Conservationists employ electronic eggs to save vultures

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The vultures of Britain's International Centre for Birds of Prey don't know it, but they're dupes. Every day, the giant birds carefully tend to their eggs, rotating them periodically so they incubate *just* right. But...take a closer look at that nest. Not every egg in there is made of calcium carbonate, and they don't always contain baby birds.

No, at this conservation center, some of those eggs are actually 3-D printed. And they're packed with a bounty that may be more precious to the vultures than an actual embryo: sensors.

Really, it's for their own good. Many vulture species are in serious trouble, and captive breeding programs like the one at ICBP may be the bird's only hope of beating extinction. But fostering those baby vultures in captivity is *hard*. Incubation may seem simple, but it's a careful balance of temperature, humidity, and movement that conservationists are just beginning to understand. So to help get a better picture of the process, ICBP developed its 3-D printed vulture egg, filled with sensor guts from tech partner <u>Microduino</u>.

The problem is, egg incubation is a complex mixture of environmental and behavioral factors. "We don't know exactly what those temperatures are, the amount of turning that goes on, the humidity, everything else that goes on underneath the parent," says Adam Bloch, a conservationist developing the electronic egg at the ICBP.

Read full, original post: The future of wildlife conservation is...an electronic vulture egg