

## Fossil Find Believed To Be Largest Bird

WASHINGTON (AP) — Scientists have discovered fossils of what is believed to have been the largest bird ever to soar the skies of the Earth — a behemoth the size of a man with a wingspan of 25 feet.

The discovery, announced Monday by the National Geographic Society, was made in Argentina and confirmed by scientists at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

The remains are of a bird that measured 11 feet from beak to tail, weighed between 160 and 170 pounds and, when standing, could have looked a 6-foot-tall man directly in the eye.

"This makes it the world's largest known flying bird," said Dr. Kenneth E. Campbell, curator of vertebrate paleontology at the Los Angeles facility. "It's definitely a most spectacular creature."

Campbell said the biggest flying bird alive today is the Andean Condor, a soaring creature with a 10-foot wingspan that can weigh about 35 pounds.

The biggest previously known flying birds were extinct varieties with wingspans approaching 16 feet. The largest known creatures to take to the air were flying reptiles called pterosaurs, some of which had wingspans of up to 35 feet.

In the latest discovery, about a dozen bones from one giant bird were recovered at a site about 100

miles west of Buenos Aires by Drs. Eduardo P. Tonni and Rosendo Pascual of Argentina's La Plata Museum.

"We have the parts of three different wing bones, two leg bones and parts of the skull," Campbell said in a telephone interview.

While visiting Argentina last year, Campbell was shown the fossils and immediately identified them as a new, larger type of teratorn. This is a now-extinct group of large birds whose name in Greek means "wonder bird."

Although no one knows exactly what teratorns looked like, of all living birds their bones most resemble those of condors.

"So, our reconstructions are patterned after condors and we assume they probably flew similar to condors," Campbell said. "Because of their size, they probably relied almost exclusively on gliding to fly, rather than wing-flapping."

"People are going to say that any bird that large simply couldn't fly," Campbell said. "But we are sure that it did . . . It's unlikely that a bird would have feathers and wing bones suitable for flight if it didn't fly."

Campbell, whose work is supported by National Geographic, said these predator birds are believed to have evolved in South America and spread to the southern United States.

BALD EAGLE

wingspan  
8 FEET



GIANT TERATORN

wingspan  
25 FEET



© 1980 National Geographic Society

—AP Wirephoto

Artist's Conception Of Giant Teratorn Compared With Eagle