

From the 9-15-07 edition of New Scientist:

## **BACK THE CONDOR, ARNIE**

Will Arnie help save the California condor, or will he say “Hasta la vista, baby”? The California state legislature has backed a bill to ban game hunters from using lead bullets in the birds’ range, and only a veto by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger can prevent the measure from becoming law.

Lead poisoning from carcasses tainted with fragments of bullets or shot is the main threat to the survival of the condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), which has clawed its way back from the brink thanks to a successful captive breeding programme (*New Scientist*, 28 February, p 14). Last week, the California senate passed the Ridley-Tree Condor Preservation Act, which will require hunters to use non-lead ammunition for hunting big game and coyotes in central and southern California.

Even so, the future of these enormous scavengers is far from secure. The law does not cover lead shot used to hunt squirrels or other small animals, and a veto by Schwarzenegger is still possible. Conservationists are lobbying the California Fish and Game Commission to introduce further regulations, and to set a timetable for phasing out lead ammunition for the entire state. Groups including the Center for Biological Diversity, based in Tucson, Arizona, have a lawsuit pending that aims to force the commission into action.

At the condor release site in southern California, meanwhile, nestlings are threatened by their parents’ habit of feeding them human garbage (*Bird Conservation International*, DOI: 10.1017/S095927090700069X). This problem does not affect birds at other sites, says Kelly Sorenson of the Ventana Wildlife Society in Salinas, which is managing releases.