



PINAL COUNTY



CAP TRAIL

RECREATION & WILDLIFE: LIVING TOGETHER

LINKING LANDSCAPES

All animals need to move as conditions in their environment change. These activities could be daily or seasonal movements in search of food, water, and shelter. These activities can also be during annual migration and breeding periods. All of these movements depend on the amount of connectivity between habitats in a landscape.

WHY IS CONNECTIVITY IMPORTANT?

As Arizona communities rapidly grow, our human activities continue to expand into crucial wildlife habitats. Urban and rural development, expansion of transportation systems, energy development, and resource extraction are all causing rapid fragmentation and degradation of wildlife habitats in Arizona. Climate change may further isolate wildlife populations in the future.

Habitat fragmentation is the process of dividing natural areas into smaller and smaller patches. Roads, fences, houses, and other developments fragment our landscapes, creating barriers that greatly reduces the connectivity between habitats. These drastic changes to the landscape have direct impacts to wildlife, including mortality on roadways, isolated populations of species, and increased urban wildlife conflicts.

WHAT IS A WILDLIFE CORRIDOR?

A wildlife corridor is an area of land that links habitats within a landscape. These corridors allow animals to complete daily, seasonal, or annual movements. Wildlife corridors often occur along ridgelines, canyons, washes, or other riparian areas where animals can move easily and safely. Perhaps most importantly, wildlife corridors allow for the exchange of genetic material that is passed between individuals and populations. This exchange of genetic material helps maintain biodiversity over the long term. In our increasingly fragmented world, wildlife corridors are more important than ever.

MAINTAINING LANDSCAPE LINKAGES

In Arizona, crucial wildlife habitats are distributed throughout the state, and are large enough to support viable populations of all species of wildlife found in the state. However, an extensive network of wildlife corridors is needed to maintain connectivity between these habitats, which are located across public, state, and private lands.

Identifying and protecting important wildlife corridors will offset the adverse effects of habitat fragmentation and ensure the future of healthy wildlife. The Arizona Game and Fish Department, along with partners like Pinal County, Bureau of Reclamation, and the Central Arizona Project (CAP), are actively working to identify, maintain, and protect wildlife corridors and the landscapes that make the Sonoran Desert so unique.

