month and a half of age she began to leave the nest, at 5 months to feed herself and at 6 months to climb the platforms within the confinement with small flights. She received her first health check-up in August 2023, consisting of a general check-up, blood samples, measurements, and insertion of her identity chip. She already weighed 9 kilos, a perfect female weight.

That reproductive season, although strong and stressful for the animals as well as for their zookeepers, ended up as the first experience of single-parent breeding of Andean condors under human care in Ecuador and the information collected is of great importance for institutions that manage condors not only in Ecuador, but also in other countries in South America and other continents.

Huagcha, now big and independent, was transferred in December 2023 in another enclosure of Condor Huasi in the company of Jatun, a juvenile male born to the other couple of the project in 2021. In the future, the FGPL hopes to offer them a new ample confinement and perhaps, in many years, they will be able to become a new reproductive partner and hope for the specie.

Coya and Tarishka are back together and the FGPL is working on extending their confinement to lessen potential tensions in future breeding seasons.

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