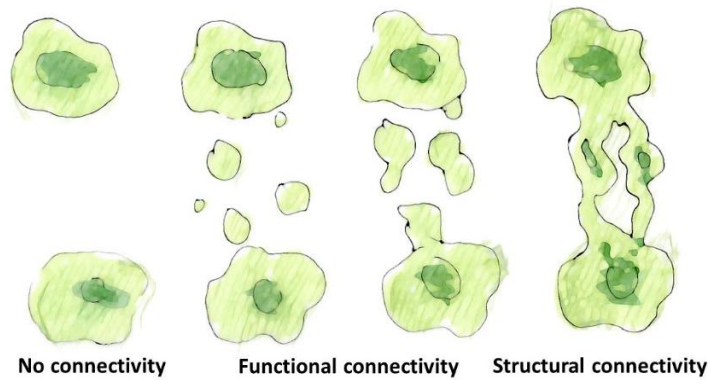




Credit: T. Butcher

What is the National Wildlife Corridors Bill?

This bill would establish the **National Wildlife Corridors System** to provide for the protection and restoration of native fish, wildlife, and plant species. The conservation of landscape corridors and waterways, where native species and ecological processes can transition from one habitat to another, is critical to conserving biodiversity and ensuring resiliency for wildlife – especially in the face of climate change. Therefore, by designating selected landscapes and waterways under federal jurisdiction as wildlife corridors, the US can safeguard its native flora and fauna for future generations.



When habitats are isolated from one another, species suffer because they cannot access the resources, mates, or genetic diversity they need to survive. Through functional and structural habitat connectivity however, we can provide a way for species to thrive, even in the face of climate change.

What species benefit from corridors?

All of them! The beauty of this bill is that all of our native wildlife – from wide-ranging carnivores to specialized amphibians – will benefit from protected corridors. **Florida Panthers** need corridors for dispersal (when the young head out on their own to find new territory) and to find mates. Because these panthers have such a large home range, corridors help to provide enough space by linking protected areas together and can help reduce human conflict by offering an alternate route around cities and towns. **Pronghorn** is an important game species in the southwest, but their survival depends upon the ability to migrate seasonally. With a designated corridor, pronghorn would be able to migrate south during the winter to access resources, like food, that are unavailable during the cold season. Even small insects like the **Monarch Butterfly** need protected corridors to migrate up to 3,000 miles in search of warmer climates in Mexico because they can't withstand freezing temperatures. It can take 3-4 generations to complete a full migration and without places along the flyway for them to rest and reproduce, we would lose this iconic species. Species have different reasons why corridors are important to their survival, but we could have a proven solution that works for all of them: a National Wildlife Corridors System!

By focusing on landscape-scale habitat connectivity, we can ensure the health of whole ecosystems – from Florida panther to pronghorn to butterflies.



Credit: Mark Conlin



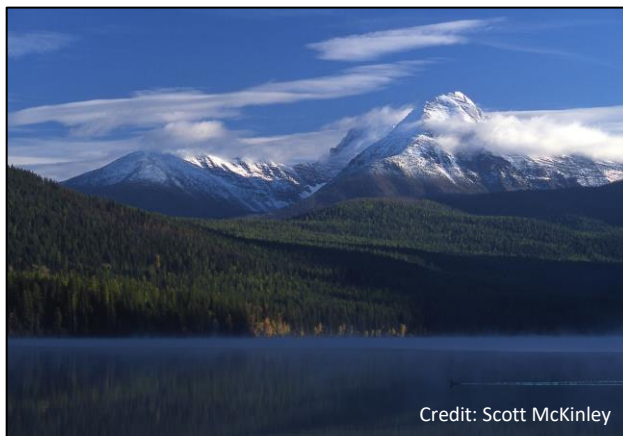
Credit: Scott McKinley



Credit: Robin Winkelmann

How does the Bill work?

- Grants authority to key federal agencies to designate wildlife corridors which will be managed in a way that contributes to the connectivity, persistence, resilience and adaptability of native species. Requires that Department of Interior – in consultation with the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense and Transportation and in coordination with states, tribes and others, develop a strategy for development of the corridor system.
- Requires coordination in both designation and management of corridors with other Federal departments and, states, tribes, local governments, NGOs and private landowners.
- Promotes public safety and mitigates species damage where corridors cross roadways.
- Establishes the Wildlife Corridors Stewardship and Protection Fund to support the management and protection of Corridors and other lands and waters important to connectivity.
- Provides authority to acquire land and interest in land from using funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Corridors Stewardship and Protection Fund, and private donations.
- A National Native Species Habitats and Corridors Database will be developed and freely available to the public.
- A Wildlife Corridors Stewardship and Protection Fund will be established to provide the financial resources necessary to carry out and sustain this system.



Why is this important?

- America's native fish, wildlife, and plant species are part of our rich natural heritage and an important legacy to pass on to future generations.
- Many species in the US are declining. Scientists estimate that one in five species are at risk of extinction.
- One of the greatest threats to species survival and diversity is the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of natural habitats. America's landscapes are losing species, becoming biologically unproductive and unhealthy because native habitats have become islands, cutoff from other landscapes and waterways, unable to sustain vital natural processes, such as: dispersal, migration, genetic exchange, acquisition of resources, population stability, and climate adaptation, among others.
- Climate change is a significant threat to native species. Plant communities are shifting in elevation and location, coastal waters are warming, and coastal habitats are eroding due to sea level rise and land subsidence. Conserving, restoring, and establishing new ecological connections to facilitate the shift of species into more suitable habitat is a key climate change adaptation strategy.
- Protecting landscape corridors and hydrologic connectivity is a broadly accepted strategy to conserving native fish, wildlife, and plant species and ensuring ecosystem resilience, and it is typically one of the first steps in restoration and recovery planning. It has already been integrated by proactive state and federal agencies, such as California, the Western Governors Association, and NOAA, and by international agreements between northeastern US states and southeastern Canadian provinces.

**Now is the time to support a National Wildlife Corridors Bill to protect and reconnect our national heritage.
For more information, contact Susan Holmes, Policy Director at susan@wildlandsnetwork.org
or visit our website at www.wildlandsnetwork.org**