

# Saving the lord of the Andean skies

James Lowen

A Wildlife Conservation Society-led initiative has set conservation priorities for the iconic Andean Condor across its entire South American range.

Whether soaring over arid canyons or lording it over skies pierced by ice-capped mountains, the Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus* is a veritable icon. Live, free-flying condors delight birders and enthral general tourists. The species is culturally revered by some communities – including being celebrated as the national bird of four countries – yet is also maltreated and hunted. And this avian marvel frustrates conservationists because the national boundaries scissoring its enormous latitudinal distribution – extending from the Andes of Venezuela to those of Tierra del Fuego – inherently fragment conservation action.

To address the challenge of creating a coherent conservation strategy at the continental level, the Wildlife Conservation Society – led by Bolivia-based Rob Wallace – convened a seminal priority-setting workshop in 2015, attended by over 100 participants including 30-plus condor experts. The results of the exercise were published last year in English (Wallace *et al.* 2020) and Spanish. This article summarises workshop participants' findings and their proposed way forward for Andean Condor conservation.

1 Adult male Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus* emerging from the mist, Parque Nacional y Área Natural de Manejo Integrado Madidi, La Paz, Bolivia, November 2017 (Robert Wallace).