

# Wildlife Migration Corridors

For thousands of years, animals such as deer, elk and moose have migrated between seasonal habitats for their survival, but our ever-growing network of roads and highways leads to millions of wildlife-vehicle collisions each year, fatal to humans and animals. The strategic placement of bridges, tunnels, culverts, fencing and other infrastructure can allow wildlife safe passage either under or over roads, connecting landscapes and improving driver safety. Several states have enacted legislation in recent years to identify and protect wildlife corridors, contributing to over 1,000 dedicated wildlife crossings in the U.S. today.



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## Five Things to Know About Wildlife Corridors

- 1** **Wildlife-vehicle collisions represent an increasing percentage of the accidents on U.S. roads.** An estimated 1-2 million motorists collide with large wildlife each year, causing roughly 200 human deaths, 26,000 injuries, and \$8 billion in property damage. In rural areas like Wyoming, 15% of all reported crashes involve wildlife.

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- 2** **The seasonal migration patterns of North American wildlife are essential to their survival.** Many species, such as moose, elk, deer and pronghorn travel the same routes from summer to winter grounds, covering hundreds of miles over the course of weeks and even months.

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- 3** **New technologies are allowing scientists to determine where, when and how wildlife move.** Wildlife biologists are using GPS collars to track migrations in real time and map the areas where collisions occur. This technology can help states make decisions on the design and location of crossings, as well as study their effectiveness.

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- 4** **States have access to federal funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).** The IIJA directs the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration to distribute \$350 million in grants over five years to states, municipalities and tribes for projects that reduce the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve habitat connectivity.

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- 5** **The protection of wildlife corridors is a bipartisan issue.** At least 12 states have enacted legislation or issued an executive order on wildlife corridors in recent years—California, Colorado, Florida, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and Wyoming.

# State Legislation

1

**California** [AB 2344](#), passed this summer, requires the department of transportation to assess barriers to wildlife movement before commencing new road projects. This builds on legislation enacted last year that clarified the application of mitigation credits to wildlife connectivity projects ([SB 790](#)). California recently broke ground on what is being billed as the world's largest wildlife crossing—a bridge more than 200 long and spanning over 10 lanes of traffic across US 101 in Los Angeles County.

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2

**Colorado** passed [SB 151](#) this year allocating \$5 million for wildlife crossings and creating dedicated funding for these structures within the transportation department. The state also unanimously passed a joint resolution in 2021 ([SJR 21](#)) calling for greater collection of wildlife movement data, a plan for improving habitat connectivity for native species, a report identifying benefits of corridors, and establishment of a working group to develop state policies. This follows an [executive order](#) issued in 2019. Colorado has more wildlife crossings than any state.

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3

**Florida** lawmakers unanimously passed a wildlife corridor law in 2021 ([SB 976](#)), allocating \$400 million to protect almost 18 million acres of interconnected natural areas key to the survival of multiple species, including the endangered Florida panther.

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4

**New Mexico** finalized its [wildlife corridors action plan](#) while also dedicating \$2 million to crossings in the 2022 legislative session. Stemming from legislation enacted in 2019 ([SB 228](#)), the plan uses ecological data and modeling to identify wildlife-vehicle collision hot spots and critical wildlife corridors for the purposes of improving driver safety and maintaining habitat connectivity for six species of large mammals. The law requires state agencies to seek input from the public, tribal governments and other stakeholders in finalizing the list of priority projects.

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5

**Wyoming's** legislature dedicated more than \$10 million for wildlife crossings this year. In 2020, the governor issued an [executive order](#) establishing a process for wildlife corridors to be designated, beginning with mule deer and pronghorn antelope routes. Also in 2020, the legislature passed [HB 69](#), allowing voluntary donations to support wildlife conservation efforts related to the state's transportation system. The U.S. Department of the Interior has indicated its [support](#) for the state's approach to wildlife corridors.

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## Additional Sources

- NCSL Webinar, [Room to Roam: The Benefits of Wildlife Infrastructure](#) (June 2022)
- The Pew Charitable Trusts, [U.S. Public Lands and Rivers Conservation](#)