

The Importance of Wildlife Corridors

Eleanor Gladding is a Senior Biologist and Project Manager in our Tucson office who has been with SWCA for almost 20 years. As a herpetologist and ecologist, her areas of expertise include endangered species habitat studies, revegetation planning, species-specific surveys, noxious weed issues, and wildlife-habitat relationships, including wildlife corridors.

“Simply put, a wildlife corridor is an area that animals use to move from one place to another,” says Eleanor. “Many animals need to move throughout the landscape to complete their life cycle and wildlife corridors allow animals to do that.”

However, habitat fragmentation – the separation of suitable habitat areas into multiple, disconnected pieces – continues to be one of the leading causes of decline in wildlife populations. Therefore, understanding, and protecting, wildlife corridors is becoming increasingly important. Land managers and scientists are promoting the importance of preserving large, intact blocks of land to provide connectivity for species.

“The analysis and protection of wildlife corridors isn’t just about protecting wildlife,” she says. “It’s also about helping clients design projects that allow for the permeability of the species.”

Many projects require consideration of effects to wildlife corridors from the proposed activities. One of Eleanor’s major roles on these projects is to assess how a proposed mine, roadway, or other development may affect how species in the area move throughout the landscape for their daily and seasonal needs. She then assists in designing mitigation to help keep the movement corridors open, such adding a underground crossing structure or a land bridge.

“All species need certain types and amounts of habitat for daily and seasonal use,” she says. “As humans continue to develop in more areas, it is important to consider ways for these developments to occur without further affecting connectivity and space for species within the landscape.”

If you have upcoming RFPs or projects with potential wildlife corridors, or if you would simply like to learn more about the topic, please reach out to Eleanor Gladding at egladding@swca.com.