



What are wildlife corridors?

Wildlife corridors are pathways or routes that connect habitat and are key for wildlife survival. These areas foster seasonal movement, between summer and winter range. They are critical for wildlife to find mates to ensure genetic diversity. Migration routes increasingly are also used for wildlife seeking new habitat because of natural disasters or climate change. Wildlife corridors also include aquatic linkages, which allow fish and other species to move freely through watersheds.

Where is the Upper Rio Grande Valley?

The Upper Rio Grande Valley includes the Taos Plateau and extends from north-central New Mexico into the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. The Upper Rio Grande Valley is home to the Santa Fe National Forest, Carson National Forest, Rio Grande National Forest and Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. It also includes vast tracts of tribal, state and private land.

What threatens wildlife corridors?

The most common threats to corridors are manmade impediments and barriers including highways, fences, oil and gas production and other development. When corridors are blocked, wildlife is isolated from food sources and potential mates. Too often, wildlife is forced to cross highways, causing vehicle collisions and devastating consequences.

What wildlife species survive in the Upper Rio Grande?

Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, black bear, cougar, Rio Grande cutthroat trout, Canadian lynx and many other important species use linkages and corridors in the Upper Rio Grande Valley.



Why are wildlife corridors important to the Upper Rio Grande?

Wildlife corridors are critical for much more than the survival of wildlife. Many local communities depend on the land, water and wildlife in the Upper Rio Grande Valley for their way of life. These communities understand the importance of preserving wildlife so that future generations can enjoy hiking, fishing, hunting, camping, bird watching and many other recreational activities in the region. A robust outdoor recreation economy has helped many of these local communities flourish.

What are potential solutions?

There are a number of solutions that can help protect wildlife migration routes. The construction of wildlife overpasses and underpasses prevents vehicle collisions. Developers and energy companies can be incentivized to create outside of migration corridors. Ranchers can be encouraged to install wildlife-friendly fences.

What role do tribes play in wildlife connectivity and corridors?

Native American tribes play an important role in protecting wildlife connectivity and corridors in the Upper Rio Grande. Some key habitat for fostering wildlife connectivity is under tribal management. Many tribal natural resource officers are collaring animals and collecting data that is critical to understanding species movement. Local tribes have also played an important role in reintroducing key species such as the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep.

Why is collaboration necessary in protecting wildlife corridors?

Wildlife doesn't recognize state lines, forest service boundaries or tribal borders. In order for any wildlife corridor policy to be effective, it must transcend jurisdictional boundaries and involve active engagement from key stakeholders including federal and state agencies, tribes, private land owners, local communities and non-governmental groups. Science and best land management practices must be shared with all partners and used to guide corridor decisions in order for the Upper Rio Grande's iconic wildlife to thrive and flourish for generations to come.

